

OUR PEOPLE. ————— OUR STORIES.**A Message About this Moment from President Capilouto**

The message below is excerpted from an email sent to the campus. Read the full message here:

<https://www.uky.edu/president/communications-and-commentary/campus-messages>

Dear Campus Community,

We are our history.

The reckoning we now confront as a country cannot be for one moment or one semester. We must, necessarily, carry it with us always – as both burden and reminder, as collective grief and motivation.

One of those heartbreaking reminders of our ever-present history is our former student, Breonna Taylor. Her death – and the aftermath of it – is a tragedy. Unfortunately, tragedy does not capture the sense of loss and anger, weariness and cynicism so many of us feel right now.

Many of us, I know, are left with the feeling that no matter how much we try, we cannot possibly understand what our neighbors and friends of color are experiencing – each day – even as we now have seen the images repeatedly flashed on screens large and small.

I can try to picture what it means when colleagues tell me they are consumed with fear when their children leave home to run an errand. I can try to grasp the worry friends say they feel when a loved one departs for a simple jog.

However, I cannot really ever understand. Yet, I can listen. I can care. And I can act.

How Breonna's tragic death is addressed as a matter of law is not something I, or anyone on our campus, can control or ordain. What we can control is how we respond as a community. What we can determine is the sense of moral clarity, intellectual focus and urgent commitment we bring to ensuring it never happens again.

We can provide spaces to gather and grieve, to discuss and dream. Our students are doing that, utilizing our MLK Center as a place to reflect, to share and process this moment. It is a small step, but a necessary one. Sharing ideas, after all, is how we always begin.

Racism is not simply our shared and tortured past. It is our present. Believing otherwise is neither realistic nor honest. And we will carry it with us, even as we work each day to erase its stain and undo its damage.

But our blighted baggage does not have to be our future. What seems inevitable today does not have to persist to tomorrow. As an institution, we were founded on the idea that our past – while imperfect and painfully persisting as our present – can include a brighter and more just future.

We must resist the disheartening temptation to be bound by an unwillingness to imagine. We carry our history with us. We can, though, commit to the idea that history should inform – not limit – our future. In that sense, perhaps, history is giving us a chance to change.

We may not be able to ever truly understand. But we can listen. We can care. And we must act.

Eli Capilouto, President

Support from Academic Leadership

The University's Academic Leadership also sent a campus message yesterday. That message, co-signed by 23 academic administrators including the Provost and Deans, included this commitment:

"Make no mistake, as university leaders, we are devoted to being an anti-racist community. This is not a questionable concept, and there are no "sides" to this argument. There is not a neutral position or room for intellectual debate. There are only two choices: anti-racism or racism. We are clear as to where we stand."