

# ASU + GSV SUMMIT

## A Visual Arts Lesson on Public Space and Statues

### Introduction:

“...the history that you did tell, you only told from one perspective. And that perspective happened to be historically wrong... The people who get to write the history are the people who get to prepare for the future.” Mitch Landrieu, former mayor of New Orleans, in *Fireside Chat: Tearing Down the Statues*. This video explores the ideas behind Landrieu’s book, *In the Shadow of Statues: a White Southerner Confronts History*. In the video, which is part of a series on Truth and Reconciliation in America, Mitch describes the issue of race and our country’s original sin, slavery, as an unconfrosted history. He explores the origins of confederate soldier statues and the few years of history that these monuments choose to display.

Using this video to guide larger questions and conversations, students in **grades 7-12** will then imagine an America where all of the confederate statues are removed and new art structures are erected. If confederate statues stand for divisiveness, hate, and racism, students will create sculptures and structures that represent equality, truth, reconciliation, and unity.

### Big Questions:

How are public spaces important in telling about our history?  
What parts of our history should be told by erecting statues?  
Whose responsibility is it to make big changes to the history we tell or don’t tell?  
Why are protestors who are fighting for the removal of confederate statues facing resistance?

### Guiding Questions for the video:

How can we ensure we are telling the truth of our history, no matter how dark, while ensuring we do not commit historical malfeasance. (Minute 10:50 in video)  
Who had/has the power and authority to erect public statues? (Minute 11:50 in video)  
Whose responsibility is it to fix the limited history we are teaching our students? (Minute 16:50)  
What is institutional racism and what role does it play in achieving racial equity in America? (Minute 34)

### Purpose:

The purpose is to provide a space for students to be part of a national conversation centered on the history that we, as tax paying citizens, choose to display in public spaces and to reimagine these spaces filled with artwork that communicates equity and unity.

### Goals:

The goal is for students to use their imagination, creativity, and inventiveness to sketch and write about plans to replace confederate statues with new artworks.

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### Resources:

This video

([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mt086ynbo5k&ab\\_channel=GlobalSiliconValleyGlobalSiliconValley](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mt086ynbo5k&ab_channel=GlobalSiliconValleyGlobalSiliconValley))

This similar lesson plan from KIPP Chicago's *Children's Museum of Art and Social Justice*

(<https://kippchicago.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Listening-Through-The-Walls-Vacant-Lot-Planning-LP.pdf>)

List of confederate statues across America

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_Confederate\\_monuments\\_and\\_memorials](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Confederate_monuments_and_memorials)

### Materials:

Large printouts of aerial views of confederate statues

Pencil

Thin, black Sharpie markers

### Procedures:

- 1) Watch the featured video with students in order to facilitate conversation and begin discussing the big questions.
- 2) As a class, identify and create a list of words (ie: unity, equity, equality, justice) to illustrate through new public art to replace confederate statues and all that they represent.
- 3) Ask students to choose 3-5 words that will guide their re-imagination of public spaces without confederate statues.
- 4) Using the large printouts of aerial views of parks with confederate statues, students will trace the outline of the park onto a new piece of paper, making sure *not* to trace the statues.
- 5) With a general sketch of an aerial view of a park, students will draw new structures, sculptures, and murals to illustrate the 3-5 words they chose from the class list.
- 6) Utilize more paper to draw detail views of the proposed artworks.
- 7) Create an art exhibition to display final student work and invite all those in power to attend and view the new proposals for public spaces that convey equity, unity, truth, and reconciliation!