**Trump alleges ‘left-wing indoctrination’ in schools, says he will create national commission to push more ‘pro-American’ history**

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President Trump pressed his case Thursday that U.S. schools are indoctrinating children with a left-wing agenda hostile to the nation’s Founding Fathers, describing efforts to educate students about racism and slavery as an insult to the country’s lofty founding principles.

Trump, speaking before original copies of the Constitution and Declaration of Independence at the National Archives, characterized demonstrations against racial injustice as “left-wing rioting and mayhem” that “are the direct result of decades of left-wing indoctrination in our schools. It’s gone on far too long.”

The federal government has no power over the curriculum taught in local schools. Nonetheless, Trump said he would create a national commission to promote a “pro-American curriculum that celebrates the truth about our nation’s great history,” which he said would encourage educators to teach students about the “miracle of American history.”

“Patriotic moms and dads are going to demand that their children are no longer fed hateful lies about this country,” he said. “American parents are not going to accept indoctrination in our schools, cancel culture at work or the repression of traditional faith, culture and values in the public square. Not anymore.”

As he campaigns for reelection, Trump has repeatedly cast education that examines the nation’s failures as a betrayal, seeking to rally his base and tap into hostility toward protesters who have taken to the streets to denounce racial injustice and police brutality.

His argument casts any criticism of the United States, even of slavery, as unpatriotic. It stands in sharp contrast to American leaders such as President Barack Obama, who spoke more frankly of the nation’s shortcomings, painting it as a country constantly striving to perfect itself.

Trump’s speech Thursday was a continuation of a message he has pushed since the Fourth of July, when he declared at Mount Rushmore, under the gaze of George Washington and other titans of the presidency, that children are “taught to hate their own country” in public schools.

In a lengthy speech to the Republican National Convention, he pledged to “fully restore patriotic education.” And last month, when reflecting on the unrest that had erupted in U.S. cities over police brutality, he also blamed schools.

“What we’re witnessing today is a result of left-wing indoctrination in our nation’s schools and universities,” Trump said at a news conference. “Many young Americans have been fed lies about America being a wicked nation plagued by racism.”

Yet educators and students say that Trump is wildly out of touch with what happens in public school classrooms, where the United States is still held up as a beacon of freedom and democracy, and a moral leader.

Trump’s gambit seeks to turn local schools — already beset by a global pandemic and many other problems — into another front in the culture war he champions, positioning history teachers as opponents of American greatness along with kneeling football players, police misconduct protesters and racial-sensitivity trainers. It fits neatly into his argument that presidential rival Joe Biden and other Democrats [want to “Abolish the American Way of Life,”](https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/from-sleepy-joe-to-the-dystopian-candidate-how-trump-has-recast-his-attacks-on-biden/2020/07/18/5a6a3e36-c830-11ea-b037-f9711f89ee46_story.html?itid=lk_inline_manual_21) as Trump tweeted in July.

Trump’s campaign defending American history arrived as protests against police brutality and racial injustice began roiling the country. While many Americans work to reckon with the nation’s racist past, Trump and other conservatives are working to preserve a narrative that casts the United States as a moral leader, as virtuous and as exceptional.

Their efforts sometimes overlap with those who seek to preserve monuments to Confederate military leaders and who cast them as heroes despite their fight to preserve the institution of slavery.

On Thursday, Trump said he would erect a statue of Caesar Rodney, who cast the tie-breaking vote to declare independence from Britain in 1776, in a “National Garden of American Heroes” that he hopes to establish. Rodney was also a enslaver, and a statue of him [was removed](https://www.delawareonline.com/story/news/2020/06/12/wilmington-remove-christopher-columbus-caesar-rodney-statues/3175003001/)from a city square in Wilmington, Del., in June.

For many on the right, any narrative that challenges American exceptionalism is by default, anti-American.

“Instead of emphasizing that America was built on slavery, we emphasize that America was built on liberty,” said Noah Weinrich, spokesman for Heritage Action, the lobbying arm of the conservative Heritage Foundation think tank.

Others say that leaves out the nation’s history of inhumane treatment of Black Americans, women and immigrants.

“They don’t want us talking too much about America’s flaws,” said Albert L. Samuels, chair of the history and political science department at Southern University. “Let’s not deal with the fact that many of the framers were slaveholders.”