



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative  
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## **Richmond's Divisive Monuments: A Look into One City's Debate over Public Art, Memory, and History**

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“This is an issue that touches the soul of a city.”<sup>1</sup>

### **An Overview**

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Behind a man clutching two Confederate flags on Richmond’s Monument Avenue, local reporters gather in an attempt to capture the powerful, and yet familiar, scene of the past and present colliding. In the course of the night, someone spray painted the message “Black Lives Matter” in foot-tall, black lettering across the base of the Jefferson Davis monument. So much of Richmond’s contentious history is captured in this moment. The well-known tension embodied in the divisive debate surrounding the boulevard’s honoring of Confederate leaders begs an answer to a question that is anything but simple: *Whose story do we tell?*

As the Confederate-sympathetic man began marching in front of the vandalized statue on the verdant median, I contemplated this question as I grew even more aware of this city’s complex memorialized story. Then I wondered what my students would think of this event occurring just a mile and a half down the same road many of them take to school.

In this unit, my students will begin exploring some of these big questions surrounding cultural narratives and the role of media and public art in bringing their tensions to the forefront. Throughout this unit my students will participate in an inquiry-based approach to understanding some of the complexity and nuances of our Southern city’s identity. Specifically, they will analyze various key arguments surrounding the 1996 addition of the Arthur Ashe monument to this historic avenue. After providing sufficient background surrounding the formation of the avenue, students will delve into the various nuances of this local debate over public space and memory. By tackling this real-world issue, students will strengthen their ability to synthesize their understandings of Richmond’s connection to the Civil War and the on-going debate over placing Arthur Ashe on a boulevard commemorating Confederate heroes.

Additionally, students will evaluate the complex and dynamic nature that public art has in community identity. We will approach public art as an integral component of public landscape and memory. Students will also ask questions about the role of local art, and as professor Chris Post writes, “by doing so, art becomes a forum for discourse over essential cultural and political activities, their history, and their representation.”<sup>2</sup> Ultimately, this dialogic approach will lead students to a better understanding of the potential for their own work to engage with and shape public discourses around their city’s past.

## The School by the Avenue

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Located one block from the historic boulevard, my school, Thomas Jefferson High School, is only a fifteen minute walk from Monument’s most recent addition, a bronze-casted statue of the great athlete and philanthropist Arthur Ashe. Portrayed with books and tennis racket in hand and standing in front of a group of children, this monument starkly contrasts those valorizing Confederate generals.

Once lauded as the second best high school in the state, Tee-Jay is located in the more affluent West End of the city through which Monument runs north to south. As Daniel Duke writes in his book *The School that Refused to Die* covering the dynamic history of Tee-Jay from 1930 to 1993, “Tee-Jay’s once well-defined [pre-busing] image began to blur into a general picture of urban high schools around the nation—schools beset by declining enrollment, white flights, and inadequate resources.<sup>3</sup> Even still, the prestige acknowledged in the past has not fully escaped Tee-Jay, and as a result Tee-Jay serves one of the more diverse populations of Richmond’s comprehensive schools. Our school consists of students from middle-class, working-class, and poor families living below the poverty line. I plan to teach this unit to my juniors studying American Literature, and I hope to teach it both to my advanced and standard-level classes. The unit is designed for a total of 12 hours in class over the span of three weeks.

## Essential Questions

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*This unit study of the Arthur Ashe monument will promote inquiry into American identity and memory as presented in the texts we read. During this unit, and throughout the year, students will contemplate the following guiding questions:*

- What forms a place’s identity?
- How does local historical research help us to understand our everyday surroundings? How do texts (including public art) become political?
- How do texts (including public art) contribute to a community’s identity?
- How do logical arguments reach conflicting conclusions?
- How should the South be represented iconographically in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?<sup>4</sup>

## The Content

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*In this section, I will provide research that assists in creating a fuller understanding of the city's debate over the placement of Arthur Ashe on Monument Avenue.*

## Why Public Art?

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Public art provides a narrative and creates a sense of place. To this end, public art often serves as a catalyst for challenging discussions over communities' essential cultural and political understandings. This summer since the massacre at the historical Episcopal AME church which claimed the lives of nine black parishioners, Americans once again delve into heated debates over the contentious meaning imbued in the South's myriad remembrances of the Confederacy. This tragic event almost immediately prompted big box organizations to remove the Confederate iconography from their shelves and South Carolina to remove the Confederate flag from its State House. Through the countless tangible reminders, the South grapples with its public identity encouraging us to question how we best represent the South in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.<sup>5</sup>

As the former capital of the Confederacy and now a majority minority city, Richmond continues to grapple with its identity. In a state which only stopped celebrating Lee-Jackson-King Day in the last fifteen years—in 2000, Governor Jim Gilmore pushed for the state to only observe the MLK holiday in January<sup>6</sup>—there is a clear continuous struggle over finding the best way to remember and celebrate our past. In her book entitled *Tangled Memories*, author Marita Sturken asserts, "Public commemoration, is a form of history-making, yet it can also be a contested form of remembrance in which cultural memories slide through and into each other, creating a narrative tangle."<sup>7</sup> During this unit, students will navigate the narrative tangles of public art. They will discover that public art is not stagnant and frozen in time, but instead imbued with different meaning that often changes depending on the audience and the historical context.

In one chapter from *Tangled Memories*, Sturken discusses various controversies and interpretations of the Vietnam Memorial created by Yale student Maya Lin, and she outlines the difference between monument and memorial. Contrary to the ubiquitous Confederate statue, Sturken writes, "Whereas a monument most often signifies victory, a memorial refers to the life or lives sacrificed for a particular set of values." There was great debate over and even ire towards the Vietnam Memorial. Controversy over public art narratives serves as one driving force which forces communities to evaluate the politics of the version of history portrayed in their public landscapes. These landscapes shift with societal changes causing communities to revisit the stories of their past, despite how layered and nuanced they may be.

## The Origins of Monument Avenue and the Robert E. Lee Statue

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Before 1890, Monument Avenue was not the “grand avenue” that it is today. Propelled by vocal elite of old Southern wealth, the once-vacant swath of farmland outside of the city limits, would become what was considered a worthwhile business proposition.<sup>8</sup>

Following Robert E. Lee’s death in 1870, two organizations composed of Confederate officers and women from prestigious Richmond families formed to commemorate the deceased general. In 1886, the Virginian General Assembly combined the two organizations thus forming the Lee Monument Association (LMA). Under the oversight of Governor Fitzburgh Lee, the nephew of Robert E. Lee and former Confederate general, LMA voted to place the monument on the undeveloped land anticipating that the West End would become a flourishing site of economic and real-estate growth. The plan ultimately proved successful; soon after the city annexed the land, Monument Avenue became a thriving terminus connecting these fashionable and wealthy suburbs directly to the city center.<sup>9</sup>

The Lee monument became the center of Richmond’s “New South,” which adopted the myth of the Lost Cause, remained in step with national ideals, and identified with Southern resistance and values.<sup>10</sup> On the day of the dedication, Archer Anderson, an Iron Works businessman and former Confederate, orated:

“A people carves its own image in the monument of its great men...It is, besides and above all, the unique combination in him of moral strength with moral beauty, of all that is great in heroic action with all that is good in common life, that will make of this pile of stone a sacred shrine, dear throughout coming ages, not to soldiers only, but to all ‘helpers and friends of mankind.’<sup>11</sup> ”

In his book *Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves: Race, War, and Monument in Nineteenth-century America*, Kirk Savage expounds upon Lee’s central role as the embodiment of the Confederacy. Unlike Jefferson Davis, whose popularity waned after his “cause célèbre and a major affront to Southern white ‘manhood’” when he attempted to flee the States disguised as a woman, Lee exemplified the South’s idea of the valorous masculinity.<sup>12</sup> Virginians revered the native-born Lee personally as well as professionally for his military prowess. Notably, despite his service in the United States army, Lee declined the offer to command the Union Army in 1861. In a heartfelt letter to his sister, Lee stated that “with all of my devotion to the Union and the feeling of loyalty and duty of an American citizen, I have not been able to make up my mind to raise my hand against my relatives, my children, and my home.” Two days later, Lee became a general in the Confederate Army.<sup>13</sup>

By selecting Lee and placing his statue away from the capitol, which already memorialized the Confederacy with various erected Civil War statues and preserved earthworks from the era of the “Old South,” Richmond attempted to distance itself from the narrative of slavery and politics. Now with Lee as the historical centerpiece, Savage continues, the story of the Lost Cause “became a glorious military record rather than a political struggle to secure a slaveholding nation.<sup>14</sup> ”

Richmond’s popular publication, the *Times*, in 1890 described the unveiling of the Lee monument to be “a day long to be remembered in the annals of Virginia.”<sup>15</sup> Conversely, the *Richmond Planet*, a publication which advocated for the rights of the African-American community, reported that the fanfare surrounding Lee’s monument “served to retard [Virginia’s] progress in the country and forged heavier chains with which to be

bound.”<sup>16</sup> Over a hundred years later, Monument Avenue still creates rifts in the community over the competing cultural implications imbued in the boulevard’s monuments.

## Richmond’s Connection to the Civil War, A Brief Overview

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After Virginia seceded, Richmond became the capital of the Confederacy because, as the Virginia Historical Society reports, the city “reflected both the material importance of Virginia to the war effort—it still was the most populous southern stay and had the most industry—and the psychological symbolism of Virginia’s association with the earlier war of independence.”<sup>17</sup>

Located a mere 100 miles south of the Union capital, Washington D.C., Richmond endured many battles and its landscape changed completely. Even away from the battlefield, women and their children also felt the dire effects of an ongoing war so close to home. The *Richmond Times Dispatch* reported that on April 2, 1863, the South had its largest civil disturbance during the Civil War when at least a thousand emaciated women marched on the capitol demanding food. When the city did not meet their demands, the women took to streets looting stores for food sold “at famine prices.”<sup>18</sup>

Less than a month before its demise, an editorial in Richmond’s newspaper began its Thursday morning publication on March 30, 1865 declaring, “It must be remembered that the South is worth fighting for.”<sup>19</sup> Despite the rallying cries to ceaselessly defend the South’s capital, a ten-month battle over Richmond and Petersburg would ultimately deplete the Confederate strongholds of their resources and on April 1<sup>st</sup>, 1865, Lee would retreat from the cities.<sup>20</sup>

## The Other Confederate Monuments

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In 1907, the city erected two additional monuments to commemorate Jefferson Davis, the president of the Confederacy, and Jeb Stuart, a Virginian-born Confederate general. In the earliest twentieth century, Southern cities began moving away from commemorative funerary Confederate monuments in cemeteries to monuments placed in more prominent locations. Author of *Ghosts of the Confederacy: Defeat, the Lost Cause, and the Emergence of the New South 1865 to 1913*, Gaines Foster, states that by 1913 “almost 80 percent [of Southern Confederate monuments] featured the lone Confederate soldier, and more than 85 percent were placed on courthouse lawns, downtown intersections, or other public places.”<sup>21</sup>

After almost a decade of fundraising by various Confederate groups, historiographer Gaines Foster writes that the city of Richmond erected “perhaps the clearest sign of the southerners’ sense of vindication...in the form of honor paid to the region’s ‘representative man.’” A crowd of at least 80,000 gathered for the unveiling on Davis’s birthday. Davis stands in front of a Doric column with his hand outstretched to the city’s capitol towering a total of 67 feet high.<sup>22</sup> Engraved inside of the semicircle colonnade, the stone reads, “If to die nobly be ever the proudest glory of virtue, this of all men has fortune greatly granted to them; for, with deep desire to clothe their country with freedom, now at the last they rest full of an ageless fame.” In 1919, Richmond

added a monument commemorating the fallen General T. J. “Stonewall” Jackson.<sup>23</sup> The Virginia-born graduate of West Point and former Virginia Military Institute professor fought in many of Confederacy’s key battles during the Civil War, including commanding militia at Harper’s Ferry and leading troops in the epic battle of First Manassas where he earned the name “Stonewall.”

In a letter to the editor written in memoriam of Jackson twelve years after his death *The Weston Democrat* writer William Arnold opined that after the death of Stonewall, “The great heart of Virginia was pierced, and tears of joy and sorrow for Stonewall Jackson, were seen to run down the cheeks of her children like water which roll down the James.”<sup>24</sup> The song “Stonewall Jackson’s Way” accompanying Arnold’s article captures the deep admiration Southerners felt towards their fallen hero. The first stanza begins, “Come, stack arms, men! Pile on the rails,/Stir up the camp-fire bright!/No Matter if our canteen fails--/We’ll make a roaring night./ Here Shenandoah brawls along, There burly Blue Ridge echoes strong,/ To swell the brigade’s rousing song/ Of Stonewall Jackson’s way.”

In 1912, the Matthew Fontaine Maury Association (MFMA) formed to fundraise erecting a monument in honor of Maury. For almost two decades, the group campaigned to bring Maury to the forefront of Virginia’s heroic narratives. Along with receiving donations from various notable Confederate groups such as the United Confederate Veterans and the United Daughters of the Confederacy, MFMA also advocated for a state holiday in honor of Matthew Maury. Even though the group was unable to secure the state-wide holiday, the state designated December 11, 1925 as “Maury Monument Day,” a day where schools featured lessons on Maury’s contributions and schools encouraged students to donate funds to the MFMA foundation.<sup>25</sup>

Despite the accolades bestowed upon the South’s martyr, the statue unveiled by Robert E. Lee’s son on October 11, 1919, represented a shift away from the lore of the Lost Cause. In his analysis of the avenue, Barbee writes that not only was the Jackson monument much smaller in scale when compared to the previous monuments, the Jackson monument also “seems to reflect a more somber, less defiant manifestation of Confederate heritage.”<sup>26</sup> In fact, unlike the other monuments, Jackson faces north which could also be a symbolic gesture toward national military unity.

Professor and author of the first title in the series named “New Studies in Southern History,” Matthew Barbee, argues that the addition of Matthew Fountain Maury to Monument Avenue, like Stonewall’s monument, also downplayed Richmond’s regionalism and connection to the Lost Cause. He writes that instead the Maury monument linked “the Confederacy to American nationalism through the global ideals of science and man’s dominance of the globe.” Born in Fredericksburg, Maury was an officer in the U.S. Navy and was considered the father of modern oceanography. Despite not holding a prominent position in the Confederacy, Barbee iterates that Maury did contribute significantly to practices of meteorology and oceanography that “greatly improved and sped up the work of naval ships and U.S. mercantile fleets.”<sup>27</sup> Barbee also writes that after the Civil War, Maury traveled to Mexico City where he “began working on plans for agricultural and commercial developments in northern Mexico which would be linked to the Pacific and the Gulf of Mexico by a system of railroads and canals and hoped to entice Virginia planters to migrate with their slaves to the region.” Maury’s plan of course did not come into fruition, and soon thereafter he returned home and started an agriculture and technical college which ultimately became Virginia Polytechnic Institute, better known today as Virginia Tech.

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Even more so than Jackson, the Maury monument moved away from the trend of classical aesthetics of earlier Southern designs. His statue went beyond battlefield prowess and instead recognized him for his accomplishments in science. <sup>29</sup> Richmond’s choice not to unveil the monument on a day associated with the

Lost Cause, but instead on November 11<sup>th</sup>, Armistice Day, furthers the narrative away from the myth of the Lost Cause and “placed the Civil War within the longer, heroic traditions of international militarism” and underscored the theme of monuments as reconciliation.

After the addition of Maury, the development of the avenue would slow down and sixty years would pass before the city would add another monument to the historic avenue. Sporadically throughout this swathe of time, however, conversations around a new monument would spark. In the sixties, for example, the city hired Salvador Dali to design a statue honoring Sally Thompkins, a Confederate nurse whom Jefferson Davis named a captain, but the city was not in favor of a monument anodized pink that depicted Thompkins fighting a dragon; unsurprisingly, the council abandoned the project altogether.<sup>30</sup> Later in the 1990s the idea of adding to the avenue arose once again when Chuck Richardson, a black city council member, “hatched an idea that resonated with many metropolitan residents, white and black alike. Richardson believed that a statue of the then governor of Virginia, Douglas Wilder, be placed on Monument Avenue.”<sup>31</sup> This proposal proved unfruitful as well, but the idea of adding someone who represented another heroic narrative persisted, and by 1996 after great debate, the city would unveil its chosen hero.

## The Politics of Power and Voice

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*The years spanning the first and last monument were rife with political change and turmoil. During this time, Richmond experienced seismic political changes including another world war, the Civil Rights movement, urban disinvestment and white flight from the city, to name a few. The information provided in this section aims to narrate the changes in political power in the city of Richmond and Virginia. This shift ultimately would lead to Richmond’s, and the nation’s, first black governor and Monument Avenue’s first statue commemorating the life of a black man.*

After Reconstruction, the politics of Jim Crow perpetuated racial hierarchies in Richmond. Like many southern states, Virginia held a constitutional convention in 1902 in order to replace the more equitable constitution adopted during Reconstruction. As Steven Hoffman writes in *Race, Class, and Power in the Building of Richmond, 1870-1920*, the convention aspired to “guarantee Democratic supremacy without the need to resort to election fraud and violence, the traditional means of ensuring Democratic victories across the state since Reconstruction.”<sup>32</sup>

The Virginia State Legislature aided the Richmond Democrats through the passage of the Anderson-McCormick Elections Law of 1884 and the Walton Act passed in 1894. The former called for the election of three officials of each city who would then appoint the election officials.<sup>33</sup> The Walton Act played a large hand in greatly reducing the black vote, even in the densely populated Jackson Ward, the historic center of Richmond’s black community. The basic provision of the act called for voting to take place in the voting booth, provided a 2 ½ minute time limit for marking the ballot, and made the ballot itself serve as a literacy test. Walton explains that before the act’s implementation “the competing parties printed the ballots which were clearly marked using symbols...[and] voters would also receive the ballots before the election to deposit in the ballot box.” Under the control of the electoral board, generally Democrats, the new ballots under the Walton Act “contained no symbols to designate parties... and the ballots could not be seen until the voter was in the booth.”<sup>34</sup> Revealing the consequence of the act, the *Richmond Planet* reported on November 16, 1889 that in

Jackson Ward “long lines of colored men were unable to vote and were driven away from the polls at sunset.”<sup>35</sup>

Richmond’s voting power resided with the white oligarchy until African Americans made political strides in the 1940s.<sup>36</sup> In 1946, an association of over 80 church, civic, business, labor and educational groups came together to form the Richmond Civic Council (RCC). The RCC began a massive campaign drive to increase black voter turnout. Working alongside local white elite and Howard University Law School graduates, Oliver Hill and Thurgood Marshall, the RCC managed to greatly increase the size of the African-American voters, and therefore, African-American electorate. As a result of this effort, black lawyer Oliver Hill was to participate as an alderman in city council for two years. Throughout the 50s, Hill, Marshall, and the NAACP, continuously challenged the social structures disenfranchising the African American community.

After the Civil Rights movement of the 60s, the white flight of the 70s, and a 1977 Supreme Court ruling which found Richmond’s annexation had disenfranchised voters; Richmond’s black population finally gained its voice. *The Washington Post* commented on Richmond’s transition from its from white control and the fears that resulted concerning the fate of Monument Avenue. The *Post* reports that after Richmond elected its first majority-black City Council and first black mayor in 1977, “the outgoing white government deeded the Lee monument to the state to prevent it from being moved or torn down.”<sup>37</sup> Soon after, the newly elected Henry Marsh laid a wreath at the Jefferson Davis monument to assuage any race-related fears and to pronounce that he was “mayor of all the city.”<sup>38</sup>

By 1990, Richmond along with the state of Virginia would elect its first black governor, the politically centrist Douglas Wilder. His election would reopen Richmond’s conversations on public art on Monument Avenue and ultimately lead to the divisive decision to honor the great Arthur Ashe.

## Arthur Ashe, The Man

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*The 2015 debates over the meaning of the Confederate flag, especially following the mass shooting at Emanuel AME, the divisive nature of Southern identity, particularly the South’s connection to the Civil War, echo the debates two decades earlier. In 1996, Governor Douglas Wilder was determined to place Richmond’s native son, Arthur Ashe, among the Confederate heroes of Richmond’s iconic boulevard. To understand the debate, however, one must, and albeit most likely does, know Richmond’s greatest athlete.*

Born in 1943 in St. Phillip’s Hospital in a segregated facility for blacks only, Arthur Ashe grew up during Richmond’s Jim Crow era.<sup>39</sup> The family inherited their name from Governor Samuel Ashe of Virginia, an owner of slaves. As biographer Richard Stein writes in Ashe’s biography, Ashe grew up in a church-going family that emphasized “the importance of hard work and adhering to the highest moral code of behavior.”<sup>40</sup> His mother died not long after his birth, and his father at one point worked as a chauffeur –butler for wealthy Richmond families including the owners of Thalimers, a local department store which would become a center point for Richmond’s civil rights movement.

As a young boy, Ashe cultivated a love of tennis by watching the black Virginia Union University student play on the Brook Field courts, where his father served as caretaker.<sup>41</sup> One of those players whom Ashe idolized on



the courts, Ronald Charity, began teaching young Ashe the game. Despite the adversity of growing up in Jim Crow Richmond, attending the all black Maggie Walker High School, and being unable to play on the nicer, white tennis courts of the city, Ashe defied the odds set against him and became the first African American to win the Wimbledon and the U.S. and Australian Open.<sup>42</sup>

Arthur Ashe left Virginia after high school on a full ride to attend University of California at Los Angeles, which at that time had one of the best college tennis programs. In college Ashe continued his success on the court. The official Arthur Ashe website notes that he was the first African American named to the U.S. Davis Cup and in 1965 won the individual NCAA championship. <sup>43</sup> Later during his service in the army, Ashe continued playing tennis and on September 9, 1968, Ashe won the first U.S. Open. A year later, Ashe applied for the South African Open, but due to the racial segregation of Apartheid, South Africa denied access to America's number one ranked player. This experience propelled Ashe onto his role as a global humanitarian and activist, and by 1975 he became the first black tennis player to compete in the national championships of in South Africa. This same year, Ashe also won the Wimbledon singles title and attained the number one ranking in the world.

Not only did Arthur Ashe carry the torch for future minorities in the white world of tennis, he also became a staunch advocate for African-American males being celebrated not only for their emotional, intellectual, and moral development in addition to their athleticism.<sup>44</sup>

In 1989, Ashe endorsed his childhood friend, Lieutenant Governor Douglas Wilder as he ran for governor of Virginia. After Wilder's win in 1990, together they established Virginia Heroes, Inc., a program which invited prominent Richmonders into the city's classrooms as role models for inner city youth.<sup>45</sup>

During this time period, Ashe also began promoting the Hard Road to Glory African American Sports Hall of Fame, which in 1993 Richmond's City Council agreed to set \$250,000 aside to fund. Tragically, this same year Arthur Ashe passed away from complications from contracting the AIDS virus in 1983 during a blood transfusion after a heart attack. Ashe learned of his diagnosis in 1988, and for four years he concealed his disease, but in 1992, Ashe's friend and journalist, informed Ashe the news of his condition was leaked to *USA Today's* editors. Instead of being the national newspaper outing him, Ashe held a press conference and made the announcement himself. In this last chapter of his life, Arthur Ashe would add another hat to his role as humanitarian bringing a heightened awareness and discussion to understanding the disease.

## **Arthur Ashe, The Monument**

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*It was not the man people contested, but the place. The Arthur Ashe monument spurred dialogue about Richmond's cultural memory. Questions arose surrounding what story the city's public art shares with the world, and indeed the world was now watching. Publications like the Washington Post, The New York Times, USA Today and The Baltimore Sun covered the dispute which forced Richmond to merge its lauded history with those less told, especially on the city's most historic avenue. Its new identity attempted to reconcile rifts in its community that for so long overlooked Richmond's darker past. This section will outline the various rifts in Richmond's community and some of the central arguments from both the proponents and opponents of the project.*

## The Planning Process

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After Ashe died, the Richmond City Council formed a committee consisting of the city manager, two City Council members, a member from Ashe's family, and nine citizens each representing one of city's districts. They proposed to rename the other main thoroughfare which runs perpendicular through Monument Avenue from the once-segregated tennis court of Byrd Park north past the Richmond's historic museums, including the headquarters of the Daughters of the Confederacy, "Arthur Ashe Boulevard."<sup>46</sup> With only minor changes and funding, this seemed the most plausible proposal. Because public commemoration carries a great deal of symbolic value, however, changing the avenue's names, as Barbee explains, "would have taken away the genteel name The Boulevard and positioned the life of Arthur Ashe as the defining feature."<sup>47</sup> The proposal never came into fruition, but during this time a different way to commemorate the life of Arthur Ashe had already begun.

Not long before Ashe's death, Virginian sculptor Paul DiPasquale took his son to see Arthur Ashe address a large crowd of young tennis players in Richmond. Matthew Barbee writes that this event convinced DiPasquale to begin creating a sculpture in honor of Richmond's most influential athlete. The sculptor soon reached out to Virginia Heroes, Inc. and began his collaboration with the organization and the Ashe family in designing a statue to be placed outside of the Hard Road to Glory Hall of Fame.<sup>48</sup> Even while in the earlier stages of the planning process, Virginia Heroes helped to raise the nearly \$400,000 needed to complete DiPasquale's statue.

With the hall of fame plans still incomplete, the Richmond City Planning Commission considered placing the Ashe monument at the corner of Hamilton and Monument Avenue. This first suggestion set off a fury of response, despite its suggested location outside of the historical district. Urban studies professor, Robert Hodder explains that Mayor Leonidas Young responded by appointing a committee "to consider sites throughout the city in the hope of avoiding rancorous public hearing."<sup>49</sup>

While the committee first approved the Hamilton location for the Ashe monument, Hodder writes that on June 19, 1995, the city manager, Robert Bobb, urged the planning committee to place Arthur Ashe within the city's historic district to represent as a symbol gesturing a reconciled future.

## The Politics of Public Art

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Immediately following the proposal to place the Ashe monument within the historic district, opponents of the new location voiced their disapproval. As reported in the *Washington Post* article covering the City Council's vote, "opponents included an oil-and-water mix of whites who considered it nothing short of heresy to the Lost Cause and blacks who considered it nothing short of heresy to Ashe."<sup>50</sup>

The division over adding Ashe to Monument Avenue did not simply fall along race lines. Arreluis D. Pleasant, a forty-nine-year-old resident of Church Hill, said in an interview that "Arthur Ashe doesn't belong with those racists. What Monument Avenue needs is a bulldozer."

In an interview with the *Richmond Times*, Mayor Young relayed that of African Americans who contacted the city about the Ashe statue, 80 percent opposed the Monument Avenue site and whites were evenly divided over the location.<sup>51</sup> Looking at the numbers of those who contacted the Mayor's office, it is clear that Pleasant was one of many in her community who felt the Avenue was an inappropriate location for a black hero.

The argument that Arthur Ashe was simply incongruous reverberated throughout the community. Some community members strongly opposed to the addition of Ashe's monument felt that it was not the place for a tennis player, and should remain what it was, an avenue dedicated to valorizing heroes who fought in for the Confederacy. During the public hearing, some would even push for adding black Confederate soldiers who fought for Virginia.<sup>52</sup>

Monument's strong identity as a sacred place for Confederate heroes caused much of Richmond's black community to dispute the Ashe's statue's placement on that boulevard. One childhood friend of Arthur Ashe, Eugene Price, argued that the monument should be placed in the neighborhood where Ashe grew up and where it could inspire youth like them, instead of a location so disconnected from Ashe's life.<sup>53</sup> In his memoir, *Days of Grace*, Ashe wrote the following about Monument Avenue:

"Every Sunday morning I could see and hear on television Dr. Theodore F. Adams, minister of the huge white First Baptist Church. That church confirmed its domination and its strict racial identity by its presence on Richmond's Monument Avenue, the avenue of Confederate heroes, with its statues of Stonewall Jackson, Jefferson Davis, J.E.B. Stuart, and Robert E. Lee. Didn't we in the black churches read the same Bible as whites in First Baptist? Didn't the whites know how Jesus felt about equality of human beings, about justice, and about the meek inheriting the earth?"<sup>54</sup>

While many felt that there were better locations in Richmond to honor Ashe than Monument Avenue, others argued that placing Ashe on Monument would challenge the narrative of "the avenue of Confederates." Douglas Wilder first brought forward the idea of placing Ashe alongside the Confederates on the Avenue. He worked hard to rally interest and, as reported by the *Washington Post*, Wilder broadcasted his daily radio show live from the proposed location of Monument and Roseneath.<sup>55</sup> In response to those opposing the addition of Ashe on Monument Avenue, the *Post* reports Wilder saying on his broadcast, "Every time we think we've crossed the bridge, we see that there's more water than we ever thought."

Like Wilder, proponents of Ashe on Monument saw this as an opportunity to challenge Richmond's symbolic segregation. Placing Ashe on Monument would serve as reconciliation.<sup>56</sup> Councilman Tim Kaine captured the sentiment of the debate, as recorded in Robert Hodder's article, when Kaine said, "The hearing gets at the heart of lot things by which this community defines itself: race, history, notions of progress [and] our relations to one another."<sup>57</sup> During the hearing, Councilman Chuck Richardson, who is black, brought forth the unspoken conversation of race when he said, "Everybody's dancing around the question, which is, 'Do we put a black man on Monument Avenue?' " In the article covering the hearing, the *Richmond Times Dispatch* then reports Robison saying, "The hand-me-down ideals those individuals represent is the very thing that chased Arthur out of this city. The Civil War is part of our history. Now we have another part -- civil rights."<sup>58</sup>

Arthur Ashe's little brother, Johnnie Ashe, spoke on behalf of the family and supported the site on Monument Avenue because he knew there the monument would be well maintained. They also supported the site because the meaning in placing Arthur Ashe on Monument Avenue would honor his brother as not just an athlete, but a hero as well. In an interview with *Richmond Times Dispatch*, Johnnie noted, "It was

Arthur Ashe Jr. who brought the system of Apartheid in South Africa to light in the United States...I don't think any of our Confederate generals could touch that.”<sup>59</sup>

After a seven-hour council meeting where hundreds of Richmond residents spoke out on the issue, the seven council members overwhelmingly voted in favor of the Monument location. Even Mayor Leonidas, who strongly felt that the Ashe monument would be better suited at Byrd Park where Ashe could not play tennis because of his race, conceded. *Richmond Times Dispatch* reporter Peter Baker covered the hearing and reported Mayor Leonidas saying, “I think this is our finest hour because it shows that we have grown. It is painful to grow, but if you do not grow, if you do not experience the pain, you will not become everything you can become.”<sup>60</sup> Baker notes that the appearance of Ashe’s family strongly influenced the committee, and at 1:15 a.m. when the council took the final vote, seven members voted in favor of the location and one abstained.

With the final vote, however, the conversation did not end. Six months after the decision, the *Richmond Times Dispatch* ran a letter from Arthur Ashe’s wife, Jeanne Moutoussamy-Ashe. During the debate over the monument, Matthew Barbee writes that Moutoussamy-Ashe made no public appearances or comments in regards to the setting of the Ashe monument. Ashe’s cousin Randy had served as the family spokesman during the debate, and Moutoussamy-Ashe deep seated disapproval did not enter the conversation until her letter on January 1, 1996.<sup>61</sup> She wrote, “I have always felt that in all this controversy, the spirit of Arthur Ashe on Monument Avenue honors Richmond, Virginia, more than it does its son, his legacy, or his life’s work.” Moutoussamy-Ashe wanted the statue to regain its original purpose as part of the hall of fame.

Between this letter and the creation of the well-funded group called Citizens for the Excellence of Public Art (CEPA) which claimed that DiPasquale’s monument lacked artistic merit, the city would once again stall its plan while CEPA funded a competition for a new statue and Moutoussamy-Ashe worked with her associates on the proposed hall of fame. Despite CEPA’s confidence in raising the necessary funds for the new monument, the City Council ultimately criticized CEPA for its lack of diversity—the group of 29 members included only one African-American—and decided that they would only permit a new statue if they city acquired the \$20 million needed for creating Ashe’s hall of fame.

Unable to raise the funds for the hall of fame, the statue would remain on the historic boulevard. On July 10, 1996, in front of 2,000 spectators present for the unveiling, Douglas Wilder proclaimed, “Today is not just any day in Richmond. Monument Avenue is now an avenue for all people.”<sup>62</sup> In this moment, however, the former governor did not know that less than a decade later he would post on Twitter his utter disappointment with how the city seemingly overlooked the upkeep of a monument meant to bring together a divided city.

## Strategies

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### Garnering Student Interest

In a world suffocating in selfies, many people, especially teens, want to know, “What’s in it for me?” One of the easiest ways to hook students into a lesson is through pre-reading activities, also known as “front loading.” With the pressure of time constraints and looming standards-based testing, teachers may skip over this part of the lesson to jump right into the daily objectives. After completing my fourth year of teaching though, I still have not witnessed any students’ ears perk up when I announce to the class, “Today, you will be

able to compare and contrasts the authors' text structure." Working with a range of student abilities, I have experienced the importance in providing enough background knowledge and promoting engagement with the text—for example, anticipation guides, "word splats," and opinion continuums—before students begin a unit study. In Kylene Beers' book *When Kids Can't Read: What Teachers Can Do*, she explains that by having students make generalizations or connections prior to reading, they then become actively involved in the comprehending the text. The Civil War and history of monuments as a topic alone will only pique a few students' interests. It will be how a teacher chooses to hook her students into the debate of public art and history that will create a classroom of students eager to discover new understandings through analyzing texts.

## **Inquiry-based Learning**

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the word "inquiry" is derived from Latin word "quaerere" which means "seek." Through inquiry-based learning, we are asking students to discover the information—and the questions—themselves. Students may need some guidance about where to begin when conducting inquiry-based learning. Depending on the students familiarity with learning through inquiry, the teacher may wish to model this process through a different analysis of art. This could be done through providing question stems (e.g. "What is the significance of ...?") while students look at an image. Perhaps a teacher may say, "Every piece of art has a story. What questions should we ask to discover the story behind this work?"

Inquiry-based learning is student center. The teacher's role is to provide the guidance and scaffolding only when needed. According to the National Academy of Sciences, when students learn through inquiry they learn to question; investigate; use evidence to describe, explain, and predict; connect evidence to knowledge; and share their findings. This is exactly what English teachers want from their students as well. Through creating a classroom community and encouraging student-led discussion, students will be able to actively engage in discussion about the role of local art and "by doing so, art becomes a forum for discourse over essential cultural and political activities, their history, and their representation."<sup>63</sup>

## **Close-Reading**

As any American teacher reading this unit most likely knows, English curriculums have shifted to include significant more nonfiction texts. For many of my students, reading nonfiction has proved to be a challenge. For this reason, I am always looking for new ways to help students engage with the text they are trying to comprehend. One of the best ways to do this is through annotating. One way my students annotate a text is through color coding and identifying the most important word of each paragraph. A colleague of mine taught me that when color coding, to instruct my students to color all "strong" adjectives or verbs one color. From this, I then ask students to create word groupings based on connotation. From here, students will either write or discuss how the author's use of diction and details aids in conveying her tone and purpose.

Students may also use SOAPtone graphic organizers to analyze the text. This organizer uses guiding questions to help students analyze a text for speaker, occasion, audience, purpose, and tone. In one educator's blog, "iTeachiCoachiBlog," he writes that on the left margin of the text, he asks students to summarize each chunk of paragraphs and in the right margin, he asks students to dig deeper by using a "power verb" to describe what the author is doing, e.g. "describing," "illustrating," "arguing" or "comparing."

Annotating a text, whether through symbols, emojis, QAR questions, written commentary, or pairing it with a graphic organizer, creates a classroom of thoughtful thinkers and will help students to understand the myriad nuances surrounding a complicated debate over public art.

## Activities

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### Day One

On the first day of this unit, I will generate student thought and interest over themes “identity” and “place.” To prompt students thinking about the topic, I will have them create a “word splat” on their own paper or white board. In the center of the room on the white board, I will write “Richmond” in large font. I will then ask my students to do the same on their own paper. Then outside of the word, there are to write as many ideas, moments, people, and places that connect to the word. With every vague word, like “restaurants,” I will encourage them to think of more specific places or ideas. Students will take turns walking up to the board and writing various words that stand out to them. Once our word splat transforms into a Richmond word-mural, student will partner up and write a “Richmond Is” sentence about the city.

Next, we will begin the discussion on public art and how it connects to identity. After coming up with a consensus over what constitutes public art, I will divide the class into groups. Using a large white board, each group will list examples of local public art. Next, each group will create either an image, cartoon, or write a sentence that answers the following question: “What does Richmond’s public art say about the city?” I will close the day’s lesson by briefly outlining how the theme of public art fits with our unit. I will tell the students that as readers of American literature, we are trying to understand our texts reveal about the American experience. Just as we may analyze text to answer this question, we may also newspapers, podcasts, film, or art. As an exit card, I will ask students to answer the question in a two-minute timed essay, “How can public art be political and divisive?”

### Day Two

On the second day of the unit, students will begin class as a “walking tour.” As they walk into the classroom, I will ask students to fold their paper in half creating two columns, one column labeled “details” and the second “questions.” Before beginning our “walking tour” of Monument Avenue, students will either watch a video or an art teacher will visit our classroom and explain how to analyze art. Because touring all on boulevard is not feasible, students will instead walk around the classroom critiquing large images of the monuments

After this activity, I will then inform students that we are going to visit and critique the last monument added to the avenue. For schools without access to the monuments, I would suggest using Google Maps for this part of the class tour. At the Arthur Ashe Monument, I will ask that students silently observe and critique the statue. They will have plenty of time to talk on the way back, and it is important for their initial reactions and questions to be their own. When we return to the school, I will ask students to finalize their observations and their questions. We will use this page to start our K-W-L chart for the next class.

## The Summative Activity

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The summative activity for this unit will involve students composing their own letter to the editor arguing whether or not they agree with the placement of Arthur Ashe on Monument Avenue. This activity will follow multiple class periods building background knowledge, researching questions, and analyzing various

arguments from both proponents and opponents of the monument from letters and newspapers. After analyzing a variety of texts, students will use their newfound knowledge to support their persuasive arguments. Students will also practice including a counterargument in their letter using direct quotes from an article or letter of which they disagree. In the final paragraph of their letter, students will add what they would like City Council to do next in regards to Monument Avenue. Students will edit their letters and present them to the class. Each class will then vote on the three strongest letters to submit to the local newspaper.

As a supplemental activity in collaboration with the art class, students will design a mural for us to submit, along with our best letters, to a local community-based art studio.

## Virginia State Standards

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11.5 The student will read and analyze a variety of nonfiction texts. a) Use information from texts to clarify understanding of concepts. d) Draw conclusions and make inferences on explicit and implied information using textual support.

e) Analyze two or more texts addressing the same topic to identify authors' purpose and determine how authors reach similar or different conclusions. h) Generate and respond logically to literal, inferential, evaluative, synthesizing, and critical thinking questions before, during, and after reading texts.

11.6 The student will write in a variety of forms, with an emphasis on persuasion. a) Generate, gather, plan, and organize ideas for writing to address a specific audience and purpose. b) Produce arguments in writing developing a thesis that demonstrates knowledgeable judgments, addresses counterclaims, and provides effective conclusions. d) Clarify and defend position with precise and relevant evidence elaborating ideas clearly and accurately.

### Images

*Teachers may easily access pictures of the six monuments online. To access some of the more controversial images, simply input key words into the search. Provided in this section are visuals of just a few moments outlined in this unit. The first two are photos I took during the summer of 2015, one of a protestor speaking with a newscaster in front of the Jefferson Davis Monument and the other of the Ashe monument. There has also been further controversy surrounding the lack of upkeep for the Arthur Ashe monument. This issue received a fair amount of media coverage this summer and may be another issue to discuss during the unit.<sup>64</sup>*







A friend of mine posted the following image on social media. He took this picture early in the morning while workers attempted to remove the spray paint which read "Black Lives Matter" from the Jefferson Davis Monument.



King, Dustin M., photographer. Photograph. (Accessed August 2, 2015).

The following image depicts Richmond after the fire the spread throughout the city following Richmond and Petersburg's fall to the Union. The Confederacy attempted to burn Richmond's goods to keep them out of the hands of the Union. In doing so, the fire spread, destroying much of the city.



Russel, Andrew J, photographer. "Richmond Virginia Damage 2." Photograph. From Library of Congress [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Richmond\\_Virginia\\_damage2.jpg#/media/File:Richmond\\_Virginia\\_damage2.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Richmond_Virginia_damage2.jpg#/media/File:Richmond_Virginia_damage2.jpg) (accessed July 28, 2015).

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This article is one example of extensive news coverage the Ashe monument received in the 90s.

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Daniel Duke, *The School that Refused to Die* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1995).

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Gaines M. Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy: Defeat, the Lost Cause, and the Emergence of the New South, 1865-1913* (New York: Oxford University Press, April 23, 197), 85. Gordon Hickey. "Statue's Path Wasn't Smooth: Debates Focused on Symbolism, Heroes, Justice, Site, Sculptor," *Richmond Times Dispatch*, July 8, 1996.

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