

It is important to recognise, while studying this history, that slavery is not restricted to white people enslaving black people. It is a practice human beings have inflicted on each other from the beginning of our history. In Bristol, before the Africa trade, slavery and indentured servitude were common practice as wealthy folk needed labour to work their land. Slavery still goes on today between people of all skin colours all over the world. However, Transatlantic Slavery remains the cruellest example of legalised 'chattel' slavery where individuals and their children were owned for ever and ever, treated as complete property, to be bought and sold.



Enslaved Africans were regarded as status symbols in Europe in the 17th and 18th centuries. Young boys would be taken from their families to become servants or 'footmen' in the homes of the wealthy. They were included in portraits as symbols of the wealth and importance of the families they served. They were not portrayed as individuals in their own right, but as possessions.



Photos©Bristol Culture, Bristol City Council

# Abolition Afloat

A booklet to accompany  
Bristol Ferry Boats' tour for schools



Pero's Bridge is one of the very few memorials to transatlantic slavery in the country. Until recently Bristol's involvement in, and debt to, slavery has been ignored. Such architectural remembrance is particularly crucial in Bristol where, "There is not a brick in the city but what is cemented with the blood of a slave".

**THIS BRIDGE IS DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF PERO, AN ENSLAVED MAN OF AFRICAN ORIGIN WHO WAS BROUGHT FROM THE CARIBBEAN ISLAND OF NEVIS IN 1783. HE WAS A SERVANT OF THE PINNEY FAMILY WHO LIVED IN WHAT IS NOW THE GEORGIAN HOUSE MUSEUM IN GREAT GEORGE STREET. HE DIED IN THE CITY IN 1798.**





## Bristol Landmarks



Only the most desperate sailors worked on slave ships. Conditions were bad - many died during the voyages from illness and often the enslaved captives would rebel. Many sailors were recruited by 'crimping' from rough drinking taverns such as the Hole in the Wall pub (then the Coach and Horses). They were often taken by trickery; the captains would pay pub landlords to let the sailors drink on credit. Once the sailor was drunk, the bill was presented and he would be unable to pay it. The corrupt landlord would then give them a choice; either the sailor would go to debtor's prison, or join the crew of a slaving ship bound for Africa.

The Ostrich Inn was built around 1745. It was used by the sailors, shipyard and dockside workers and merchants who worked in the Port of Bristol. One of its walls has been partly knocked down so that you can see part of the caves under Redcliffe. Inside the pub, on the wall there is a copy of a trade card for the Ostrich Pub from 1775, which has a picture of a young black man (probably enslaved) on it.



There is a local story that enslaved people were kept in Redcliffe Caves before they were sold, but there is no evidence to support this. This story may have started because goods used in the African and West Indian trades were stored in the caves.

The red sandstone was mined from the caves to be made into glass for bottling beers and rum, made from sugar cane which was produced on the plantations.



Anti-slavery campaigner Reverend Thomas Clarkson came to the Seven Stars pub in 1787 to collect testimony from sailors to support the Act for the Abolition of Slavery. He disguised himself as a miner, blackening his face and wearing working clothes to hide his true identity.

*"I was determined to inquire into the truth of the reports that seamen had an aversion to enter, and that they were often forced, into this hateful employment. For this purpose I was introduced to a landlord of the name of Thompson who kept a public house called Seven Stars. He was a very intelligent man, well accustomed to receive sailors when discharged at the end of their voyages, and ... nothing could now pass in Bristol relative to the seamen employed in this trade, but it was soon brought to me."*

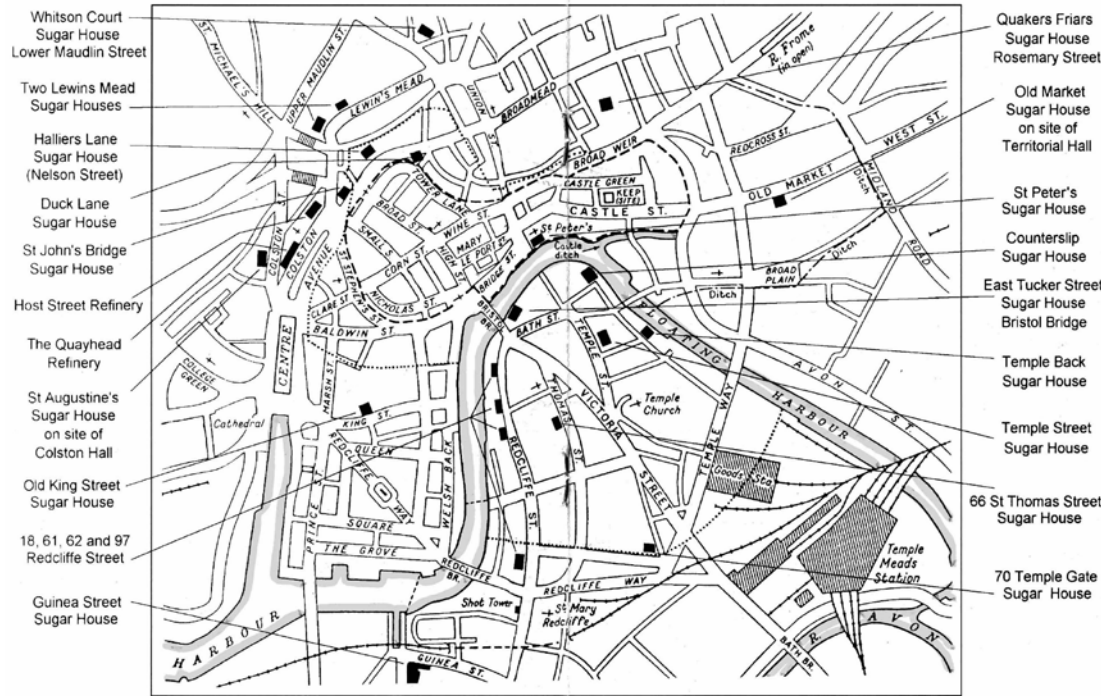


Coffee, chocolate and tea all had a naturally bitter taste. What made them popular was adding sugar.

Instead of an expensive luxury item, slavery made sugar cheap and available to everyone. Tea and coffee houses became popular.

The new craze for sugar meant that there was a massive increase in the number of sugar plantations in the Caribbean and the huge number of people needed to plant and harvest the sugar. Bristol was a centre for refining sugar and had over 20 sugar refineries by 1760 to supply the local demand.

### LOCATION OF BRISTOL'S SUGAR REFINERIES



### Three Sugar Loaves Pub

This pub gets its name from a nearby sugar refinery that burned down in 1859. Fires were quite common in the sugar industry and between 1670 and 1859, 11 sugar houses were destroyed by fires in Bristol.

The sugar was moulded in to conical loaves of sugar and you can see an example of a sugar loaf and sugar tongs on the pub sign and in the kitchen of the Georgian House Museum.

Finzel's sugar factory became Georges Brewery

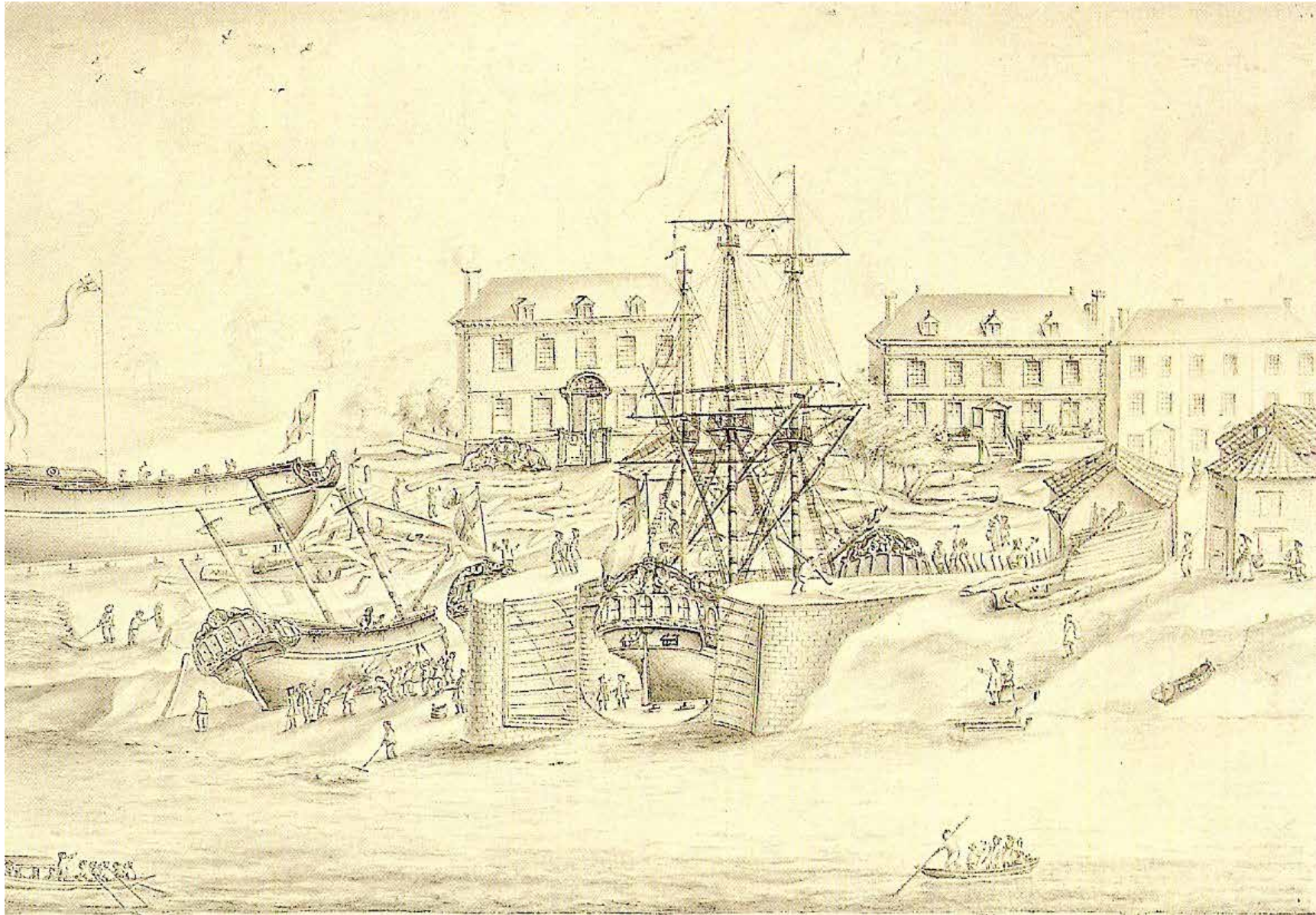


*I pity them greatly,  
but I must be mum,  
For how could we do without sugar and rum?*

William Cowper in his poem, *Pity for Poor Africans*, satirises peoples' attitudes to Abolition







Sydenham Teast's shipyard was situated where the 1980 'Merchant's Landing' development now sits on Merchant's Wharf. It is on record that in 1786 the slave ship *Hector* was repaired and re-fitted here. Transatlantic slavery also supported iron works and nearby glass and brass factories. By the end of the 18th century virtually all economic activity in Bristol was connected to transatlantic slavery. Mr. Teast lived in Redcliffe Parade which was, along with Queen's Square, the home of wealthy Merchants until Clifton was developed.



# Resistance and Rebellion

The African people who were enslaved resisted the system of slavery, from the moment of capture to life on the plantations.



Enslaved Africans fought their captors or tried to escape. The most successful uprising was the revolution in St Domingue, led by Toussant L'Ouverture which led to Haiti becoming an independent republic.



(Right) Leonard Parkinson, Captain of the Maroons, escaped slaves who fled to the mountainous areas of Jamaica, where it was difficult for their owners to follow and catch them. There they formed independent communities as free men and women.

The price of overt resistance was high and many lost their lives. The enslaved also resisted by retaining their cultural traditions, often in secret.

Even very small things, like the headwrap and traditional hairstyles became symbols of personal and communal identity.

This is Nancy Burns, an enslaved woman who gained her freedom.



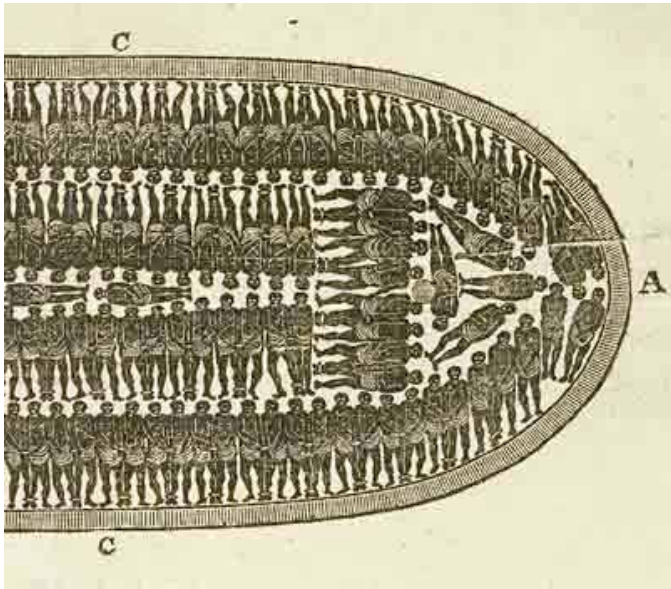
Photo@amerian museum bath



Plantation owners frequently tried to suppress all vestiges of African culture, fearing that it could lead to resistance or rebellion. Drums, for example, were prohibited in many plantation colonies as it was thought they might be used for covert communications, as indeed they were. Dancing and singing were permitted as the plantation owners failed to recognise any element of resistance in them. Capoeira evolved as a martial art disguised as a dance.




## Tools of the Abolition Campaign



Poster Campaign

14. t.f. St. Ann's, July 20, 1779.



**RUN AWAY**  
from the Subscriber,  
About five weeks ago,  
A NEGRO BOY, named  
**JACK,**  
Of the Congo Country,  
About 15 or 16 years of age, and has no Brand Mark.  
—He speaks tolerable good English, and it is supposed  
that he has taken the Clarendon road, being well ac-  
quainted in that parish.

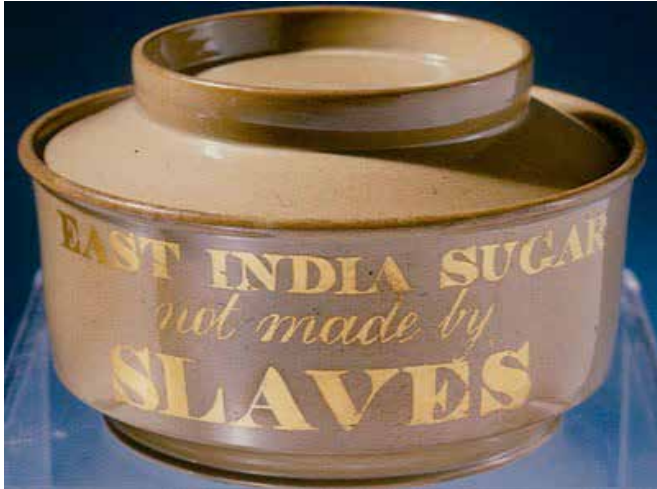
TWO POUNDS FIFTEEN SHILLINGS Reward  
will be given for taking him up, and lodging him in  
any of the Gaols of this Island, giving information  
thereof.

ANDREW BYRNE.

Judicial challenges

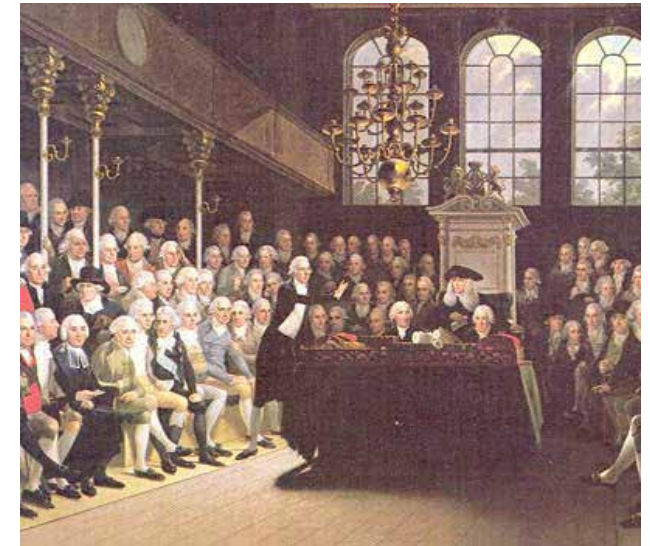


Branding and logos



Sugar boycott

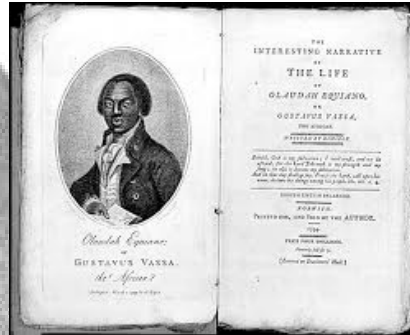
### Petitions



Parliamentary lobbying

# The Abolition Campaign

## Personal testimony: Olaudah Equiano



Olaudah Equiano was kidnapped when he was 11 years old and sold into slavery. He had many terrible experiences as a slave and was sold from owner to owner. He eventually bought his freedom and became a spokesperson for the anti-slavery movement. Equiano was courageous, resourceful, literate, cultured and Christian - all the qualities that British people admired and aspired to. He published a book about his experiences which became very popular and played an important part in educating people about the realities of enslavement and challenged some of the widely held beliefs about Africans and transatlantic slavery.

## Collecting evidence: Thomas Clarkson



Slavery was regarded as normal, legitimate, profitable and even 'genteel' employment. The pro-slavery lobby claimed that Africans had no native society, lived like savages, were grateful for the opportunity to escape Africa, enjoyed the crossing and benefited from a good life on the plantations.

Abolitionists proved that none of these things were true. As they bought shackles, thumbscrews, and a device for force-feeding slaves who went on hunger strike. These provided evidence of physical abuse.



Thomas Clarkson came to Bristol to interview sailors who testified that the 'trade' was conducted with brutal cruelty, and that, on average, 20% of each crew died of disease or ill treatment.





Campaigns for the vote and other civil rights use marches and petitions



**Legacy: other social justice campaigns that use the same tools**



AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL

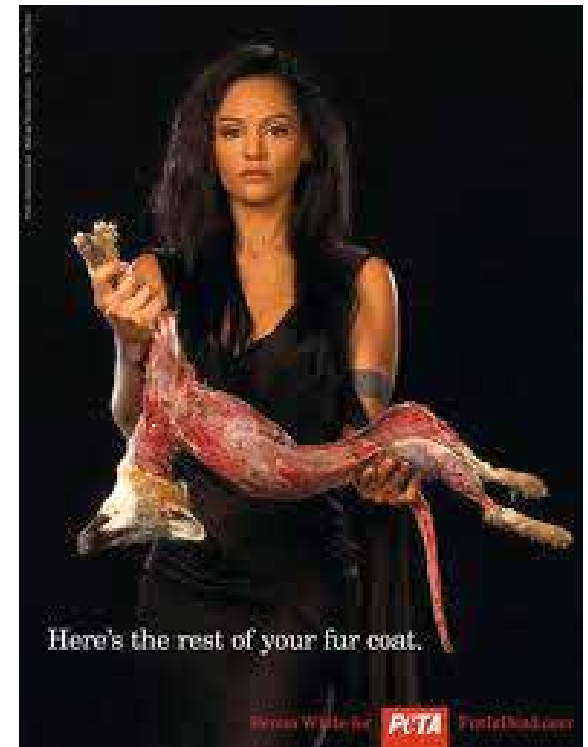


Campaign logos and branding



Boycotts

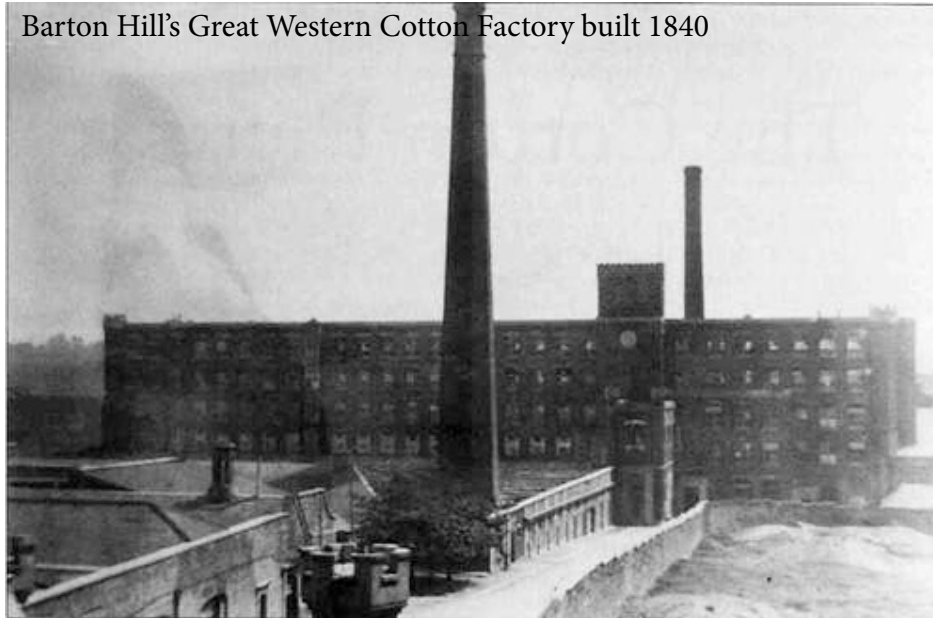
Campaign posters



# Legacies

*"From our rich ancestral life, we were bought, sold and used, but we were brave, we were strong, we survived. All the world is now richer."*  
Sokari Douglas Camp

Barton Hill's Great Western Cotton Factory built 1840



Industrialisation



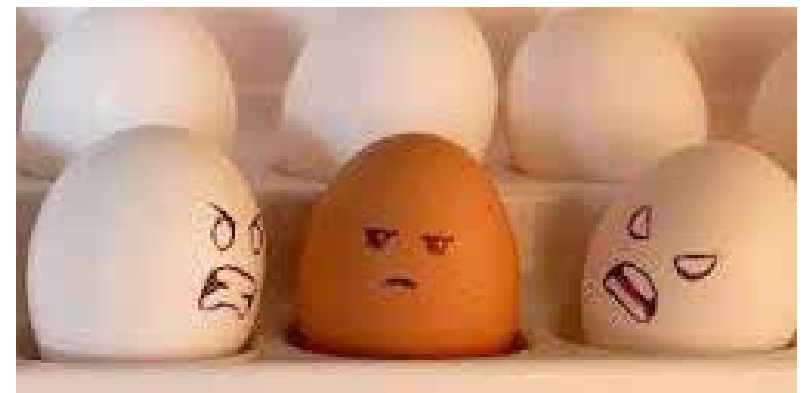
Modern popular music



Bank of England

## Odd One Out

Which one of these was not a legacy of Transatlantic Slavery?\*



Racism

\*Trick question - they are all legacies



# The Colston Debate

What do you think? Airbrushing history or respecting those who were enslaved?

## Who was Edward Colston?

Colston was a Bristolian who was a major investor, manager and deputy governor of the Royal African Company (RAC) between 1680-1692. In those years he was responsible for the kidnap and transport of 84,500 enslaved Africans, with 23% dying before reaching shore (19,300). This included women and children as young as six – each enslaved person was branded with the company's initials on their chest. To maximise profit, the ship's hulls were divided into holds with little headroom, so they could transport as many enslaved people as possible. The unhygienic conditions killed nearly 20,000 enslaved Africans during the crossings. Their bodies were thrown overboard.



## Countering Colston

After decades of campaigning, Edward Colston's statue was finally removed by protesters during the Black Lives Matter uprising on Sunday 7th June 2020.

Countering Colston campaigner Cleo Lake said: *"Demonstrators removing Colston's statue reminded me of the suffragettes – we cannot wait for social reform and action to be granted ... it must be taken by the collective will of the people to remove their statues that symbolise global white supremacy and oppression"*

Given this historical and cultural context, it's no coincidence that Bristol has some of the worst institutional racism in the UK. Statistical analysis and research by Runnymede Trust confirms that people with Global South Heritage are very poorly served by Bristol's education system and economy, resulting in some of the worst employment inequalities and educational outcomes in the UK.

Countering Colston Website 2021



In 2017 an official-looking plaque was placed on Bristol's statue of Edward Colston by someone seeking to set history straight. Instead of extolling his 'virtues' it read:

***Bristol, Capital of the Atlantic Slave Trade 1730-1745. This commemorates the 12,000,000 enslaved of whom 6,000,000 died as captives.***

The Council and the Merchant Venturers were unable to agree on alternative wording for the statue's plaque.



## Above and left: Creative responses to the continuing presence of the statue in Bristol

*The artwork contains dozens of figurines as if packed tightly into an 18th Century slave trip, with words around the side bringing slavery into the modern day, including sex worker, fruit picker, nail bar worker and car wash technician.*

*Writing on Twitter, Alasdair Cameron said: "One of reasons I think this statue should remain. It creates a place for thought and remembrance, and that slavery was once considered quite normal in many societies, or that societies once felt one could be a slaver and a philanthrope... shows the journey we are on."*

B24/7 October 2018

# The Colston Debate

What do you think? Airbrushing history or respecting those who were enslaved?

## Discussion Questions:

1. Should historic statues be taken down? Explain your answer with examples and reasoning.
2. Do the statues represent or misrepresent the country's history? How?

### Pro:

The statues misrepresent history, and glorify people who perpetuated slavery. Taking them down stimulates debate and re-examines received historical 'truths'.

The statues are a painful reminder of past and present institutionalized racism. As public monuments they serve to perpetuate entrenched social assumptions of white supremacy.

There are many other people who could be represented by statues who would better represent the historical progress and diversity of the country.

*"It was a piece of late-Victorian public art, that said almost nothing truthful or of interest about Bristol, about Edward Colston. Now I think it's the most important artifact you could select in Britain if you wanted to tell the story of Britain's tortuous relationship with its role in the Atlantic slave trade."*

David Olusoga, The Guardian

### Con:

The statues represent the country's history, no matter how complicated. Taking them down is to censor, whitewash, and potentially forget that history.

Removing statues is a slippery slope that could lead to the brash removal of monuments to any slightly problematic person.

The statues do not cause racism, although they may serve to perpetuate it, they could be used to fight racism if put into historical context.

*'To deplore slavers and racists, you have to remember them,' once said Lionel Shriver in the pages of this magazine. Spot on. Now the protesters, after more than a century of adulation for Edward Colston, and a very selective reading of history by his supporters, are going too far the other way by trying to erase him from history. It isn't right. Colston should be fished out of the docks and put back.*

Will Heaven, The Spectator