WARRIOR'S PATH
LEADER TRAINING | 2025

Talking With Monuments:
What they Don't Say and The Stories Being Missed



NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE Humanities

NEH Certified Discussion Leader Training

MEDICAL COLLEGE OF WISCONSIN

War Memorial Center

Way To Go!

Congratulations, we did it again. This is our third NEH grant for the Warriors Path. Because of your expertise, skill, and continued dedication to assist fellow Veterans in their moral injury healing, along with the expanded mission to educate the public, we can continue this work.

Warriors Path is funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities. This a prestigious and very competitive award and we won it because of the strong partnerships, expertise of all the people involved, and most importantly, the feedback and suggestions you provided us in the last program. We continue to expand on the content and make a difference in veterans' lives.

The goal of this program builds on our previous work where we learned that certain groups of veterans were silenced, their stories rendered invisible, and their experiences undervalued. This contributed to moral injury in unexpected ways. We came to learn that this experience is understood as "erasure" in certain communities. For our veterans this erasure was experienced as:

Society's collective indifference of their service, history, and achievements, contributing to feeling unseen and unrecognized.

This invisibility has everything to do with how veterans are acknowledged and commemorated. Whose stories are told and whose service is remembered? Who gets monuments and where are they located? What are they made of? And does this matter?
Talking with Monuments focuses on how we memorialize, who we memorialize and what the personal and collective costs of being omitted from history are. How can we even know about groups of people who served if that opportunity was never offered... or taken away.

Through facilitated discussion at memorial sites, using poems and comics as a conversation starter, you will lead discussions around moral injury and "erasure".

Our goals of this program are to:

1. Decrease Veterans' moral injury through discussions, storytelling, and validation of history, sacrifice and experience.

2. Expand Cultural Narratives around military service and who serves.

3. Amplify the stories and experiences of veterans who have been silenced or erased.

Thank you for all you do and your continued commitment to this community engaged work.

Respectfully,

Katinka Hooyer, PhD



Any views, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this discussion guide do not necessarily represent those of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Talking with Monuments
A Brief Intro

Talking with Monuments: Veteran Dialogues on Remembering is a 5-week public program that engages war memorials as powerful stages to recall and reflect on military service. Often, monuments tell one story, at the cost of omitting others. As a result, the experiences of diverse veterans and their stories become overlooked or forgotten.

This 'erasure' can intensify veterans' post-military reintegration challenges. Veteran leaders will lead difficult discussions around the topics of status and belonging, heroism, representation, exclusion, remembrance, and impermanence. Moral injury will be thread that weaves these discussions together.



African American Memorial



MacArthur Monument



Eternal Flame

We visit 5 memorial sites, with historical mini lectures covering the Civil War, WWI and II, Korea, Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan, and Pre-colonial Tribal Wars. Participants recite paired poetry and comics at these sites, activating remembrance and expanding cultural narratives around who serves and the stories that are untold.

Through these site visits and veteran-led conversations, we cultivate dialogues around military service, public representation, belonging, and moral injury. Our aim is to acknowledge the stories that have not been told, removed, or silenced, and gain a deeper understanding of diverse veterans' lives and service. 3 cycles of programming for veterans, veteran service providers, and the public, will occur between May 2025 and August 2026.

Our Collective Responsibilities

Thank you for your commitment to fellow Veterans and to the NEH Discussion Leader training. Here is a quick summary of our responsibilities to you and your responsibilities as a leader for the Talking with Monuments project.

I understand that the project team will:

- Provide me with materials and training needed to facilitate discussion groups
- Provide me with the flyers and information for promoting discussion series
- Pay me a $300 stipend for the training
- Pay me $150 for each discussion session
- Be available to me to develop my skills and practice
- Check in with me about how discussions are going
- Provide respectful feedback
- Respect my perspective and suggestions to improve the program
- Prepare me for Veteran-Civilian dialogues
- Share opportunities for professional advancement
- Access support and provide additional resources to the best of their ability.

I understand my responsibilities related to my leader role are:

- Attend all training as outlined in the syllabus
- Do the 'pre-work' for training and for each session I lead
- Attend the 2-hour practice session before the 5-week program starts
- Attend planning session before my discussion series
- Let Katinka know one week in advance, if possible, if I cannot make a session
- Follow the agreed upon structure of the discussion groups
- Promote my groups and recruit participants
- Provide program feedback that is specific, relevant, and respectful
- Not discuss participants' personal information or comments outside of the circle
- Consult with Katinka before organizing groups and talking with media
- Acknowledge/tag the NEH, Warrior's Path in media communications
- Talk with Katinka if I have concerns about my participation, structure, content

_____ _____

Project Director **Date**

_____ _____

Participant **Date**

American Anthropology Association Statement on Race

(Translated in common language.)

The idea of race was created in the 1700s in colonial America to separate groups: European settlers, Native Americans, and enslaved Africans. It was based on an old belief that people could be ranked in a hierarchy created by God or nature. Race was used to justify treating some groups unfairly, especially to support slavery. In the 1800s, some even falsely claimed that Africans, Native Americans, and Europeans were separate species to justify racism.

Race is socially constructed, meaning the concept was created and given meaning by a group of people, not a biological or natural fact based in science.
Physical traits, like skin color or hair type, change gradually across regions and do not predict other traits. For example, having dark skin does not mean someone will have a certain type of hair or nose shape. This proves that dividing people into races based on appearance is random and not scientific.

The idea of race spread worldwide and was used to divide, control, and rank people. In the 1400s African slavery was justified on the concept of race, and in the late 1800s, Europeans used race to discriminate against each other. During World War II, the Nazis took these ideas to an extreme, leading to the Holocaust, where millions of people, including Jews, Roma (Gypsies), Africans, and others, were murdered.

Over time, race became a way of thinking that shaped how people saw differences and group behavior. Many myths developed about race, falsely linking physical traits to intelligence and abilities. However, scientists now know that race is not based on biology but on social ideas.

We also understand that culture, not genetics, shapes human behavior. People are not born with a set culture or language; they learn these from birth. Anyone, regardless of race, can learn and adapt to different cultures. History shows that immigrants from many backgrounds have adopted American cultural traits.

How people are treated in a society affects their success.

The idea of race was created to keep some groups at the bottom while giving others power and privilege.

Unfortunately, this system worked too well, creating deep inequalities. Today, we know that differences in success between racial groups are not due to biology but to historical and social factors like education, economy, and politics.

Session 1: Erasure and Moral Injury

Katinka Hooyer, PhD

Objectives: In this session we will introduce the concept of erasure and learn how it relates to moral injury and belonging, specifically in the commemoration of military service and public memorials. We will discuss examples of erasure in past and contemporary history and identify the types of moral injuries these erasures may create. Finally, we will introduce discussion strategies to draw out experiences of erasure, moral injury, and service.

Pre-work

- *Tribe* by Sebastian Junger (on belonging and identity). This book takes about 3 hours to read.
- *You can listen to it here*: **www.youtube.com/watch?v=1ozcDgt80dA**
- Please read and watch these brief segments from a variety of news outlets:

www.nbcnews.com/news/nbcblk/historic-figures-cut-military-websites-others-are-restored-dei-ban-rcna197336

www.foxnews.com/us/richmond-va-removes-last-confederate-statue

www.tiktok.com/@sabishammered/video/7474955516922367237

www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/voices/2025/03/24/medgar-evers-erased-arlington-trump-dei/82525769007

www.military.com/daily-news/2025/03/24/pentagons-diversity-purge-officials-describe-scramble-remove-and-then-restore-online-content.html

www.cbsnews.com/video/nasas-hidden-figures-awarded-congressional-gold-medal

0:00 – 0:10 Project Overview and Objectives

0:10 – 0:20 Definitions

The **erasure** of diverse military history is deeply linked with **moral injury**, reinforcing feelings of betrayal, invisibility, and historical injustice.

Moral Injury
The psychological, emotional, and spiritual harm that comes from experiences that go against your core values of right and wrong.

Erasure
The practice of collective indifference that renders certain people and groups invisible, thereby dismissing their pain, history, and achievements.

Belonging
The feeling of being accepted, valued, and connected to a group, community, or place. It means feeling recognized, included, and supported as an integral part of a larger whole.

0:20 - 0:45 How are belonging, erasure and moral injury connected?

Damage to Identity and Belonging

The destruction of cultural heritage can have a profound impact on the identity and sense of belonging of communities.

Moral injury is often linked to a betrayal by a trusted authority, and historical erasure is a form of institutional betrayal when:

Official narratives exclude or minimize contributions of diverse military personnel.

Commemorations, monuments, or history books fail to include these groups, reinforcing a narrow and often misleading version of military history.

Policy decisions, such as school curriculum changes or removal of historical markers, erase these contributions from public memory.

For example, the removal of references to LGBTQ+ service members, who were historically forced to hide their identities under policies like "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," continues the institutional betrayal of those who fought despite the discrimination they experienced in the military.

Moral Injury and the Betrayal of Service

Moral injury often results from a sense of betrayal by an institution or leadership, particularly when an individual's values and sacrifices are disregarded. When the military history of diverse groups—such as African Americans, Native Americans, Latinx, Asian Americans, women, and LGBTQ+ service members—is erased or downplayed, it creates a **collective moral injury** by:

Negating the sacrifices of these individuals, who served despite discrimination and systemic barriers.

Invalidating their experiences, making them feel that their service was unrecognized or unworthy of remembrance.

Diminishing historical accountability, as removing records of diverse contributions often ignores past injustices, such as segregation, forced enlistment, or discrimination within the armed forces.

For example, Black soldiers in World War I and World War II, like the Harlem Hellfighters or the Tuskegee Airmen, faced racism during and after their service. When their history is erased or not taught, it reinforces the moral injury, specifically the sense of betrayal and damage to identity of those who lived through this injustice This extends to their descendants who continue to fight for recognition.

"But what is a memorial, when you come right down to it, but a commemoration of wounds endured? Endured, and resented. Without memory, there can be no revenge." – Margaret Atwood

The Psychological Impact of Erasure:

Erasure of military history affects not just those who served but also their families and communities. This erasure can contribute to moral injury by:

Distorting collective memory, leading to a loss of identity and pride in one's heritage.

Deepening systemic inequalities, as lack of representation in military history can contribute to modern disparities in veteran support and recognition.

Creating intergenerational trauma, where families of veterans feel disconnected from their ancestors' sacrifices because they are not acknowledged in mainstream history.

For example, Native American code talkers played a vital role in World War II, yet their contributions were classified for decades, preventing their communities from receiving due recognition. This secrecy and erasure contribute to feelings of betrayal and invisibility, key components of moral injury.

Recognizing and restoring these contributions is essential not only for honoring those who served but also for repairing the broader psychological and societal wounds caused by their omission from history. That's what this program is about.

00:45 - 1:05 Examples of Erasure in Past and Present

The Thiepval Memorial to the Missing of the Somme is a major war memorial to 72,312 missing British and South African men who died in the Battles of the Somme of the First World War between 1915 and 1918 with no known grave. In other words, the bodies were so fragmented and dispersed that they eventually became churned up into the surrounding soil. Their remains are still there, a hundred years later. Even while the quiet industry of farming continues in the Somme, bones are still found and dug up to this day. The scars in the landscape are still visible from mines that were detonated and trenches that were dug … in other words, the bodies of these men were never found.

On the walls of Thiepval Memorial, you can find the names of these 72,000 servicemen, including the names of white South African soldiers who fought and died in the battles of Delville Wood nearby. No black South African service members are included because then, it was inconceivable that a black man would be allowed to take up arms against a white man on the Western Front. Black South African servicemen were not allowed to carry weapons and are therefore not included on this memorial, even though many were killed.

Military monuments serve as a bridge between generations, ensuring that sacrifices and lessons from history remain relevant.

"Monuments are the grappling-irons that bind one generation to another." – Joseph Jouber



Thiepval Memorial. Photo by Paul Emmanuel.



Woman reading names. Photo by Paul Emmanuel

An example of **erasure in monuments** is the removal of Confederate statues in the United States. Many statues of Confederate leaders, such as Robert E. Lee and Jefferson Davis, were erected during the Jim Crow era to reinforce white supremacy. In recent years, these monuments have been removed or relocated due to their association with racism and oppression. Nearly 100 monuments were removed in 2020, about 700 remain.



Crews attach straps in July to the statue of Confederate Gen. J.E.B. Stuart in Richmond, Va. The statue was one of several that were removed by the city in 2020 following nationwide protests against systemic racism - Steve Helber/AP

For instance, the **Robert E. Lee statue in Richmond, Virginia**, was removed in 2021 after standing for over a century. Some view this as an effort to correct historical narratives and remove symbols of oppression, while others see it as erasing history. This debate reflects the complex ways societies decide which histories to commemorate and which to reconsider.

Most recently in 2025, the US government's initiative to stop diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives has resulted in the removal (for review and possible permanent removal) of the sacrifices and contributions of people of color who served in the United States military.

For example, Doris Miller, the first African American sailor to receive the Navy Cross for his bravery during the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, was removed from the Navy site. Miller's image was used on recruitment posters to recruit Black Americans.

The amount of truth that stands to be lost is substantial, given the countless contributions by Black people, people of color and members of the LGBTQ community who were military heroes and historical figures.

Some view DEI as discriminatory equity ideology that divides the military force, unit cohesion, and interferes with the services' core warfighting mission. To maintain a cohesive force these symbols and histories of women, Native American, and Black veterans must be removed. Others see it as erasing history and using DEI as a way to conceal a collective history that includes all peoples. Some veterans have expressed that

"There was no race or ethnicity when we served together. It was when we got home that we were treated differently." – Hispanic Vietnam Veteran

1:05 – 1:15 **Break**

1:15 – 1:30 **Contemporary and Historical Erasure**

Impact on Moral Injury

In what ways does the removal of historical contributions reflect institutional betrayal? How might this betrayal exacerbate feelings of mistrust and distress among veterans?

How does the erasure of Black, Hispanic, Indigenous, and female service members from military records and public websites contribute to a broader societal moral injury?

Impact on Legacy and Belonging

How does historical erasure contribute to intergenerational trauma among the descendants

1:30 – 2:00 **Recognition & Erasure: Sample Discussion**

Consider if there were moments during your service when you felt unseen or overlooked.

How has the lack of recognition affected your life after military service?

How has it affected how your sense of belonging?

Have you ever felt that your contributions as a veteran were ignored or forgotten? Can you describe an example?

How does it feel to know that your story, or the stories of veterans like you, has been left out of history, or the public eye?

What do you wish people knew about your service and the challenges you faced?

2:00 **Closing and Debrief**

Session 2: Skills Training

Patricia Clason

Objectives: In this advanced emotional intelligence workshop, you will learn strategies to develop and maintain connection and safety in group facilitation, and how to support participants in moving through emotions. We will learn how to stay grounded during story sharing and respectfully support participants who may become activated.

0:00 – 0:10 Check-in

0:10 – 0:30 Attunement | Mis-attunement | Re-attunement: Developing Connection and Safety

Attunement

Attunement is the ability to deeply understand and connect with another person's emotions. It means being fully present, picking up on their feelings through words, tone, and body language, and responding in a way that shows empathy and understanding. *When you're attuned to someone, they feel heard, valued, and emotionally connected to you.*

How might you attune to group members?

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Mis-attunement

Mis-attunement happens when someone doesn't properly understand or respond to another person's emotions. It means missing emotional cues, reacting in a way that doesn't match the other person's feelings, or failing to connect on an emotional level. *Mis-attunement can make people feel unheard, misunderstood, or disconnected.*

Re-attunement

Re-attunement is the process of fixing a moment of disconnection in a conversation or relationship. If you misunderstand someone's emotions or react in a way that doesn't match their feelings, re-attunement means recognizing the mistake, acknowledging their feelings, and making an effort to reconnect. It can be as simple as apologizing, clarifying your intention, or showing empathy to rebuild trust and emotional connection.

What might you say if you misinterpret someone's emotions in a group conversation?

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Ritual Placebo

A specific action or practice that helps people feel better. The belief in the action's power is what creates the effect, not the action itself. For example, "How are you?" at the beginning of a conversation, or "Thank you for sharing your story" during a conversation, contributes to a positive feeling that someone is valued. It works because the mind expects a benefit, which can influence emotions and even physical sensations.

What ritual placebo might you use in your group?

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0:30 – 0:40 **Preparing Yourself**

How to stay grounded and present when emotional sharing and insights are intense and activating for the facilitator

- Tuning Breath
- Focus – Identify present time physical reality
- Personal Grounding Anchor

0:40 – 0:50 **Tools for Creating Emotional Safety**

How to safely support participants in moving through emotions

1. Realize the prevalence of trauma
2. Recognize how trauma affects all individuals
3. Respond by putting this knowledge into practice

"How do you feel about" versus "How does that make you feel"

0:50-1:00 **BREAK**

1:00 – 1:20 **Attunement: Connecting the Group and Establishing Emotional Safety**

Establish Trust

- One word check-in – What are you looking to take away from this conversation? Give examples - peace, understanding, awareness, compassion

- Develop Agreements with the Group: What do you expect to engage in respectful discussion on these topics?

What agreements/ground rules did you establish in previous Warriors Path groups that worked well?

Remind people of our collective goal and program mission at the beginning of every conversation:

Our veterans and their families made many sacrifices for our freedom. The very freedom that offers us the opportunity for these conversations and sharing of ideas like this. Let's honor those sacrifices by providing respect and space for all perspectives.

Affirm Safety of the Environment and Surroundings

Verbally remind them of safety as needed

• Describe the area you are in and how it is safe for the discussion

• Sharing of stories outside of the group will only be done anonymously/no naming of people

• We will be moving to a room for our discussion

• Can contact Dr. Hooyer if any concerns arise

When Someone becomes Agitated: Calming Emotion

Signs of arousal: rapid breathing, paling, shallow breathing.

Direct their breathing – Fastest way to change emotional state

- Deep Breath
- Connected Breathing
- Tuning Breath

When you become agitated: Staying Regulated

Stay Calm Yourself

• Keep your voice soft and steady.

• Maintain a relaxed posture and slow movements.

• Your calm energy can help them regulate their emotions.

Acknowledge Their Feelings

• Show that you understand their emotions by saying, "These conversations can bring up memories and emotions. I see that you're really upset right now."

• Avoid dismissing or minimizing their feelings.

Give Them Space if Needed

• Take a bathroom break: acknowledge emotions and take a 10 minute break. Some people need a moment alone before they can process their emotions.

• Say, "I'm here for you if you want to talk after the group, but I'll give you space if you need it."

1:20 – 2:00 **Practice Rounds**

1. You are at an outside memorial statue – how do you connect your group?

2. You are inside in a public space – how do you connect your group?

3. You are in a room, having a discussion and someone from the group is feeling a strong emotion, what do you do?

• Crying

• Loud voice, angry

• Agitated, leg bouncing, darting glances.

4. You are done with discussion and group is feeling emotions, how do you close the group?

5. Your own emotions are activated, how do you get grounded? What do you tell the group?

Q&A – How to respond to big emotions.

2:00 – 2:10 **Closing – Write a group closing as if you were closing your group.**

Session 3: How do Memorials Work and Why do we Make Them?

Paul Emmanuel

Why do human beings create monuments – and sometimes – destroy them? We will question if we are influenced by these monuments (or not) and why we sometimes forget why they were put up in the first place. We will explore how monuments tell stories, whose stories get told and whose do not. We will question whether talking about moral injury at a monument is better than in a classroom and try to discover why.

Before this session:

Krzysztof Wodiczko: Abraham Lincoln War Veteran Projection Video (2012) Watch the video on this link:

www.gsd.harvard.edu/exhibitions/krzysztof-wodiczko-abraham-lincoln-war-veteran-project/



The Abraham Lincoln Monument Projection, "War Veteran Project", Krzysztof Wodiczko, 2012, outdoor video projection, New York | **Statue of Abraham Lincoln**, Henry Kirke Brown, Bronze, New York City, 1870.

After watching the video, think of 3 questions to bring to class. Write them below:

Question 1:

_____

Question 2:

_____

Question 3:

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View of the Washington Monumentfrom the Vietnam Veteran Memorial, Washington D.C. | **The Vietnam Veterans Memorial,** Maya Lin, black granite, Washington D.C. 1982. | **The Washington Monument,** Robert Mills, Thomas Casey and the U.S. Army Corps Of Engineers, marble, granite, bluestone gneiss, Washington D.C. 1888

A **monument** is a large structure or statue built to remember an important event, person, or idea. It can be something like a statue, building, or memorial that helps people remember the past. Monuments are usually made to honor and celebrate special moments in history.

Monuments operate to commemorate. **Commemoration** is the act of remembering and honoring something important, like a person, event, or achievement. It's a way of showing respect and keeping memories alive, often through ceremonies, monuments, or celebrations.

0:00 – 0:05 Check-in

0:05 – 0:20 View Krzysztof Wodiczko video:

www.gsd.harvard.edu/exhibitions/krzysztof-wodiczko-abraham-lincoln-war-veteran-project/ and discuss leader questions

0:20 – 0:35 Presentation Why do we Have Monuments and What is Their Purpose?

Notes:

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The Purpose of Monuments

Monuments are important because they help remind people of important events, people, or ideas. They help people remember their history, culture, and identity. Here are three main reasons why monuments exist:

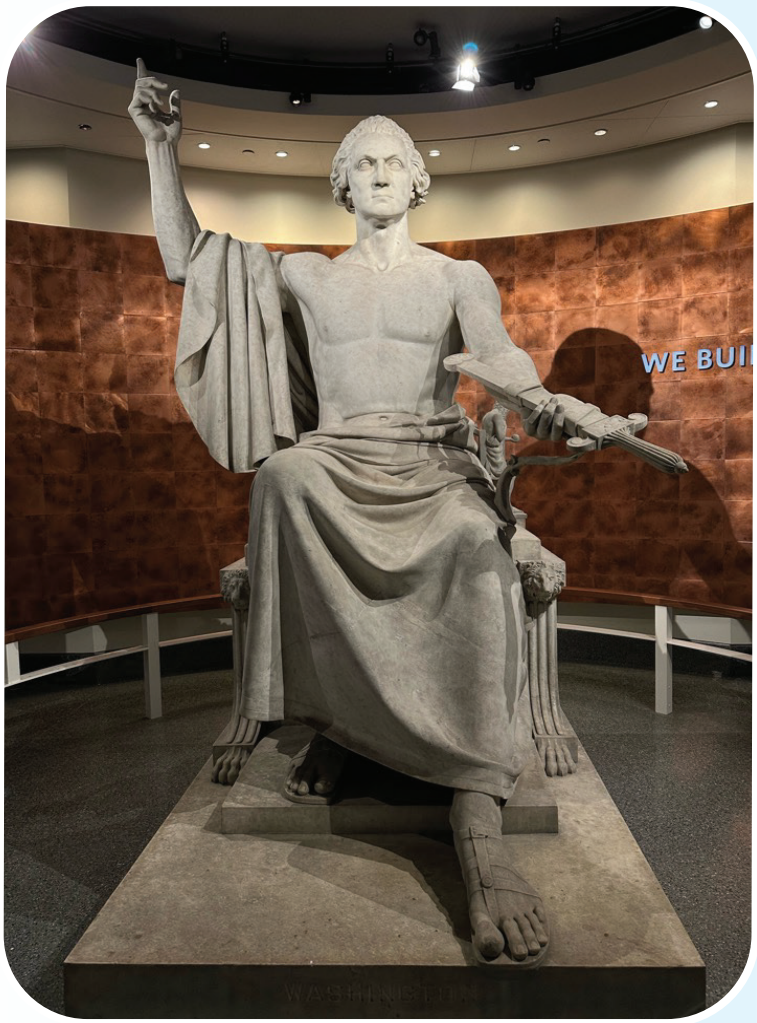
1. **To Remember Important Events or People:** Monuments are built to honor special moments or important people in history, so we don't forget them.

2. **To Show National or Cultural Identity:** Monuments help represent the values and traditions of a community or country. They help people feel connected to their heritage.

3. **To Express Political Ideas:** Some monuments are built to show support for certain political movements or beliefs, representing the power or ideas of a particular group or leader.

Monuments help keep history alive, bring people together, and express important beliefs.

0:35 – 0:45 Move from War Memorial Center to General Douglas MacArthur Memorial



Notice how you feel standing under this statue.

What does it represent to you?

Enthroned Washington, Horatio Greenough, marble, Washington D.C. 1840. Originally installed in the Rotunda of the United States Capitol and then the Capitol's East Lawn. It is now displayed in the Smithsonian National Museum of American History.

0:45 –0:55 At Statue: Mini Historical Lecture by Katinka Hooyer

0:55 – 1:00 Read We Put on the Uniform by Maggie DeMay

1:00 –1:30 **Practice prompts linking the poem to the statue.**

1. Recall how you felt standing under the statue and what it symbolizes to you. How does the message in the poem mirror or challenge the symbolism or feelings that the statue brings up for you?

2. How does the poem offer new insights or interpretations about who veterans are, when you compare the veteran in the poem to the veteran this statue commemorates?

3. What roles do the poem and memorial statue play in preserving collective memory?

4. How do they work to tell a specific story?

1:30 – 1:45 **Move to Vietnam Memorial and Mini Historical Lecture**

1:45 – 2:00 **Move to Eternal Flame and Mini Historical Lecture**

2:00 – 2:15 **Move to African American Veterans Memorial Mini Historical Lecture**

2:15 – 2:30 **Indian Burial Mound Mini Historical Lecture**



Indian Mound (300 BC - 400 AD)
This conical burial mound is the last remaining of a group of mounds which were destroyed in the building of Lake Park. It is also the last known remaining Indian mound in the City of Milwaukee.



TO ENGAGE PARTICIPANTS WHEN THINGS GET CHALLENGING

The point of these discussions is to make meaning of events and shine a light on experiences that were "erased", forgotten, or misremembered.

Try these questions to get at different sides of a story and various points of view.

ARGUING OR SOMEONE TAKING OVER DISCUSSION: "I want to acknowledge these conversations can be difficult and what we ALL HAVE IN COMMON is that we are all here to learn about different perspectives, to learn about stories and experiences that have not been highlighted or shared historically". [Go with your gut, does the group need to take a break or do a breathing exercise?]

Thank you for sharing, I'm wondering if someone can provide a different perspective - either as someone involved in this event/situation or as an outsider looking in?

If someone is speaking in a disrespectful manner:

DISRESPECTFUL PERSON: I must admit, this language is making me a bit uncomfortable, and I will explain why...

If someone is sharing their experiences or blaming themselves for the outcome of a situation surrounding their moral injury:

SOMEONE DISCLOSING GUILT OR SHAME: I wonder what you might say to a Veteran who had the same feelings and thoughts around their experience?

If someone is blaming another person for making a mistake or being "evil", "inhumane", etc.:

SOMEONE DISCRIMINATING AGAINST ANOTHER: Can you provide a countering example of what might have been going on? Why that person acted that way? Can you provide a different perspective that shows this person is inherently good?

Closing the Conversation: Reflecting on Meaning & Moving Forward

If this group could create a new story about this issue, what would it sound like?
What is one thing you want others to remember from what you shared today?

Ways to Attune to Your Group

1. Active Listening

- Maintain eye contact and nod to show engagement.
- Avoid interrupting and let people finish their thoughts.
- Summarize or reflect back what someone said to show understanding.

2. Observe Nonverbal Cues

- Notice facial expressions, body language, and tone of voice.
- Adjust your responses based on the emotions people are showing.

3. Match the Group's Emotional Tone

- If the group is excited, show enthusiasm; if they are serious, be thoughtful.
- Avoid being overly energetic in a calm discussion or too detached in an emotional one.

4. Validate Emotions

- Acknowledge people's feelings with statements like, "That sounds really exciting!" or "I can see why that would be frustrating."
- Even if you don't fully agree, show that you understand their perspective.

5. Encourage Participation

- If someone is quiet, invite them in with a gentle question like, "What do you think?"
- Avoid dominating the conversation; create space for everyone to contribute.

6. Adjust Based on Group Dynamics

- If someone seems uncomfortable, help redirect the conversation to include them.
- Be mindful of group energy—if the mood shifts, adapt to keep the conversation balanced.

7. Express Empathy

- Use phrases like "That must have been tough" or "I can imagine how exciting that was for you."
- Show emotional responsiveness rather than just logical replies.

By practicing these techniques, you create a more connected, inclusive, and meaningful conversation within the group.