

Primary Source

Robert Woodson, "The Crucial Voice of 1776,"
February 13, 2020



What progress has been made in the twentieth century in the fight to realize Founding principles of liberty, equality, and justice for African Americans? What work must still be done?

- ☐ I can interpret primary sources related to Founding principles of liberty, equality, and justice in the 1960s to the present day.
- ☐ I can explain how laws and policy, courts, and individuals and groups contributed to or pushed back against the quest for liberty, equality, and justice for African Americans.
- ☐ I can explain why the civil rights movement fractured in the 1960s.
- ☐ I can compare movements for liberty, equality, and justice for African Americans over time.
- ☐ I can create an argument using evidence from primary sources.
- ☐ I can analyze issues in history to help find solutions to present-day challenges.

Essential Vocabulary

postulate	claim
-----------	-------

Building Context

The 1619 Project sparked criticism and debate, both for its scholarship and for asserting that the enslavement of African Americans was central to the founding of the United States. The following essay by Robert Woodson, a Black civil rights activist, appeared in *The Washington Examiner*, directly criticizing the central premise of *The 1619 Project*.

Robert Woodson, “The Crucial Voice of 1776,” February 13, 2020

Source: <https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/opinion/op-eds/the-crucial-voice-of-1776>

[The writings of *The 1619 Project*] postulate that the “actual” founding of America occurred in 1619, with the arrival of the first slaves on our nation’s shores. They declare that America is essentially and irrevocably rooted in injustice and racism.

...

To counter the debilitating and dangerous message of *The 1619 Project*, we are launching “1776,” honoring the vision of our nation’s Founders who saw beyond their years. Though slavery and discrimination are undeniably a tragic part of our nation’s history, we have made great strides along its long and tortuous journey to realize its promise and abide by its founding principles. People are motivated to achieve and to overcome the challenges that confront them when they learn about inspiring victories that are possible, rather than being barraged by constant reminders of injuries they have suffered.

...

We are launching “1776” to counter the false history that *The 1619 Project* espouses and has disseminated as a school curriculum. We aim to highlight the victories that are possible in spite of oppression and to open the door to discussion of solutions to the moral disarray that afflicts not only minority, low-income neighborhoods but that also takes its toll among the sons and daughters of the affluent.

Notes

Comprehension and Analysis Questions

1. What does Woodson say about the presence of slavery and discrimination throughout the nation's history?

2. *The 1619 Project* and Woodson's essay about "1776" put forth rival views about the founding of the United States. What is the difference between these two dates as a starting point for U.S. history? Why is it important to consider both narratives when studying U.S. history?

3. Both essays ask us to consider the history of enslavement in the United States, its legacies, and the way it should be taught in schools. How does this mandate relate to the documents you have read across this curriculum?