

# ART AND ACTIVISM

Betye Saar (born 1926), *Blow Top Blues: The Fire Next Time*, 1998, lithograph, Autry Museum of the American West, 2018.45.1



Betye Saar uses her art to confront and challenge the racism and discrimination experienced by Black Americans. In this lithograph, Aunt Jemima, a character who embodies a racist stereotype based on the practice of enslaving Black women to work as maids and nannies, peers at the visitor from the lower right corner, wearing a bandana featuring the word LIBERATION as bright flames shoot out across the rest of the artwork. In this artwork, Betye Saar frees Aunt Jemima; she is no longer a stereotypical figure. Instead, she is a free and powerful woman with a voice that demands to be heard and respected.

## **Activism is taking action to create change in one's community.**

Activism can happen anywhere and can take many forms; some people organize, others donate money to important causes, some people volunteer their time, and others protest through marches or strikes. For Betye Saar, making art is how she takes action against racism and discrimination. **In this project, you will identify and develop your own activism plan.**

# RECOMMENDED FOR AGES 12 AND UP

## INSTRUCTIONS:

- 1. Think about a time** when you, a family member, a friend, or one of your communities experienced discrimination. Explain what happened on a separate piece of paper.
- 2. Now think about which type of activism** you would like to participate in to take action against the discrimination you described. Describe this type of activism in the space below or on a separate piece of paper.
- 3. Plan how you will participate in this type of activism.** Create your plan by writing the answers to the questions below on a separate piece of paper.
  - When will you do this activity? Choose the date(s) and time(s).
  - Where will you do this activity? Choose the location(s).
  - What supplies will you need for this activity?
  - Will you need other people's help for this activity?  
If so, whom can you ask for help?
  - How much time (hours, days, weeks, months, etc.) will you need to complete this activity?
  - What else do you need to complete this activity?
- 4. After you have taken action,** reflect on your experience by writing the answers to the questions below on a separate piece of paper.
  - What did you learn by taking action?
  - What did you like the most about taking action?
  - What did you like the least about taking action?
  - What would you do the same way if you were to take action again?
  - What would you do differently if you were to take action again?
  - Would you like to take action again? Why or why not?
- 5. Share your experience with others and help them take action!**