

How a racialized disinformation campaign ties itself to The 1619 Project | Columbia Journalism Review

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Footage of the January 6 Capitol insurrection revealed hundreds of references to 1776—in signs and in speeches, on t-shirts and hats and stickers. “1776” was chanted in the Capitol halls by leading figures within the so-called alt-right, including some who had also participated in the racist riot in Charlottesville, Virginia, and by those who believed themselves participants in the dawn of the next American revolution. The Proud Boys, too, cite this date; they sell their merch through [a store called 1776](#).

We are researchers of media manipulation and disinformation at the Harvard Kennedy School’s Shorenstein Center, and we wanted to know more about how “1776” became the battle cry of the insurrection. Our research reveals that the popularity of “1776” owes in part to keyword squatting—a tactic by which right-wing media have dominated the keywords “1619” and “critical race theory” and enabled a racialized disinformation campaign, waged by Trump and his acolytes, against Black civil rights gains.

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