Art Education and an Integrated Richmond

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I am a Richmonder. We take pride in our city for its beauty, culture, varied recreation, coziness, and strong traditions. But one of Richmond's traditions divides and damages the community. A long, complex history of slavery to segregation to prejudice created two Richmonds: one black and one white. I love this place the way family loves—shamefully aware of the city's flaws, but committed to caring for its welfare. The terms "black and white" take the place of "African-American and European-American" to show Richmond's shallow prejudice as honestly as possible. In the following pages, I explore how my particular insights as an art educator can help my hometown alter its divisive traditions. How can art education contribute to a more integrated and equitable Richmond?

A Brief Overview of Slavery, Segregation, and Bad Policy:

Although Richmond and the surrounding counties currently include a wide variety of ethnic, racial, and cultural groups, the relationship between black and white residents claims special priority due to its storied past (Campbell, 2012). The first Africans came to Virginia in 1618, only 11 years after the first English settlement. For a brief moment, Africans claimed the same rights in the colony as European indentured servants, but legal distinctions soon appeared. While punishment and protection of white indentured servants took place in juried trials, black servants were entirely at the mercy of their masters. After black and white former indentured servants burned Jamestown in Bacon's Rebellion of 1675, a frightened Virginia legislature codified the lifelong enslavement of Africans. From that year until 1970, Virginia and the City of Richmond's laws expressly privileged whites over blacks (Campbell, 2011).

Plessy versus Ferguson (1896) legalized racial segregation across the Unites States, but localities designed their own systems for enforcement. Richmond used a variety of laws to separate its residents. For instance, a black man could not supervise a white man in the workplace, interracial marriage was forbidden, and people who were not allowed to marry by law were also restricted from occupying adjoining residences. White neighborhoods protected themselves by requiring deeds to include restrictive covenants barring sale to any non-white entity (Campbell, 2011). Despite numerous prohibitions, black communities in Richmond grew and flourished.

By 1911, Richmond's five wards all contained nearly fifty percent black residents, and each elected one representative to city council. To avoid loosing control of government as the majority shifted, the council created a new ward from sections of the old five settled by black families. The newborn Jackson Ward enjoyed its separation. Black merchants, artists, and thinkers congregated within the borders of the "Harlem of the South" (Campbell, 2011). Richmond's black population continued to grow, constantly gaining their own separate power and edging toward majority status.

Annexations in 1942 and 1970 intentionally added white neighborhoods from Chesterfield and Henrico Counties to Richmond's electorate. By 1970, both
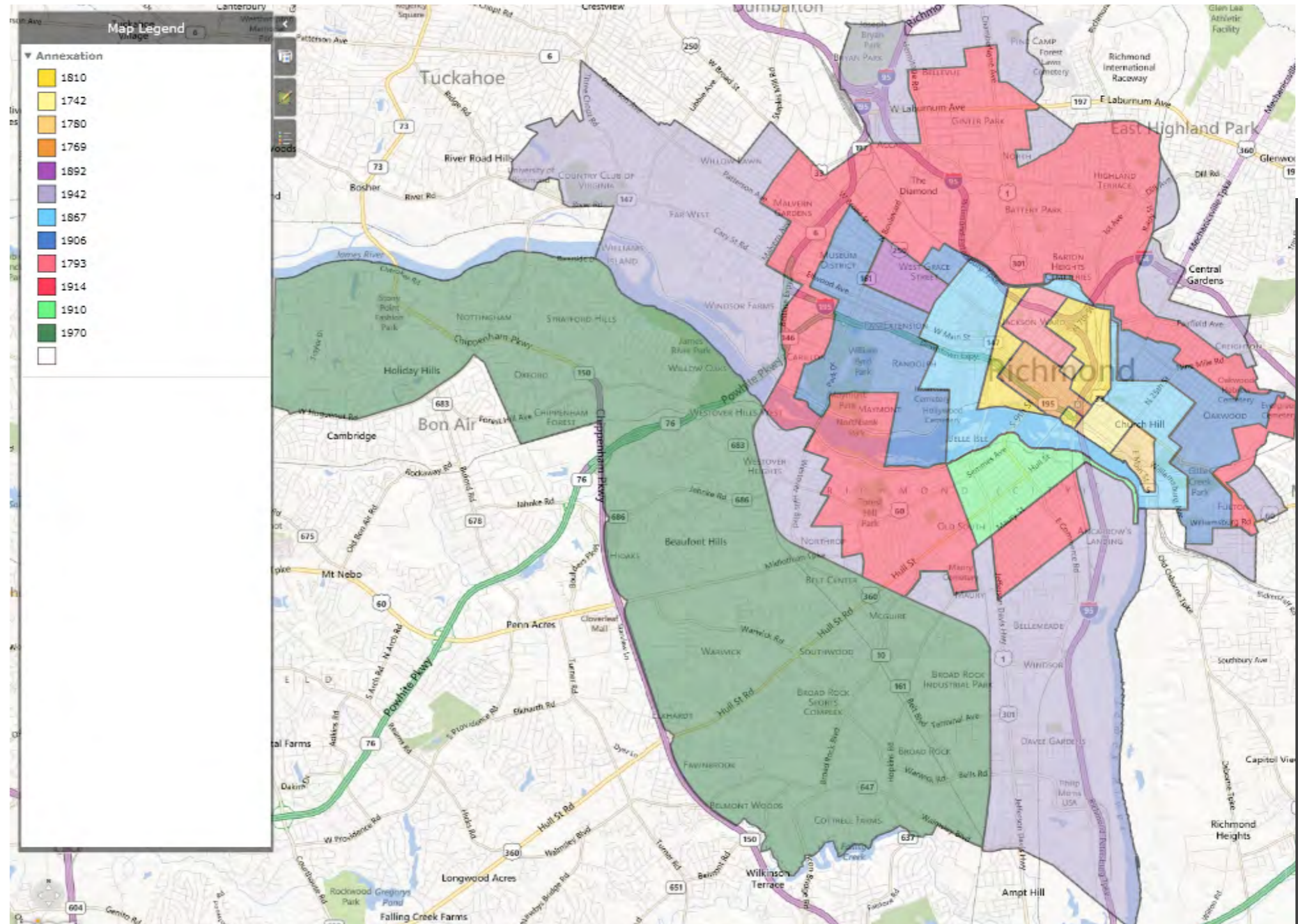
black citizens of Richmond and the white Chesterfield families absorbed by annexation realized and resented the intent of Richmond's growth. Public outrage forced city council to outlaw any further annexation in perpetuity (Moeser, 2012a).
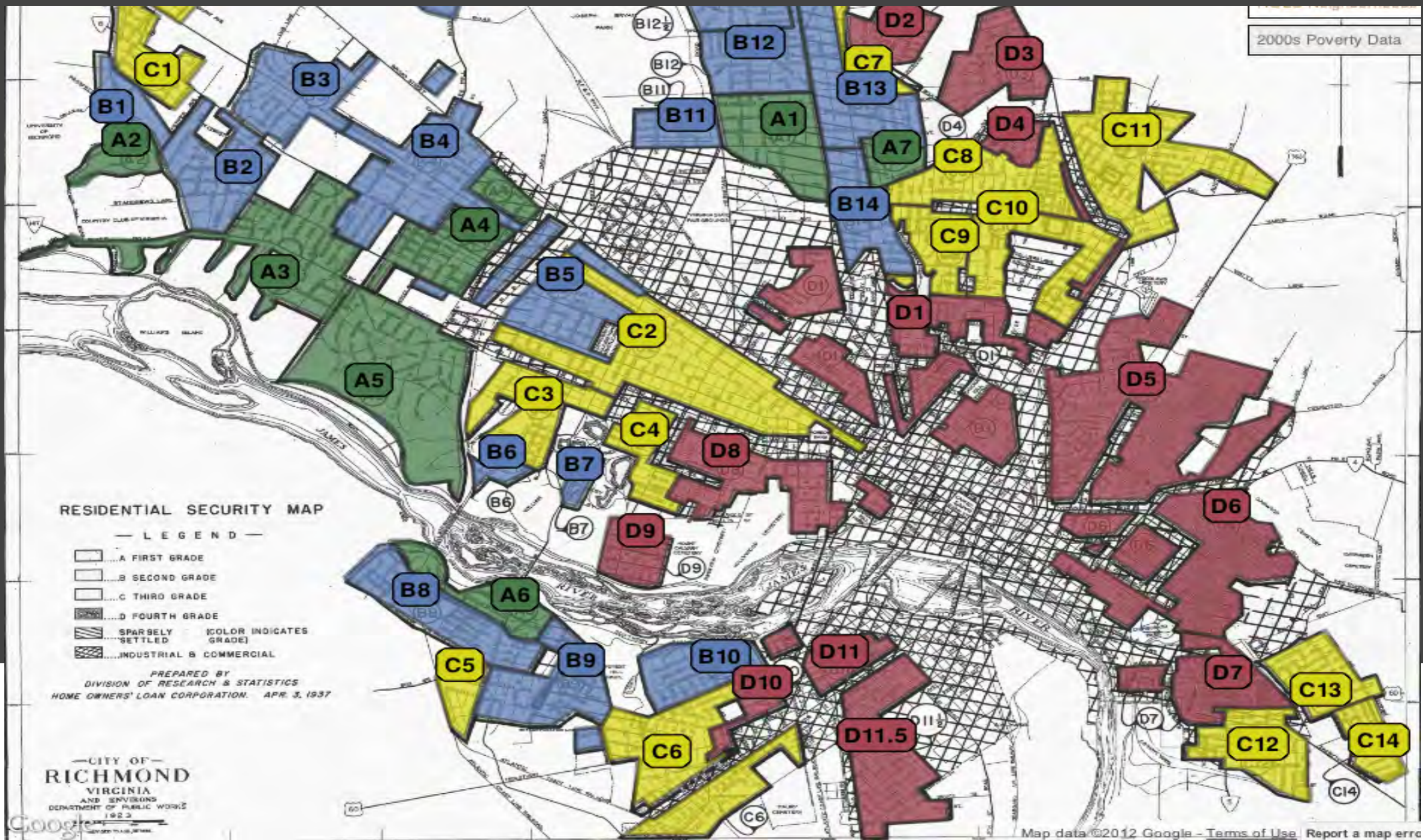
Black communities suffered a series of assaults by policy makers. Across the U.S., the practice of "redlining" limited home ownership for blacks. The 1937 HOLC (Home Owners' Loan Corporation) mapped all the major cities in the country to predict mortgage security. They ranked neighborhoods by ap-

Richmond's annexation history. Source: http://www.arcgis.com/home/item.html?id=2c2cc30aec1b4c8b8ccdbdbfdc5b9116

HOLC 1937 map of Richmond's neighborhood ratings Source: http://dsl.richmond.edu/holc/neighborhoods/map

pearance, prosperity, and "type" of inhabitants (by which they meant blacks, Jews, immigrants, and so forth). Neighborhoods protected my restrictive covenants received high ratings, while neighborhoods populated by, or likely to become populated by minorities received low ratings (Redlining Richmond, 2012). Banks refused loans to anyone buying in low-rated areas. Cash-rich slum lords took ownership of many of the redlined properties across the U.S., but some of Richmond's neighborhoods self-sustained for decades (Campbell, 2012).

In 1955, the Richmond Petersburg Turnpike Authority undermined Jackson Ward's economic success by razing hundreds of homes and businesses. The routes chosen for the future I-95 and Downtown Expressway displaced black

families and physically isolated Jackson Ward, Navy Hill, Randolph, Maymont, Oregon Hill and the Carillon from the rest of the city. Expelled families who could afford it moved to the next neighborhood over, initiating a wave of white flight to the suburbs (Moeser, 2012a). After so many decades of division, white Richmonders feared the unfamiliar other moving next door.

City developers built dense swaths of public housing projects to accommodate the families with limited financial options. Most of those living in the projects lacked the means to own a car as well. As Richmond transitioned from a public transit based city to one dependent on automobiles, the neighborhoods isolated by freeways lost access to jobs (Moeser, 2012b). Jackson Ward's thriving economy shriveled and much of Richmond's downtown fell into a cycle of deprivation still in place today (Moeser, 2012a).

HOLC 1937 map and 2010 poverty levels. Source: http://dsl.richmond. edu/holc/neighborhoods/map

RESIDENTIAL SECURITY MAP

— L E G E N D —

- A FIRST GRADE
- B SECOND GRADE
- C THIRD GRADE

21st-Century Poverty Rates Legend

- Less than 20% in both 2000 and 2009
- Greater than 20% in 2000 and Less than 20% in 2009
- Less than 20% in 2000 and Greater than 20% in 2010
- Greater than 20% in both 2000 and 2009

Richmond's Contemporary Challenges:

Richmond's social landscape remains largely unchanged since 1970. Neighborhoods left in poverty remain stuck, far from jobs or high-quality schooling. Those with the resources move in pursuit of opportunity. They choose the direction of their lives, but poverty removes choice (Utsey, 2012). White flight in the mid-twentieth century exemplified residential choice en mass (Moeser, 2012a). In keeping with the national trend, Richmond's schools show a continuation of white flight for families with school-aged children today (Lewis-McCoy, 2012). While blacks make up 50 percent of Richmond City's total population, Richmond Public Schools claim 81 percent black enrollment (2012). In contrast, Chesterfield County Public Schools have 27 percent black students, Henrico County 36 percent, and Collegiate Private School (located within the City of Richmond) has only 6 percent black enrollment (Chesterfield County Public Schools, 2012; Henrico County Public Schools, 2012; Collegiate, 2012).

Date	Black	White	Asian	Indian	Hispanic	Unspecified	TOTAL
2009/2010	85.09%	8.15%	0.70%	0.00%	5.64%	0.37%	100.00%

School	Black	White	Asian	Indian	Hispanic	Hawaiian	Unspec.	TOTAL
Bellevue	306	5	1	0	1	0	1	314
Blackwell	612	8	0	0	10	1	2	633
Broad Rock	256	10	1	0	72	0	0	339
Carver, G.W.	494	1	0	0	1	0	1	497
Cary, John B.	197	41	1	0	14	0	2	255
Chimborazo	542	10	0	1	6	0	1	560
Clark Springs	196	6	3	0	12	0	1	218
Fairfield Court	478	0	1	0	2	0	1	482
Fisher, J.B. Model	242	77	5	1	20	0	10	355
Fox, William	127	274	8	2	11	0	11	433
Francis, J.L.	414	11	6	1	75	0	0	507
Ginter Park	521	0	0	0	2	0	0	523
Greene, E.S.H.	271	9	0	0	147	2	5	434
Holton, Linwood	358	147	13	1	12	0	2	533
Mason, George	476	4	0	0	2	0	0	482
Maymont	183	4	1	0	2	1	0	191
Miles Jones	364	13	5	0	102	0	2	486
Munford, Mary	80	427	12	0	22	0		
Oak Grove	359	11	0	0	9	0		
Overby-Sheppard	345	1	0	0	3	0		
Redd, Elizabeth D.	386	18	4	3	46	0		
Reid, G.H.	421	18	2	0	108	0		
Ruffin Road/Summer Hill	380	16	0	0	161	0		
Southampton	347	37	7	0	48	0		
Stuart, J.E.B.	345	2	1	0	1	2		
Swansboro	293	7	3	0	1	0		
Westover Hills	339	8	4	0	14	0		
Woodville	563	3	0	0	4	1		

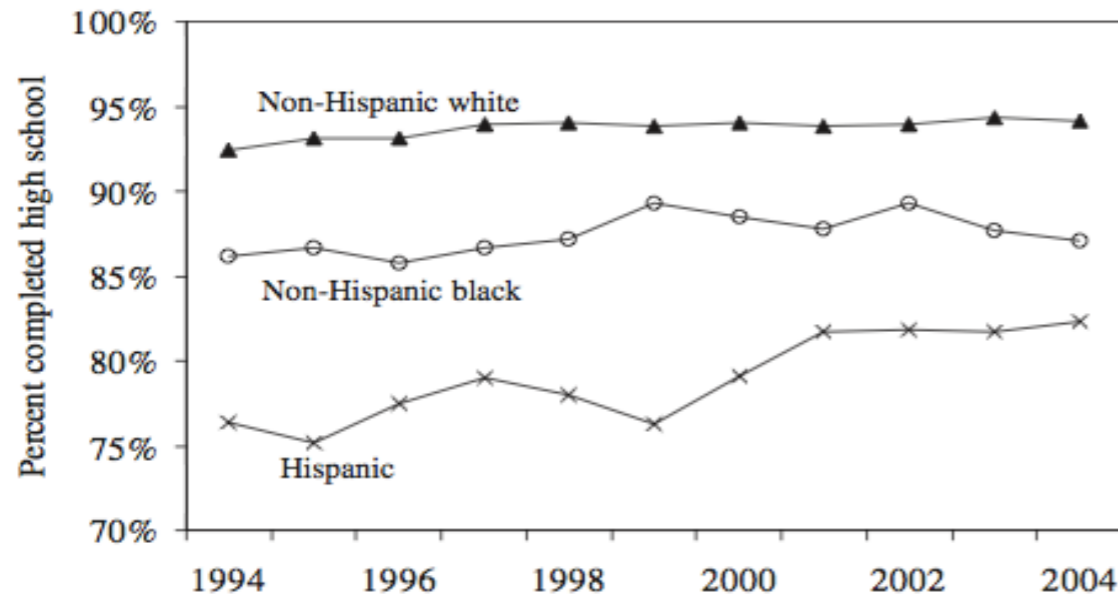| School	Black	White	Asian	Indian	Hispanic	Hawaiian
Armstrong	1040	8	0	1	6	0
Franklin Military	274	13	0	1	8	0
Huguenot	1046	77	26	1	107	0
Jefferson, Thomas	709	132	9	0	18	0
Marshall, John	910	61	1	0	4	0
Open High	149	40	0	0	1	0
Richmond Community	215	14	6	0	2	0
Wythe, George	906	44	3	1	30	0

The U.S. Supreme Court ended legal segregation of schools on the grounds that "separate but equal" education was impossible. Black schools received fewer resources than their white counterparts (Brown v. Board of Education, 1954). Richmond's heavily segregated schools of today show the reverse trend. Richmond spends $13,000 per student while Chesterfield budgets $9,000 per pupil (Richmond City Public Schools, 2012; Chesterfield County Public Schools, 2012). So why oppose segregation? If resources distribute evenly between races, where is the problem with Richmond's separate educational communities?

Left: Richmond City Public Schools enrollment by race for all schools, by elementary school, and by high school. Source: http://web.richmond.k12.va.us/AboutRPS/Statistics/Ethnic2010.aspx

Below: Richmond 2010 Poverty data and population by race. Red represents white and blue shows black. Sources: http://dsl.richmond.edu/holc/neighborhoods/map & http://www.geistweg.com/blog/?p=1063
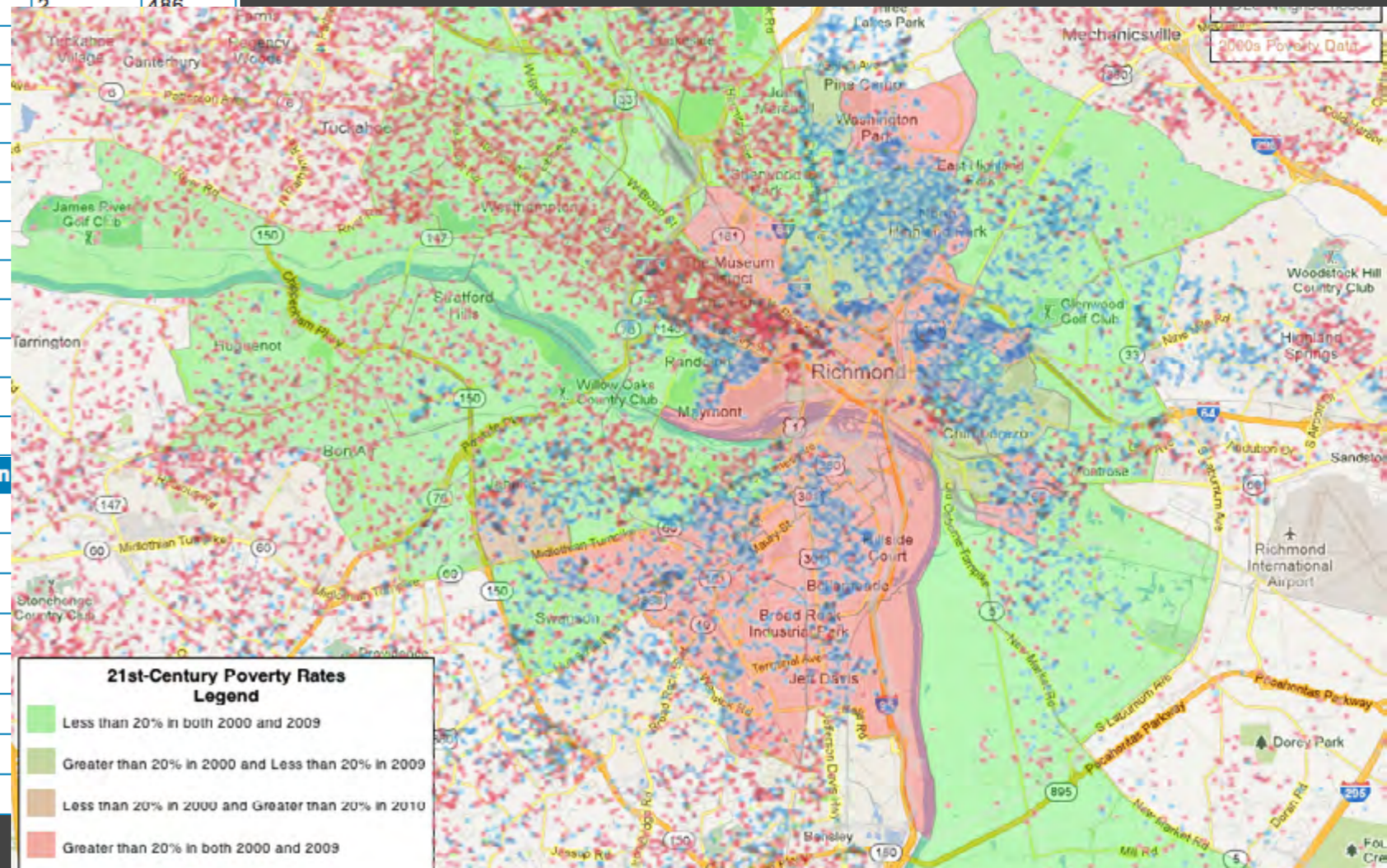
21st-Century Poverty Rates Legend

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Economic Policy Institute. (2006). Rethinking high school graduation rates and trends. Washington, DC: Mishel, L & Joydeep, R
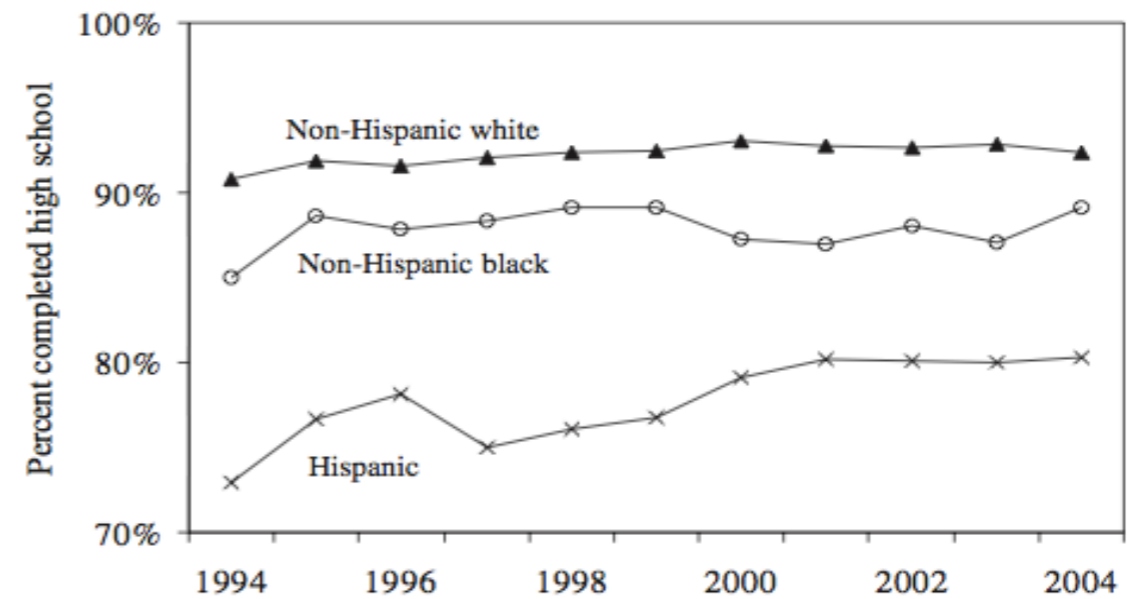
Dewey (1964) claims school is society. Children do more than practice life skills over their thirteen years in the school system; they live. Relationships bloom and wither, challenges rise up and fade away, and through these experiences, students build a gradual understanding of self and society. How can we teach our children to respect and value diversity we do not expose them to diverse peers? What messages do children receive from our current school system?

Despite increased funding for inner-city public schools, an achievement gap persists between the races. Many scholars discuss the subtle racism of lowered expectations creating a self-fulfilling stereotype threat (Bell, 2010; Boske, 2012; Desai, 2012; Economic Policy Institute, 2006; Friend, 2007; Thompson, 1997). Children observe trends within the school system first hand. When schools consistently under perform, they earn reputations for failure in the community. If those "bad" schools happen to teach predominantly black students, children notice the correlation and form their own conclusions in the absence of adult guidance. As an educator, I feel a responsibility to address racial issues in the classroom, but I also feel rather out of my depth.

An Approach to Anti-Racism and Empowerment:

I am an affluent white woman, raised in the Chesterfield County school system. I will never completely comprehend the minority experience. However, I recognize the privilege society grants me because of my skin color and cul-

tural background. My teachers expect me to succeed, police offer protection instead of mistrust, and employers judge me positively based on appearance. I want these advantages for all Richmonders. I believe we all have an obligation to strive for equity in our surroundings (King, 1963). While I feel compelled to help my hometown, I also recognize my limitations in this effort. I know how to succeed in white culture, but if our city values diversity, success through black culture must be possible as well (Desai, 2010).

The Author

In limited instances, segregation can provide positive environments for black citizens. Jackson Ward in the 1920's, for instance, boasted economic opportunity and the security of a cohesive community (Utsey, 2012). While Richmond no longer legally enforces segregation, the city continues to self-segregate for many reasons. Cultures develop and persist by proximity. Perceived difference between groups causes anxiety and unrest, and people often feel more accepted and valued within their own group. Imagine the stress of being one of those first black children to integrate schools after

Brown versus the Board of Education. The same experience of otherness occurs today. Black adolescents self-segregate within integrated schools to feel more valued and to gain popularity (Bronson & Merryman, 2009b).

Bussing failed to integrate school systems because it overlooked the root cause of inequality: prejudice (Kozol, 2005). Many reformers calling for integrated schools focus on transferring black students to predominantly white schools. For what reason? Why should black children perform better when surrounded by white peers? Advocates must rethink the reasons for integration (Utsey, 2012). Who benefits and how?

Black neighborhoods need and deserve resources to counteract Richmond's oppressive policies enacted over the last century. Better public transportation, tax incentives to lure employers within the city, and mixed-income community plans must play a part in restoring economic opportunity to disenfranchised neighborhoods (Campbell, 2012; Moeser, 2012a). Unfortunately, I lack the expertise required to recommend policies of this nature. My contribution capitalizes instead on my particular talent: art education for social justice.

My efforts toward integration derive from the following reasons: White Richmonders miss out on a large portion of the city's culture by allowing segregation to continue. They may also feel shame at their own prejudice toward members of other groups. Children naturally discriminate against people who look different from them if they are not explicitly taught otherwise (Bronson & Merryman, 2009a). Students, especially in segregated schools, require direct instruction to clarify and reinforce our national value that all men are created equal. Segregation further damages the white psyche by rendering half the population mysterious, and possibly frightening.

A new challenge to discussing race comes in the form of color-blind multiculturalism. Many members of today's youth claim they do not see race (Desai, 2010; Seltzer-Kelly et al, 2010). Anxieties about appearing racist prevent students from discussing race or asking about different cultural practices (Shin, 2011). As a result, white people are much more likely to pretend racism is a thing of the past than members of minority groups. Whites tend to judge America's progress toward equality by how far we've come, while minorities look at how far we have left to go (NPR, 2012). In Richmond, the distance to equity appears particularly wide.

The strong correlation between race and money in Richmond compels some blacks to approach whites in pursuit of opportunity (Utsey, 2012). Whites do not face the same dilemma. They require manufactured opportunities to disabuse their racial anxieties. Exposure to diversity is necessary for this. Schools cannot force enrollment by quota, but they can design inter-group experiences with sister schools nearby. Local exchange programs allow the most idealistic and open students to act as emissaries and hosts. Whatever measures appear in the curriculum, the intention should be for all groups to benefit equally.

Art as Critical Self-Examination:

Art education pairs with social justice learning particularly well. Individuals construct their understanding of the world by synthesizing experiences into narratives (Dewey, 1964). Living in a segregated and unequal environment results in personal narratives mirroring that condition. Richmond's inequalities in test scores and poverty levels might lead educators to believe a narrative like, "black students generally cannot achieve the same goals as whites." While the distinct data trends that contribute to such a story may be true, the narrative is damaging and unfair (Bell, 2010; Friend, 2007). Lowered expectations cause educators to give up on their students more quickly and signal to students that their teachers do not believe in their potential (Desai, 2010). Educators have a responsibility to examine their personal narratives to ensure fairness in their practice.

Art made by a school administrator as critical self-reflection (Boske, 2012)

Art offers a venue for critical self-examination. The visual nature of art matches the visual experience of perceiving race. The process of making art tests, expresses, and re frames nuanced narratives with emotional acuity. Visual messages subtly but pervasively shape our understanding. Practitioners can intentionally evaluate and transform the story of their artwork to build a healthier concept of race and resist themes of inequality (Bell, 2010; Boske, 2012; Clover, 2006; Desai, 2010; Najuana, 2012). The imaginative quality of art practice encourages empathy with diverse perspectives and brings idealism closer to possibility by seeking creative solutions (Efland, 2004; Shin, 2011).

Art as Empowerment:

Youth face a constant barrage of images shaping their ideas about society. Unfortunately, stereotypes in the media largely go unexamined. Images like this one perpetuate ideals of beauty and individual value that ignore or abuse black self-concept. The tile of this magazine issue, "stepping out of the shadows", reveals a problematic message. The surrounding models fade into the background. They look admiringly at the central ideal of white beauty, becoming merely shadows. The poses convey a power structure valuing the white model above all her black counterparts.

Left: March, 2012 cover of FHM Magazine from the Philippines

Right: Kehinde Wiley's painting Willem van Heythuysen, 2005

Teaching children to look critically at such images gives them the ability to decide whether or not to internalize the message. Visual culture constantly and unconsciously becomes incorporated in the world-view of the audience. Students need the opportunity to counteract discriminatory cultural messaging by becoming active makers of culture themselves. When they understand the role of the artist in shaping visual content, magazine covers become nothing more than a single perspective to be enjoyed or left alone (Bell, 2010; Desai, 2010; Najuana, 2012; Seltzer-Kelly et al, 2010).

When students see themselves presented as active contributors, they begin to believe in their own efficacy (Bianchi, 2011; Nelson, 2011). Art can be a powerful voice. As community members witness and honor young people's artistic creations, stereotypes predicting failure fade away. Young artists understand their ability to communicate ideas through a productive medium (Nelson, 2011). Once students respect their own power, diverse perspectives become less threatening. They can honor the values of others while recognizing their own viewpoint as legitimate (Bell, 2010; Nelson, 2011).

Student and artist work from the "Global Dimensions" case study of art for intercultural understanding (Bianchi, 2011)

Anti-Racism Art Program Designs:

Education, particularly in the arts has the power to alter expectations of power distribution and train away prejudice. I recommend Richmond initiate several programs to capitalize on this potential and increase the likelihood for integration in the city. Arts-based professional development for educators trains them to evaluate and alter their ideas of race when appropriate. This self-critique works to eliminate the subtle racism of lowered expectations (Boske, 2012). Training on how to lead classroom discussions on race should abate anxieties arising from such a sensitive topic. I suggest Richmond public schools set up a summer institute for teachers and administrators to deal with these themes. Enrollment should ideally be open to educators from the surrounding counties as well in order to incorporate diverse perspectives.

Once educators are properly trained in anti-racist education, local curriculum can take on equity as an area of emphasis. Richmond must strive to mitigate the divisive message of heavily segregated schools. Beginning in Kindergarten, children should access scheduled opportunities to discuss their thoughts and feelings about race in a supportive classroom environment (Bronson & Merryman, 2009a). Popular narratives of color-blind society require intentional investigation to identify subtle stereotyping (Desai, 2010). In high school, students can take on the same arts-based learning methods that teachers use in the summer institute to critically self-examine possible prejudices.

Community building programs encourage constructive inter-group dialog. After school art for social justice clubs, with transportation to community centers provided, may allow students to experience new collaborations with their neighbors. Segments of Maggie Walker Governor's school, private school, county school, and Richmond's inner city student populations can come together for studio art experiences. The access to diversity will enable students to witness the value inherent in other communities and prepare them for negotiating inter-group relationships in the adult world (Najuana, 2012; Nelson, 2011; Shin, 2011).

These art education programs will not resolve segregation and inequality by themselves, but they do play an essential role in reshaping Richmond's culture. The shift in perception away from stereotypes and toward intercultural understanding will prepare Richmond's population to adapt as policy makers design further interventions for integration in the city. If educators can combat the harmful narratives of expectations based on race, the cycle of prejudice and poverty may begin to relax. Richmond's neighborhoods trapped in poverty will find a little less challenge on the way to success.

HOLC Neighborhoods

2000s Poverty Data

An idealized view of Richmond's future race and poverty levels