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New Release

**PEOPLE MISUNDERSTAND PROPOSED APOLOGY FOR SLAVERY,
CONTENDS LAW PROFESSOR WHO PREDICTS BILL WILL FAIL**

DAYTON, Ohio — Vernellia Randall doesn't hold out much hope that a bill calling for the government to apologize for slavery will win passage in Congress, but the overdue apology wouldn't be empty words, she says.

Randall is a law professor at the University of Dayton who specializes in racism and the law, and she is the great-granddaughter of a Mississippi slave.

Rep. Tony Hill (D-Dayton) planned to re-introduce the bill Monday, June 19.

"A lot of people misunderstand the nature of the apology," Randall said. "They think they as individuals are apologizing for something their parents or grandparents did. But that's not what is being proposed. It's saying that the United States government had a role in slavery, that slavery was legally recognized in this country. The government is legally accountable for what happened to Africans and should apologize to the African-American descendents of slaves."

She likens the situation to a childhood lesson. "Everything you need to know about relationships you learn at your mother's knee," she said. "If you do something wrong, you have to say you're sorry and you have to do it publicly, not just in your heart. And you can't do it again. You have to make amends, to pay for the broken window."

Randall, 52, believes the specter of possible financial implications down the road will keep legislators from approving the bill. Reparations have been ignored since slavery ended,

she said.

Would an apology be important to her? "It would mean that after 200 and some odd years, the government of the United States was saying, 'We were wrong for snatching your parents, for enslaving them, for killing them, for abusing them, for allowing lynchings.' Yes, it would be a meaningful thing for me.

"Some people think slavery is just old history," she said. "But I'm just two generations removed, and we're still living with the cultural consequences of slavery and racism. When I grew up, I thought everyone packed a ton of food when they traveled. I thought black people used the bathroom on the side of the road, but we did that because when we traveled we had nowhere to stop to eat or use the bathroom. I thought a man got a college degree to drive a cab or work as a laborer in a factory, like my dad did. It wasn't until the 1960s that he got a job where he could use his degree."

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For media interviews, contact **Vernellia Randall** at (937) 229-3378 or via e-mail at Randall@udayton.edu. Her Web site on racism and the law can be seen at <http://www.udayton.edu/~race/>.