

**Subject:** Response to comments about 1619

**Date:** Thursday, May 6, 2021 at 9:21:17 AM Eastern Daylight Time

**From:** UofL Update

**To:** UofL Update

UofL Community,

As I am sure most of you are aware, the recent statements made by Sen. Mitch McConnell during a press conference in Louisville this week are quite troubling for American descendents of slaves, our allies and those who support us.

To imply that slavery is not an important part of United States history not only fails to provide a true representation of the facts, but also denies the heritage, culture, resilience and survival of Black people in America. It also fails to give context to the history of systemic racial discrimination, the United States' "original sin" as Sen. McConnell called it, which still plagues us today.

What we know to be true is that slavery and the date the first enslaved Africans arrived and were sold on U.S. soil are more than an "exotic notion." If the Civil War is a significant part of history, should not the basis for it also be viewed as significant?

Our vision statement affirms that we "commit ourselves to building an exemplary educational community that offers a nurturing and challenging intellectual climate, a respect for the spectrum of human diversity, and a genuine understanding of the many differences - including race, ethnicity, gender, socio-economic status, national origin, sexual orientation, disability, religion, diversity of thought and political ideology - that enrich a vibrant metropolitan research university." To be true to that vision, President Bendapudi, Provost Gonzalez and I reject the idea that the year 1619 is not a critical moment in the history of this country.

I hope you will join me in being committed to providing an exemplary educational community to our students and honoring the truth of our history in all its tragedy and triumph.

V. Faye Jones, MD, PhD  
Interim Senior Associate Vice President  
Diversity and Equity  
University of Louisville