Monumental Challenge: Preservice Teachers and Elementary Students Contest Statues of Racists

Dr. Meir Muller
Phases of Civic Literacy

- Describe a social problem
- Study the problem
- Address the problem

Justice-Orientated Pedagogy

- Explicitly addressing issues of injustice
- Critiquing the status quo through using a critical lens
- Analyzing the cause of injustice
Critical lens:
Marginalized
Prioritized
Why Confederate or White Supremacist Monuments?
Third grader, “All of these monuments make me think of Jim Crow.”
Classmate, “Who is Jim Crow?”
Third grader, “He said black and white children could not be friends.”
Classmate, “Does he have a monument?”
Third grader, “I don't see it but I think he is here.”
Guiding Questions
1. What is a monument?
2. Why might a person or event have a monument?
3. What do you notice about any one monument?

Student Responses:
1. Monuments are ways to honor people.
2. “Were good”
   “Deserved respect”
   “Helped our country”
What Do You Notice About Any One Monument?

"WTH"
Describe the Problem

My “social studies buddies” and I were researching Wade Hampton’s monument and discussing his role in the Civil War. Each of the second graders was convinced that Wade Hampton wanted to end slavery. This surprised me as the children knew that Wade Hampton was a Confederate soldier and owned 3,000 slaves. I asked again if they thought Wade Hampton wanted slaves to be free or to stay enslaved? The children continued to express that Hampton wanted slaves to be free. Seeing my confusion with their response, two children explained, “He must have wanted them free because he has a monument”. The children continued, "Only good people have monuments and therefore Wade Hampton must have been good.” (preservice teacher’s journal 2/4/17).
Four Prompts to Facilitate Studying the Issue

- Explore the history of one monument looking at issues of injustice.
- Use a critical lens to consider the impact of having this monument on display.
- Create a map of where the monument can be found on the State House grounds.
- Describe issues of the costs associated with building the monument.
### Primary Source Analysis Tool

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<th>Reflect</th>
<th>Critical Question</th>
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**Further Investigation**
Geography and Economics

Phases of Civic Literacy
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Action

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Dear Legislator,

Can you please take down the Ben Tillman monument? Because he is a racist, if a African American came here they feel uncomfortable.

from

Action

Dear Legislator,

I am a student in 2nd grade at the CTDS on Trenholm Road. I am writing because I think Tillman didn't destroy a monument. He didn't give hits to the Black People who have monuments. So post to be good people. I think Ben Tillman was bad!

Sincerely,
Action

To Whom it May Concern,

Ben Tillman was a bad man! So please get his monument! Because:

1. He was bad!
2. He did not like black people and he made fun of them.
3. If people come they could feel comfortable and they may not like him.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Yes, once you get всех it is off of billy Clinton.

Bye
Dear: Legislator,

Why the hell did you put a stooge of Bent till an in front of the st house?! You shu knock it to Smith he was racist and i’m Black african american and im mad the your not tack it down.

By: 

Published:
My buddy understood that she can make a change when she sees injustice. She made me realize that children can have difficult conversations.

One aha moment was seeing how the students were able to understand difficult concepts and figures like Ben Tillman.

I love how the students came up more ideas than just tear it down.

It’s not the children who have the problem taking about race; it is us [college students].
Assessment

Classroom Application – Phases of Civic Liberty - Shira Epstein (2014)
- Having children describe a social problem
- Study the problem
- Address the problem.

Teacher’s perspective
- Teachers need to develop reciprocal relationships with students
- Continually deepen their content knowledge
- Embrace the role as active participants in challenging unjust conditions or events
- Work collaboratively with students, communities and other stakeholders to create positive change.

- Explicitly addressing issues of injustice
- Critiquing the status quo through using a critical lens
- Analyzing the cause of injustice.
Reflections

• Discuss your general impressions of this work.

• What do you think might be challenges using this with elementary students?

• What do you think might be challenges using this with undergrads?

• How might you adopt to make this experience stronger or a fit for your setting?
Third grader, “All of these monuments make me think of Jim Crow.”
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“African American and white children are now friends so that is good, but Tillman was not taken down so I guess we have to write more letters because Jim Crow is still around.”