Through art and photography, *Reckoning: Protest. Defiance. Resilience.* demonstrates the struggle Black Americans have faced in their pursuit to enjoy the fundamental rights and freedoms promised in the United States constitution. In the face of systemic and direct racism and violence, the resistance and resilience of Black Americans have inspired hope and created change. Black artists document and challenge racial and social inequity through their work, inspiring viewers to resist inequalities, remember the past, and rise up in spite of the pain to continue the quest for justice.

This guide is a tool caregivers and educators can use to facilitate conversations and connections to art in the *Reckoning* exhibit with children.

Try these suggested steps as you move through the exhibit and guide: Start by finding the artwork featured in the guide and similar art nearby. Pause, look carefully and share your observations. Read the guide’s words aloud and ask questions to spark a conversation. Be sure to invite children to ask questions too! Before moving on to the next gallery or topic, say an affirmation together.

Remember that this guide is just one part of very special and important conversations that will continue throughout a child’s life. Every child has unique needs. Use what best supports the little one in your life to feel loved and safe, empowered to resist injustice, engaged to remember history and inspired to rise up as a change maker.

This resource was designed by the NMAAHC Early Childhood Education Initiative Team. All art and objects featured in this guide are from the collection of the National Museum of African American History and Culture.
Exhibit Entrance
Exhibit Exit

1. New Age of Slavery by Patrick Campbell
   This artwork shows images of lynching and gun violence.

What do you think of when you see the American flag? The American Flag can mean a lot of different things to different people. Even though our country’s important laws say that all people have a right to live, be free and be happy, not everyone gets those things — and that is not fair. The artist is using this painting of the American flag to tell us that.

2. Untitled (Lynching of a Woman) by Mildred Jean Thompson
   This artwork shows nudity, lynching and KKK members.

This artwork suggests nudity and injuries.

3. Ghetto Krater by Roberto Lugo
4. Rodney King, Before BLM by Shaun Leonardo
5. Flower Memorial for Pee Chee by Patrick Martinez

These artworks show images of gun violence and police brutality.

Sometimes, police officers make choices that help and protect our communities. Sometimes police officers make choices that are hurtful and unfair. When anyone, including police officers, treats people badly because of their skin color, that is a hurtful choice. No one deserves to be hurt or treated unfairly because of who they are. We can all make choices that are fair, kind and helpful.

6. Insecurity Past, Insecurity Present, Insecurity Future by Colette Veasey-Cullors

When you enter the exhibit, you'll hear a series of sounds from protest marches: singing, chanting and the sounds of crowds being tear gassed and shot with rubber pellets. These sounds are only in the entry gallery.

The Reckoning exhibit tells stories of injustice, resistance and resilience. Though these topics can be discussed with children, some of the art pieces representing these concepts contain imagery that is not developmentally appropriate for young children.

To support caregivers to explore this exhibit in a way that best honors their child’s developmental and emotional needs, we’ve provided a preview of the sensitive and graphic imagery and audio in the exhibit.

The following family guide includes questions and activities focused on art in this exhibit that caregivers may use to discuss this special exhibit’s themes in a way that is empowering, engaging and appropriate for children.

NOTE TO ADULTS: EXHIBIT WARNINGS
Humans are different in a multitude of ways, from how we look and live to the ways we think and feel. We can celebrate and learn from our differences. But sometimes, people are treated unfairly because of the ways they are different and that’s not okay. When unjust things happen, there are people who choose to help by using their voices to tell others what they want to change and why we all deserve to be treated with love and respect.

When do you feel brave or strong?
Standing up and speaking out against things that are unfair aren’t easy. When people join together to let others know their thoughts and feelings, they may feel more brave and strong.

People often use their voices to chant or sing together. Songs can encourage people during difficult times and spread important messages about changes our world needs.

Try singing an empowering song together!

At marches, people can express their emotions about what is happening in the world and in their own lives. How do you think the people in the photos are feeling? What makes you think that?

How does it make you feel when you are treated unfairly?

Your voice is worthy of being heard and has the power to change the world. One way to share your voice, emotions and ideas is with words on a sign.

Share a belief or feeling that is important to you by writing words on this sign. Then, say them out loud!

My voice is powerful.
We are stronger together.
REMEMBER.

Art can help us to remember people and moments in time by telling stories in creative ways. Art in this section of the exhibit tells stories about challenges and accomplishments in Black communities. We can honor those who have come before us by remembering them and learning from their stories. Their stories can also inspire our words and actions today.

Remember Black voices.
Find two art pieces that are filled with colorful words. Look closely. What letters and words do you see? (Try finding the words Black, beautiful, and families.) These paintings help us to remember the way Black women have used their voices throughout history to make a positive and powerful difference in the world by telling others when things are unfair and need to change.

Remember Harriet Tubman.
Look closely at the large quilted tapestry of Harriet Tubman. What colors and patterns do you see? How is the quilt the same and different than the small sculpture nearby? Harriet Tubman was a brave, smart, and innovative woman. She helped other enslaved African Americans leave the places where they were hurt and treated badly because of their skin color. This work of art helps us to remember Harriet Tubman and can inspire us to help others.

How do you help others in your community?

Note to Adults on Talking About Police Brutality:
Finding a way to explain to children that police can be helpers, protectors and, sometimes, hurters is challenging. When introducing the concept of police violence, start with topics children understand well, like fairness, and invite them to share their thoughts and questions. By beginning conversations this way, you can layer in increasingly complex ideas in a way that better meets the child’s needs and level of understanding so that they feel safe and loved during these discussions. Due to the complexity of these conversations, they should happen when both the child and the adult are emotionally and mentally ready to have them. If you’d like to begin the conversation today, consider saying phrases like these:

It is never okay to treat someone badly because of their skin color. Many police officers help people in their communities and keep them safe. Some police officers make choices that are unfair and hurtful because of how someone looks. Some of the art in this section tells these stories and helps us to remember the people who have been hurt and those who stood up to make our world more fair and safe. I want you to know that I am helping to make the world more safe and fair for you! I love you.

I can learn from the past.
We can create a better future.

Did you use your voice to say something important?
When have you made a choice that showed care or love?

Draw a picture of ways that you or people in your family and community have helped others.
**REMEMBERING BREONNA TAYLOR**

**Pause.**
Before telling your child the name, story or details behind this portrait, pause and give them space to look closely, think about what they see and share how they are feeling. Your child may be familiar with Breonna Taylor’s name or face or may have yet to learn about her life. Listening will allow you to meet your child where they are. Taking the time to reflect in this way is also a practice that helps us to remember and honor the beauty, strength and humanity of people in our communities whose lives have been taken.

**Take a deep breath together. Look carefully at this painting. What do you see? How does this painting make you feel?**

**Say her name.**
This is Breonna Taylor. She was a daughter, a sister and a friend to a lot of people. She was an EMT who helped people when they were hurt. She had dreams to learn more and do more to help others. Breonna Taylor loved to play board games, watch movies and tell jokes. She had special people in her life who she loved and who loved her. She was a strong, smart and beautiful person.

She was worthy of being celebrated, loved and kept safe but her life was unjustly taken away.

When that happened, people who knew and loved Breonna were heartbroken. There were also people who didn’t know her that were sad and mad (and still are). It’s normal to care and feel a lot of emotions when something painful or unfair happens to someone else. We can love people outside of our family and want to find ways to remember them and tell others about them.

**Remember.**
People have found many ways to tell Breonna Taylor’s story and remember her life. Some people have marched and made signs. Others have sung songs or written poems. Artist Amy Sherald painted a portrait to remember Breonna’s life!

**One powerful way to remember people who are important to us is by saying their names. When we say something, like a name, out loud we are showing that it matters.**

**Use this space to write the names of special people in your life.**
You are important, special and worthy of good feelings, experiences and treatment just as you are! That means, you don’t have to earn love, happiness or respect, you are worthy of great things just because you are you. Who you are, how you feel and what you think matters. Sometimes it can be hard to remember your worth, especially when we go through hard times, hear unkind words and see unfair or painful actions.

Keep shining.

Everyone is worthy of shining bright! We all have a light that’s worthy of sharing with the world. You share this special light when you tell stories, sing loud, dance big, create art and play imaginatively! Your light sparkles and shines when you’re simply being yourself.

How many art pieces can you find that shine bright with gold or have shining candles in them?

Count together!

How do you shine?

Each time you find candlelight or shiny gold, talk about one way that you shine everyday!

Then, draw a self-portrait inspired by Stephen Towns’ Offering series.

Everyone deserves to feel free to be themselves safely and happily! Sometimes people say that that kind of freedom feels like flying. Close your eyes and imagine your arms are wings and you’re flying high in the sky! What do you see? How does it feel?

Look for art that shows a person flying into the air. Find and count butterflies.
Reckoning

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Cover Page


Exhibit Warnings


Resist


Remember


_The People’s Uprising, Justice for Breonna Taylor, protesting the decision by the Kentucky grand jury to indict former officers in connection to the shooting death of Breonna Taylor, Atlanta, GA._ by Sheila Pree Bright, 2020. Collection of the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, Gift of Sheila Pree Bright, © Sheila Pree Bright. 2021.56.3

Rise


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