



Introduction

by Daniel Martinez HoSang, Associate Professor of Ethnicity, Race, and Migration and American Studies

2020 has been a tumultuous year, filled with endless crisis and loss, and also renewal and possibility. After the pandemic focused all of the YNI seminars into remote meetings, an extraordinary group of nine Fellows, hailing from diverse locations, settings and backgrounds—Tulsa, New Haven, Chicago, Richmond, Pittsburgh, Delaware, San José, and Texas—met for our seminar, **Teaching About Race and Racism Across the Disciplines**. The group included art educators, early elementary teachers, middle school language arts instructors, and those teaching journalism, language and social studies in high school.

Only a few weeks after our first meeting in early May, protests against police brutality and anti-Black violence filled the nation’s streets. Teachers across the country asked themselves how their classrooms and curriculum could provide a central site to help students understand, resist and transform the racist structures they confronted in their own lives.

The seminar provided Fellows with the pedagogical and conceptual tools and resources necessary to expand their capacity to teach about race and racism within their disciplines and subject areas. Moving beyond the more limited paradigms of racial colorblindness and diversity, the seminar introduced curricular strategies for centering race and racism in ways that are accessible to students from a broad range of backgrounds, and that work to advance the overall goals of the curriculum.

The first week of the seminar explored the ways in which particular academic fields, including legal studies, musicology, art education, and literary studies, became organized around principles of race neutrality and colorblindness, and the ways this framework sustained and reproduced broader forms of racial inequality.

The second week focused on practices of pedagogy, curriculum development and teacher education that disrupt these colorblind norms, drawing on traditions in Critical Race Theory, Ethnic Studies, and women of color feminism. Across all of these sessions, we drew on diverse examples—the art of Romare Bearden and Titus Kaphar, and social movement struggles over economic justice, queer intimacies, indigenous sovereignty and immigrant rights—to model the ways teachers can use cultural texts and primary materials in their pedagogy and practice.

The fruits of hundreds of hours of collective labor by five elementary and four high school teachers resulted in the curriculum units that follow.

Art and creative practice form the basis of the first three units.

Katherine Leung, an art educator in San José, California, developed “**Mexican-American Labor in California**

through Art Literacy” to use the art of Ramiro Gomez and other Latinx artists and social movements to facilitate student discussion about domestic workers and farm workers and their representations in artistic and popular discourses.

“Who Is In Charge Here?: Examining (in)visibility and Cultural Context of Jim Crow Era Monuments in Elementary Art Education,” authored by Danielle Raddin Houdek, an art educator in Richmond, Virginia, uses the statues of Confederate generals along Monument Avenue in that city to teach students about the roles that public art, historical context and communal art spaces play in establishing and dismantling systems of power and control.

Carol Boynton’s **“Understanding Race and Racism Through Faith’s Ringgold’s Work”** introduces Faith Ringgold’s art and children’s books to primary students as a way to learn more about the artist’s life and influences and to take up questions of family, community, and kinship in their own lives.

Katherine Swann, a Kindergarten teacher in Delaware, developed **“Centering Race in Literary Studies in the Kindergarten Classroom”** using core literary studies concepts related to story structure, perspective, and literary traditions to introduce basic concepts about racial identity, formation and history to her students.

The three units authored by high school teachers and bring interdisciplinary traditions and frameworks to their pedagogy and objects of study.

Cristina Meija’s **“Race and Racial Formation in Latin America”** introduces Spanish Heritage language students in her Tulsa high school to dynamics of race and racial formation in Latin America by examining representations in film and literature across three national contexts.

Sean Means, a high school teacher in Pittsburgh, developed, **“Collusion in the Owner’s Box: How Racism and Oppression Have Built the American Sports Industry”** to help students consider the ways that professional sports and the NCAA facilitate racial subordination but also serve as a platform for new form of resistance.

Ray Salazar, an experienced journalist and journalism teacher in Chicago, authored **“Seeing the World through Race-Colored Glasses: Guiding High-School Journalism Students to Report in a Race-Conscious Way to Create a Race-Conscious World”** to guide teachers new to journalism with a set of pedagogical concepts and practices to support students in developing socially conscious and relevant news stories.

Literary arts and study form the basis for the final group of units.

Sabrina Evans, a language arts teacher from Richmond, designed **“We Are Family: The Importance of Community through an Exploration of *Johnathon Upper Elementary Schools*”** to introduce more explicit discussions about race and racism to her students through an interdisciplinary study of the novel *Johnathon* by Jo Ann Burroughs.

Debra Jenkins’s unit **“No Lye, Nappy or Straight, People Still Gon’ Hate: Getting to the Root of the Issue; Colorblindness and Neutrality within Hairstyles and Hair Types”** engages upper elementary students in an examination of the political power and meaning that a hairstyle or hair texture holds through different literary texts.

All of these units provide teachers with models that demonstrate the ways that anti-racist commitments must

extend to the curriculum and pedagogy in order to truly transform public education for all students.

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