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Identity Politics: Histories and Theories

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Challenging America's Origin Story What White Backlash Against the 1619 Project Reveals About America's Ethnocultural Identity

I. Introduction

In 2019 the *New York Times* published the *1619 Project* to highlight how race and racism have been entangled within American history. The *Project* and its writers sought to create a more inclusive public memory of the history of the United States, which has previously centred around the achievements of white men. Shortly after, many schools used the *Project* as inspiration for an updated school curriculum that includes discussions on race, racism, and systems still influenced by America's racial past and critically engages with the legacy of its founding fathers. The inclusion of a more nuanced curriculum sparked a public outcry by conservative politicians, conservative news outlets, and conservative personalities, such as TV show host Tucker Carlson and then President Donald Trump. This led to policies aimed at suppressing history, which unfavourably references the deeds of white 'patriots' by Republican politicians. The Trump White House launched the *1776 Commission* and published the *1776 Report* in response to focus on a narrative which aims to glorify US history, its founding fathers, and its past presidents.¹ The *1619 Project* is not the first instance where conservative white Americans voiced their disagreement with movements questioning the US' racial hegemony. This phenomenon of backlash reverberates throughout history, as every win made by movements or organisations striving for racial equality was met with backlash from America's white population.

To illustrate, first and foremost, the Civil Rights movement was met with fierce backlash, especially in the South, by arch-segregationist George Wallace, who was among the first modern politicians to oppose desegregation efforts in his infamous speech "Segregation

¹ Pickup and Southall, "A Critical Discourse Analysis of the 1619 Project Controversy," 224.

now, segregation tomorrow, segregation forever” in the 1960s.² Richard Nixon consequently solidified white identity within federal politics by targeting ‘forgotten Americans’ during his presidential bid in 1968. In his ‘Southern Strategy,’ Nixon pandered to white non-progressive middle- and working-class voters, making the Republican Party the Party of white identity. Multiple variations of backlash followed in every decade. The most recent instance of white backlash happened when Obama became the first biracial President of the United States. Shortly after his election, the “Birther Movement” was born, questioning President Obama’s citizenship and subsequently challenging his election. The latest version of white backlash centres around themes in the classroom, such as the opposition to the *1619 Project* or the banning of books spotlighting LGBTQIA+ topics. White backlash has found a new focus around education and the supposed ‘indoctrination’ of children. It appears that this form of backlash is closely linked to white identity. Therefore, this paper seeks to answer why the *1619 Project* and an attempt to update the history curriculum are met with backlash and what white backlash tells us about white identity. This paper argues that the *1619 Project* received backlash from conservatives because it criticises the origin story of the US and, by extension, the American political identity. It also highlights white backlash as a tool white identity politics use to maintain an ethnocultural American national identity.

II. Identity Politics

First, one must define white identity or white identity politics. To determine white identity politics, it is vital to understand the origins of identity politics. The *Combahee River Collective* first utilised the term identity politics in 1977. The *Combahee River Collective* was a Black, feminist, lesbian organisation formed in Boston against the backdrop of immense racial inequality. Their published statement theorised that black women need to advocate for themselves in politics because they are constrained by race, gender, and class. This triple constraint of race, gender, and class is unique for women of colour. To illustrate, white women share the constraint of gender with Black women but are not constrained by their race. Black men share the constraint of race but do not face discrimination due to their gender. Black women thus have to navigate the constraints of race, class, and gender living in

² Carter, *Transformation of American Politics*, 5.

a patriarchal country with high levels of racial inequality. Due to this, the only people who fight for political recognition for Black women are Black women.³ In fact, Black women were sidelined from the women's movement, which was primarily spearheaded by white middle-class women, and the Civil Rights Movement, which Black men led. Both movements failed to encapsulate Black women's unique experiences and political needs. *The Combahee River Collective* states: "*It was our experience and disillusionment within these liberation movements, as well as experience on the periphery of the white male left, that led to the need to develop a politics that was antiracist, unlike those of white women, and antisexist, unlike those of Black and white men.*"⁴ Because Black women's lived experience is distinctive from the political needs of white women or Black men, the *Combahee River Collective* assert that Black women must make their own politics for their identity to resolve the racial-sexual oppression Black women face. "*[F]ocusing upon our own oppression is embodied in the concept of identity politics. We believe that the most profound and potentially the most radical politics come directly out of our own identity, as opposed to working to end somebody else's oppression.*"⁵ Hence the original thought of identity politics is to give marginalised groups, specifically Black women, the ability to advocate for their political needs to end their oppression by the cultural hegemony that does not recognise the realities of people's lived experiences beyond the status quo. Identity politics is the tool that enables people to address oppressive policies and systems and create more inclusive policies that consider the different needs of different identities. Given that the identity of whiteness presents the status quo and whiteness is the cultural hegemony within the US, white identity politics should not exist. Most policies and systems already include or favour white people. Yet, electoral politics have solidified around whiteness in recent years.⁶

III. Whiteness and Identity Politics

³ Combahee River Collective, "A Black Feminist Statement," 237.

⁴ Combahee River Collective, "A Black Feminist Statement," 235.

⁵ Combahee River Collective, "A Black Feminist Statement," 237.

⁶ Jardina, *White Identity Politics*, 4.

Throughout US history, whiteness has always been interlinked with the American identity. In fact, Americans have been obsessed with their national identity since its founding because the US was founded based on ideas, values, and a belief set as opposed to based on a specific ethnicity.⁷ However, to be white is to be American. The *Naturalization Act of 1790*, which codified laws regarding American citizenship, was limited to ‘free white persons.’⁸ Whiteness is at the core of white identity and subsequently maintains racial cohesion among whites and underlines racial differences by positioning being white as different and superior to non-whites.⁹ This aligns with ethnoculturalism, which posits that one’s cultural ancestry defines American identity. According to ethnoculturalism, “true Americans are white, English-speaking Protestants of Northern European ancestry.”¹⁰ Hence, white Americans never had to struggle between their racial and national identity and maintained whiteness as the core of their national identity.¹¹ White people thus primarily identify as American, while other ethnic groups identify as American and their ethnic identity.¹² The conflation of being white and American also leads to a bigger tendency of blind patriotism, which does not allow any criticism regarding American history.¹³ Noteworthy, levels of patriotism generally tend to be higher in groups who do not face discrimination in schools, the workplace, or the ability to achieve success.¹⁴ As the United States diversified, white identity has come into focus since many white Americans fear their national identity is threatened. If one assumes that American identity equals whiteness, diversity would therefore ruin the American identity. Demographic changes, which continually decrease whites’ share of the population, cause whites to believe that their power and status as a group are fading in favour of other ethnic groups. In turn, whites become more opposed to policies aimed at racial equality because they believe that

⁷ Schwartz et al, *Handbook of Identity Theory*, 846.

⁸ Jardina, *White Identity Politics*, 8.

⁹ Hughey, “(Dis)Similarities of White Racial Identities,” 1291.

¹⁰ Schwartz et al, *Handbook of Identity Theory*, 859.

¹¹ Jardina, *White Identity Politics*, 12.

¹² Schwartz et al, *Handbook of Identity Theory*, 850.

¹³ Perry and Schleifer, “My Country, White or Wrong,” 1262.

¹⁴ Schwartz et al, *Handbook of Identity Theory*, 854-855.

through demographic changes, equality has already been achieved and would thus be disadvantaged by such policies.

Furthermore, white identity politics is often associated with the misconception that white people are marginalised or oppressed by other groups, such as racial minorities, immigrants, and LGBTQ+ individuals. This directly contradicts the high levels of blind patriotism whites possess. White men, in particular, have been at the centre of the ‘culture wars’ since “*they are the group most likely to feel aggrieved by the social, economic, and political gains achieved by women, immigrants, and racial and ethnic minorities over the past several decades.*”¹⁵ White men have always had and still have advantages compared to any social group within the United States. To illustrate, the Declaration of Independence, a significant moment in forming the American identity, encompassed white free land-owning men when it claimed that all men are created equal. Subsequently, for years the American political identity encompassed being white and male. Thus, as more social groups gain the right to vote, high positions or financial independence, white men’s grip on the American identity is threatened, which is why white men are the most outspoken about their perceived unjust treatment and gives rise to white male anxiety. As discussed previously, identity politics is supposed to give marginalised people the ability to advocate for their political needs to end their oppression by cultural hegemony that does not recognise the realities of people beyond the status quo. Hence, feminist, Black, and LBTQIA+ identity politics exist. White identity politics, however, exist to advocate for whiteness, despite whiteness being the cultural hegemony, since white people feel threatened by a diversifying country and more inclusive politics as they fear their grip on power and the American national identity is fading. It is concerned with what it means to be a true citizen of the US. White identity politics is a response to a diversifying political landscape that is no longer only concerned with the well-being of white people.

IV. White Backlash

White backlash is a phenomenon that reverberates throughout American history, is present in most political discourses today, and is closely linked to white identity. Backlash

¹⁵ Jardina, *White Identity Politics*, 93.

can be defined as reactionary opposition or attacks on multiculturalism.¹⁶ Roger Hewitt explains that these attacks or oppositions “*included responses within specific local community relations and racism, as well as the competition between political groups seeking to appeal to such constituencies of interest.*”¹⁷ Hewitt argues that backlash appeared with the emergence of identity politics and the different politicisation of racial equality between the Republican and Democratic Parties.¹⁸ White backlash specifically centres around race and justice, migration waves and ensuing settlements, and policies addressing them.

Simply put, white backlash is a term for the negative responses of whites towards racial progressivism.¹⁹ Hewitt clearly defines white backlash as: “*Negative reactions within white communities to (I) the proximity of black communities following migration, or (II) the potential acquisition of new power and/or status by blacks, or (III) the fashioning of policies or legislation to bring about greater equality between “racial”/ethnic groups, or (IV) the enforcing of such policies or legislation.*”²⁰ Additionally, white backlash is presupposed by the misconception that non-white advancement is only achieved at the expense of white success and status.²¹ In reality, however, whites’ status and success come at the cost of racial and ethnic minorities.²² This misconception gives rise to a white victim narrative. This narrative consists of three sociological elements. Firstly, in a political environment which focuses more than before on the interests of marginalised groups, whites do not feel included and therefore feel excluded. Secondly, this notion of feeling discriminated against leads to resistance in the form of white backlash. Thirdly, this resistance against a conceived anti-white mainstream gives rise to a feeling of pride. Matthew Hughey writes: “*When a white person erroneously claims to be victimised by racism or racial prejudice and then asserts they endure unjust suffering, that claim can be interpreted as a sign of their supposed*

¹⁶ Hewitt, *White Backlash*, 3.

¹⁷ Hewitt, *White Backlash*, 3.

¹⁸ Hewitt, *White Backlash*, 3.

¹⁹ Carter, *The Politics of Rage*, 349

²⁰ Hewitt, *White Backlash*, 5.

²¹ Hughey, “White Backlash,” 721.

²² Jardina, *White Identity Politics*, 277.

dedication, authenticity, and virtue as a conscious white person.”²³ To illustrate, the backlash to affirmative action stems from the misguided belief that college admissions are stolen from deserving white applicants to less deserving people of colour for the sake of diversity.

Moreover, white backlash is not only confined to communities speaking out against policies that have a racial equality agenda. White backlash itself can also take the form of policies. For instance, under President Ronald Reagan’s term ‘colourblind’ approach, which focussed on the individual as opposed to a collective group, took centre stage. Those policies effectively denied the existence of institutionalised racism and reversed strides made towards equality in previous years.²⁴ To conclude, white backlash can manifest in different forms, from verbal opposition to institutional policies and is a response to a perceived threat from non-white members of society to the white status as the status quo.

V. The 1916 Project

The *1619 Project* is a long-form journalism piece published by the *New York Times Magazine* in August 2019 to commemorate the 400th anniversary of the first ship with enslaved Africans arriving in Virginia. The *Project* aims to reframe the USA’s history by highlighting the legacy of chattel slavery. Not only does the *Project* create a historical account where race and racism are the focal points, but it also thematises how the USA’s history of chattel slavery continues to influence systems and structures today, such as the industrial prison labour complex or inequities within the health care system.²⁵ The centrality of the *Project* hints at the thought that the landing of the first enslaved Africans arriving in the territory of modern-day Virginia can be considered the origin story of the United States of America. Thus, insinuating that the enslavement of black people is central to the colonies and the Republic that is about to follow. In addition, the *Project* asserts that the Declaration of Independence remains a significant historical focal point for American political identity.²⁶ However, the *Project* and Hannah-Jones centre African-American experiences in the

²³ Hughey, “White Backlash,” 727.

²⁴ Hewitt, *White Backlash*, 9.

²⁵ Hannah-Jones, “The 1619 Project.”

²⁶ Goggins, “Reshaping Public Memory,” 64.

foreground when discussing momentous events such as the Declaration of Independence or World War II. For instance, while discussing the drafting of the Declaration of Independence, the *Project* reminds readers that Thomas Jefferson at the time he wrote the famous words, “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”, owned about 130 enslaved people.²⁷ This contextualising of historical events that highlight the hypocrisy of many ‘great’ men moves away from the preexisting narrative of American history, which tends to romanticise the Antebellum South and put Slavery on the periphery, not the centre of the nation’s evolution.²⁸

The *Project* has been praised by many, as well as simultaneously criticised by right-wing politicians as well as esteemed historians. Some historians have criticised the historical accuracy of the *Project*. They report multiple misrepresentations and historical inaccuracies, which “*suggest a displacement of historical understanding by ideology.*”²⁹ However, whilst historians such as Victoria Bynum and Sean Wilentz criticise the methodology and a lack of transparency of how the *Project* came, they maintain that “[*r*]aising profound, unsettling questions about slavery and the nation’s past and present, as *The 1619 Project* does, is a praiseworthy and urgent public service.”³⁰ In addition, some historians took issue with the claim that the American Revolutionary War was mainly inspired by the desire to uphold chattel slavery, which goes against the accepted narrative that the War was caused by taxation without representation.³¹ *The New York Times* then clarified that the desire to uphold chattel slavery was partly responsible for the American Revolutionary War based on multiple colonial newspaper reports writing about court cases in England, highlighting that chattel slavery is not supported under English common law. In fact, many enslaved people joined British forces during the American Revolutionary War to gain their independence.³² Based on the existing historical evidence, *New York Times* journalists provided a fair historical

²⁷ Hannah-Jones, “The 1619 Project.”

²⁸ Goggins, “Reshaping Public Memory,” 64.

²⁹ Silverstein, “We Respond to the Historians Who Critiqued The 1619 Project.”

³⁰ Silverstein, “We Respond to the Historians Who Critiqued The 1619 Project.”

³¹ Goggins, “Reshaping Public Memory,” 65.

³² Silverstein, “We Respond to the Historians Who Critiqued The 1619 Project.”

interpretation of the Revolutionary War, even if some historians disagree, and this view is not taught in schools. Overall, the majority of the critique of historians is aimed at inaccuracies within the *Project* or the methodology in which journalists, who lack an academic historical background, analyse and interpret historical sources. Some historians also contend with the interpretation of historical sources and dismiss them. Nevertheless, they praise the *New York Times Magazine* for the effort to illuminate the US's history of slavery and its afterlife.

VI. Conservative Reactions and the 1776 Commission

The critique directed at the *Project* by right-wing politicians or public figures presents a stark contrast in comparison. Conservatives have a long-standing practice of whitewashing history and practising a hagiographic form of patriotism to uphold myths about the nation's origin.³³ Linda Alcoff writes that “[s]ome whites see antiwhite prejudice looming whenever histories of racism come up for discussion; unable to focus on what is happening to the oppressed groups, they foreground every potential reference to whites [...] and display extreme sensitivity to slights, real or imagined.”³⁴ Contrary to the previously mentioned historians, conservative figures rejected the effort of writing history from a non-white point of view. In particular, they have taken issue with the *Project's* contention that the American Revolution was motivated by a desire to preserve slavery rather than by a desire for political freedom. They have also challenged the *Project's* assertion that slavery is the foundation of American capitalism and that African Americans have been central to the development of American democracy and culture. The adverse reaction towards the *Project* is marked by figures such as Tucker Carlson, Newt Gingrich, and Trump. They have described the *Project* as ‘left-wing propaganda’ and called the effort to incorporate the *Project* into the school curriculum ‘indoctrination.’ Right-wing figures criticised this ‘rewriting’ of American history and objected to the central thesis that the United States’ founding and history are deeply ingrained with Slavery.³⁵ Besides attacking the *Project* and claiming it is propaganda, conservatives have proposed bills to undermine it within the school curriculum. Arkansas

³³ Walsh, “Fragile Patriotism.”

³⁴ Alcoff, *The Future of Whiteness*, 52.

³⁵ Goggins, “Reshaping Public Memory,” 69.

Senator Tom Cotton proposed the *Saving American History Act of 2020*, prohibiting federal funding to primary and secondary schools that teach the *1619 Project*. Cotton remarked, "[t]he *New York Times's 1619 Project* is a racially divisive, revisionist account of history that denies the noble principles of freedom and equality on which our nation was founded. Not a single cent of federal funding should go to indoctrinate young Americans with this left-wing garbage."³⁶ Cotton is not the only high-ranking Republican politician who has bashed the *Project*. Trump has outwardly stated that "*Critical race theory, the 1619 Project and the crusade against American history is toxic propaganda, ideological poison, that, if not removed, will dissolve the civic bonds that tie us together, will destroy our country.*"³⁷ The criticism and backlash to the *1619 Project* culminated in Trump's administration realising the *1776 Report* a few days after the storming of the capitol on January 6, 2021. The Report was an effort to correct 'the radicalised view of American history' and restore 'patriotic education.' The report's name can be identified as a direct response to the *1619 Project* as it chose the year when the Declaration of Independence was signed, thus rejecting the thesis that the US origin is linked to the first enslaved people arriving on the continent. While disallowing a history education without perspectives focussing on race is problematic in itself, the report also lacks historical evidence and not a single US historian was consulted in making it. Hence the report is more resembling of propaganda rather than quality history education.³⁸ Moreover, the *report* is a blatant attempt to suppress history that critically engages with America's dark past. By denying the fact that the US has a history rooted in racism, you deny the fact that racism is still entrenched within US institutions and systems, consequently blocking a path to address those issues. To underline this fact, the Commission to create a 'Patriotic' education was brought to life in 2020, a year of global Black Lives Matter protests in light of the murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis police. At a time when a large portion of the American public demanded a reckoning with its institutionalised racism, the Trump administration created a hagiographic account of American history that glorifies its founding fathers and criticises the Civil Rights movement.

³⁶ "Cotton Bill to Defund 1619 Project Curriculum: U.S. Senator Cotton of Arkansas."

³⁷ PBS, "What Trump is Saying."

³⁸ Watts, "Charting the Present of Teaching the Past," 45.

VII. The Fight over a Nationalised Curriculum

Next, one has to analyse the negative response of Conservatives to the *1619 Project* and determine whether or not it qualifies as white backlash and what it tells us about white identity. First and foremost, the reaction to the *Project* can be clearly defined as white backlash. There was a clear negative response to the aim of telling a less glorifying history of the United States, with Conservatives calling the *Project* ‘indoctrination’ and ‘left-wing propaganda.’ Further, Conservatives, specifically Senator Cotton, tried to introduce a bill directed at suppressing schools teaching the *Project* at schools. According to Hewitt, policies aimed at curbing progressivism are a form of white backlash. Trump, as a response, tried to create a national school curriculum which lacked historical accuracy and focused on glorifying the historical deeds of ‘patriotic’ figures, such as Jefferson, claiming that he wholeheartedly believed in the principles written in the Declaration of Independence. There was likely a substantial backlash against the *Project* because it aims to reframe history and discusses the implications of slavery and institutionalised racism. This revealed a form of blind patriotism, which indicates that white identity politics are at play. Until recently, American historical figures have been portrayed as heroes fighting for the American ideals of individualism, a belief in the justice system, and equality. For instance, the founding fathers were revered as heroic and noble figures, which led to a tendency to view them as flawless.

Consequently, any criticism highlighting their flaws was seen as challenging their heroism since heroes are often seen as perfect beings. As a result, any such critique within the *Project* was met with a strong and hostile verbal response in defence of these revered figures. Additionally, Conservatives launched multiple attempts to prevent schools from teaching history with a Black perspective and tried to replace it with a whitewashed version instead.

Having identified the Conservatives’ response as a form of white backlash brings us to the question of why this backlash is targeted at the *1619 Project* and a more nuanced history curriculum. Firstly, history and the history of a nation are inherently political. The history of a nation is a form of public memory, and that public memory dictates “how a society defines itself in the present.”³⁹ Ergo, a nation's history is essential when defining its national identity.

³⁹ Goggins, “Reshaping Public Memory,” 60.

As we have established previously, an American identity equals being white due to its history and whiteness being the cultural hegemony and status quo.

Additionally, white identity politics are defined by a perceived threat, which often results in the self-victimisation of whites by whites. A history curriculum that looks at history from a Black perspective and mentions the shortcoming of white ‘patriots’ impedes whites’ ability to self-victimisation. The ‘threat’ to whites, in this particular case, is twofold. First, history paves the way a country goes forward and handles issues and problems of the present. A government can thus either do a historical appraisal and critically evaluate its past, or it can choose to avoid the dark undercurrents of its history and, in some cases, even glorify its history. If the US had an updated curriculum that critically engages with slavery and its afterlife, it could potentially open more pathways to racial equality. A comprehensive historical education would allow more people to recognise institutionalised racism and advocate for change. Considering that whites’ status, in reality, comes at the cost of racial and ethnic minorities,⁴⁰ and whites think racism is a zero-sum game in which they lose privileges as soon as a marginalised group gains privileges,⁴¹ any more changes towards racial equality are perilous for whites’ success and status. Second, education is one of the most essential tools for transmitting values, beliefs, and ideas from one generation to the next. Since a history curriculum, which is inspired by the *1619 Project*, questions those beliefs and values, it is anti-American in the view of whites who believe in ethnoculturalism, as America is founded based on ideals and values. Since white identity is interlinked with American identity, a *1619 Project*-inspired history curriculum is not only anti-American but also anti-white. As a result, the classroom has become a highly contested space where identity politics come to the surface because of opposing views of the American past.

VIII. White Identity and Backlash

White identity politics and white backlash are two closely related phenomena that are often intertwined. White identity politics refers to a political and social movement that emphasises the interests and concerns of white people, particularly in response to perceived

⁴⁰ Jardina, *White Identity Politics*, 277.

⁴¹ Norton and Sommers, “Whites See Racism as a Zero-Sum Game,” 217.

threats to their status and privilege in an increasingly diverse and multicultural society. In contrast, white backlash refers to the adverse reaction of some white people to advances in racial equality and social justice, often driven by resentment and fear. Both white identity politics and white backlash are based on a sense of white grievance and victimisation, which is the idea that white people are being unfairly treated or marginalised by the rise of minority groups. This grievance often comes with a desire to maintain or reclaim a perceived sense of superiority or privilege that white people have historically enjoyed.

White identity politics and white backlash often manifest themselves in similar ways, such as opposition to affirmative action, resistance to multiculturalism, and the use of racially charged language and symbols. They both reflect a view of American society and racism as a zero-sum game in which gains made by non-white groups are perceived as losses for white people. White backlash is an integral part of white identity politics, which is concerned with the status of whites and the American identity. Both white identity politics and white backlash are simultaneously concerned with demographic changes and racial equality. White backlash is concerned with any potential changes in status and privileges that could result from these changes. In addition to concern for status and privileges, white identity politics is also concerned about national identity and what it means to be a 'true' American. It centres around ethnoculturalism and the belief that whiteness equals being American. White backlash is more of a knee-jerk reaction to recent strides towards racial equality and can be done by a single individual. White identity politics, however, goes further and has long-term implications for the national identity in mind and is thus a more organised set of beliefs. While white identity politics and white backlash are not synonymous, they are two sides of the same coin, reflecting a broader trend of white resistance to efforts to promote racial equality and social justice. White identity politics often utilises white backlash to advance the interests of whites, as white backlash facilitates white identity politics and its aims to secure white superiority over non-whites and keep their grip on the national identity. Ultimately, white backlash is an essential part of white identity politics on a more organised level, and its objective is to uphold favouritism towards whites.

IX. Conclusion

To summarise all the aforementioned points, white identity politics stem from the belief that whites are being discriminated against and that their status and success must therefore be protected and advocated for. Integral to white identity politics is ethnoculturalism, which equates whiteness with the American Identity. Since history is vital for the public memory of a nation, it plays an essential role in forming the national identity. The *1619 Project* critically engages with American history. It moves away from blind patriotism and questions the values, ideas, and set of beliefs America is founded upon and, by extension, the national identity. Since there is a conflation between national identity and whiteness, the *Project* received backlash from Conservatives who felt their American identity was under attack by a less hagiographic narrative of history. While white backlash and identity politics may appear similar, white identity politics is more organised and shaped by ethnocultural ideas and aims to keep whites' status above those of other ethnic groups. White backlash is used by white identity politics as a tool to voice its grievances and is used by politicians, for instance, to suppress education which has a non-white focus.

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