

1619 v. 1776

The Bethlehem Gadfly George Floyd killing September 22, 2020

 *Latest in a series of posts responding to the George Floyd
murder* 

It has been said that the murder of George Floyd has triggered (another) national reckoning with race.

Followers will recognize that Gadfly rarely comments on national political issues, rarely mentions national political figures.

By design.

There is such polarization on the national scene that community seems impossible.

But Gadfly believes that community is possible among neighbors in the relatively small town of Bethlehem, believes that if we focus on local issues fellow residents will “lean in” and resolve differences for the benefit of all of us.

We have on our plate, in the words of Councilman Reynolds, the lofty goal of ending systemic racism and making Bethlehem an equitable city.

And thus Gadfly, as you can tell, has for several months now been filling his mind and yours with perspectives on racism.

And, as such, President Trump’s recent announcement of a **1776 Commission** to foster “patriotic education” and his reasons thereof very much clamored for his attention.

The 1776 Commission is very much a response to the *New York Times* 1619 Project inaugurated in August 2019, a project that suggests thinking of that year — the year the first African American slaves arrived on land that would become the United States — as our founding moment. Replacing 1776.

(Take a moment to consider the importance of founding moments/points of origin to our national sense of self. The issue of the

local Columbus monument fits in here. What we think of as our founding moment is quite important to our identity. Put it this way: where would you want the traditional survey of American History in high school or college to begin? What's chapter 1?)

Gadfly, like you, has heard of the 1619 Project and knows that it is finding its way into school curricula, but, probably like you, he has never looked in to it.

Gadfly's going to take a look at it now, first by considering the controversial — well, the whole project is controversial — Pulitzer Prize-winning **introductory essay by Nikole Hannah-Jones**.

Gadfly, as always, invites you to join in reading for yourself rather than adopting someone else's opinion.

It sounds like doing so will add to the important big picture frame to our local discussions.

Some of the *New York Times* material is accessed by subscription only. If you are not a subscriber and you run into that barrier, write to your Gadfly, and he will give you his log in info.