

# 1619 Project creator Nikole Hannah-Jones was paid over \$1 million to speak about race at colleges in 2022

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Journalist and author Nikole Hannah-Jones, creator of *The New York Times* 1619 Project, was lavished with over \$1 million in speaking fees by dozens of colleges and universities last year as a reward for promoting a reactionary, race-centered view of American history and society.

According to an investigation conducted by the *Daily Wire*—which filed a Freedom of Information Act request with 11 public-taxpayer funded colleges—Hannah-Jones was paid an average of \$43,000 per speech. Assuming this pay rate for the other 22 colleges, Hannah-Jones would have raked in \$1.4 million in speaking fees in 2022 alone. The report notes that this is likely an undercount, as the list of speeches is incomplete and doesn't take into account the private institutions that may well have handed out even more cash.

Her speeches generally lasted an hour or less. In a few instances, she never had to leave her home; Northern Illinois University paid Hannah-Jones \$30,000 for a Zoom talk. Similar engagements at Metro State University-Denver and the Cleveland Library netted her \$25,000 and \$20,000 respectively.

In her biggest payday, she pocketed over \$101,700 for 24 hours of work—over \$4,200 an hour—at Indiana University, which consisted of a 1 hour speech followed by a book signing, 4 classroom discussions and a dinner party. Not bad for a day's work.

Last September, Hannah-Jones charged a \$40,000 fee for a 45-minute speech given at an event hosted by the Arlington Public Library in Virginia, breaking the library's budget. More recently, she was paid \$35,350 by the Fairfax County Public Library for a one-hour lecture given on February 19 at the McClean Community Center. A month earlier, county officials had paid \$22,500 to racist author Ibram X. Kendi for a one-hour virtual

speech. Combined, the two speakers were paid a total of \$57,850 to give lectures about their race theories. By comparison, the average starting salary of a county librarian amounts to \$54,421 annually.

Last summer, Hannah-Jones was awarded nearly \$75,000 as part of a legal settlement with the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Hannah-Jones had threatened to sue the university after the administration had failed to act with sufficient haste in granting her tenure, claiming racial discrimination. Though the university ultimately relented to her demands, Hannah-Jones publicly turned down the offer in favor of a tenured position at Howard University. The whole episode testifies to the debased, money-hungry character of identity politics.

In 2021, Hannah-Jones, alongside Ta-Nehisi Coates—yet another racist author—founded the so-called Center for Journalism and Democracy at Howard University, financed to the tune of \$20 million from the Knight Foundation, Ford Foundation, and other major capitalist donors. She was also a recipient of the MacArthur Foundation “Genius Grant” in 2017 which came with a generous \$625,000 payout over five years.

Hannah-Jones is best known as the creator of the 1619 Project, which the *World Socialist Web Site* has exposed as a racist falsification of American history. It puts forward the view that the United States was explicitly founded upon racial oppression; that the American Revolution was a counterrevolution waged to defend slavery; that blacks fought alone against a racist and indifferent white society; and that the destruction of slavery during the Civil War was merely an incidental byproduct, utilized cynically by an otherwise racist Abraham Lincoln in order to preserve the Union.

These claims were taken up and thoroughly debunked

by principled historians and scholars, including James Oakes, Victoria Bynum and Adolph Reed Jr. and Gordon Wood, among others. But the 1619 Project, whatever its pretensions, was never intended to provide an objective historical analysis. Its purpose was to manufacture a pseudo-historical narrative in order to justify present-day political ends.

To what end? The huge sums of cash being lavished upon Hannah-Jones and other racist figures provide a clue. Hannah-Jones, who is an advocate of race-based reparations—a reactionary demand that serves to divide the working class along racial lines—claims that “structural racism” pervades the very DNA of American society.

Hannah-Jones is representative of a whole priestly layer of race and gender “experts,” tasked with preaching the preferred religion of the self-obsessed upper-middle classes grouped around the Democratic Party—identity politics. They claim to represent the interests of black people. But speaking about race has made them very wealthy, with access to privileges that are denied to the vast majority of the population, of all races.

They present their views as oppositional, even dangerous to the establishment. If this is true, how is it that the racist view has been embraced wholeheartedly by every powerful institution of—what they would call—“white society”? Big business, academia and the Democratic Party, tied by a million threads to Wall Street and the Pentagon, have all thoroughly assimilated the racist outlook. Clearly they do not perceive anything dangerous or subversive in these views. Quite the contrary.

Hannah-Jones—who has made millions speaking about the oppression experienced by enslaved African-Americans in the past—maintains a discreet silence on the prevailing form of exploitation and brutality today—wage labor under capitalism. In fact, the recent documentary version of the 1619 Project aired on Disney’s Hulu station pinned the blame for social and racial inequality on “white workers.”

Hannah-Jones holds a tenured position at Howard University, which has seen protests and threatened strikes by students and faculty over deplorable living conditions and exploitative working conditions. She was conspicuously silent on these struggles conducted by the university’s majority-working class student body and its underpaid staff.

The university administration—made up of millionaires—claims that there is no money to fix these

problems. The students and faculty might respond with an inquiry as to what exactly is being done with the \$20 million that was donated to Hannah-Jones’ center, which so far has accomplished nothing to improve the lives or education of Howard’s students. More recently, the university signed a \$90 million deal with the Pentagon, establishing a research center aimed at improving the US military’s killing machines.

For race politics and militarism, the institution finds tens of millions of dollars. For students and faculty, it scatters a few crumbs on the floor. This is the reality under capitalism, and Hannah-Jones, with her silence, has given it her implicit approval.

The latest revelations come as students, graduate workers and educators across the country enter into struggle against exploitative working conditions. At Temple University in Philadelphia, at least 750 teaching-assistants are waging a concerted struggle against low wages and tuition hikes, in the face of efforts by the graduate students union to suppress their strike.

Similar strikes have broken out across the country, from the University of California to the New School in New York, among others. These cannot be understood apart from a growing global movement of the international working class—of all races, creeds and nationalities—against austerity, the threat of war and inequality.

The race-obsessed layers grouped around the Democratic Party, which Hannah-Jones perhaps best epitomizes, are fundamentally fearful of and hostile to this growing movement. They do not seek to end capitalism, but to grab their own piece of the action. The last thing they want is for the party to end when there is yet so much money to be made.



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