



Slavery: memory and afterlives



Edited by Josie Gill and
Julia O'Connell Davidson

This collection was published in 2016 under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 3.0 licence.

Produced by Cameron Thibos

Cover photo: Zanzibar: Memory of Slaves. missy/Flickr. CC.

PRINTING

This publication is formatted for A5 paper and is thus optimised for printing as well as electronic viewing. If you have access to a duplex (front and back) printer, you can easily create a physical copy of this book by using the 'booklet' printing option available in Adobe Acrobat Reader and many other PDF viewing programmes.

Slavery: memory and afterlives

Edited by Josie Gill and Julia O'Connell Davidson

Acknowledgements

Beyond Trafficking and Slavery is grateful to the Brigstow Institute of the University of Bristol for its support in producing this volume as well as the online series of the same name.

Julia O'Connell Davidson also gratefully acknowledges the Leverhulme Trust for the award of a Major Research Fellowship (MRF-2012-085), which allowed her to work on this volume.

Core Beyond Trafficking and Slavery Supporters



The University of
Nottingham



University of
BRISTOL



About Beyond Trafficking and Slavery

A wide range of activists, academics, trade unions, governments and NGOs are currently trying to understand and address forced labour, trafficking and slavery. *Beyond Trafficking and Slavery* (BTS) occupies a unique position within this larger movement, one which combines the rigour of academic scholarship with the clarity of journalism and the immediacy of political activism. It is an independent, not-for-profit marketplace of ideas that uses evidence-based advocacy to tackle the political, economic, and social root causes of global exploitation, vulnerability and forced labour. It provides original analysis and specialised knowledge on these issues to take public understanding beyond the sensationalism of many mainstream media depictions. It further works to bring citizens, activists, scholars and policy-makers into conversation with each other to imagine pioneering policy responses.

BTS is housed within [openDemocracy](#), a UK-based digital commons with an annual readership of over nine million. OpenDemocracy is committed to filling gaps in global media coverage, helping alternative views and perspectives find their voices, and converting trailblazing thinking into lasting, meaningful change.



Find out more at: opendemocracy.net/beyondslavery

Want to contribute? Email us: beyond.slavery@opendemocracy.net

Introduction from the Brigstow Institute

It has been a great pleasure for the Brigstow Institute at the University of Bristol to facilitate this project, not only financially, but by bringing academics from different disciplinary backgrounds and with different disciplinary perspectives together. Brigstow loves developing new partnerships – between academics at the University of Bristol who have not worked together before, and between academics and partners in Bristol and beyond – so that together we can create alternative futures.

That doesn't mean that Brigstow doesn't care about the past. *Slavery: Interdisciplinary Dialogues on its Memory and Afterlives* is one of a number of experimental partnerships that we have brokered and funded in 2015-2016 that are deeply concerned with the past. Understanding the past is worth doing for its own sake, but as a number of projects have shown, there is particular value in exploring the connections between past, present and future. That sense of working with longer time spans in view (rather than simply a set of presentist concerns) can be seen across our current range of activities, which focuses on living well with technologies, living well with difference, living well with uncertainty and just plain old living well. To make better futures, we would do well to think hard about the past.

One of the most exciting things about being part of Brigstow is seeing what happens when you put curious people in the room together and give them a little money. They come up with an extraordinary range of ideas and make a wide variety of things. I massively enjoyed the weeks when a new contribution to *Slavery: Interdisciplinary Dialogues on its Memory and Afterlives* would appear on my twitter feed. Clicking through to openDemocracy postings always provoked new questions. I am delighted that these voices have now been brought together as an independent volume so that others can participate in the conversation. Thanks to Julia O'Connell Davidson, Josie Gill and openDemocracy for curating the dialogue and bringing so many voices to this space. And thanks also to Cameron Thibos who has brought those voices together in this publication.

—*Tim Cole, Director of the Brigstow Institute, University of Bristol*

Follow the Brigstow on Twitter [@HelloBrigstow](https://twitter.com/HelloBrigstow) or visit us on the web at www.bristol.ac.uk/brigstow for more information.

Contents

Slavery: memory and afterlives 10

Julia O'Connell Davidson

Section one: 'literary archaeology'

Literary archaeology: exploring the lived environment of the slave 20

Josie Gill

Adding flesh to the bones: re-imagining stories of the enslaved
through the analysis of human skeletal remains 23

Catriona J McKenzie

Marking bones..... 26

Jenny Davis

(Very) close to the bone 30

Ralph Hoyte

Section two: Bristol and the slave trade

Black Bristol, racism and slavery: one narrative to rule them all? . 36

Edson Burton

Obliteration, contextualisation or 'guerrilla memorialisation'? Edward
Colston's statue reconsidered..... 42

Madge Dresser

Colston, the cathedral and Bristol's children..... 46

Christine Townsend

Remembering empire in Bristol and Brussels..... 49

Jonathan Saha

Slavery and visual memory: what Britain can learn from France ... 54

Olivette Otele

Section three: global afterlives

Language and resistance: memories of transatlantic slavery, and its continuing afterlives in the use of Rastafari language and terminology..... 60

Shawn-Naphtali Sobers

Stealing freedom: attempts to re-enslave blacks in post-emancipation Barbados..... 64

Alana Johnson

Remembering captive bodies: indigenous child labour and runaway ads in a post-slavery Peru 68

Jose Ragas

An appeal for a monument to the 1811 Louisiana slave revolt 73

Ibrahima Seck

‘Sankofa’: slavery and selective remembrance..... 77

Samuel Okyere

Contributors 81

About the editors..... 84

Beyond Trafficking and Slavery Editorial Board..... 85

Other titles available from BTS..... 86

Slavery: memory and afterlives

What should we remember, and to what purpose?

Julia O'Connell Davidson

On 21 August 2016, two days before the annual International Slavery Remembrance Day, the UK's first ever memorial service to the victims of the transatlantic slave trade/African holocaust was held in Trafalgar Square. But what exactly should or can we remember, and why, and what should we 'do' with these memories?

History and remembrance

A call for remembrance is not necessarily a call for closer attention to the details of history. To remember the war dead, it's not necessary to be well acquainted with the geopolitics or military history of the wars concerned. Likewise, remembering those whose lives were destroyed by slavery doesn't require encyclopaedic knowledge of slave regimes throughout history. But in former slave and colonial states like Britain, there's a difference between remembrance of war and transatlantic slavery remembrance. The latter disrupts dominant, self-congratulatory narratives about these countries' great historical love of liberty, equality, democracy and justice.

There's also a perceived question mark over the 'we' who will remember. In nationalist acts of remembrance, all citizens alike are positioned as owing a debt to the soldiers who are said to have 'given' their lives defending (or aggrandising) the nation. But do all citizens stand in the same relation to the Africans whose lives were stolen to fuel a system that enriched nations, cities, and private individuals?

Even if remembrance is made international, and imagined as an act of humanitarian mourning, the problem remains. Transatlantic slavery divided and dislocated human populations, and its abolition did not

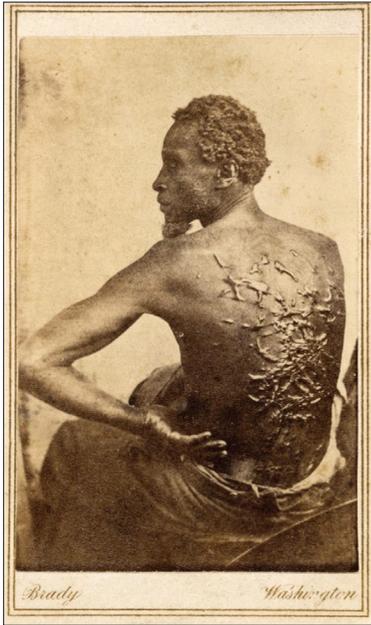


The Negre Marron by Albert Mangones commemorates the Haitian slave revolt against France. Steve Bennett/Flickr. Creative Commons.

undo those divisions or restore communities. The particular character of slavery's violence is, in Stephen Best and Saidiya Hartman's words, "ongoing and constitutive of the unfinished project of freedom". If 'we' look back in sorrow, we do not do so from the same blank territory of a presumed universal humanity. We do so from our own particular position in the ugly tapestry of inequality woven by the violence and displacement of transatlantic slavery.

A question of race?

Race is central to that horrible tapestry, but also complicated. Though every person racialised as black now living in former slave or colonial states will have experienced, in one way or another, the destructive powers of the anti-black racism spawned by transatlantic slavery, not all either have or feel any personal connection to those who were once enslaved. In fact, one of their experiences of racism may have been when slavery was mentioned in the classroom or lecture theatre, and white students or teachers immediately assumed that they would



Gordon's back (1863). Public domain.

have some special interest and detailed knowledge of the topic. And as Edson Burton points out in his contribution to this book, those racialised as black are also divided by class (as well as gender, religion, sexuality etc.).

It's also complicated because being anti-slavery is not the same as rejecting the ideology of race. Many white, nineteenth-century abolitionists bitterly condemned the human suffering wreaked by slavery without at the same time considering black people to be qualified for freedom and citizenship in white societies.

Today, it is perfectly possible for people racialised as white to sincerely mourn the fate of the enslaved without simultaneously challenging anti-black racism or questioning their own white privilege. In this context, what are the dangers and the possibilities opened up by calls for transatlantic slavery remembrance?

Remembering transatlantic slavery as a holocaust

A poster created by British-based slavery remembrance activists is currently displayed on South Lambeth Road, in London. It features a photograph of a man named Gordon (above), who had been enslaved on a Louisiana plantation. The photograph shows him in sitting posture. His face is clear in full profile, but the viewer's attention is commanded by his bared back, described by a contemporary observer as "scarred, gouged, gathered in great ridges, knotted, furrowed, the poor tortured flesh stands out a hideous record of the slave-driver's lash ... From such evidence as this there is no escape, and to see is to believe".

Why ask people in 21st-century London to look at this image? One reason is that the way history is taught and publicly commemorated in Britain and other former slaving powers *does* allow escape from evidence like the photo of Gordon's scourged back. In fact in Britain, the story of transatlantic slavery is frequently used primarily as a vehicle for proud memories of the white Britons who played a role in its legal abolition. And such national or civic pride can equally be taken in white Britons who, though they actively profited from their involvement in the murderous trade, also contributed to the well-being of their British brethren (as discussed in contributions to this book from Olivette Otele, Madge Dresser, and Christine Townsend on Edward Colston's public memorialisation in Bristol).

Against this, Gordon's image publicly recalls the immense violence enacted upon the victims of transatlantic slavery, and the overwhelming physical force required to transport people into, and to prevent them from fleeing, slavery. It acts as a reminder of the many millions who died en route, who were gruesomely tortured and executed by state officials, and who were starved, beaten or worked to death by slaveholders. It focuses attention on transatlantic slavery as a holocaust, in the sense that it entailed the destruction and slaughter of Africans and their descendants on a mass scale.

The billboard is titled 'the African Holocaust Censored' because when the Stop the Maangamizi organisation sought to advertise its annual march for Reparatory Justice in a major national newspaper earlier this year, it was told the paper would not print an advert containing the term 'African Holocaust' as 'holocaust' was reserved for the Jewish community. But use of the term 'holocaust' and demands for public acknowledgment of the suffering of the enslaved does not detract from similar claims by any other group.

Reflecting on the vast disparity between the public outpouring of grief in the US for the lives lost in the 11 September attacks, and the lack

of interest in the hundreds of thousands of civilians who subsequently died as a result of the US 'war on terror', Judith Butler has observed that not all lives are regarded as grievable. Some lost lives are not publicly mourned because they are not seen "as worthy of protection, as belonging to subjects with rights that ought to be honored". Calls to remember transatlantic slavery as the African holocaust are, at one level, calls for its victims to be brought into the fold of the grievable. This is not a competition to win a share of a finite quantity of grief, but an assertion of belonging to humankind. No community loses out by its endorsement. In fact, some might argue that it is the poster's reproduction of the image that raises the more difficult ethical questions.

Memory, bodies and subjects

Gordon's back, upon which the violence and suffering of slavery was so inescapably visible, became an iconic anti-slavery image. Yet Gordon was much more than his bodily surface. He was a man who managed to escape the plantation, outwit the slave patrols and bloodhounds that hunted him, and reach the safety of the Union encampment at Baton Rouge. He subsequently joined the Union States Colored Troops and fought in the Civil War. But his courage, ingenuity, and political commitment are not what he is remembered for.

It's true that were we to remember only the bravery of the individuals who escaped, rebelled, and resisted slavery, we would risk minimising the overwhelming structural violence of slavery as an institution, as well as overlooking the quiet courage of the women, men and children who, against such appalling odds, made their lives as best they could within its confines. Yet what kind of memory is invited by a photo that focuses attention on Gordon as a suffering body (the image is sometimes even referred to as '*the scourged back*')? In the context of the racism that insists on seeing white people as individuals, while reducing Others to mere bearers of a racialised category, this image can make people uncomfortable not because they want to deny transatlantic slavery's mass destruction of African lives, but because they

do not want to be complicit in the kind of voyeuristic gaze so eloquently interrogated in Susan Sontag's book, *Regarding the Pain of Others*.

Mourning and activism, mourning as activism

Courtney Baker has recently observed that to look at the pain and death of others is not necessarily to exercise a dangerous or disabling power. There is also a form of looking, "humane insight", that actively seeks out knowledge about the humanity of the sufferer. And, she concludes, with humane insight comes an understanding that some modes of mourning are also forms of activism. Here is another sense in which historical context matters. Calls for transatlantic slavery remembrance are today being made in the context of a new wave of black political mobilisation to assert the value of black life, resist mass incarceration, call for reparatory justice, demand that public monuments to colonists and slave traders "must fall", insist on the public memorialisation of victims of white supremacist terror, and so on.

The important point is not whether remembrance campaigners have satisfactorily resolved every ethical dilemma surrounding the visual representation of slavery; or whether campaigns for reparations or to remove historical monuments succeed; or even whether everyone agrees that they should succeed. The important point is that contem-

This is not a competition to win a share of a finite quantity of grief, but an assertion of belonging to humankind.

porary black activists are successfully generating public awareness and political debate on transatlantic slavery's afterlives in Europe and the Americas. In so doing, they are opening up more and different possibilities for collectively remembering transatlantic slavery and collectively weaving a different future from its living remains. That's a project that all of us can and should get behind.

Structure of this volume

The articles in this volume are all concerned, one way or another, with the ways in which transatlantic slavery is remembered and forgotten, the different conversations that can be had about its past and the present, and the relation between the two. In **Section 1**, Josie Gill, Ralph Hoyte, Catriona McKenzie and Jenny Davis explore how bringing together the art of creative writing and the science of archaeology enriches our remembering and commemoration of the lives of the enslaved.

Bristol's historical connections to the slave trade, simultaneously highly visible and completely invisible, form the focus of **Section 2**. It includes contributions from Olivette Otele and Jonathan Saha reflecting on what we might learn from French and Belgian efforts to publicly engage with their histories of empire and slaving, as well as analyses of the complicated politics surrounding the memorialisation of slavery in Bristol itself from Edson Burton and Madge Dresser.

Section 3 extends the geographical spotlight. Alana Johnson and Jose Ragas draw attention to little known histories of persistent restraints on freedom in post-slavery Barbados and Peru, in particular restrictions on the freedom of movement of persons formally deemed to be 'free'. Shawn-Naphtali Sobers' contribution illuminates Rastafari language as a means of resisting the hold of slavery in a post-emancipation society, and "(re-)building an autonomous, black identity".

Ibrahima Seck takes us to New Orleans, where the Whitney Plantation, a museum exclusively dedicated to the memorialisation of slav-

ery, has recently installed a commemoration of the 1811 slave uprising. But beyond the Whitney, “the black population (more than 60% of the city) is excluded from memorialisation in public space”, and New Orleans needs to do more both to celebrate its unique Afro-Creole culture, and to memorialise “the evils of slavery, as the evils of the Shoah are remembered elsewhere”, he argues. Finally, Samuel Okyere looks critically at the way in which slavery’s history is represented in Ghana, arguing that the country’s unique historical experience can and should provide insights to “inform a more sophisticated set of contemporary explanations for ongoing inequality and exploitation’ and to underpin “work towards emancipatory agendas, towards reparations, and towards international social justice”.

The articles in this volume are but a small sample of the rich and growing multi- and interdisciplinary literature on slavery’s memory and afterlives. They do not, and cannot, provide *the* answer to questions about what should be remembered and acknowledged, and how, and by whom, for there is no simple or single answer to such questions. However, they do all contribute to the project of unlocking new and different possibilities for remembering transatlantic slavery and acknowledging its continuing significance for social, political and economic life in Africa, the Americas, and Europe.

Section one

'Literary archaeology'

Literary archaeology: exploring the lived environment of the slave

Archaeology and creative writing are powerful tools for understanding the past lives of slaves. What happens if we bring the disciplines together?

Josie Gill

How can we know what it was like to be enslaved? When it comes to the transatlantic slave trade, there is no simple or straightforward answer. Historical documentation is dominated by the perspectives of slave owners and colonisers, the experience and voice of the enslaved sometimes glimpsed through court proceedings or oral history. We might turn to slave narratives – autobiographical accounts that slaves gave of their experience – some of which have been dramatised for film or television, such as *12 Years a Slave*. However the novelist Toni Morrison cautions against an unquestioning acceptance of these accounts in her essay *The Site of Memory*.

Morrison argues that slaves' interior lives were excised from the stories they told, their narratives having had their objective and emotionally restrained style dictated by the popular taste of a slave society that did not wish to read of the horrors of slavery: "In shaping the experience to make it palatable to those who were in a position to alleviate it", she writes, "they were silent about many things". Morrison views her task, as a contemporary writer, as accessing that interior life, "to rip the veil drawn over 'proceedings too terrible to relate'". She describes her approach to this task as "a kind of literary archaeology", an imaginative excavation of the past and a reconstruction of past lives from what remains.

But what if we were to go beyond archaeology as metaphor for this process? What if the remains that writers worked with were to include, in addition to historical fragments, archaeological discoveries

and human remains? Writers are not the only group of people trying to get a deeper understanding of how the enslaved experienced their lives. Archaeologists excavate and examine the bodies of slaves in order to gain insights into slave health and wellbeing. The bones of the enslaved can give archaeologists information about where slaves were born, their diet, traumatic injuries they sustained, the movement of individuals from early childhood to adulthood, weaning practices and other cultural practices. While historians are increasingly drawing upon such archaeological information in their studies of slavery, there hasn't been much communication between archaeologists and literary writers, who are both seeking to do the same thing; to understand slavery from the perspective of the enslaved.

The Arts and Humanities Research Council-funded project *Literary Archaeology: Exploring the Lived Environment of the Slave* was set up to address how archaeological scientists, literary scholars and creative writers might influence and inform each other's approaches to understanding slavery. We are interested in exploring whether literary rep-

Slave trader ledger of William James Smith (1844-1854), detailing the prices paid and received for slaves, as well as the expenses incurred by Smith in undertaking this business venture, such as feeding, clothing, sheltering, and nursing the people he had purchased. Wofford College/Flickr. Creative Commons.

1849			1849 & 1850		
Negroes bought in the summer			Negroes sold in 49/50		
June 27 th	Willis	bought 512 00	Nov 20 th	Willis	sold 800 00
June 27 th	Mary	" " 500 00	Nov 20 th	Mary	" " 775 00
June 27 th	Glady	" " 50 00	July 23 rd	Elday	" " 150 00
June 28 th	Abin	" " 450 00	Nov 21 st	Abin	" " 625 00
July 3 rd	Caroline	" " 330 00	July 2 nd	Caroline	" " 367 50
July 10 th	Eliza	" " 500 00	Nov 9 th	Eliza	" " 635 00
July 11 th	Jesse	" " 485 00	Nov 16 th	Jesse	" " 775 00
July 17 th	Harriett	" " 450 00	Nov 16 th	Harriett	" " 750 00
July 19 th	Salena	" " 460 00	Nov 22 nd	Salena	" " 650 00
July 23 rd	Stanford	" " 530 00	Dec 30 th	Stanford	" " 825 00
July 23 rd	Lawson	" " 375 00	Nov 27 th	Lawson	" " 625 00
Aug 7 th	Lucy & child	" " 525 00	Nov 27 th	Lucy & child	" " 725 00
Aug 21 st	Maldida	" " 475 00	Nov 10 th	Maldida	" " 600 00
Aug 22 nd	Adeline	" " 395 00	Nov 24 th	Adeline	" " 525 00
Aug 22 nd	Caney	" " 525 00	Nov 26 th	Caney	" " 725 00
Aug 22 nd	Harriett	" " 475 00	Nov 5 th	Harriett	" " 600 00
Aug 25 th	Caroline	" " 350 00	Nov 5 th	Caroline	" " 450 00
Aug 25 th	Rachel	" " 630 00	May 20 th	Rachel	" " 980 00
Am't	Carried over	\$ 80 67 00			\$ 115 62 00

representations of slavery can provoke new questions in archaeological science and, conversely, how an engagement with skeletal remains and scientific data might inform literary representations of slave lives and literary critical forms of inquiry.

Concentrating on two slave burial grounds, one in Barbados and one in Gran Canaria, two scientific archaeologists and seven writers from the Bristol-based collective *Our Stories Make Waves* have come together to exchange ideas and perspectives on slavery. The following articles by two of the writers and one of the archaeologists involved represent individual reflections on the project and on the process of working across disciplinary boundaries. The conversation is ongoing, but the project is already producing some interesting and unexpected questions about the role of emotion in science and about the interpretation of scientific data and language in literature. As the following pieces attest, thinking about the lives of slaves is never easy, but bringing art and science together to do so can enhance the ways in which we remember and commemorate those lives.

Adding flesh to the bones: re-imagining stories of the enslaved through the analysis of human skeletal remains

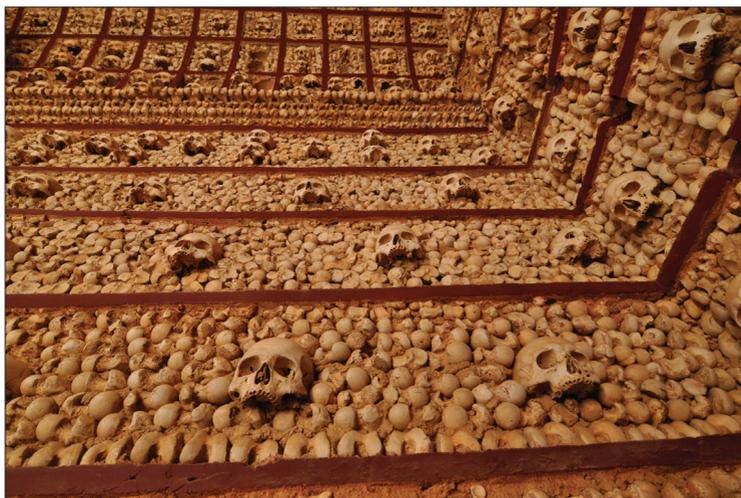
Scientists can't always see the humans stories beneath their data, but turn that data over to creative writers and a whole new world opens up.

Catriona J McKenzie

The analysis of human skeletal remains can provide insights or glimpses into past lives. As a biological anthropologist, when I analyse a skeleton for the first time I look at the bones of the body to find clues about who the person once was. Through studying the bones, a picture emerges; but that picture is only ever partially complete.

I can uncover information about the sex, age, and height of an individual; but I have no way of knowing about their inner life, their personality, hopes and dreams. I can record information about different diseases which affected an individual, but the personal experience of disease or impairment often evades my study. Sometimes, the final picture is almost disappointing – there appears to be more gaps than facts.

If I analyse a large number of skeletons from the same population, then a different picture emerges. I can now identify whether all individuals from a community are likely to be represented within the burial ground, and determine whether the community was a healthy population or whether they were suffering from poor health. In a large population I can look at the patterns and types of injuries and diseases that were common, and explore the different factors that may have influenced these. More can be learned about a population by examining a large number of skeletons; but by considering the skeletons as a collective, the individual fades from the picture.



Real human skulls in the Chapel of Bones. Jim Kelly/Flickr. Creative Commons.

For the project *Literary Archaeology: Exploring the Lived Environment of the Slave* we are using data about enslaved individuals from Finca Clavijo, Gran Canaria and Newton Plantation, Barbados, that were collected from the published and unpublished literature*. One of the aims of the project is to explore the potential for collaboration between archaeological scientists and creative writers through a joint study of the human skeletal remains.

Emma Lighthouse from the University of Cambridge and I selected four skeletons from each of the two enslaved populations, and collected information about these from the written sources. Each of these skeletons had been sampled for stable isotope analysis, which provides insights into the different types of diet that individuals were consuming when they were children and when they were adults; and also the broad geographical regions from where they likely originated. In addition, I collated the information that was derived from the skeletal analysis of these eight individuals.

At the first workshop, we met with a group of creative writers and presented the archaeological information about the selected skeletons. We spent a considerable amount of time explaining all the different indicators of disease and occupational activity in the bones, as well as the evidence for diet and geographical origin. By using skeletal information as a starting point, we aimed to inspire the writers to re-imagine stories about the enslaved, to delve deeper into re-imagining the past.

As I work with human remains on a daily basis it can sometimes be difficult for me to see beyond the bones and the scientific information that I collect, to imagine the daily lives of the people that I study. Working with the creative writers has been fascinating, as they have responded to the archaeological information in a very different way.

This project has highlighted the importance of sharing and examining information beyond disciplinary boundaries. Over the years I have worked with a number of groups from different backgrounds, explaining my work and the information that can be discovered from examining human skeletal remains. Creative writing has the potential to add a further dimension to our interpretations, and this may be particularly important when presenting the results of archaeological projects to the public. It may also aid us in considering difficult and painful pasts such as those of enslaved individuals. My hope is that this project will bring the stories of the skeletons to life – by adding flesh to the bones.

* I am particularly grateful to Dr Kristrina Shuler who shared her unpublished data with us for use in this project.

Marking bones

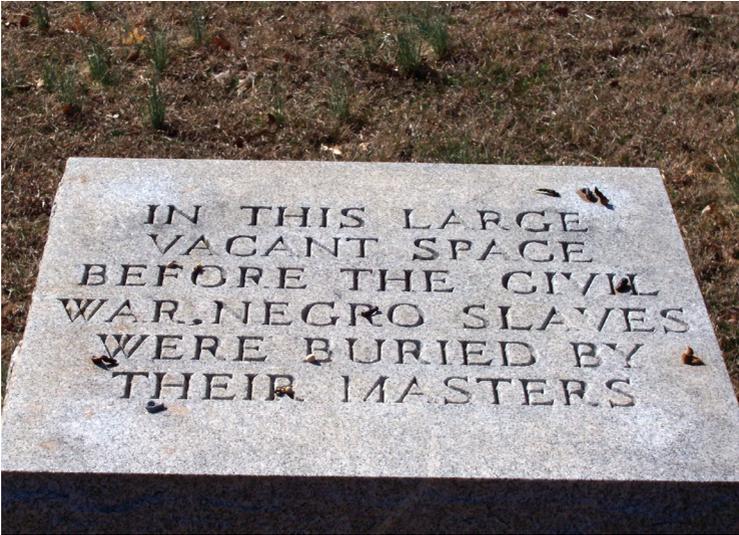
Archaeology has incredible powers of detection, but it frequently suffers from emotional sterility. When we unearth the bones of the enslaved, we must feel their humanity through the science.

Jenny Davis

How can we engage with slavery from the past, how can we consider it in front of our eyes, bring the past to the present? Slavery's aftermath is all around us, if we care to look, and listen. I've been immersed in the words and studies of archaeologists, anthropologists and osteologists, learning that for instance there has been three decades of research at the Newton Plantation in Barbados. A wealth of data and information that has kept archaeologists and scholars digging and re-digging, looking for clues about 'slave life'.

A previously undisturbed 'slave' cemetery has been dug up, not once but thrice. 'What were they looking for?' I found myself muttering. I could feel my impatience as yet another academic paper recounts in painstaking, minute detail the methodology used to scrape off the bones, the process for analysing teeth. And yet it becomes clear from the uncertainties and insecurities expressed in these papers that this is still about one scientist talking to another. The discourse about the 'slave life' remains resolutely academic. The concern of the archaeologist is how to share results with an audience of historical scholars: whose methodology is the most accurate? How can the methodology and techniques of one discipline be applied to another? How can this generate new perspectives on the slave life? The question keeps being repeated, like a recurrent itch.

We want to gain a better understanding on 'the slave life', the academics say, so human remains or human biology is uncovered and unearthed. Disarticulated bones are packed with care, in storage containers using



Vacant Space Slave Stone. De Shark/Flickr. Creative Commons.

acid free tissue or foam, bubble wrap and clear strong plastic bags which have to be at least 500 gauge thickness. Bag right hand bones separately to left hand bones. I have been learning the language. I have learnt that the teeth are the most durable bone of the human body, that this is what remains, and it is simply staggering to realise what can be read by them. But, but, but, my repetitive itch says, what has this got to do with now? What is the point of all this excavation, if we do not yield the lessons from it?

Archaeologists, or rather scientists, I am coming to understand, are great prevaricators and qualifiers. I thought they dealt with facts and certainty, but I realise they stop short of absolutism. The skeletal remains may offer up information, data, but the scientist always holds back from the full stop. They leave gaps, everything qualified with the great 'maybe'. What the bones yield is still proffered in possibility. The teeth do not lie: fever lines, malocclusion, and hypoplasia tell us stories of 'nutritional stress', malnutrition and starvation.

The ‘field negroes’, described as ‘emaciated slaves’ in some of those quaint, English, seventeenth-century travel diaries, cultivated small plots of land to augment a paltry diet of guinea corn and sometimes saltfish, which was never enough. Hurricanes, droughts and inflated trade prices meant the plantation management would skimp on rations, therefore between the elements and economics, malnutrition and starvation was commonplace for the enslaved worker. The practice of geophagy – eating earth – provided mineral quantities to compensate for the relative lack of minerals in their food. An ‘adaptive explanation’ is offered – besides being a cultural practice, this could also be about ‘hunger alleviation’. So less a case of taking your daily mineral supplement.

*If we are to
disinter our
ancestors, we
should justify
the sacrifice.*

What is missing in the academic is the emotional life. The language is always removed, human beings are remains with identifiers, colour coded and a quantifiable sample in a vial. The academic language also gives away the fact that this is a western discipline; the gaze White

European, dissecting the Other. Whereas in some indigenous cultures, the laying of bones is sacred. This is sacred earth that should not be disturbed.

The academic peers through a looking glass. And there’s a code of practice that warns of destructive sampling: archaeologically-derived remains should not be regarded as a limitless resource for testing methods of analysis. Repeated samples for the same study are considered poor practice, ‘ensure the results justify the sacrifice’. It seems

to me that if we are to disinter our ancestors, we should justify the sacrifice. And that means to create a discourse that steps outside the leafy walls of academic establishments: a discourse that steps into the world where Black Lives don't matter.

And yet as the teeth speak, the enslaved yield their narrative. I see that we are really not that removed in time. I can follow the threads of my own family history, watch them un-spool...among the remains are clay kaolin pipes, testified to by teeth with a habitual one sided clench. Tobacco and pipes were part of a reward system, for good behaviour. We reward a good slave with tobacco. The trail from West Africa is peppered with gifts of beads, buttons, guns and unhealthy habits. But the trail and thread leads to my grandmother, an avid pipe smoker. She would smoke sitting on the porch of a zinc roof house. She suffered respiratory illness and died in her sixties due to thrombosis. She lived in a valley, too far from town and the price of a medical doctor.

It feels so hard doing this project right now. As a Black woman, how can I disconnect from what the archaeologists have found? How can I talk about the enslaved life, without it feeling like a shared past, my past? I feel the weight of irony: to live as a slave was to be brutalised and dehumanised, and now there is more 'care' given to their bones than when they were alive. The bones do not lie. 500 gauge of thickness should not prevent us from seeing that human remains are about our collective humanity, our past. If we are to think of slavery in new ways, it should be about placing every one of us in the heart of the discourse, as equal participants, equal voices.

(Very) close to the bone

A dire alchemy; but nonetheless, an alchemy: 'Literary Archaeology: Exploring the Lived Environment of the Slave' is about archaeologising memories of slavery.

Ralph Hoyte

Archaeology is digging things up and making inferences about the lives and cultures of the people who left or used the discovered objects. Literary archaeology is metaphorically 'digging up' the writings on and of long-gone people and cultures and making inferences about their lives and cultures from the writings. But for this project we are going one step further. We are archaeologising memory. So where are these memories to be found? Can we dig them up? Find them? Re-imagine the life of the enslaved? How to construct this, when memory is itself a constructed narrative, both on the individual level as well as shared?

These particular memories exist as bones scattered in a cemetery in Gran Canaria. Can the bones speak? No. Can the scientists speak for them? Well, the scientists say, "3: Female 20–25 Right lateral SW-NE – Possible earring/glass beads", or "Individual: $1 \delta^{18}\text{O}_{\text{VPDB}} - 4.2 \delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{carb}} - 10.7$ ". This is a kind of poetry in itself, the poetry of which we are made, the poetry of our basic building blocks; the poetry of life which expresses itself in any way it can, given the circumstances it finds itself in.

So what route to take? How to approach the topic? What is the structure? These are always the first questions I am confronted with when I am commissioned to write 'a work' (and being commissioned to write about 'something' is my main way of working). I think I work more like a sculptor than a poet or writer: I have to have a 'structural backbone'. Then the words appear out of nowhere and get bolted on to the scaffolding.

These concerns get even more pointed when I look at the theme. Slavery. How is one supposed to write about slavery? What's the angle? '*Re-imagining the life of the enslaved*' – wow! A scientific approach goes only so far. Scientists can – will – only say 'our results indicate...' or 'the prevailing evidence points to...' Historians can – will – only say 'in 1492 ...' and then proceed on the basis of their own cultural conditioning and persuasions. What can writers and poets say? Well, I could be a romanticist and write 'romantically' about the lives of the enslaved (if you look up 'romanticism' the definition is framed in terms of the nineteenth-century Romantic movement, but modern use of the term seems to imply a heightened and even overblown thickly daubed-on artistic palette; something 'larger-than-life'); or I could write a kind of costume drama, in which the dry bones of the story are fleshed out in a kind of faux-historical narrative; I could –

And then the sheer horror of 'the lives of the enslaved' hits me. How dare I? How can such suffering, such numbers be approached at all? The only thing I know is that I, too, am a product of a system of slavery, through many pathways, and many intertwined fates and bloodlines, and across three continents; and, that 'a transformation' has occurred, is occurring, is always occurring. It is/was a dire transformation and a dire passage, but, what else have we got? A narrative of victimisation which sits sour in me belly like the green guava me di tief off de neighbour tree an' Miss Ivy she did tell me, 'eh, Master Ralph....'? 'Master Ralph' – class, too, always present. Do I want to write a victimisation narrative? Well, let's at least give the finger to that one:

Shipshape and Bristol Fashion they did go
Down the Avon Gorge under the cliffs in tow
Out to the Bristol Channel where the Severn did flow
Carrying trinkets for the African Kings, Yo heave ho!

*Ho! And out to the Bristol Channel where the Severn did flow
Carrying trinkets for the African Kings, Yo heave ho!*

The winds o'er to the Guinea Coast their ship did blow
They anchored in the Bight of Benin and to the shore did row

They loaded up with slaves till their gunwhales were low
And set off for Amerikee with their cargo of woe

*Ho! They loaded up with slaves till their gunwhales were low
And set off for Amerikee with their cargo of woe*

And back from the Americas they did come
Loaded to the gunwhales with sugar, 'baccy and rum
Ho King of Spain here's one up yer bum
An' a pox on the Frenchies and those Portuguese scum!

[CHORUS]

*Ho! King of Spain that's one up yer bum
An' a pox on the Frenchies and those Portuguese scum!*

So, no victims. Have patience with me while I argue that 'being a victim' requires that the victim agrees to be victimised. Dat likkle rasta-man on de corner of Jelf Road, Brixton. When I did arsk him is what him feel 'bout dem always oppress I-man for why, him did tell me seh: "*I no business wid de Man business*" and went on to explain that if 'de Man' wanted to oppress him, then dat was The Man's problem, not his. I don't think I could live that, but I've remembered that for, oh, 25 years: to be 'oppressed', to be 'a victim' requires you accept the label. He denied it, so 'the oppressor' became the one carrying the burden of historical oppression, not him.

Where does that leave poets and writers? Not Romanticised. Not Historical (costume) drama. Not Victimisation. When Skuld ('being'), Urd ('fate') and Verdandi ('necessity') spin and the Iron Maiden gapes: why, transform yourself!

The bones gather themselves, from Finca Clavijo the bones gather themselves. They emerge from tiny rustles in the foliage; they erupt, snarling, out of the ground; they scrape the clay off themselves; they roll, creep, rattle; they crawl, simper over the dry soil; they clack their teeth. Es el Día de Muertos. The back swash of herstory eddies her loops around them; the far-off Milky Way; they congeal, congregate, clabber; they fuse, join: I am the composite one, of this one am I made, of that one, of the little one who died in childhood, of the Forokukromhene of Ashanti, the Adowahemmaa, of the Golden Tree, the Nyame Dua of Nana Ameyaw Kwaakye, the mother of dental enamel hypoplasia. Sing then Brothers, sing, Sisters, for it will be a dread song...

Section two

Bristol and the slave trade

Black Bristol, racism and slavery: one narrative to rule them all?

The parish of St Paul's occupies an important place in the history of Black Britain. But what part should the history of slavery play in its inhabitants identities?

Edson Burton

I first arrived in Bristol in September 1994. One of my first encounters from then with a Bristolian born and bred has stuck firmly in mind. While purchasing a fearsome slab of bread pudding, the young woman behind the counter concluded our conversation with the warning: “don’t go into that St Paul’s”. I failed to follow her advice. Indeed, much of my social, creative and work life has since involved living and working in St Paul’s. But to this day, her warning continues to reverberate. And I’ve seen that her fears are as current now as they were then. Only this year, the choreographer Cleo Lake discovered that *none* of the twenty plus participants in her Bristol Black History workshop had ever visited the neighbourhood.

St Paul’s remains in the popular consciousness an immutable zone of vice and Blackness, a place where modern white missionaries find meaning or where thrill seekers find adventure. But the St Paul’s I have come to know is anything but frozen in stasis. Its recent history is among the most dynamic in Bristol. From a much fancied ward in the nineteenth century, it became a zone of transition long before Caribbean settlers arrived in the 1950s and 60s. Landlords turned their homes over to multi-occupancy for lucrative letting to Irish families, European migrants, and people from the Commonwealth.

But the availability of rooms, discrimination by private landlords outside St Paul’s, residential rules preventing West Indians from qualifying for public housing, and patterns of chain migration from parishes

in Jamaica all led to a concentration of African Caribbean people in the ward. Yet what is little understood is that the Pan Caribbean community emerged *after* migration. It has no Caribbean antecedent. As such, it is a very 'British' phenomenon, with formerly disparate cohorts divided in the Caribbean by colour, caste, faith, income, profession and lifestyle all in a proximity that would not have existed previously. The resulting mix has been a crucial factor in St Paul's' contemporary vibrancy, as has been the fact that it has long been home to many white outcasts who remained or came to the area to enjoy its multicultural, youthful, non-judgemental vibe.

*Britain was our 'home', but we
were on the one hand absent
from its narratives of glory and
omnipresent in its tales of vice.*

St Paul's: a personal view

Since my arrival in 1994, I have experienced many moments of celebration and crisis in St Paul's' community history. A vibrant voluntary sector has spawned cultural institutions such as the St Paul's Carnival, the Kuumba Arts Centre, and service-based organisations such as Black Carers, the Centre for Employment & Enterprise Development (CEED). Colourful community leaders have risen in glory while some have fallen ignominiously.

The drug trade has delivered the antithesis to community spirit. Particular low points have included the senseless shooting of much loved



The Parish of St Paul's. KylaBorg/Flickr. Creative Commons.

caretaker Bangey' and armed police patrolling the streets in anticipation of a turf war. Yet even at the height of gang violence the community retained the plurality which marked its foundational years.

I witnessed a reduction in the vibrancy of St Paul's at the start of the current decade. Black professionals – some of whom had been rebels in their youth – started moving out of the area. Opportunities to buy elsewhere were a factor, although a friend living at the heart of the neighbourhood explained that he had run out of answers to his daughter's questions about the women on the corner or the used condoms in the gutters. Some residents in social housing were relocated away.

Changes in funding criteria and in some cases poor governance have also led to a stark decline in the Black voluntary sector. Of the multiple organisations that I recall only a handful remain. Beginning with the compulsory purchase order on the Black & White Cafe, many of the sites which gave St Paul's its edge closed one by one. The heterogeneity of its Caribbean descendant community is not as it was once was.

Recent migration into St Paul's has however delivered an alternative vitality. The migrant experience is being repeated today by Somali families that have settled in the inner city including in St Paul's. Across the country inner city living has become attractive once again. In Bristol, first time white buyers have snapped up new and existing properties in St Paul's. Proximity to the shopping district Cabot Circus and the independent creative quarter around Stokes Croft are key factors. The influx of the latter has led longer term residents to bemoan gentrification.

The slavery narrative and its pitfalls

There are palpable challenges facing the Black community in St Paul's, and in Bristol more generally, but there is also a strong tradition of resilience. That is why I am so struck by the community's narrative of itself, which relies on historic trauma and notions of powerlessness. How this has arisen, and what are its potential dangers?

For the children of migrants like myself, there was no comfort of island return when we were faced with racism. Britain was our 'home'. But we were on the one hand absent from its narratives of glory and omnipresent in its tales of vice. How were we to make sense of this complicated relationship? Unsurprisingly, an interrogation of Britain's historic relationship to the African diaspora and in particular to slavery was an important part of the process, especially in the former slave port of Bristol.

As part of the City Museum's 1997 slavery exhibition, for example, artist Tony Forbes produced a visual collage of iconic Bristol symbols drawn from its slaving past and troubled present. A young black man in urban garb chained to a rock was placed at its centre. This is perhaps the most succinct visual representation of the popular narrative linking slavery to the contemporary identity and plight of Black Britons.

I grew up with this narrative, listening to the lyrics of Peter Tosh and Burning Spear. Yet I question the extent to which it allows the com-

munity to understand the forces that structure its current challenges. Let's take gentrification as an example. Although gentrification may be painful for a community to witness, it is a colour-blind, class-insensitive process that is repeated across the country. It is *not* a conspiracy to ethnically cleanse the inner city.

Similarly with the criminal justice system. We all know that Black Britons are disproportionately incarcerated. But we also know that judicial systems in highly stratified societies across the world disproportionately target the poor regardless of their colour. Just as we know that those without the legitimate means of access to social mobility are most likely to engage in crime. So we need a more nuanced popular discussion about how the criminal justice system affects Black Bristolians instead of simply saying "it's a re-hash of slavery".

The same is true when we're thinking about the fragility of governance in the Black voluntary. One particularly disempowering narrative holds that "we can't run our things properly", as if we have been rendered historically incapable. Funders seem to agree, failing in the process to understand that organisational problems are a consequence of a skills shortage among what is predominately a working class population that needs support.

Discourse(s) on health, education, employment and housing inequalities are also important. Although these inequalities clearly exist, when we look at them in a comparative cultural perspective we see that inequality's major dimension is *class*. Indeed, we see similar patterns of exclusion among Bristol's low income families regardless of ethnicity. What then are the unique challenges facing Bristol's Black community and how useful is an appeal to slavery's past in meeting these challenges?

Complacency must be eschewed and complexity embraced. Some second and third generation Black Britons access higher education, and others find work in professions that were closed to our parents. But

many do not. Perhaps then the time has come for Black Britons to consider class distinctions within our own community? For by doing so we can begin to focus attention and resources where they are most needed. Appealing to a homogeneous Black identity shaped by slavery and racism draws attention away from recognising these other critical distinctions. We are not, after all, entirely in this together.

Researching the transatlantic slave trade is deeply effecting, especially when it involves the story of your own ancestors. I'm well aware of slavery's toxic legacies, including racism. Racism is a force that stains every aspect of our human interaction. But I don't believe we are brought any closer to understanding slavery's legacy in contemporary society when its history is used as a catch all for a multiplicity of multifaceted social ills. We disempower ourselves when we reduce complex injustices to one simplifying cause. And we distort the actuality of Black life with narratives of 'damage' rooted in slavery. That said, it is unquestionably valid to remember slavery so that we may not repeat. We can honour the dead without conscripting their bones to any contemporary cause.

Obliteration, contextualisation or ‘guerrilla memorialisation’? Edward Colston’s statue reconsidered

Legacies of slavery’s past dot many a British cityscape. But how best to handle the architectural politics of memory?

Madge Dresser

What are we to do with statues from a colonialist past? The recent furore over the memorialisation of Cecil Rhodes in Oxford has made us question not only who should be honoured in public spaces but also who makes up the public whose past is being collectively represented.

In Bristol, the statue of the merchant, slave trader, and philanthropist Edward Colston (1636-1721) has become a lightning rod for racial and class tensions in the city today. Some, inspired by the ‘Rhodes Must Fall’ movement have called for its removal, some for its recontextualisation, whilst others have attempted to subvert it through what Alan Rice has characterised as ‘guerilla memorialisation’.

The statue in question, which has presided over Bristol’s city centre since 1895, celebrates this ‘virtuous and wise’ son of the city who was briefly the city’s Tory MP in 1710 and its foremost benefactor. Tellingly, there is no mention on the statue’s plinth of his slave trading activities. Indeed, the city literally bristles with streets and buildings named in Colston’s honour – almshouses, tower blocks, schools and a concert hall all bear his name. Many of Bristol’s churches, tourists are routinely reminded, were restored with his money. Little wonder then that city fathers (and I use the term purposely) have long invoked this sanitised image of Colston as an icon of an apparently universal Bristol identity.

For centuries, Colston’s birthday has been a civic event. Yet Colston’s philanthropy was far from universal. He was, in fact, selectively

sectarian towards ordinary Bristolians in his day, explicitly excluding any Whigs and non-Anglican Christians from benefitting from his largesse. And the late Victorian statue by John Cassidy (which is but the most recent of at least three monumental likenesses) was originally conceived as a symbol of civic unity at a time when the established Liberal and Tory elite were challenged by increasing labour unrest.

It is only since the late 1990s that Colston's hero status and the statue itself have come under fire, as his involvement



Victoria Street, Bristol 1890. Paul Townsend/Flickr. Creative Commons.

in Britain's slave and sugar trades has become more widely known and as new scholarship has further documented the extent of the city's historic debt to the wealth engendered by enslaved Africans. In 1998, as part of a consultative exercise leading up to the city's first major exhibition on Bristol and the slave trade, Colston's role as a director of the Royal African Company was related to a multi-racial audience in St. Paul's, Bristol. The following morning, 'F—k off slave trader' was famously daubed in red paint across his statue. The vandalism caused outrage in the city, as did a remark by Ray Sefia (then Bristol's only black Councillor) that it was as inappropriate to have a public monument honouring Colston as it would be to have one of Hitler. Letters pages of the local press, television news features and phone-ins on BBC Radio Bristol all featured heated defence of Colston, who was increasingly conflated with the honour and identity of the city itself.

The battlelines then drawn between pro- and anti-Colston camps uncannily mirrored historic divisions between the city's pro-slavery and abolitionist factions two centuries before. By the millennium's end, however, Bristolians were a far more disparate group, including not only increasing numbers of well-educated and liberally-minded newcomers to the city, but also residents of Caribbean and African origin, many of whom were themselves descended from those enslaved in the British colonies.

The debate over Colston's statue rumbled on into the 21st century, with pro-Colston advocates arguing that Colston endowed many schools, churches and charities and was an intrinsic part of the city's identity. His philanthropy should not be ignored or forgotten. By contrast, black critics of the statue and their allies pointed out that the uncritical civic celebration of a figure who enslaved one's ancestors was not only woundingly insulting, but also excluded them from a sense of belonging to the city.

It speaks volumes about implicit civic priorities that up until 1998 the only memorial to enslaved Africans was a small plaque privately financed by Ian White, then MEP for Bristol, and the novelist and former Colston girls' school pupil, Phillipa Gregory. In 2000, a footbridge was named 'Pero's bridge' after the personal servant and slave of a Bristol mayor and Nevis plantation owner, John Pinney. Pero's dependent status hardly made him an inspiring role model for black Bristolians and many white working class Bristolians reportedly refer to the distinctive construction as 'the horned bridge' rather than refer to Pero himself. When calls were made for the city to fund a more explicit memorial to those enslaved, some white Bristolians asked why the focus was solely on those of African descent when Bristol was also built on the back of exploited white labour.

Throughout this debate, Colston's statue with its celebratory plaques remained unchanged. As such, it has become the target for more

unofficial artistic interventions. During the bicentennial of the abolition of the British slave trade in 2007, drops of blood mysteriously appeared on the statue's plinth, which some attributed to Banksy. The following year, the artist Graeme Evelyn Morton proposed 'The Two Coins' temporary art installation in which he aimed to project his recently funded film on historic and contemporary slavery onto Colston's statue, which would be temporarily boxed in for the purpose. The city never actioned his scheme. A virtual subversion of the statue was effected online by the Anglo-Nigerian artist Hew Locke as part of his 'Restoration Series'. Here, Colston's statue was transformed into a fetish object covered in trade trinkets. Most recently a slave collar spray painted to match the statue has been surreptitiously placed around Colston's neck.

Such interventions, ephemeral as they are, at least have the virtue of revivifying public debate about painful history which belies such blandly celebratory public memorials. Removal of the statue would stifle such perspectives. Using public funds to recontextualise the statue with new plaques and counter memorials (i.e. to the exploited labour underpinning the city's historic wealth) would both preserve and enrich Bristol's symbolic urban landscape and provide for a more honest and inclusive sense of Bristolians' shared identity.

Colston, the cathedral and Bristol's children

Most public debate over the legacy of Edward Colston focuses on his statue. But what of the schoolchildren's ceremonies that take place in the cathedral?

Christine Townsend

Events held during the month of November in Bristol are much like those held across the country. We have our fair share of fireworks displays, we mark Remembrance Sunday, and some say the Christmas decorations appear far too early. But the month of November is unique in Bristol for the many annual rituals centred around the person of Edward Colston.

Edward Colston (1636-1721) was a Bristol son and Merchant Venturer, described by his city centre statue as “virtuous and wise” and once a top official in the Royal African Company, which had a monopoly on trade along Africa’s west coast during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. He was without doubt a great benefactor of the city, but also a huge personal beneficiary of the slave trade. As such, his legacy is now torn between those who value his philanthropic deeds and contribution to Bristolian civic life, and those who see him as an embodiment of historical injustice.

Although much of the contemporary debate over his memorialisation revolves around the statue remembering him in one of the city’s central roundabouts, I believe that we would be better off focussing on the role his personage plays in the lives of the city’s school children. Most are aware of places like Colston Hall, Colston Girls School and Colston Tower. Some are also aware of streets named after him. But most will come into contact with him in the annual November ceremonies sponsored by the Merchant Venturers and designed to preserve his memory, which take place in the city’s cathedral.

Any ceremony held in a cathedral is significant. When that ceremony is led by a bishop, it is even more so. Bristol Cathedral dates back to the twelfth century and occupies a prominent position in the centre of the city. It is within this venue that the life of Edward Colston is annually celebrated and commemorated. Should that be so?

Although the hundreds of school children who participate in these ceremonies may pay as much attention to the words spoken by a bishop as they do to statues of dead white men, all will eagerly receive their 'Colston bun' at the end of the ceremony and will pose for photographs within the cathedral grounds for school newsletters and promotional material used on websites. On the day of the ceremony itself, hundreds from the Colston Girls School wear a bronze chrysanthemum on their lapels, apparently this man's favourite flower; children bring a 10 pence piece for the 'charity box' to continue the actions of this man who used philanthropy as a means to stamp his name on the city.

Bristol Cathedral. Mathew Black/Flickr. Creative Commons.



Yet what these ceremonies fail to include are reflections on the system of enslavement that contributed to the fortune that made Colston's philanthropic endeavours possible. There is no mention or acknowledgement of the suffering he caused to the ancestors of those now living in Bristol, some of whom will be represented amongst the children in these ceremonies. Whilst recent activism in the city has seen an end to children placing wreaths around his central statue, religious ceremonies continue behind the cathedral's closed doors annually in early November.

Surely it is time for the cathedral to wake up to its hypocrisy? How can it claim to promote peace and understanding, or the word of Jesus, when it continues to allow the Merchant Venturers, a centuries' old organisation built on the wealth of exploration, exploitation and enslavement of fellow human beings, to whitewash over the historical realities of how his money and assets were accumulated?

Bristol is a city divided along two lines in relation to Colston. Some continue to regard him as 'a man of his time who used philanthropy for the good of the city'; others see 'a human-trafficker and enslaver, who needs to be remembered as such whenever his name is spoken'. With the cathedral's continued endorsement of these ceremonies and the message they convey to the city's children, there can be little doubt which side of the division it sits. And there can be little doubt that it contributes towards teaching the city's children only a very partial historical narrative.

Remembering empire in Bristol and Brussels

In debates over how to remember the imperial, slave-driving past, what can Bristol learn from Belgium?

Jonathan Saha

I was recently part of a small delegation of historians from the University of Bristol involved in a trip to the Royal Museum for Central Africa in Brussels. The purpose of the visit was to consider the ways that imperialism and its legacies have been approached in the museum, and the difficulties of publicly engaging with this divisive history.

We were also reflecting on the sad story of Bristol's British Empire and Commonwealth Museum that ran from 2002 until 2008, a story which continues because of some ongoing controversies. Following its closure, the large collection amassed by the museum's staff was acquired by Bristol City Council, who have a huge quantity of archival material to sort through, as well as artefacts to preserve. How should these materials, originally acquired to be part of the country's only collection dedicated to the history of empire, be integrated in to Bristol's existing collections? How should these imperial objects be displayed in muse-

*It is not a matter of moving
beyond colonial history, but of
consistently acknowledging and
remembering the past.*

ums in, and largely about, Bristol? These are some difficult questions, and at Bristol University we have been running some events to spark ideas. But the elephant in the room is how should empire be remembered in Britain – particularly since some in the media pinpointed the reason behind the museum's decline as a general British distaste for remembering the colonial past. We went to Brussels to see how this bigger problem had been dealt with in a different post-imperial context.

The Museum for Central Africa is housed in, to say the least, a grand building and it is situated in some dramatic grounds. Commissioned by Leopold II with money from his personal colony, the Congo Free State, with help from the Belgian tax-payers, it was founded in 1898 as the Congo Museum. The current buildings were constructed between 1904 and 1909. The intention was to showcase the supposed development of the colony to the Belgian public. Re-branded as the Museum for Central Africa in 1960s, following Congolese independence, the Royal Museum for Central Africa. Laurence Livermore/Flickr. Creative Commons.



function of the museum has changed. It now sees its role as fostering greater public interest in the continent and facilitating scientific and humanities research involving scholarly partnerships between Europe and Africa. On our tour we got a sneak, behind-the-scenes insight into the incredible resources they have to achieve this. We had a privileged glimpse at a small fraction of their huge collection of Congolese masks and icons, and visited the archive of explorer Henry Morton Stanley (we got to see his luggage and rifle – I can't think of more appropriate symbolic relics). The museum is now going through another phase of renovation and the museum's management are again rethinking its role. Its imperial baggage is, in theory at least, gradually being shed. But despite these shifts and re-inventions, the imperial origins of the building continue to cast a long shadow.

Today's main entrance – which in its original incarnation was the entrance reserved for notables – confronts the visitor with irredeemably racist statues. Golden European figures with African children cling-



ing to them stand looming over black statues of African men making crude symbols in the dirt, or attempting to make fire. This is the imperial 'civilising mission' on display: it was a soothing justification for violent imperial expansion and exploitation, with Africans depicted as inherently backward and inferior. However, although I was struck by this racist iconography, these statues do not really *confront* the visitor. The entrance hall in which they are located is simply where the tickets are sold before you enter the Museum proper. Despite its imposing architecture and decoration, it is a sort of 'non-space' which you merely pass through – a lobby, a corridor.

This entrance is part of a general difficulty faced by the museum. Its imperial heritage is literally built in to it. Leopold II's double 'L' motif is absolutely everywhere. There are a number of controversial displays and artefacts that present an unreconstructed colonial view of Central Africa. There are plaques commemorating Belgian soldiers who died in the explorations prior to colonisation. There has been a concerted effort to tell the story of Belgian colonialism in the Congo through the museum, and it is an unavoidably brutal and unhappy story. There have also been specific events organised to deal with imperial memories and legacies, events involving the Belgian Congolese community. But this effort to decolonise the museum sits awkwardly with many of the ethnographic displays and the building itself. In a sense, the Museum *is* an artefact of imperialism, and was in its time an agent of imperialism, and it needs to be framed as that to its visitors. This is not a matter of moving beyond its colonial history, but of consistently acknowledging and remembering that past; something that some of the curators at the museum are striving for.

In Britain, the sorry fate of the only museum specifically set up to remember that past is a sign that the history of imperialism remains publicly unremembered. Although to listen to politicians on the right, you might be forgiven for thinking that the British public were constantly having the evils of empire forced down their throats. Conjuring

up a mythical period of national post-colonial shame, [Foreign Secretary William Hague](#) recently argued that Britain needed to shed its guilt about empire and deal with countries on an equal footing. I don't know when this time of brooding national guilt is supposed to have happened. The piecemeal and [ironically imperial-style, official apologies](#) (and pressure for further apologies) for events in Britain's colonial history would suggest that much of it remains unresolved. Moreover, quite contrary to these attempts to consign imperial history to the past, [recent studies of the compensation paid to former slave owners](#) have shown the huge material impacts that imperialism had on Britain that have hitherto gone unacknowledged.

We are constantly learning more about the legacies of empire, and about [the violence of decolonisation](#). Living in Bristol, the material legacy of imperialism is everywhere but, like the Museum for Central Africa, the history of imperialism is not always made apparent. Perhaps Britain doesn't need a museum specifically dedicated to empire because its traces are so ubiquitous in the built environment and implicitly in the collections that museums possess (see for instance [the tale of the stunning Burmese Buddha](#) that greets you in the Asia section of the British Museum). Instead, perhaps the history of empire needs to be made clear and acknowledged in numerous sites?

There has been some academic debate over the impact of imperialism on British culture, with some arguing that Britons were 'absent-minded' imperialists. That is not a position that I subscribe to, but regardless of this, Britain shouldn't be an absent-minded post-imperial nation.

This piece was originally Posted on [Dr Saha's blog, Colonizing Animals](#), on April 10 2013, and is reprinted with his permission.

Slavery and visual memory: what Britain can learn from France

The debate over Edward Colston's statue goes to the heart of the visual politics of memory and history. What can Britain learn from France's treatment of its slave-trading past?

Olivette Otele

Controversies surrounding the public memorialisation of slave trader and philanthropist Edward Colston illustrate how Bristol oscillates between remembering and forgetting its slave trading past. There have, on the one hand, been several initiatives in the city since the 1990s aimed at raising awareness of Bristol's historical connection to slavery. A major exhibition exploring the city's role in the slave trade was initiated by local activists, academics and artists in 1999, and some of its exhibits are now held in a permanent gallery in what used to be [the Industrial Museum](#). There is also the [Slave Trail](#), and [Pero's Bridge](#), linking the two banks of the Bristol docks, and named in memory of [the life of Pero](#), servant to eighteenth-century plantation owner John Pinney. But on the other hand, Edward Colston, a slave trader, continues to be publicly honoured. Schools, avenues, and a concert hall are named after him, and his statue stands in the city centre. The mere idea of tearing it down meets with fierce resistance from certain quarters.

In May 2016, the annual debate of the [Bristol Institute for Research in the Humanities and Arts](#) revisited [the controversies surrounding Colston's statue](#). Prior to the debate, a three-hour programme on BBC Radio Bristol stimulated heated exchanges among listeners. They had been encouraged to comment on the question, "time to get rid of Edward Colston's legacy?" The answers revealed how current social issues shaped people's perceptions of the past. Many argued that the statue was disgraceful because it celebrated the life of a man who contributed to the welfare of the city with revenues acquired through 'human



Mémorial de l'abolition de l'esclavage. Groume/Flickr. Creative Commons.

trafficking? But some were unapologetic, stating that it was irrelevant to question the statue's morality since slavery was legal in Colston's time. Still others contended that European conquest saved the lives of millions of Africans who would have otherwise been condemned to a life of misery and tribal warfare. Some called in to deplore the emphasis put on the history of slavery abroad when the conditions of British coal miners two centuries ago were, they claimed, as appalling as those of slaves. "What about our own people?" one caller asked, while the radio host claimed that "Nigerians sold their own people". Lurking beneath these words is the troublesome question of race, expressed in terms such as 'us' often opposed to 'them', and in the assumption that Bristol's "own people" did not include descendants of the enslaved.

Debate about Colston's visual legacy is taking place at a time when academics, student movements, and social justice activists concerned with inequality, racism and nostalgia about empire are themselves debating how and whether to dismantle postcolonial sites of memory. But what is different in Bristol is that the debate is public, which is a strong marker of a shared history, and focusses very specifically on the

visual representation of that common history. Some Bristolians argue that removing the statue will lead to forgetting the past (good or bad), while others argue that what happens to Colston's statue is irrelevant, since what would really make a difference would be raising a statue of prominent black men or women as a memorial to the descendants of enslaved Africans. Yet what can Bristolians learn from France?

Slavery and memory in France

Consider, for example, the argument that street names in honour of slavers should be changed. In Paris, a plaque indicating a street named after Antoine Richepanse, who was one of Napoleon's generals and who helped him to re-establish slavery in 1802, was replaced by a plaque that also names Joseph Boulogne, Chevalier de Saint Georges. Boulogne, the son of an enslaved black woman and an aristocratic plantation owner, was brought to Paris and became one of the most renowned musicians and composers of eighteenth-century Europe. The joint presentation of both men's names ensures that visitors are confronted by multiple histories.

There are few statues of people who were enslaved or of enslaved descent in Britain (notwithstanding the memorial to the Caribbean community in London and [Mary Seacole's newly unveiled monument](#)). By contrast, after 28 years of debate, the French city of Nantes unveiled a full [Memorial to the Abolition of Slavery](#) on Quai de la Fosse in 2012. For its part, Bordeaux chose both an exhibition and monument to acknowledge the role of people of African descent in the city's history, with the exhibits of the Musée d'Aquitaine complementing the bust of Toussaint l'Ouverture located in Parc aux Angeliqes.

The city of Le Havre chose to transform the use of colonial spaces by telling the story of France's past and its legacies in what used to be the seats of power. La Maison des Armateurs, for example, is now a regular site for debates about the history of slavery, colonialism and European expansionism. As for the capital city, Paris, a modest monument is to

be found in the Jardin du Luxembourg, located near the senate, and offering a reminder of the role played by politicians in first legally and financially supporting, then outlawing, the slave trade.

Beyond statues, France has chosen 10 May as the date of the annual commemoration of the abolition of slavery. The event is organised by the [National Committee for the Memory and History of Slavery](#). It is an important date for the nation and the ceremony is attended by high ranking members of the state such as the president, mayor and education minister. Education has become pivotal to abolition commemorations in France. During the ceremony, prizes from the project [La Flamme de l'Égalité](#) are awarded to people for their contribution to enhancing their peers' understanding of the history of slavery or for setting up initiatives that foster social equality and tackle racism. These initiatives are [by no means the only ones](#), and they reveal how outreach projects and high profile yearly commemorations can work together.

A way forward for Bristol?

All of the above show the different approach that France is taking to its historical involvement in transatlantic slavery (even if sensitive questions of [social cohesion and white supremacy](#) are still to be addressed in nationwide public debate). France continues to work towards inclusive viewpoints regarding its slaving past by tackling the debate generated by what I call 'reluctant sites of memory'. By contrast, proudly multicultural Bristol is still struggling to find common ground regarding its own forms of memorialisation. The new mayor of Bristol, Marvin Rees, thus has a vast task ahead in cohesively integrating diverse narratives and expectations. He frames his own dual heritage and working class background as positioning him as a unifying figure, and he locates the roots of deep-seated inequality and racism in post-war migration stories. He will now need to connect these stories to a longer history of inequality and address growing demands for reparations if Bristol is to break the vicious circle of remembering and forgetting a past that has been polarised around Colston's presence in the city.

Section three

Global afterlives

Language and resistance: memories of transatlantic slavery, and its continuing afterlives in the use of Rastafari language and terminology

Language within the Rastafari culture, known as Iyaric, or Word Sound, has been formed in resistance to the effects of white supremacist domination as it manifest in slavery and colonisation.

Shawn-Naphtali Sobers

A famous scene in the landmark 1977 series *Roots* shows the moment when language is recognised as being significant in the fight for power – for the Africans, in our struggle for liberation, for slave masters, in their plan to dominate a whole set of people by violent and cultural means. The scene shows Kunta Kinte being tortured to force him to relinquish his African name, after he was caught again trying to escape the plantation. Other enslaved Africans are gathered to witness him being whipped to within an inch of his life, with his slave master demanding that he accept the European name of Toby.

From a physical perspective the battle was grossly unequal, with Kunta's arms and legs bound. But from a psychological perspective, the fight was by no means one-sided, with Kunta having to be severely beaten before he finally conceded. Both Kunta and the slave master recognised that language is power, with the overseer determined to prevent the enslaved from holding on to any sense of self-worth, pride, or notion of individual and cultural empowerment. When Kunta does eventually concede, even his enslaved family and friends look disappointed – since his surrender marks a significant moment in the defeat their liberation struggle.

From the late 1930s onwards, Rastafari use of language emerged out of the shadow cast by slavery and these kinds of practices as a means of (re-)building an autonomous, black identity. *Iyaric*, as that language

is known, emerged in a context in which speaking 'Oxbridge English' was a way for the poor and working classes to escape from poverty, even if doing so saw them alienated from, and alienating, their peers. Iyaric rejected that English and its alienation, as part of what scholar Horace Campbell calls "a determined effort to break with the sophistry of the English culture of Jamaica" and "to form a language which reflected...solidarity, self-reliance and Africanness".

Rastafari challenged the Anglophile culture that was dominant amongst Jamaica's elite and sought to embrace our African heritage at a time when any association with that continent was resisted. Early Rastafari ideology stemmed from the ideas of Jamaican pan-African philosopher and activist Marcus Garvey who, when asked whether he was African or Jamaican, famously responded, "I will not give up a continent for an island".

Unsurprisingly, personal name changes were one of the first stages in this development and in the development of a Rastafari self. Rastafari shed both our slavery-given surnames and our European (or otherwise) first names. Although replacement names were not always strictly African, they included many that were, as well as names that were Biblical, were symbols of power reflecting Ethiopian royal titles, names that referenced African culture (such as Lion, Addis, Bushman, and Simba), or that were Rasta-fied nicknames (such as Natty, Iyah, Dread, and Bongo).

Naming and framing the world

Yet Rastafari use of language transcended the realm of personal names to form new words and grammars, syncretised by adapting English, Jamaican patois, Amharic and creole, in order to build a vocabulary capable of reflecting on broader society, philosophy and theology.

For example, Iyaric is seen as 'lived', not merely ephemeral, but with tangible physical presence and impact through the vibrations each

word makes. This is encapsulated in the Rastafari chant of *Word Sound Power*, which is intoned in response to speech of inspirational significance, that strikes a chord in the hearer's heart.

Another important (and common) element in Iyoric is the 'rule' of avoiding the word 'back', in the sense of 'back to Africa'. Instead, Rastafari use the word 'forward', since Africa is our spiritual homeland, or Zion, and therefore a place of philosophical and spiritual progress. One moves forwards towards it, one develops, without any negative connotations of regressing. Although *forwards to Africa* is that terminology used in its deepest sense, it is also used in more mundane situations, such as to move forward home. To consciously move forward through space and time is seen as a religious state of progress and potential, with the concept 'back' a negative *Babylon* designed to stifle self-development and growth.

This complex psychological-linguistic turn is encapsulated in our mantra '*Forwards Ever Backwards Never*'. Such mantras point to the diachronic pedagogic philosophy that underpins Rastafari language, theology and philosophy. Another is '*Each One Teach One*', which asserts that everyone is teacher and pupil alike, that life is fluid, and that ones moves forwards into history, towards self-determination and liberation.

Forward movement is evident even in the preferred name of our faith itself – Rastafari, rather than Rastafarian(s) or Rastafarianism. The latter two monikers are fixed and bound, the ends of the words rendered static, pinned like a butterfly, beautiful, yet powerless. In contrast, *Rastafari* is both singular and plural, also noun and verb, the 'I' at the end constantly vibrating in the air, floating above any enclosing full stop.

The use of 'I' as a unifying connector wherever possible is a common factor in Iyoric. Words that have been used by Rastafari since the early days of the movement include Inity (unity), Iwa (hour/time), Iver

(ever), and Ises (praises). The most well-known 'I' phrase within Rastafari culture is *InI*, ("I-an-I"), which is a collective we – you and me combined, and also singular. It denotes shared values and lessons, accepts that there is sameness-in-difference, and that despite individuality, InI move forward in Inity (unity). The term InI appeals to broader senses of solidarity, empathy, and the building of a notional Rastafari citizenship towards the broader rallying cause of *One Aim, One God, One Destiny*, which optimistically encompasses many paths towards the same goals of equal rights and justice.

The phrase InI appeals to this broader sense of solidarity within not only us members of the Rastafari faith, but also to 'goodwill' people of whatever creed or religion, as there is the belief that people fundamentally want to be, and see, good, and it is Babylon that corrupts. When certain Ights (heights) of knowledge and wisdom have been reached, Rastafari say that something is Overstood, in the sense that if InI understands something, then InI are not underneath the knowledge, InI are over it, so InI say Overstand, never under.

Ultimately, what is important in this discussion is that language is and has long been one of the tools that Rastafari use to decolonise and resist. Since its inception in the late 1930s, Rastafari have attempted to build a decolonised lexicon, to turn perceived negatives into positives, and to effectively construct a linguistic programme of *re-programming* the emancipated, post-colonial, pan-African, Rastafari mind, free from the shackled mind-states imposed during slavery. With our dreadlock hair, green, gold and red clothes, and our own language, Rastafari challenge the oppressor both inside and out.

Stealing freedom: attempts to re-enslave blacks in post-emancipation Barbados

As was the case across the Americas, formal emancipation in Barbados did not automatically lead to 'freedom' for formerly enslaved people.

Alana Johnson

Emancipation for Barbadian blacks signaled a mere conditional and partial freedom, a position tantamount to re-enslavement. This was primarily because the island's small size and dense population meant that it was easy for planters to dictate post-emancipation conditions by withholding jobs and housing until their terms were met. Planters devised policies that mocked blacks' new status as 'free', constantly reminding them that they existed solely for the purpose of labour.

These policies were encapsulated in the infamous Masters and Servants Act of 1838, known popularly as the 'Contract Act'. From this act emerged the dark and brutal policy of 'ejection'. 'Ejection' saw planters hold the threat of homelessness over black heads. Since blacks owned neither homes nor land, many lived in their former masters' lodgings in exchange for continued work on the plantation – with the caveat that if they ever refused, they would be 'ejected'.

Planters used this marriage of housing and labour to coerce work from the formerly enslaved and to retain social, political and economic control over them. Beyond stripping blacks of their choice over where and whom to work for – one of the fundamental components of liberal, capitalist 'freedom' – they used it to demand their continued obedience and deference. As the island's foremost civil rights leader, Samuel Jackman Prescod, put it: "whatever of slavery [the planter] could retain, he was...unwilling to relinquish; and as servants attached to his property and subject to his daily, hourly surveillance and command, the negro was retained in a condition near...that of slavery".

This assault on black freedom festered like a wound in Barbadian society. Planters were especially determined to uproot people during the night, and seemed to relish disassembling houses and throwing peoples' belongings onto the island's roads. Many ejections stemmed from impetuous decisions over trivial matters that planters felt threatened their authority. The result was the splitting up of families; the invasion of people's right to privacy; the imposition of rent-fines, and an extreme insecurity of tenure coupled with a conditional freedom that left blacks feeling as though they still had no control over their own lives.

*Emancipation for Barbadian
blacks signaled a mere
conditional and partial freedom,
a position tantamount to re-
enslavement.*

Commenting on the proliferation of ejections, Prescod condemned the practice as rendering blacks “still subject, though nominally free, to the grossest and most wanton oppression of slavery”. One landmark case stands out. This was the ejection of Betsy Cleaver. According to Prescod, at the time of her ejection, Cleaver was “far advanced in pregnancy” and shared the house with her two young children. She stated that she had invested her own money and partially built the house from which she was ejected and that the crime for which she

was thrown out was disobedience. In desperation, she and her children sought refuge with her uncle, “an old, infirm and nearly blind cripple”. However, the planter counterattacked by also targeting his house and ejecting all the occupants into the street.

Blacks’ responses to these attacks was to vote with their feet. By 1839, hundreds of young men sailed from Bridgetown, with reports indicating that many more were leaving the fields daily. Rather than acquiesce to planter control and demands, they asserted their right to voice their opinions, to choose their work, and to protect their freedom and independence.

Yet planters retaliated once more, devising new ways to attack black freedom. Legislation against emigration was one powerful example. This was justified as necessary to protect blacks from unscrupulous interlopers out to trap them in a ‘new slavery’. Planters paraded as new ‘abolitionists’ wanting to shield blacks from their own potentially foolish decisions – and did so by preventing them from moving. Without

A shack in Barbados. Tom Hodgkinson/Flickr. Creative Commons.



doubt a case of wolves in sheep clothing, since planters' real goal was to maintain control over black lives and labour.

As Prescod pointed out at the time, it was planters' effort "first to plunge the peasantry into hopeless wretchedness, and next to prevent their escape from it [that] led to the emigration acts". One of these – infamously dubbed 'the Gagging Act' – not only denied would-be migrants from exercising their freedom to go where they chose, but sought to mute the entire island by criminalising persons who counseled or advised migration. Numerous people were convicted and imprisoned.

The other major tactic planters used was propaganda – popularising stories of post-emigration suffering. Planters hired Joseph Thorne, a popular lay-preacher, formerly enslaved person, and member of the Barbados Auxiliary British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, to preach on the horrors of emigration. Although he had never visited it, he sought to dissuade blacks from migrating to British Guiana by denouncing it as a country surrounded on all sides by "swarms of venomous serpents, ferocious alligators and millions of mosquitos". He and others like him painted emigration as a new slave trade which promoted kidnapping and tore families apart. The boats used to transport labourers were vilified as mirroring the conditions and cruelty associated with the Atlantic slave trade. The picture that was painted was so persuasive that it succeeded in dividing the loyalties of the Barbados Auxiliary British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society causing many members to question emigration.

Yet in the face of all these efforts, blacks remained reticent. Continuing to jealously guard their freedom, they pushed forward, determined not to succumb, and fighting to achieve unconditional freedom regardless of where they had to go to get it. Is it any surprise that over 1000 Barbadians arrived in British Guiana every year?

Remembering captive bodies: indigenous child labour and runaway ads in a post-slavery Peru

What can runaway ads tell us about histories of exploitation and exclusion in post-slavery Peru? How did 'masters' govern before surveillance technology?

Jose Ragas

Until a few decades ago, it was common to find handwritten signs outside the houses of middle and upper class neighborhoods in Lima seeking domestic servants. “*Se necesita muchacha cama adentro*” (“Indoor Maid Needed”) was written on large pieces of paper and displayed in windows and doors to tempt potential applicants to inquire about the job. Those who applied were almost invariably young women in their teens or twenties, born in the highlands and recently arrived in Lima seeking escape from the difficulties of rural life and a better future. For them, such signs were life lines in a city known for its hostility toward Indigenous migrants. Yet the signs were also visual reminders of the enduring demand for workers for a job that had changed little since the nineteenth century, and which embodies inequality and segregation.

Long before these contemporary signs (see page 70), there were others, published in newspapers, asking not for new domestic servants but demanding the capture of escapees and their immediate return to the master’s household. These runaway ads seem now like relics of a cruel and arcane past, available only in archives and libraries, but for decades, they worked to reproduce slavery and bondage in the Americas. While often associated with African slavery, in what follows I introduce a different type of runaway ad. In them, we learn of fugitive domestic servants, primarily Indigenous children (male and female) fleeing their masters’ households in Lima during the 1860s.

I first encountered these runaway ads while conducting archival research for my dissertation. I was intrigued by the mechanisms and grassroots tactics of identification and surveillance employed during a pre-scientific period, before a biometric system, mug shots or fingerprints were available. The advertisements' physical descriptions of runaways offer an opportunity for social historians to look more closely at masters' strategies for monitoring and controlling their workers.



Photo by author. All rights reserved.

Runaway ads, as US historians have [explained](#), can also restore the presence of the socially dominated whose voices are usually absent in the historical archive. For although masters produced the ads and intended them for the literate population, these documents nonetheless offer a glimpse into the world of domestic servants and the households that served as their spaces of confinement. Situating these runaway ads alongside the analysis of previous essays by [Sandra E. Greene](#) and [Sophie White](#) on *Beyond Trafficking and Slavery*, my work looks for new ways to unearth the history of slavery and bondage, specifically the genealogy of indentured servitude in the Andes and elsewhere.

In the 1860s, like many other major cities around the world, Lima experienced an extraordinary population spike. Chinese 'coolies' and European immigrants came from abroad while Indigenous migrants from the highlands arrived in massive numbers, lured by an economic

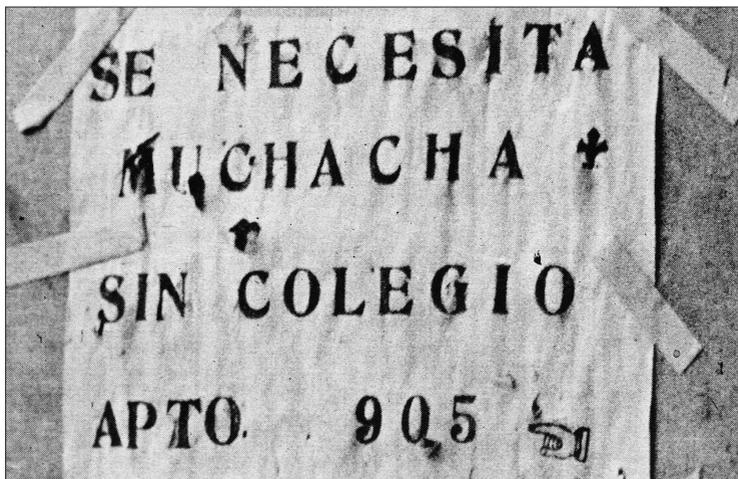


Photo by author. All rights reserved.

boom due to the export of guano. The revenues obtained from this activity enabled the Peruvian government to implement an aggressive plan to modernise social and political structures in a short period. President Ramon Castilla's 1854 abolition of African slavery was one of these measures. Politicians and economic elites expected the newly arrived Chinese 'coolies' to provide an alternative and nominally free source of labour in the wake of abolition. In reality, the post-abolition economy extended slavery through debt peonage, and reproduced and extended racial hierarchies, placing the local middle and upper classes above Chinese immigrants, Indigenous, Andean migrants, former black slaves, and Native workers brought from Polynesia.

Domestic servitude provided many newcomers an easy entrance into the local economy, especially to Andean children. Their presence was so ubiquitous in the urban landscape that they earned the collective nickname *cholitos* (the diminutive of *cholo*, used to denote people from the highlands residing in urban areas.) How this trend began remains unclear, but some reports exist of soldiers – who were in the Andes combatting a series of rebellions that shook the region – kidnapping

children and selling them as servants on their return to Lima. The growing demand for their labour sparked the rise of a trade in *cholit*os, as travelers would act on requests to capture Indigenous children during trips to the interior.

Given their doubly marginalised position as domestic servants and children, the *cholit*os remained invisible to scholars for a very long time. Only in the 1980s did the late Peruvian historian Alberto Flores Galindo rescue *cholit*os from their historical silence in an essay depicting them as a tragic example of post-colonial governments' failure to provide equality and social justice to subalterns¹. He used the previously overlooked runaway ads as sources at a time when social historians were reworking their methodologies to unearth the lives of vulnerable populations.

Runaway ads provide a window into the urban household, helping us reconstruct the daily lives of *cholit*os and their relationship with their masters². These ads let us know, for instance, that although most of the fugitives were known by their first names (few mentioned surnames), physical descriptions were the most prominent forms of identification. The ads' detailed descriptions of age, facial features, body type, clothing, and race offer a rich repertoire of how people perceived themselves, each other, and hint at the rationale behind their worldviews. Masters also include descriptions of special marks on *cholit*os' bodies to facilitate their capture. Thus, the pockmarks common on the faces of Indigenous youth served as both indelible body markers as well as visual testimonies of the *cholit*os' resilience against the epidemics that swept the Andes in the nineteenth century.

A century and a half later, these small pieces of paper still convey a sense of the dramatic conditions in which they were posted: masters appealing for help, *cholit*os seeking refuge from potential captors. What happened to the *cholit*os after they fled the household? What events prompted them to leave? We cannot yet answer those questions

and can only speculate about the fate of these children. Most likely, some found work in other households, hoping for better treatment. Others joined the ever-growing gangs of street children, wandering the city centre and robbing bystanders. In either case, theirs was a desperate effort to survive in the hostile environment of nineteenth and twentieth-century Lima.

That we do not see these runaway ads in the local press of today does not mean that Indigenous domestic servant conditions have drastically changed. Only in the 1970s – one century after *cholitos* ads appeared in the press – did domestic servants begin to unionise and openly demand better conditions such as a minimum wage, a free day per week, an eight-hour workday, and social benefits. Despite the opposition of the government and their employers, household workers held their first National Congress in 1979³. Since then, and particularly in recent years, Peruvian society has become increasingly aware of the exploitative conditions of domestic labour. This concern has been accompanied by a joint effort from public institutions and NGOs to draw attention to the endurance of human trafficking in the country. These are small but decisive steps towards overturning a long legacy of abuse and exploitation.

I want to thank to Julia O'Connell Davidson and Matthey Casey for their editorial comments and suggestions to this essay.

1. Alberto Flores Galindo, "A Republic Without Citizens," *In Search of an Inca. Identity and Utopia in the Andes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010). Translated and edited by Carlos Aguirre, Charles Walker and Willie Hiatt.

2. Jose Ragas. "Documenting Hierarchies: State Building, Identification, and Citizenship in Modern Peru," Ph.D. Diss. History. University of California, Davis, 2015.

3. Thea Schellekens & Anda van der Schoot. "Household Workers in Peru: the Difficult Road to Organization," in Elsa M. Chaney & Mary Garcia Castro, eds. *Muchachas No More. Household Workers in Latin America and the Caribbean* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989); and Adelinda Diaz Uriarte. "The Autobiography of a Fighter (Peru)," in *Muchachas No More*, 404.

An appeal for a monument to the 1811 Louisiana slave revolt

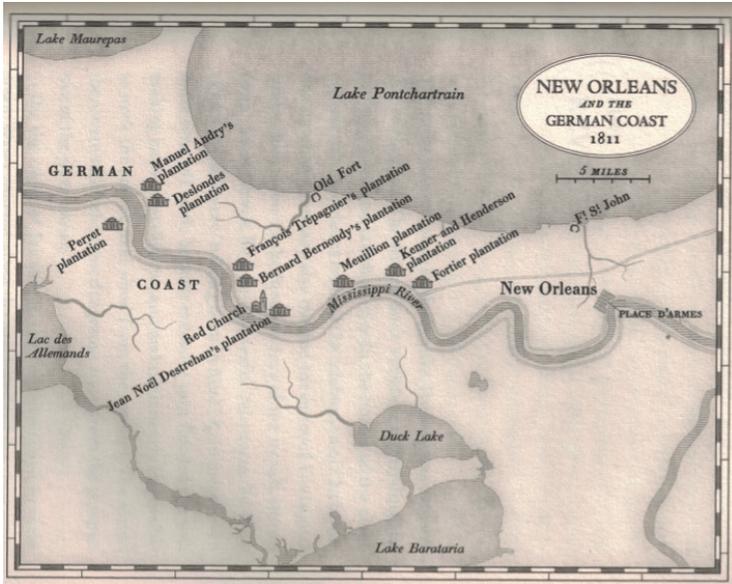
Public memorialisation in Louisiana fails to reflect the history of the state's black population, or the evils of slavery. It is time for that to change.

Ibrahima Seck

Following a trend in many Southern states to take down the Confederate battle flag, the City Council of New Orleans voted on 17 December 2015 to remove four monuments to the Confederacy from the city's landscape. Three of those statues honour General Robert E. Lee, General Beauregard and Jefferson Davis, President of the Confederacy. The fourth monument is an obelisk celebrating the Battle of Liberty Place, when members of the Crescent City White League attacked the New Orleans Metropolitan Police in their effort to overthrow a biracial Republican government and a black-dominated legislature. The proposal was introduced by a majority of City Council members. But opponents took it to the Federal Appeals Court, while white supremacists started threatening those sponsoring the proposal and the contractor hired for the job.

This case is a perfect illustration of how the issue of slavery still plagues the lives of the inhabitants of New Orleans. As things stand, controversial monuments imposed by white supremacists dominate public space. With the noticeable exception of the statue of Louis Armstrong, the black population (more than 60% of the city) is excluded from memorialisation in public space – New Orleans is still awaiting its first markers related to slavery.

In sharp contrast to New Orleans, a museum exclusively dedicated to the memorialisation of slavery was recently open to the public on the Whitney Plantation. This historic site is located on the west bank of the Mississippi river, on the historic River Road in St. John the Baptist



Public Domain.

Parish, less than an hour west of New Orleans. As a site of memory, with the focus on the lives of the slaves and their legacies, visitors can experience the world of an eighteenth- and nineteenth-century indigo or sugar plantation through the eyes of the enslaved people who lived and worked there.

The 90-minute tour of the plantation is mostly devoted to the memorials built on the site. The *Wall of Honour* is dedicated to all the people who were enslaved on the plantation. Their names and basic information relating to them were retrieved from original archives and engraved on granite slabs.

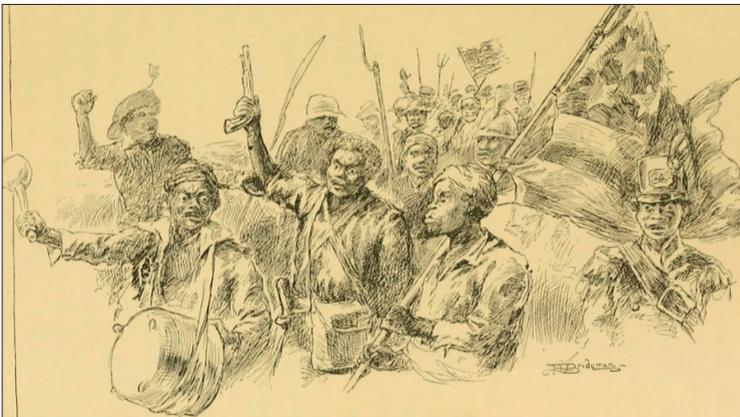
Similarly, the *Allées Gwendolyn Midlo Hall* is dedicated to all the people who were enslaved in Louisiana. Named after Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, author of *Africans in Colonial Louisiana* (1992) and *Slavery and African Ethnicities in the Americas* (2005), it recognises this scholar's

contribution to the history of slavery in the Americas. All the 107,000 names recorded in her Louisiana Slave Database are engraved on 216 granite slabs mounted on 18 walls.

Yet the most striking memorial at the Whitney Museum is still in the making and is dedicated to the 1811 slave uprising on the German coast of Louisiana. In January 1811, an uprising erupted involving an estimated number of 500 enslaved people in the lower Mississippi parishes of St. Charles, St. John, and St. James. It was the largest slave revolt in the American South, beginning on 8 January on the plantation of Colonel Manuel Andry, commander of the local militia. On their march towards New Orleans, the insurgents burned several plantations and added more recruits, including maroons who had been living in the woods. Many planters fled to the city with their families.

The uprising had several leaders – five of them born in Africa. It was apparently well planned and sought to capture New Orleans, free all the people enslaved there, and either lay the foundations for a black 'nation' or lead the people to a free country like Haiti or Mexico. The plotters knew that if they lost only death would await.

Illustration by L. J. Bridgman from M. Thompson (1888). *The Story of Louisiana*. Boston: Berwick & Smith. Public domain.



Unfortunately, they were hindered by weak firepower. On 10 January 1811, several detachments of militiamen attacked the rebels and by 11 January the insurrection was broken when the regular troops of General Hampton joined Major Milton's Dragoons at Destréhan plantation. Many insurgents were killed and others fled into the swamps.

On the evening of 12 January 1811, Charles Deslondes – the main leader of the insurrection – and several others were executed in the quarters of Colonel Andry after an expeditious trial. For the next two days, another trial took place with a court composed of Judge Pierre Bauchet St. Martin and a jury of five slave-owners. The insurgents were called '*brigands*', like rebels throughout history, and judgments rendered without appeal. Convicted, the insurgents were shot in front of the plantations to which they 'belonged', before being beheaded and having their heads posted on poles as a warning to other enslaved men, women and children.

To commemorate this, the Whitney Museum has commissioned 63 ceramic heads from African-American artist Woodrow Nash. Those depicting the martyred rebels will be mounted on steel rods and displayed in a secluded area. The graphic memorial will be accessible only to adults. The place is designed to be like a shrine where people can perform prayers and libations. But more needs to be done to honour these freedom fighters, especially in New Orleans, where a monument should be erected. Mayor Mitch Landrieu described the decision to remove the Confederate monuments as a courageous decision, turning a page on a divisive past. Now New Orleans must go further. It should focus on celebrating its unique Afro-Creole culture, and its public space should be open to the memorialisation of the evils of slavery, as the evils of the Shoah are remembered elsewhere. The more the city does this, the more it will generate emotion and consciousness, both of which are necessary as we walk the path towards real reparations.

'Sankofa': slavery and selective remembrance

Despite the clear historical evidence, both Britain and Ghana still sanitise memories of the brutality and suffering of the transatlantic slave trade.

Samuel Okyere

On 21 August 2016, for the very first time, a memorial service was held at Trafalgar Square in London to commemorate the transatlantic slave trade. The icon and theme for the event was 'Sankofa', a popular Ghanaian (Ashanti) symbol. A bird with its neck turned backwards, Sankofa implies going back or retracing one's steps to fetch items, practices or memories which have been left behind or forgotten. I found the theme quite apt, for as a Ghanaian living in Britain, I have been struck by the walls of silence, convenient conflation and half-truths produced by both societies to shield themselves from their histories of the transatlantic slave trade.

Reliable figures are hard to come by, but some historians suggest that by the end of the transatlantic slave trade, an estimated 1.5 million people (excluding those who died or were deliberately drowned at sea) had been transported from Ghana alone (then the Gold Coast) to slavery in the Caribbean and elsewhere in the 'New World'. The legacies and icons of this tragedy spanning over 300 years are dotted all over the country. To name just a few, we have Jamestown, where slaves were purportedly sold to European merchants for the very first time; the castles and forts in Accra and Cape Coast, where men, women and children were held in dungeons until their perilous transportation across the Atlantic; and the slave market at Salaga. Despite this visible and visceral evidence, discussion of Ghana's connections to the transatlantic slave trade are rare; and as yet, there is no national remembrance event or annual memorial day for what is undoubtedly a national tragedy.



Cape Coast Slave Fort. Photo by antonella sinopoli/Flickr. Creative Commons.

Owing to this deliberate ‘silence’, understanding of the true scale of the transatlantic slave trade among Ghanaians is relatively limited and often extremely fallacious. Treatment of the topic in the school curriculum is brief and lacking in critical insight, as I know from first-hand experience. When it is taught, it is common to find suggestions that Ghana’s experiences were of benefit to the country. In the senior high school history syllabus, for example, evaluation of the topic ‘The Coming of the Europeans’ actually asks students to write about “Who benefited more from the transatlantic slave Trade: Ghanaians or Europeans?”. As part of the same evaluation, tutors guide students through a “discussion of the positive and negative effects of the slave trade”!

These unfortunate attempts to find positives from a wholly indefensible practice appear designed to anaesthetise. Ghana has opted for a utopian agenda in which it can somehow claim to have benefitted from the slave trade and from colonial rule more generally, without accepting the shame and dishonour that both implied, and which have contributed to the country’s ongoing socio-economic deprivation.

Britain's historical silence

Living in Britain in my early twenties, a series of unsavoury experiences led to introspection about where (and whether) I actually fit as a black African in British society. Experience of anti-black racism for the very first time in my life finally made me grasp the extent to which my identity, ancestry and biography intersects with the transatlantic slave trade and its legacy, to an extent which may never have been possible in Ghana. I became aware of Britain's own brand of whitewashing and deliberate forgetfulness in its representations of the transatlantic slave trade. It seemed impossible to find media or popular representations of the slave trade which did not inadvertently veer towards the heroic deeds of William Wilberforce, Granville Sharp, the Quakers, and Britain itself in the abolition of slavery. At the same time, there was a noticeable absence of recognition for the role that Africans and African descendants played in the demise of the slave trade. In truth, while some were complicit in the sale and exportation of their compatriots into slavery, Africans were themselves central to the abolition of slavery, and started to resist it almost as soon as it began. Without the exploits of Olaudah Equiano in the British anti-slavery movement or Haiti's successful anti-slavery rebellion in 1804, abolition might not have occurred when it did.

Thus, similar to Ghana's attempts to take 'ownership' of the slave trade by compelling high school students to evaluate its benefits to the country, Britain avoids the inconvenient truths of the scale of its involvement by skimming over the topic in the history curriculum in public schools. Indeed, relatively few in Britain today recognise the immense benefits which Britain (unlike Ghana) extracted from the slave trade and from the colonial rule that became the 'post-slavery' mode of subjugating black and brown bodies after the abolishment of the transatlantic slave trade. The British industrial revolution, numerous monumental buildings, banking powerhouses such as Barclays (with its Quaker linkages at the time) all immensely benefitted from the transatlantic slave trade.

The dangers of distorted facts and selective remembrance

The selective representation today of Britain's role in, and the immense benefits it drew from, the slave trade serves to shield it from calls for reparatory justice for those who suffered injuries at the hands of the British Empire over the last 500 years. This is a continuation of historical injustice. As indeed is the perpetuation of 'white saviourism' in the contemporary abolitionist movement, which draws so much from the sanitised histories of Wilberforce *et al.*

For its part, Ghana's unique historical experience should be providing it with insights that inform a more sophisticated set of contemporary explanations for ongoing inequality and exploitation. But instead, it neglects the past and in the present reproduces the facile narratives of 'modern slavery' activists who seek to label all sorts of difficult work 'modern slavery', without addressing any of the underlying political or economic cause factors. This too is a dereliction of duty. And it must change. For Ghana could and should make the antiblackness of contemporary anti-slavery activism and discourse apparent. It should ensure that the historic and persistent debilitating impacts of the transatlantic slave trade and its legacy are not waved away by modern abolitionists. It should demand work towards 'emancipatory' agendas, towards reparations, and towards international social justice.

Contributors

Edson Burton's career in creative writing began with poetry as part of Bristol Black Writers. In 2008 his first collection of poetry *Seasoned* was published by Bristol-based publishing company City Chameleon. His first full-length production was the acclaimed *Children of Salt*. He has written plays for theatre and for Radio 4, including *De Wife of Bristol*, which was broadcast on 6 October 2014. He has been lead researcher, consultant and coordinator of various heritage projects including most recently *Vice and Virtue: Discovering the History of Old Market*. He has co-curated a number of events in partnership with the Watershed Media Centre, including the *Beyond the Boundary* Conference 2012 and the Bristol Afrofuturism strand of the BFI Sci-Fi season. In addition Edson wrote a historical drama to commemorate the bicentenary of the abolition of the Trans-atlantic slave trade. *Nanny of the Maroons* was broadcast on regional radio in 2007.

Jenny Davis is a writer for stage and screen. Her theatre work includes 'The Front Room' which nationally toured at the Oval theatre, Nottingham playhouse and Bristol old Vic. Her screenplay 'Finding Hermione' was winner of the SouthWest Screen and UK film council script development award. Jenny's award-winning short film 'Little White Lies' was also Royal Television society nominated and BAFTA long listed. Jenny has been writing for the BBC's medical drama 'Doctors' for three years.

Madge Dresser is Associate Professor in Social and Cultural British History at the University of the West of England and a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society. She has researched extensively on the history of slavery.

Josie Gill is a Lecturer in Black British Writing in the Department of English at the University of Bristol. She is Principal Investigator of the

AHRC-funded project ‘Literary Archaeology’: Exploring the Lived Environment of the Slave and she sits on the executive committee of the British Society for Literature and Science.

Ralph Hoyte is a Bristol-based poet and writer who writes epic live-art works arising out of a place-based walking practice, collaborates with other artists as well as sculptors, engages with academics to transmute their work into the artistic sphere, and creates GPS-triggered poemscripts for the smartphone. He tweets [@ralphhoyte](#).

Catriona J McKenzie is a Lecturer in Human Osteoarchaeology in the Department of Archaeology at the University of Exeter. She specialises in palaeopathology and funerary archaeology, and her research to date has focused upon skeletal collections from Medieval Gaelic Ireland.

Julia O’Connell Davidson is a professor in social research at the School of Sociology, Politics and International Studies, University of Bristol and a member of the *Beyond Trafficking and Slavery* editorial board.

Sam Okyere is a lecturer in Sociology at the University of Nottingham. He is a member of the *Beyond Trafficking and Slavery* editorial board.

Olivette Otele is a Historian, a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society and a member of Centre International de Recherches sur les Esclavages. Her research centres around transnational history and in particular the links between history, collective memory and geopolitics in relation to European colonial past. As one of the recipients of an AHRC-LABEX Pasp grant, Olivette is currently conducting a research project entitled “Telling one’s story, redefining collective memory: the challenges of African refugees and migrants in 21st century Europe”.

Jose Ragas is Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow in the Department of Science & Technology Studies at Cornell University. He investigates

the emergence of the global biometric system in post-colonial societies and the current implementation of ID cards as a mechanism designed to grant citizenship and curb the legacy of gender, age, and racial discrimination imposed by similar technologies in the past. Follow him on Twitter: @joseragas.

Jonathan Saha is University Academic Fellow in the History of Race and Empire at the University of Leeds.

Ibrahima Seck is Research Director at the Whitney Plantation Museum of Slavery, in Louisiana.

Shawn-Naphtali Sobers is Associate Professor of Lens Based Media at the University of the West of England and Curator of the Tafari Gallery, Fairfield House, Bath. Shawn is a member of the Rastafari faith.

Christine Townsend is a Bristolian and secondary school teacher. For over 20 years she has worked with some of the most disadvantaged young people in the UK. She co-founded Integrate Bristol and occupies a voluntary and community sector seat on Bristol's Children's Safeguarding Board. Christine is also the vice-chair of Bristol School Forum. She recently stood as the only female independent candidate in Bristol's mayoral election as part of her ongoing struggle for equality for all for Bristol's children.

About the editors

Josie Gill



Josie Gill is a Lecturer in Black British Writing in the Department of English at the University of Bristol. She is Principal Investigator of the AHRC funded project 'Literary Archaeology': Exploring the Lived Environment of the Slave, which brings together archaeological scientists, creative writers and literary scholars to think about the everyday experiences of the enslaved from their own perspectives. Dr Gill has published in journals such as *Modern Fiction Studies* and *Textual Practice* and is currently writing a book on the relationship between scientific and fictional engagements with race in Britain and the United States since the 1970s. She sits on the executive committee of the British Society for Literature and Science.

Julia O'Connell Davidson



Julia O'Connell Davidson is Professor of Social Research in the School of Sociology, Politics and International Studies at the University of Bristol. She has a longstanding research interest in work and economic life, and race, gender and sexuality. Since 2001, she has been involved in research on various aspects of 'human trafficking', as well as on child migration, child 'trafficking' and children's rights. Between 2013 and 2016, Julia held a Leverhulme Major Research Fellowship for a project titled 'Modern slavery and the margins of freedom: Debtors, detainees and children'. She is an editor of *Beyond Trafficking & Slavery*, and on the editorial board of *Anti Trafficking Review*. She has published extensively on 'trafficking', and 'modern slavery', and is author of *Prostitution, Power and Freedom* (1998, Polity), *Children in the Global Sex Trade* (2005, Polity), and *Modern Slavery: the Margins of Freedom*, (2015, Palgrave Macmillan).

Beyond Trafficking and Slavery Editorial Board

Neil Howard

Neil Howard is an academic and activist based at the European University Institute in Florence.

Prabha Kotiswaran

Prabha Kotiswaran lectures in Criminal Law at King's College London.

Genevieve LeBaron

Genevieve LeBaron is Senior Lecturer in Politics at the University of Sheffield and Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery Fellow at Yale University.

Julia O'Connell Davidson

Julia O'Connell Davidson is a professor in social research at the School of Sociology, Politics and International Studies, University of Bristol.

Sam Okyere

Sam Okyere is a lecturer in Sociology at the University of Nottingham.

Joel Quirk

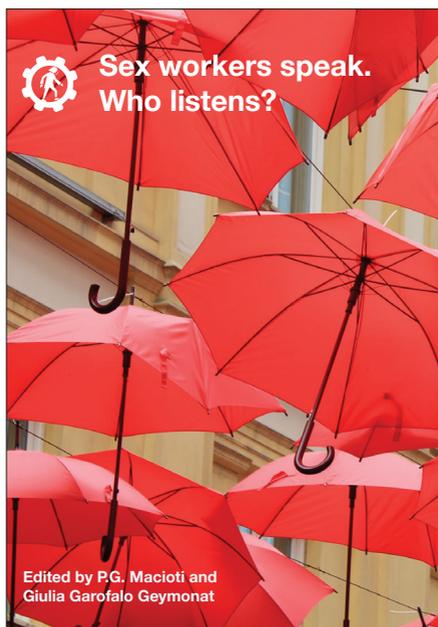
Joel Quirk is Associate Professor in Political Studies at the University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa.

Cameron Thibos

Cameron Thibos is the managing editor of *Beyond Trafficking and Slavery*.

Other titles available from BTS

Gendered, racist, classist, homophobic, and transphobic violence haunts the world of sex work, and many of us believe that states, inter-governmental organisations, and NGOs should do more to help. Yet a lot is being done, the problem is the efficacy of these interventions. *Sex Workers Speak. Who Listens?* addresses the violence, exploitation, abuse, and trafficking present in the sex industries, but it does so from



the perspective of sex workers themselves. These are the women, men, and transgender people who are directly touched by interventions made 'in their name', and they are the people who actively and collectively resist all forms of violence against them. We hope that their voices will help readers resist indifference, on the one hand, and to become more critical of states' interventions, which are widely regarded and legitimated as necessary to combat 'trafficking', on the other.



The *BTS Short Course* is the world's first open access 'e-syllabus' on forced labour, trafficking, and slavery. With 167 contributions from 150 top academics and practitioners, this 900-page, eight-volume set is packed with insights from the some of the best and most progressive scholarship and activism currently available. We have made this free for download, as well as print and classroom ready, with the goal of not only reaching practitioners and students in the global north, but also readers working in organisations and institutions unable to pay for expensive academic journal and subscription services.

Popular and political representations
Forced labour in the global economy
State and the law
On history
Migration and mobility
Race, ethnicity and belonging
Childhood and youth
Gender

All freely available at: opendemocracy.net/beyondslavery

A call for remembrance is not necessarily a call for closer attention to the details of history. It is not essential to be well acquainted with geopolitics or military history in order to remember the war dead. Nor does remembering those whose lives were destroyed by slavery require a knowledge of historic slave regimes. But in former slave and colonial states like Britain, there is a difference between the remembrance of war and the remembrance of transatlantic slavery. Because the latter disrupts the dominant, self-congratulatory national narrative about a country's love of liberty, equality, democracy and justice. So what exactly should or can we remember, and why, and what should we 'do' with these memories? This volume reflects on these questions as they relate to the memory of slavery and the different conversations that can be had about its past and present. But they do not, and cannot, provide the answer to these questions, for there is no simple or single answer.

Beyond Trafficking and Slavery

Web: opendemocracy.net/beyondslavery

Email: beyond.slavery@opendemocracy.net

Facebook: facebook.com/BTSoD

Twitter: [@beyondslavery](https://twitter.com/beyondslavery)