**Trump's 1776 commission is proof America is spiraling toward fascism**

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[Arwa Mahdawi](https://www.theguardian.com/profile/arwa-mahdawi)

Trump is setting up the commission to teach students ‘the miracle of American history’ – which sounds like a core part of the fascist process of taking power

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Can we use the F word yet? Can we finally admit that America is dipping its feet in fascism? Armed militias are roaming the streets; Donald Trump is laying the groundwork to discredit the results of the 2020 election; the press has been labelled the “[enemy of the people](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1114221533461790721?s=20)”; there are credible allegations that migrant women in detention camps are being coerced into having their uteruses removed; “anti-fascists” [have been branded public enemy number one](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jun/06/what-is-antifa-trump-terrorist-designation). And now Trump has [announced](https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/video/2020/sep/18/trump-signs-order-for-patriotic-education-as-he-rails-against-warped-american-story-video) a “national commission to support patriotic education” – in other words, a racist propaganda program.

“Leftwing rioting and mayhem are the direct result of decades of left-wing indoctrination in our schools,” Trump declared in a [speech](https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-white-house-conference-american-history/) on Thursday. He went on to condemn critical race theory and the 1619 Project, the New York Time’s Pulitzer-prize winning initiative to reframe American history by placing the consequences of slavery at the center. “[T]he crusade against American history is toxic propaganda [that] will destroy our country,” he announced. Per Trump, the only way to save the United States is to revise its history entirely; to gloss over violent colonialism and slavery and pretend America doesn’t have a bigoted bone in its body. Which is why, Trump said, he is setting up a 1776 Commission to teach students “about the miracle of American history”. Well, “miracle” is certainly one way to describe something completely made-up.

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The federal government doesn’t have jurisdiction over school curriculum – but don’t let that reassure you into thinking that Trump’s 1776 Commission is pure puff. Whenever Trump comes out with an outrageous plan there are always people rushing to point out that he won’t actually be able to follow through with it; that checks and balances will stop him. But Trump has already [stormed through](https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2020/02/checks-and-balances-trump-has-swept-away/606013/) many of these checks and balances; he’s already normalized behaviour that would have brought down any other president. If he gets another term there are no limits to what he might do; hello re-education camps, goodbye reproductive rights! And that, ultimately, is what his speech on Thursday was about; it wasn’t so much about American history as it was about America’s future. It was a promise to his base that he will Make America White Again.

Hannah Arendt famously talked about the banality of evil – unspeakable horrors are often perpetuated by unthinking people simply “doing their job”. What we’re living through right now might be characterized as the inanity of evil. Trump is still treated as a figure of fun a lot of the time. A buffoon incapable of becoming a “proper” fascist. Objective White Men™ have lined up to lecture us all on how Trump isn’t all that bad and belittle fear of what he is capable of as “[elite hysterics](https://nypost.com/2020/07/23/its-not-fascism-to-protect-federal-property-from-riots-revolutionaries/).” (Easy to talk dismissively about “hysterics” when you don’t have a uterus that Trump wants to control.) But as Madeleine Albright explained in a [discussion](https://www.vox.com/world/2019/2/14/18221913/fascism-warning-madeleine-albright-book-trump) of her 2018 book, Fascism: A Warning, “Fascism is not an ideology; it’s a process for taking and holding power.” Propaganda like the 1776 commission, narratives that make a [dominant cultural group](https://www.vox.com/2018/9/19/17847110/how-fascism-works-donald-trump-jason-stanley) feel like victims, is a core part of that process. The most patriotic thing a person can do is tell the truth, and the truth is that America is spiraling towards fascism horrifyingly fast.