

Workshop Examples from Europe

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*Disclaimer: For participants of the International Workshop for
“Dealing with the aftermath of slave trade and slavery.” Elmina
(Ghana) 10 – 17 September 2024*



Introduction

- Previously worked in 3rd Sector roles focused around, Black History and anti-racism work Included co-ordinating programming for Black History Month Scotland
- In that role gained an understanding of how culture and heritage key for shaping societal memory, knowledge and understanding
- In current role, responsible for leading on work by Glasgow Museums that aims to acknowledge and address the histories and legacies of Slavery and Empire.
- Lead curator for Glasgow City of Empire, Glasgow Museums and Scotland's first permanent exhibition on this subject



Glasgow Museums

- 10 sites including Kelvingrove, Gallery of Modern Art, Burrell Collection and Peoples Palace
- Collections, building histories and city based in all deeply connected to slavery and empire
- ‘Empire exhibitions’ in 1888, 1901, 1911 and 1938 key in establishing museums in Glasgow and shaping perceptions of British colonialism









Why Museums

- Key sites of heritage and culture
- Kelvingrove and Riverside amongst UK most visited sites (1.3 million visitors 2023)
- Key sites for engagement, education and shaping memorialisation and knowledge (what gets remembered and preserved?)



Bloomsbury Publishing Study 2023

- More than half of Britons know so little about Black British history that they cannot name a single historical figure
- Most people also underestimated the scale of Britain's involvement in the transatlantic slave trade. More than half (53%) did not know how many people were taken from Africa by the British. Around half believed the number was 250,000 or fewer and only 12% of Britons thought that more than 1 million people were taken.



Legacies of Slavery- Wealth

“Glasgow does not readily admit its history in the way that other cities in the United Kingdom have done - Bristol, Liverpool, London.”

Jackie Kay



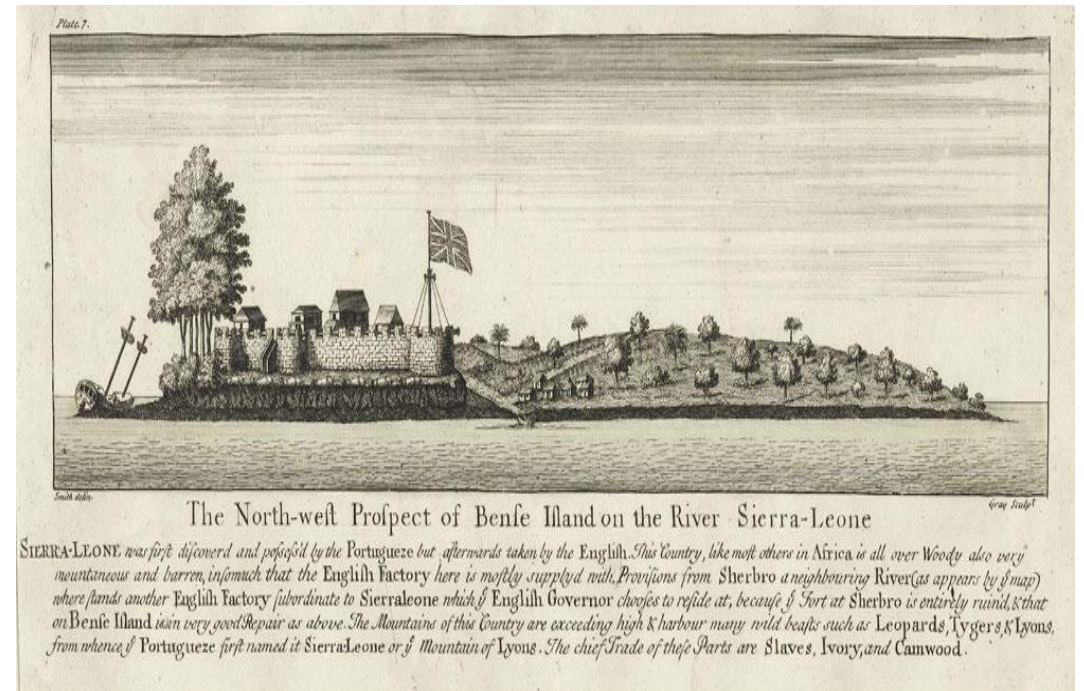
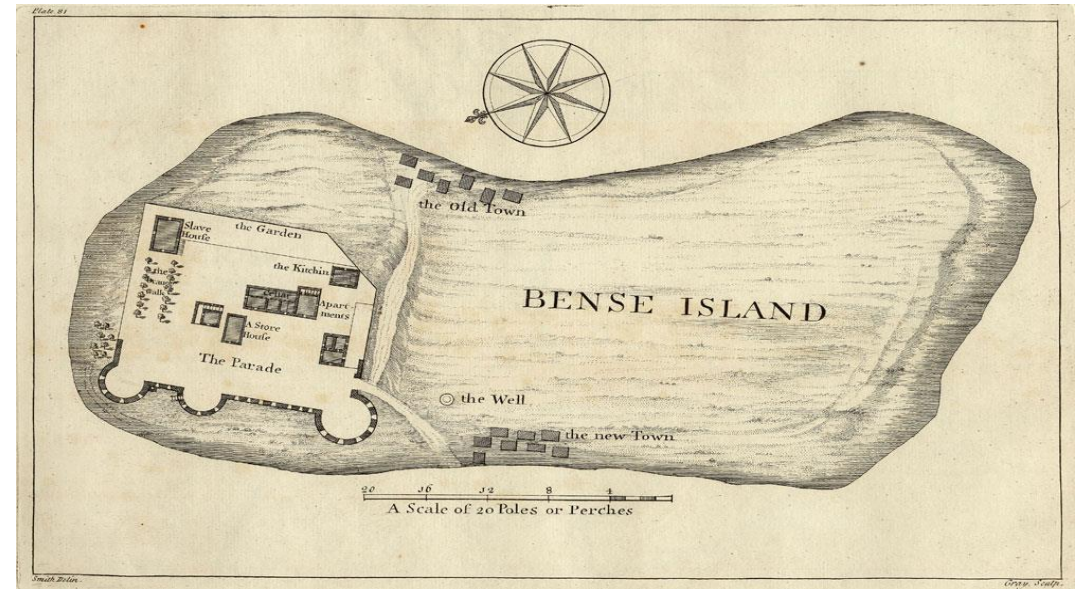
Legacies of Slavery-Wealth

- By 1750, every single UK city/town had been touched by the slavery trade.
- Approx 12% of UK GDP in 1800 (but wealth generated potentially higher)
- UK's four big banks formed through mergers of lenders centred around slavery.



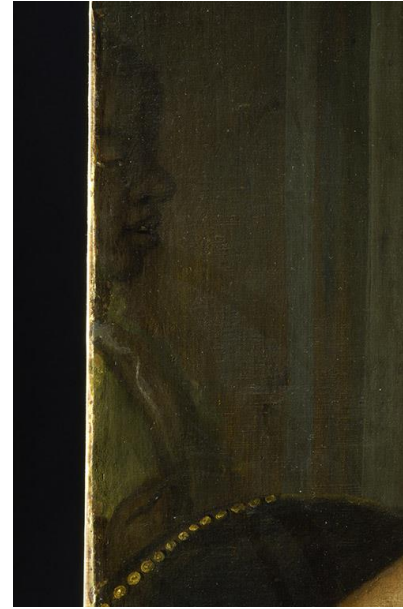
Legacies of Slavery- Wealth

- Money was made at all stages of the triangular trade, through trafficking, plantations where people were enslaved to produce sugar, tobacco and other cash crops.
- Scotland profited significantly, with Scots overrepresented in plantation ownership (while far less ships trafficking enslaved people left Scottish ports than England the profits from slavery were made at other stages of the triangular trade).
- Much of Glasgow's expansion into city it is today comes from slavery era.



Legacies of Slavery- Wealth

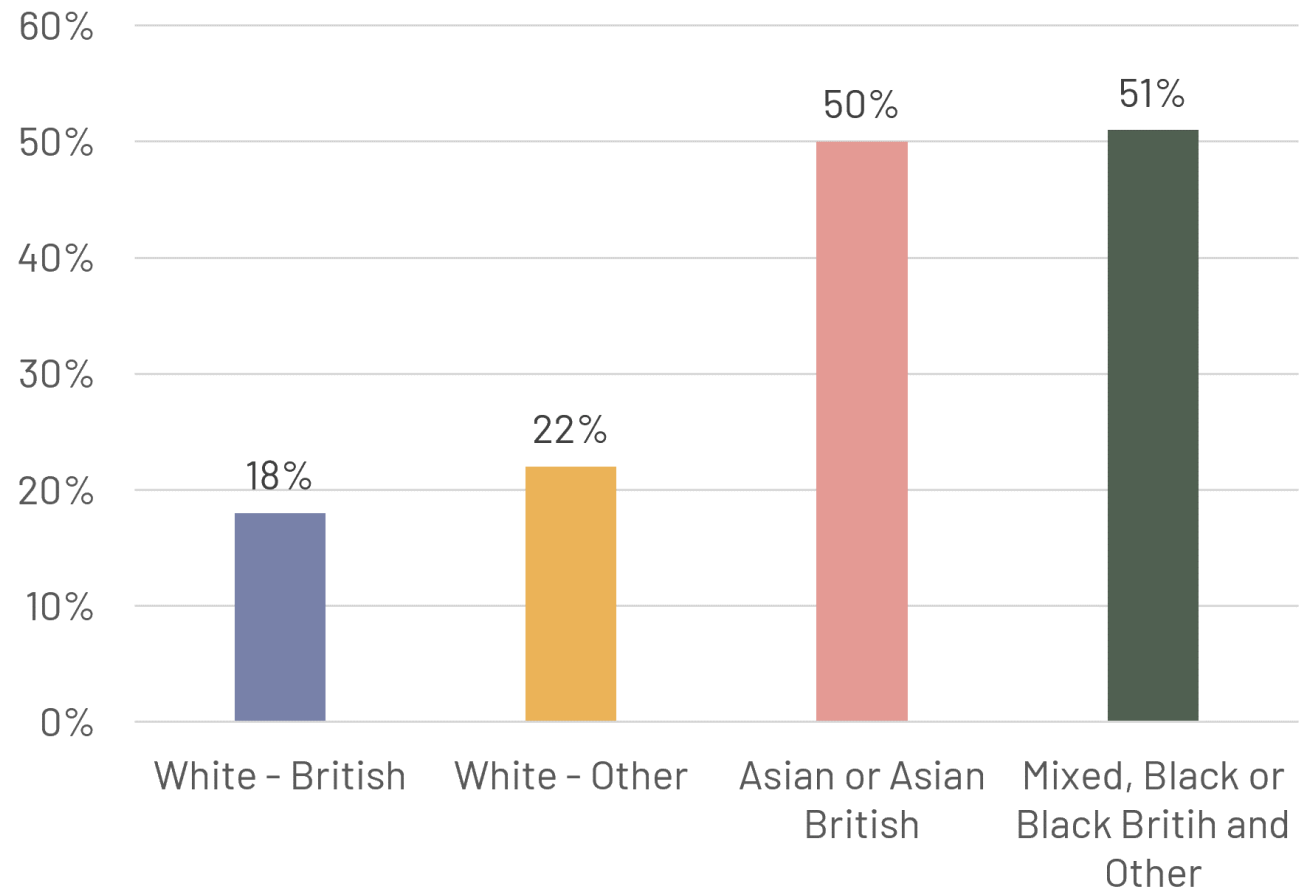
- John Glassford, one example of many in Glasgow of an enslaver who made equivalent of millions today and has street named after him in City Centre
- Museums an example of how this wealth shapes memorialisation, impacts how we see and perceive slavery in UK context, key to thinking about where legacy lies.
- Many of our cities in UK built on this wealth made from enslavement but idea of this rarely engaged with



Legacies of Slavery- Wealth

- This has shaped the contemporary balance of wealth of our society in many ways.
- The most recent statistics from 2018-23 show that, both before and after housing costs, the rate of relative poverty in Scotland was more than double for those from BME groups compared to the majority ethnic white Scottish/British group- similar rates across whole UK.

Relative Poverty rate (after housing costs), by ethnicity [2018-2023]



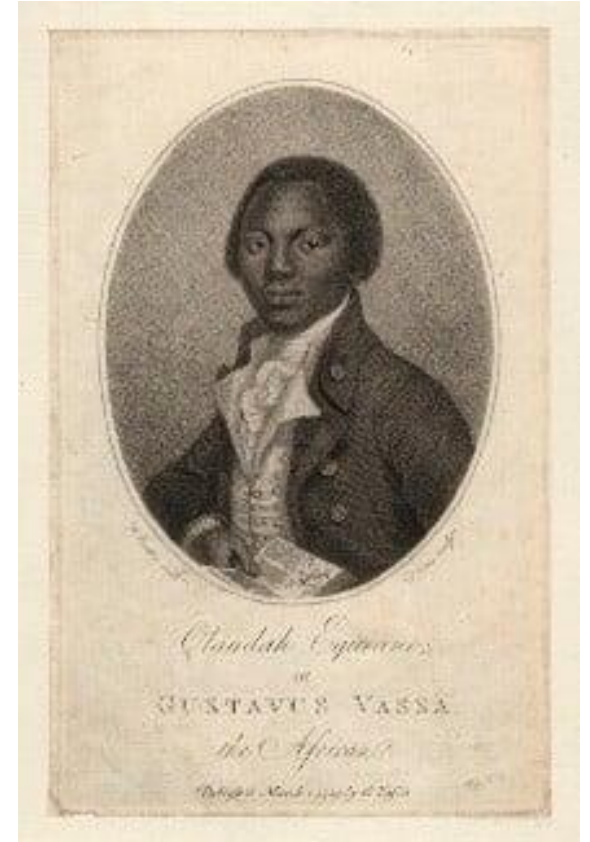
Source: Poverty and Income Inequality in Scotland National Statistics report, March 2024

Legacies of Slavery- Identity

“This isn’t divide and conquer, this is provide and prosper. This isn’t destroy and rebuild, this is I love my future more than I hate parts of my history.” Wretch 32

Legacies of Slavery - Identity

- Stuart Hall
- Barbados Slavery Code 1661 and Act of Union 1707, two key acts in establishing Blackness in British identity as unequal to whiteness?
- Identity of society put forward is one that often tries to distance from Blackness or introduce Blackness as new to Britain/other
- How this frames our understanding of Empire (museums)



Legacies of Slavery - Identity

- Black British Identity is complex and in someways hard to define but rooted in ideas of solidarity and resistance to colonialism and racism.
- This resistance exists in many forms; art, music, sport...
- Contemporary anti-racism movements often influenced, inspired and owe origins to the decolonial movements of the past.



Legacies of Slavery -Systemic Racism

“We live in a society of an imposed forgetfulness,
a society that depends on public amnesia.”

Angela Davis



Legacies of Slavery-Systemic Racism

“Racism in Scotland is structural. This means it operates across different levels of life - personal, social and institutional. Because of this, the impact of racism affects people across their life experiences. It affects working life, family life, friendships and physical and mental health. Racism is unjust, and should have no place in Scotland.”

Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights (CRER)



Legacies of Slavery-Systemic Racism

- The attitude and legalisation of racism and inequality against people of colour is a product/continuation of empire, despite present day equality legislation outlawing it this racism still occurs and lives on today.
- Slavery and empire connected to top of UK society, key in structures that shape present day.
- Contemporary issues: migration system (hostile environment), windrush, race riots (1919, 2024), never apologised for slavery?
- Challenge to this- Museums, MGS/activism campaigning, lots of avenues where challenge comes hint at the way racism seeps into all parts of society?



SERIOUS DISTURBANCE IN GLASGOW. HOSTILITY BETWEEN BRITISH AND COLOURED SAILORS.
The Scotsman (1860-1920), Jan 24, 1919; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Scotsman
pg. 4

SERIOUS DISTURBANCE IN GLASGOW.
HOSTILITY BETWEEN BRITISH AND COLOURED SAILORS.
REVOLVERS AND KNIVES USED.

BAD feeling between British and coloured sailors in Glasgow took a serious turn yesterday afternoon, when a fight occurred between the rival parties, and revolvers and knives were freely used. The trouble broke out early in the afternoon in a backcourt in the Broomielaw district, where a number of coloured sailors, who were apparently well supplied with revolvers and knives, had collected. A number of shots were exchanged between the rival groups, and the combatants, getting into close quarters, freely used knives. Two police men, attracted by the firing, pluckily took the situation in hand, and, with difficulty, succeeded in clearing the backcourt and quelling the disturbance. However, the mêlée soon broke out afresh, and a running fight ensued along the Broomielaw. One coloured man was particularly conspicuous as he ran along the street firing wildly from his revolver. He was accompanied by his coloured companions, with the British sailors in pursuit. A running fire was maintained along the street, and several people had narrow escapes. So alarming was the occurrence that a force of police were hurried to the scene, and within a short time they succeeded in restoring order.

Legacies of Slavery- Looking forward





Legacies of Slavery- Looking forward

- Is a positive time, some progress
- Questions around funding how sustained.
- Activism key in shifting UK museums from veil of neutrality to recognising roles in social justice
- More and more public interest and expectation around addressing legacies

