

Free To Be Me: Exploring Identity



Synecdoche

A skillful fusion of abstraction and representation in painting, *Synecdoche* is a potent statement about identity. Arranged in a grid, these monochrome panels replicate the skin color of twenty individuals that Byron Kim encountered at random on The University of Texas at Austin campus. As such, *Synecdoche* may playfully literalize a comment made by modernist painter Brice Marden, who once referred to the surfaces of his own monochromatic paintings as “skin.”

Synecdoche is an ongoing series of more than 410 individual panels that Kim began in 1991 and has continued to the present day. Borrowed from literary criticism, the term “synecdoche” refers to a figure of speech in which a part represents a whole. Here the color of each panel stands in for the individual sitter, while all of the panels together represent the university population. Yet in this context, the work points to the futility—the absurdity even—of defining human beings by their skin color alone.



Action Projects

After engaging your students in discussions about the artwork and the theme of 'Identity' the next step will be the Action Projects! Explore ideas about ways we can raise awareness about our diverse identities beyond skin color. To get you started, here are some ideas:

AT HOME: Make large scale portraits of your family that show the multitude of different shades (brown, black, tan, beige, white) present all over the face and body.

Interview a family member about the ways in which they experience life in their skin.

IN SCHOOL: Create art posters that show the diversity of identities in the class and invite the wider school community to view the gallery.

Create a Byron Kim-style artwork for your class or school, consider ways to celebrate the variety of skin color.

IN THE COMMUNITY: Create short drama pieces that show why identity including skin color is important. These could be presented in assembly or filmed and screened.

Create a community newspaper/blog that is shared at school and home.



ESTEEM

Feel Better



RESILIENCE

Do Better



GROWTH

Be Better



COMMUNITY

Better Belonging



CHANGE

Better Conditions

Note: As you work through this guide, notice these **five dimensions**, which reflect how art captures our ongoing efforts at improvement and growth. More specifically, these dimensions often reflect how we feel, what we do, how we want to be and be seen, the groups we belong to, and how conditions in society can be better. Research suggests that the more aware we are of our circumstances, the better we are able to self-regulate, make healthy decisions, relate to others, and work toward longer-term, functional goals — even in the face of adversity.

The Individual and Community Empowerment Framework includes the dimensions of esteem, resilience, and growth (for individual empowerment), and community and change (for community empowerment). The framework and table are adapted from Travis & Deepak (2011) and Travis (2013), the CREATE Lab, and FlowStory.

TALK

Look at the artwork *Synecdoche* by Byron Kim. Look for a full minute. Turn to a friend and discuss what you see.

What feelings come up for you while viewing this artwork? Collect some one-word responses, phrases or ideas on chart paper.






LOOK

Take a minute to look longer and spend some time thinking about the following questions:

- What colors do you see?
 - What might this work show?
 - What is similar? What is different?
 - Which beautiful skin color is most like your own unique shade?
 - What do you like most about your own beautiful skin color?
-

TALK

Self Talk. Reflect or journal on the following core questions:

-  Who am I?
-  What stories about my experiences would I like to tell others, but have not been able to?
-  In what ways am I trying to be better, to be the best version of myself?
-  What groups do I have a strong connection to or belong to? Where do I feel at home?
-  How may daily experiences cause people to feel left out, like they don't belong or are unimportant?

Peer Talk. Turn to a friend and discuss one or two of the core questions above. Talk about the ways people and communities contribute to our sense of self.



Turning back to the art...

- How might it feel to be identified by your skin color alone?
- Why is it important to notice our differences and our similarities?
- How might this artwork be EMPOWERING?
- Why did the artist create this work?

ACT

What parts of your identity can people 'see', what about the parts of your identity are 'unseen'? How do we celebrate our identity?

Make a mask with outer identities displayed on the front, and unseen identities on the inside.

- Compare how similar or different each part of the mask is.
- Consider your mask in relation to others.
- How do we share with others the many parts of ourselves?
- How do we respect the identities of others?



Resource Guide

ADL's No Place for Hate[®], the Blanton Museum of Art, AISD, and The CREATE Lab have teamed up to bring anti-bias education and object based learning to our schools. This resource is one in a series featuring a work of art from the Blanton selected to foster important conversations and inspire students to act! The theme for this series is **Identity**, and this work of art should be used to foster curiosity about ourselves and others and raise awareness of our sense of belonging.

This guide has everything you need to create successful discussions and a No Place for Hate Action Project.

Here you will find:

- No Place for Hate guidelines for Action Projects
- Information about the artist and artwork
- Guiding questions for initial discussion and making
- Suggested community action projects



As this guide reaches multiple schools, we hope it will inspire students to work together to create action projects that can be shared and celebrated.

Please share your projects to austin@adl.org, education@blantonmuseum.org and Cultural.Proficiency@austinisd.org



BLANTON MUSEUM OF ART

Support for School Programs at the Blanton is provided by the Buena Vista Foundation, the Burdine Johnson Foundation, the CFP Foundation, Jeanne and Michael Klein, the Lowe Foundation, the Meinig Family Foundation, and The Powell Foundation, with further support from the Applied Materials Foundation, the Tapestry Foundation, Texas Commission on the Arts, the Susan Mayer Art Enrichment Endowment, and KVUE and the TEGNA Foundation.

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No Place For Hate®

No Place for Hate® is a self-directed framework helping educators and students take the lead on improving and maintaining a school climate where all students thrive. The Anti-Defamation League (ADL) offers resources to ensure that anti-bias and diversity education are an integral part of the school curriculum. No Place for Hate® also helps create and sustain inclusive school environments where all students feel valued and have the opportunity to succeed by promoting respect for individual difference while challenging bigotry and prejudice. Launched in Austin schools in the fall of 2004, the popular campaign has been embraced by hundreds of campuses throughout the Central Texas region. Austin ISD is the largest No Place for Hate® school district in the United States.

The Need for Discussion

The success of No Place for Hate® relies on the assurance that all members of school communities have a central voice in creating a plan that will lead to lasting change. The foundation for creating that change is a strong coalition of school leaders — students, educators, and family members — who have a stake in the outcomes of that plan.

There is no more obvious stakeholder than a student. Too often, adults assume they know what is needed to support youth, but without engaging students in the process, change can be elusive. No Place for Hate® Committees create activities that amplify students' voices and give them opportunities be active participants.

All qualifying activities must be consistent with the No Place for Hate® mission by challenging bigotry, bias and bullying; exposing young people to diverse identity groups, backgrounds and points of view; promoting respect for individual and group differences; and providing opportunities for community-building within the school. Projects should challenge students to think critically, instill a sense of empathy, and empower students to become allies for one another.

No Place For Hate® Activities Should:

- Involve all students in active learning
- Involve all students in discussion and debriefing of activities
- Address school-based issues
- Have a school-wide impact
- Take place throughout the school year, with three or more activities spread out over time
- Focus on inclusivity and community

For more information visit austin.adl.org/noplaceforhate.



Blanton Museum of Art School Programs

Interested in visiting the Blanton?

The Blanton provides gallery lessons for Pre-K–12 students that address different styles of learning through engaging conversation, collaborative investigation, and thoughtfully planned gallery activities.

Guided visits invite students to draw connections between art, their lives, and the world around them so they can become more critically engaged citizens. Students are encouraged to use evidential reasoning to construct interpretations about objects of art and develop social and emotional skills. Lessons are designed to support TEKS and English language learners. They reinforce classroom objectives and promote arts integration across the curriculum.

A typical gallery lesson will feature four to six works of art and include some longer interpretive conversations, group activities, and choice-based learning opportunities. The Blanton's talented gallery teaching team expects to customize their plans according to teacher and student needs and interests, as every group is unique.

We are committed to removing financial barriers for schools that demonstrate financial need by offering **free buses and free admission through Art Access funding.**

Schedule a visit

- The Blanton can accommodate up to 75 gallery teacher-led students per hour. Larger groups may be scheduled for back-to-back guided visits.
- Guided visits will discuss 4–6 works of art. They are scheduled on the hour, 50 minutes long, and are available Tuesday–Friday from 10 a.m.– 3 p.m.
- Teachers may elect to bring their students on a self-guided visit, subject to space availability.
- A gallery teacher must lead Pre-K through 3rd-grade students.
- Pre-K–12 groups must bring one adult chaperone for every eight students. Chaperones must stay with the group.
- Guided visits and self-guided visits are \$2 per student, including Thursdays. Required chaperones and teachers accompanying school groups are free. Additional adults pay the regular admission price of \$12.
- To schedule a visit, please fill out our online form at least three weeks in advance.

Information at blantonmuseum.org/k12tours.

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