



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative  
2020 Volume II: Teaching about Race and Racism Across the Disciplines

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## **Who is in Charge Here?: Examining (in)visibility and Cultural Context of Jim Crow Era Monuments in Elementary Art Education**

Guide for Curriculum Unit 20.02.02, published September 2020  
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The unit uses the statues of Confederate generals along Monument Avenue in Richmond, Virginia and the activist street art that has recently been produced on and around the monuments to teach fourth and fifth grade visual art students about the roles that public art, historical context and the artists who reimagine communal art spaces play in establishing and dismantling systems of power and control. This unit engages students about the role public Confederate monuments and other monuments across the country play in promoting white supremacy and systemic racism. This unit curriculum was developed because anti-racist teaching and pedagogy has taken renewed importance amidst all of the uprising and resistance occurring with The Black Lives Matter movement. This unit will allow students to explore counter narratives created by contemporary artists of color that dismantle unequal control of power and therefore facilitating the end of racist ideas of superiority. Centering race is critical to this project because it will facilitate critical conversations about race and socially engaged artmaking with students.

I plan to teach this unit over the course of nine weeks with the intent of having students invest in their own learning, and to design new public monuments that help to represent and capture a vision of society and community and justice with which they identify. It is essential that the students connect to the material covered and not just as distant spectators.

The unit could certainly be modified and adapted for use in the upper grades.

(Developed for Visual Arts, grades 4-5; recommended for Social Studies, grades 4-5)

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