

Gaslighting at the Academy

by [G. Murphy Donovan](#) (August 2021)



Faces of Deceit, Gary Hansmann, 1986

"It's pretty clear that my tenure was not taken up because of political opposition because of discriminatory views against my viewpoint and, I believe, my race and my gender." –Nikole Hannah Jones

Black victims and white guilt now meet at the merge of journalism and the academy; nowhere is this more apparent than in the case of Nikole Hannah-Jones (*Right*) and the so-called *1619 Project*, a clever piece of pseudo-academic trolling, yet another “woke” theory about the [centrality](#) of race in American history; presented first, by the *New York Times*, and then ratified by the Pulitzer Committee.



Ms. Jones has a basket of press prizes, most from the political American left. Her resume also includes a history of advocacy journalism, loose talk, and conspiracy theories coupled with race baiting. Most recently, Nikole claimed her five-year contract with the University of North Carolina “guaranteed” tenure, in advance, until southern white racism poisoned the well.

Neither claim was true.

After playing the victim for several days amidst the subsequent media firestorm, Nikole abandoned the UNC tender and retreated into the black academy at Howard University where she will be able to preach to the choir—with tenure. Absent teaching credentials, Nikole’s demand for tenure is a symptom of victim privilege at best, or affirmative action at its worst.

Professional victims in America are now weaponized and monetized.

Alas, self-segregating colleges, like Howard, are part of the race problem, not the solution. Like urban public schools, so-called historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) are academic ghettos, second rate at best. Few blue-chip African American scholars or athletes go to the black academy if they can matriculate, recreate, or teach elsewhere. The black American schoolhouse, at all levels, is a job's program; an expensive, subsidized, mediocre artifact of America's race wars.

The University of the District of Columbia, also in the nation's capital, might be the best example of the worst. The dirty secret about "separate and unequal" is that progressive elites know that a segregated black academy, like public assistance, keeps blacks in their place; permanently in second place that is.

Like Barack Obama, Jones is a product of a mixed marriage; white mother, black father. Like our former president, Nikole self-identifies as black. With the woke, race or sex is choice, not biological fact; very convenient options for insecure, or paranoid, double-dippers of color.

Jones is now a 21st Century liberal American political pin-up, fast approaching a stereotype. Ms. Jones "matriculated in white," start to finish; including a bachelor's degree from Notre Dame and a master's from UNC. Blacks make up three percent of Notre Dame's student body and most of those are men sporting helmets or jockstraps. Like the Obamas, Ms. Jones has been rump-high with black privilege in white school ghettos her entire life. Jones may wear a coat of many colors, but victim she is not. Character is seldom an issue these days on the American left.

Alas, integrity, or lack of it, is at the heart of

Project 1619. Problems with Nikole's thesis begin with innumeracy.

There were no "united states" in 1619, only European colonies; Dutch, Spanish French, Portuguese, and English; the latter, especially Virginia, central to the Jones polemic. Suggesting that Virginia spliced slavery into a defining "American" narrative in 1619 is a little like saying European buggery began with Bulgaria. Slavery was flourishing midst native Americans and all European imperialists for eons before the Virginia plantation got into the act. Slavery was a global phenomenon in the 17th Century, a social and economic standard that dates back to pre-history.

And the color of slavery has always been gold or green, never exclusively black. Slavery might be American "original sin," in the same sense that hamburgers are made from ham.

Ms. Jones fails to acknowledge that legal slavery survived in the United States for only seventy-five years (1788-1863). Before that, slavery was a European colonial sin or crime. Ironically, black slavery still thrives today where it began—in black and Muslim Africa. Slavery no more defines the "white" American narrative than crime, cocaine, and fatherless families tells the African American story.

The American revolution was not fought to "defend slavery" either, any more than the Civil War was fought to save cotton, tobacco, hush puppies, or grits.

All European settlers, no matter race or class, were second class citizens outside their motherlands; a sore spot for Dutch, English, French, and Spanish 17th Century colonists alike. The heavy hands of George III and the British parliament on the original 13 English colonies was felt from Boston to Beaufort.

"White" America, in a bitter civil war, bled

profusely to end slavery in the 19th Century. But then again, as we now know from Nikole, and a host of like-minded shills, only black lives really matter, then or now. Ironically, black servility and indenture is still a necessary predicate to the success of today's Democrat Party and the careers of race baiters like Hannah-Jones countrywide.

Slavery in America might be an economic footnote compared to the historical plight of native Americans, where genocide, not servitude, was the norm. One might also point out that, unlike black Africa, native Americans (nee Indians) seldom sold their brothers, sisters, and children into export slavery.

If any American institution is to be held accountable for systemic racism, slavery, apartheid, or Jim Crow; the Democrat Party, by any measure, should be the first culprit in the dock.

Nothing said so far excuses or minimizes the horrors of slavery or social injustice anywhere.

But slavery, even black slavery in America, is not unique; rather, it is just one of many national sins that now include the native American genocide, Japanese American internments during the last great war, and willful indifference to the plight of Jews in Europe during the same era. Ironically, institutions like the *New York Times*, which ignored 19th American and 20th Century European genocides, now seeks redemption by pandering to racist fictions about the place of slavery in American history.

If America must repent for "original sin," if justice is overdue, then the remnants of 574 Amerind tribes and the American Jewish tribe might go to the head of the any reparation's line. The impact of racism on Africans doesn't come close to the impact of racial crimes visited on Native Americans.

African slaves may have been abused, but they were not brought to America for extermination. The abuses of servitude don't come close to the impact or finality of racial genocide.

To be fair, we should also give Nikole Hannah-Jones her due. As a race victim, Ms. Jones has already donned the robes of moral superiority; she really doesn't need teaching experience, a PhD, or automatic tenure. No one has done more for professional victims and gaslighting since George Cukor allowed Charles Boyer to abuse Ingrid Bergman on the silver screen in 1944.



Bergman won an award for her portrayal of a victim that year too.

Addendum

Hannah-Jones' 1619 argument captures the worst of two professions, teaching and journalism, both doubling down as partisan political propaganda platforms. Black servility and indenture are necessary predicates to the political success and professional careers of race profiteers in America today.

For a fact-based and scholarly assessment of the role of slavery in the American historical narrative, consider Dr. Thomas Sowell's (Stanford) excellent [*Intellectuals and Race*](#).

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G. Murphy Donovan writes about the politics of national security.

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