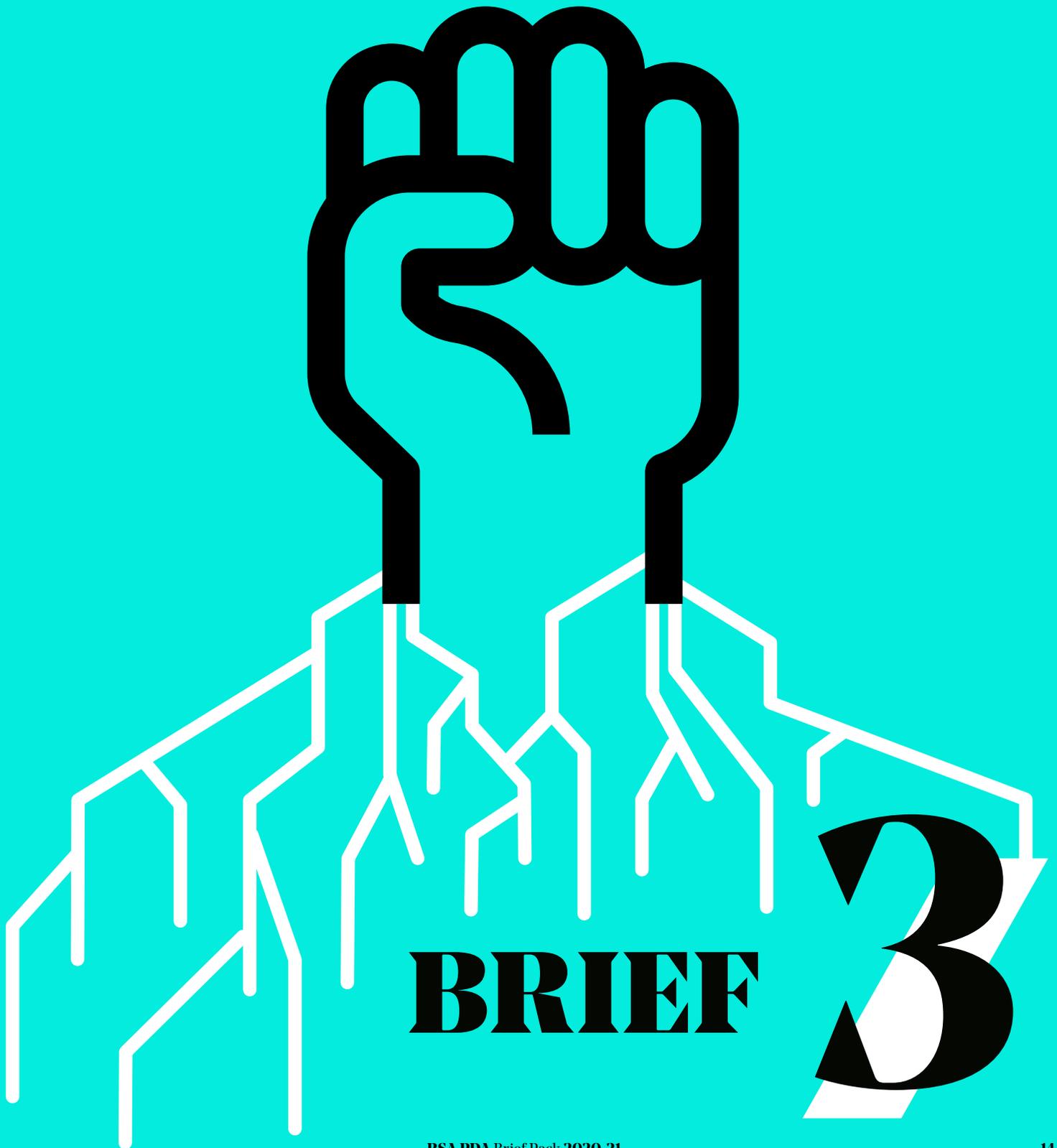


ROOTS TO EMPOWERMENT



BRIEF

3

Brief 3:

Roots to Empowerment

How might we challenge systemic racism by redefining heritage to ensure that future generations engage with a more inclusive story of our past?

Background

- Summer 2020 saw the resurgence of the Black Lives Matter movement and a global response to the killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis. This has been widely hailed as a defining moment in our collective responsibility to challenge systemic racism.
- **Systemic or institutional racism** refers to the ways that prejudice and discrimination are embedded into the everyday actions and decisions of institutions. Global protests have also highlighted the historic roots of racial injustice and how traditional accounts of the past can reinforce inequality. This is particularly true of **heritage**.
- What is **heritage**? Heritage refers to features of the past that we value and want to pass onto future generations. Heritage can be both 'tangible' in the form of objects, historic buildings, public monuments and museum collections, or 'intangible' in the form of memories, stories and experiences. The RSA Heritage Index identifies six forms of heritage:
 - Historic built environment
 - Museums, archives and artefacts
 - Industrial heritage
 - Parks and open space
 - Landscape and natural heritage
 - Cultures and memories¹
- The now-toppled statue of Edward Colston in Bristol is an example of the link between heritage and systemic racism. Protests about the statue focused on how celebrating Colston's charitable work ignores the fact that he was a slave trader involved in the brutal oppression of black people. Statues like Colston's obscure a more complex heritage, in favour of one that celebrates a white elite.
- Events like this raise important questions about what existing heritage we should protect and what new representations of our histories must be created to ensure that the next generation inherit a more **inclusive** story of our past.
 - **Black respondents to the 2019/20 Taking Part Survey reported visiting heritage sites less often (41%) compared to other ethnicities (60-75%). Additionally, it was observed that Asian respondents (60%) were less likely to have visited than white respondents (75%) (DCMS, 2020).**
 - **YouGov interviewed over 1,200 BAME Britons. 56% support the removal of all statues linked to slavery and 69% are in favour of updating the school curriculum to include Britain's colonial past (YouGov, 2020)**

¹ Antink, B. et al (2020) *Heritage for Inclusive Growth*. Available here: <https://www.thersa.org/globalassets/reports/2020/the-rsa-heritage-for-inclusive-growth.pdf>

What needs to change?

- Whose heritage is represented, and how, are big questions that we believe design thinking can help us to address.
- How can we challenge expressions of systemic racism by learning about the heritage of ourselves and others? How can young people feel empowered through exploring heritage? What kind of heritage do we want to leave for the next generation?

How to approach the brief

When tackling this brief, you might want to focus on:

- **Local community:** investigate what young people and communities currently think about the heritage in their local area. What could a more inclusive and diverse 'heritage' look like?
- **Existing projects:** find out about what other people are already doing to make heritage more inclusive. You might want to look at museums, schools, archives, galleries, community groups and storytellers.
- **Education:** how might our heritage help educate people about systemic racism in our past and present day. How can we redesign educational heritage experiences to achieve this?
- **Barriers:** what are some of the current barriers to engaging young people with heritage? Does a lack of representation exclude some people? Are there geographical or financial barriers to accessing more diverse heritage experiences?

Here are some examples of proposals that could meet this design brief:

- A new public monument for your local area that reveals a previously hidden part of its history
- A story telling exhibition that captures diverse experience and collective memories like [this project from Beatfrecks](#)
- An app that provides information about underrepresented local history and heritage when you scan your phone over specific landmarks

Further Resources

- [What is systemic racism? Kids' questions answered](#) (video 4 mins)
- [What is white privilege?](#) (video 3 mins)
- [The Black Curriculum](#)
- [How to involve young people in heritage resource pack](#)
- [BBC Black and British resources](#)
- [National Trust 'How are we challenging our history'](#)
- [Historic England and Inclusive Heritage](#)