Representing Enslavement and Abolition in Museums

BOSTON SPA LS237BQ

YK.2011.a.41729

9 Making the London, Sugar and Slavery Gallery at the Museum of London Docklands

David Spence

This chapter examines the processes involved in creating a permanent gallery that presents the history of London's involvement in the sugar and slave trade. It shows how many of the processes were new to the museum and how it formed equitable partnerships with academics and community members in an attempt to present an interpretation that particularly included black British perspectives. Black British in this context refers to individuals of African and Caribbean heritage living in London.

WHY A GALLERY AT THE MUSEUM?

The Museum of London Docklands in east London is housed in a former sugar warehouse built for the West Indies sugar trade. As this trade was integrally connected to the transatlantic slave trade, the building is a unique historic artefact that is testament to a crucial chapter in the history of Britain as well as the African Diaspora. Significantly, it also provides a means to examine the history of the city. Understanding London's involvement in the slave trade provides an essential insight into London's identity. From Jamaica Road to the Bank of England, from the merchant houses of Blackheath to the collections of the National Gallery, London's involvement in the transatlantic slave trade has shaped the metropolis. Many buildings created from the profits of the trade survive in London and Britain's other major slaving ports such as Liverpool and Bristol. However, few buildings survive that were built specifically as part of the chain of production in the trade. The sugar warehouses on West India Quay in the heart of east London are in this sense unique.

In the five years between the opening of the West India Dock in 1802, and the British Parliament's abolition of the slave trade in 1807, official records show that twenty-two ships sailed from the dock to West Africa where they purchased more than 7,000 enslaved Africans who were transported to the Americas. At least 10 percent did not survive the journey (Transatlantic Slave Trade Database 2008). This human supply generated the labour that produced the sugar on British West Indian plantation islands such as Jamaica,

Barbados, St Kitts and Nevis. The same ships returned to the dock with their cargo of sugar, destined for the boiling houses of Ratcliffe and Whitechapel and consumption in the coffee houses and kitchens of London. Official records are hard to find, and the true statistics will probably remain unknown. We do know, however, that the recorded figures form but a fraction of the total number resulting from London's two-hundred-year involvement in the slave trade. At one time London was Britain's leading slave port trafficking up to a million Africans (Transatlantic Slave Trade Database 2008). It was the fourth-largest slaving port in the world after Rio de Janeiro, Salvador de Bahia and Liverpool (Rawley 2003: xii). Current estimates are that the London trade involved more than 2,500 ships carrying between 750,000 and 1 million Africans into slavery, with the ships of one company, Camden, Calvert and King, accounting for carrying some 220,000 Africans (Transatlantic Slave Trade Database 2008). But London was also the centre in Britain for the diverse coalition of men and women, both black and white, who worked towards the abolition of the trade.

To understand this history is to understand many facets of British society today, such as attitudes to race, and the melding of British, African and Caribbean culture. Appreciation of this history helps African-Caribbean people reclaim their identity and their past. It also deepens everyone's knowledge of the factors that have shaped London's physical, cultural and economic landscape. As a museum that deals primarily with the social history of London, especially the working history of the East End, it seemed vital to include this history within its permanent galleries. Yet when I arrived as director in 2004, there was only a small display in a corner of the museum. This was because little research existed on the role of the West India Docks in the slave trade or, for that matter, the part played by London, and the museum focused on the working history of the river and operation of the Port of London which was the area of expertise of the first director, Chris Ellmers, who led the development of the museum.

The museum decided in 2005 that it would expand the interpretation of the slave trade because of its clear relevance to the building and wider environs of West India Docks. This decision dovetailed with the national interest in the transatlantic slave trade awakened by the imminence of the bicentenary of its abolition by Britain. The bicentenary created funding opportunities that would assist the museum to achieve its ambition to create a new gallery on this subject although all concerned were very clear that the initiative to create a new gallery was not simply because of the bicentenary.

WORKING WITH THE COMMUNITY

In order to assist with the development of the overall concept of the project and its content, the museum recruited a consultative group. It was museum practice to consult with the wider community when dealing with subjects

that would benefit from first hand experience. For example, in its exhibition 'Belonging'[1] the Museum of London presented the stories of London's refugees, challenging assumptions and exploring the contributions they make to London. A large element of the exhibition was oral history interviews with refugees and the museum worked with representatives from twenty refugee communities.

With 'London, Sugar and Slavery' the museum started by inviting Baroness Young, a long-standing supporter of the museum, to act as facilitator, bringing together representatives of community activists, academics and individuals with a particular interest in the history of transatlantic slavery and its relationship with Britain. Understandably a significant number of those who responded were, like Baroness Young, of African and Caribbean heritage, and the museum was especially interested in hearing the views of this group as direct descendents of the enslaved Africans that were now part of London society. The purpose was to ask what an appropriate way of interpreting the subject of London and slavery in the museum would be. There were two meetings without representatives of the museum present as it was thought that this would make the meeting less inhibited. A third meeting included representatives of the museum. From these wider group meetings the museum invited a smaller number of participants to form a consultative group, based on individual interest and availability. At this point Baroness Young completed her involvement and had no further participation in the project. The final group was a mix of academics specializing in black history, community activists, and representatives of relevant groups in the museum's neighbourhood, for example, Tower Hamlets African Caribbean Mental Health Organisation (THACMHO).[2] THACMHO works with individuals with mental health problems and believes that the dislocation of identity—loss of name, family history and traditions—caused by the enforced migration of Africans to the Caribbean is a primary factor in their illness. They work on the basis that greater personal understanding of the history can be therapeutic, assisting mental well-being. The museum also appointed an independent curator, Dr Caroline Bressey, to work with the museum's curatorial team. Dr Bressey's research area is the black presence in London in the nineteenth century. She is director of the Equiano Centre at University College London (see Bressey 2002, 2008).

Members of the consultative group were predominantly of African-Caribbean heritage. This was crucial to the project given that only one member of the museum's team shared this heritage, and we were dealing with a subject that for some was deeply connected to their own family history. Londoners of African-Caribbean heritage are directly descended from enslaved Africans and one of the objectives of the gallery was to reflect the perspectives of these Londoners, as mentioned in the introduction to this chapter. This approach has precedents such as the Museum of London's 'Belonging' exhibition and is central to the way of working for a social history museum. On more than one occasion our partners referred to Alex Haley's 'Roots', the American

book and television series that covered the history of the African-American experience. In some ways the U.K. projects that were to coincide with the bicentenary of the abolition of the slave trade were deemed to be the U.K. equivalent of 'Roots'—the first time for many that their collective family history was to be foregrounded by popular media (Burt Ceasar, consultative group member, pers. com.). This personal ownership of the subject was beneficial because it meant that the level of engagement was extremely high, accompanied by a strong will to create a gallery that could communicate the story to as wide a range of visitors as possible.

The consultative group met regularly for vigorous in-depth discussions on the content and approach to the gallery. It was clear throughout that all sensitive issues should be raised and addressed, however difficult a process this was. I believe it was because many of us, including myself, were operating outside our 'comfort zone' that an openness was fostered which was rewarded with constructive contributions. Put simply, the need to unpick the complex issues that form the basis of views and prejudices on race required all of us, black and white, to examine our own preconceptions and be prepared to accept that skin colour had played a formative part in our own experiences. The group meetings were actually about what goes unspoken in everyday life and were conducted with candour and trust. The dynamics of the consultative group were to prove critical to the success of the project. From the outset, I signalled my intention to be personally involved in every aspect of the project and to attend, and chair, every group meeting. The clear message to the group was that the director of the museum considered the project to be a priority. Consequently the group, in their dealings with their own particular networks outside the museum, had the confidence to similarly refer to the work as an important priority and this generated a significant amount of trust within the various communities represented. This was also crucial to the museum's successful application to both the Heritage Lottery Fund[3] and Renaissance in the Regions[4] for funding of £700,000.

The presence of the director on the consultative group also worked to the project's advantage in other ways. Clearly, there was an influential voice within the organization signalling its importance to other staff and the museum's board: it was not just the project that was important, but what the project stood for. This was a new way of working, tackling difficult issues such as race and identity. It raised fundamental questions such as, how exactly will our press officers write releases that refer to race and ethnicity? Or what kind of awareness is required, what training is needed? Because of this, the gallery project became a transformative agent for the museum, and became in many ways synonymous with the organization's aspirations to become a more diverse institution. Making a gallery, however, is a finite process and now, more than three years after the opening of the gallery, we are still assessing its wider impact on the organization and if the change it instigated has found a constructive legacy. With regard to

curatorial practise, the involvement of the consultative group required a change in the way the museum worked. As Dr Tom Wareham, the curator of the gallery explained,

> Often, in a very simplified form, the process runs like this: research the subject, identify objects and images to illustrate the subject, create the narrative, marry the objects to the narrative, write the text. For *London, Sugar and Slavery*, however, a whole range of factors existed which changed this process. The group gave us close access to two immediate and very important resources. First, they were an advisory body to whom we could turn for help and advice, and which could point us in certain directions and provide us with historical information. Second, they themselves constituted an audience who could react to what we were doing, respond to our suggestions without reservation, and be critical where necessary. We had to learn every day, all day, with each other, and transcend boundaries between the intellectual, the creative, the professional and the experiential. The Group included those who were direct descendants of enslaved Africans. Their life experience and their view of existing historical narratives did not always match or agree with received academic opinion. We had to remember that to make this interpretation meaningful; their views had absolutely equal weight. Nothing was dismissed—all views were considered.[5]

Until comparatively recently, museum galleries tended to pretend that there was no curatorial voice (Lord and Lord 2002: 346). The narrative conveyed in a gallery was projected as neutral, balanced and authoritative, with no hint of subjectivity. Some museums are still doing this, but as a practice, it is no longer convincing or acceptable. Curators, whether they admit it or not, cannot be objective. They bring their own views and interpretation to bear on any subject. This of course, had implications. Few museum curators are descended from the victims of slavery or have been subjected to racist behaviour. This is bound to have implications for the way the subject of slavery is approached.

Dr Wareham reflects on an important point when he says that 'their [the consultative group] life experience and their views of existing historical narrative did not match or agree with received academic opinion'.[6] The view of the academics on the consultative group was that their own work, which challenges many established discourses, was yet to be used in a way that informed the wider interpretation of the subject in, for example, museums or the media. The Africa Galleries at the British Museum and feature film *Amazing Grace* that premiered in 2006 were given as examples. Museums generally do not challenge established views of history, but with this subject we were expected to do so by the very extensive range of individuals and groups that we had been in contact with. It simply wasn't good enough to accept without question matters such as how plantation slavery

in the Caribbean came to an end; through Acts of Parliament in London or through the erosion of the will of plantation overseers when faced with the irrepressible resistance of the enslaved? Were abolitionists in London black or white? Men or women? Did Africans encourage the trade because of their own internal system of human trafficking or did European slavers denude Africa of generations of men, women and children that affected its ability to grow and develop? Was there a black presence in Britain before the trade in the sixteenth century? How about earlier?

THE GALLERY'S RELEVANCE TO ITS AUDIENCE

The 'Windrush' generation of Caribbeans that migrated to Britain in the 1950s and 1960s are today an integral part of London society. The Windrush generation and their children want to understand how their stories connect with the history of their adopted country. Was their place in the postcolonial narrative presented in Britain's museums? How did this narrative express the relationship between Africa, the Caribbean and Britain's agency in forced mass migration? If the role of the enslaved African contributed towards the economic development of Britain, helping it become a dominant world force in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, was this explained in our museums? Surely it should be if the African and Caribbean story was important, and this would help today's generation understand more of their personal history. But it appeared that this narrative was absent from our museums and galleries, absent from our national curriculum, absent from our collective national consciousness. Political posturing at the time tells us a great deal about the equivocal attitude to the bicentenary that could be sensed through popular media. Prime Minister Tony Blair would not make an apology for Britain's involvement in the slave trade, unlike other world leaders such as President Jacques Chirac of France, but instead issued a statement of regret (*New Nation* 2006). Possibly the fear of claims for compensation that might follow an apology presented too great a risk. At the same time, Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott urged museums, galleries, and other cultural mediators like the BBC to mark the bicentenary. A commemoration service was organized at Westminster Abbey attended by Her Majesty the Queen, Prince Phillip, Prime Minister Blair and several hundred more dignitaries. This event provided the only real moment of catharsis during 2007 and it arrived in the form of an outspoken intervention. Pan-African activist Toyin Agbetu broke through the cordon and demonstrated loudly in front of the Queen and Prime Minister, calling for an apology for Britain's role in the slave trade, before being marched out of the Abbey.

This event perhaps captured the essence of the museum's challenge. How to not only show the historical actuality but also create a visceral impact that carried the true awfulness of what had happened. The consultative

group felt that the 'London, Sugar and Slavery' gallery offered an opportunity to redress the historical balance, and provide a means for London to reconcile itself with its slaving past. Recognizing that it was a relatively small gesture in the wider scheme did not diminish its importance. And yet even at this point the broader picture seemed to indicate that as a nation we had done our breast-beating, the Queen had stoically sat through the protests, and now we should be ready to brush the unsavoury business under the carpet and move on. During the making of the gallery, I was invited to attend a discussion on the question of responsibility and accountability at the editorial offices of *The Voice*, a London-based newspaper aimed at the African-Caribbean community. Also present was Dominic Grieve QC MP, the shadow (Conservative) Attorney General and shadow Home Secretary. It was commendable that Grieve agreed to participate in such a debate, but his position summed up the stance held by many in the country who had no particular interest in the subject or were not of African-Caribbean heritage. This position was that slavery is a trade as old as humanity as witnessed by the Egyptians, Greeks and Romans and that Africans were slave traders and had traded their fellow Africans for hundreds of years. In Grieve's opinion, transatlantic slavery was just part of this continuum; it is in the past and it serves no useful purpose to raise it now other than to highlight the iniquities of the modern-day trade, for example, the trade in eastern European women for purposes of prostitution. The instinct was towards closing down the debate.

For the consultative group, this was to miss a vital point: the need to recognize publicly what had happened so that those who had been directly affected by transatlantic slavery could find their own history in the national story, in our cultural institutions and in our schools. For the group the creation of 'London, Sugar and Slavery' was an imperative for black Londoners. They were also concerned that all Londoners should understand why it was so important that the subject become a proper part of the overall historical narrative. The gallery had to speak to everyone, regardless of race, to do its job properly. This was a difficult objective because clearly the museum's audience is very diverse in all senses, but nevertheless it was attempted. For example, the introductory film, *This Is Your History*[7] in the first section of the gallery literally puts the words of enslaved African Olaudah Equiano into the mouths of an elderly white man, a Muslim woman, a Chinese girl, a blind white youth and, of course, black men, women and children. The film ends emphatically with the words, 'This is your history'.

Burt Caesar, a member of the group, reflected,

> Black is not a binary opposite to white. It is pluralistic. We also have a European part of our history that we should embrace. What I kept pushing for in making this gallery was what I had imagined and, despite its shortcomings, I am proud that we have produced something away from the imperial notion of storytelling. I am against any notion

of multiculturalism which suggests something closed. History and heritage are not decorative. If this gallery carries on its potential it will be in the vanguard of the emerging knowledge around this story, and of accurately telling this country's history.[8]

THE OBJECTIVES SET FOR THE GALLERY

One of the tasks of the group was to identify the principal objectives of the gallery. In the early discussions there was a clear desire to try and encompass the wider 'black' history of Britain as well as the history of transatlantic slavery: the story of self-determination by enslaved Africans to win their freedom through rebellion—a recurring issue that found expression in the gallery; the role of women in the abolition movement; and the Parliamentary abolition process. In other words, much more than the museum could cope with. This desire was perhaps prompted by a lack of information generally about these subjects in our schools, museums, libraries, television programmes and so on. A shorthand emerged for this absence: hidden histories. In fact on closer inspection it became evident that the history was not hidden; rather it had been overshadowed by the privileging of other histories. The primary material was there to be found, but very few people were actively working on it. It was agreed that the job of the gallery was to address this information gap and that the gallery must concentrate on aspects of the subject that were absolutely relevant to the place rather than on an encyclopaedic history. Our story, therefore, would be about London, sugar and slavery. A set of agreed objectives for the gallery were essential. Those decided on were as follows:

- The gallery will reinterpret the museum building and location within the context of London's involvement with slavery and the slave trade.
- It will create a vehicle for community engagement and to extend our learning programmes on a subject of relevance to new audiences from under-represented communities as well as our existing audiences.
- Through the gallery we will raise awareness of the museum as a place of international importance for the understanding of the African Diaspora and the making of British society, and to make it a 'must visit' destination for those interested in black and British history.
- It will make us all think about how our colonial past has affected the world around us; how it created the physical, economic and cultural London that we know today and how that history has shaped the present.[9]

The group also decided on a series of essential key messages that could be widely communicated. These were as follows:

- Museum of London Docklands (No 1 Warehouse) is a surviving structure connected to the triangular slave trade.
- London played a central role in the transatlantic slave trade but public awareness of this is very low.
- London's wealth and Britain's industrial revolution were fuelled by profits from the plantations of the Caribbean and the labours of enslaved Africans.
- West Africa, the Caribbean and London are irrevocably connected by the slave trade and this interconnection shaped nineteenth- and twentieth-century London and is still evident today.
- The struggle to end slavery and the slave trade united the interests of people on both sides of the Atlantic, and saw the first mass mobilization in Britain of a diverse alliance of men and women from different social classes and racial backgrounds.
- The abolition campaign highlighted conflicting ideas about race which still haunt us today.
- The story told in the gallery is about the making of British society. It is therefore *our* story, and affects us all irrespective of race.[10]

Through the development of these messages and objectives the museum made it clear that the 'owners' of the process, and the product—the gallery—was the consultative group. Responsibility for how the gallery narrative should be constructed and the space designed was to be shared between the group and the museum. In this context we talked of 'ownership' in the sense that the museum would not override group decisions and the 'authorship' would be transparent. The group would be named in the gallery as creators for the public to see. The focus on London enabled the gallery to fit into the wider national picture presented by museums such as the International Slavery Museum in Liverpool.

CONSULTATION IN ACTION

With the consultative group in place and with an agreed method of working, a clear set of objectives and messages that we wanted to convey, and funding in place, the museum had what it thought was the best way to create its new gallery. At about nine months into the process, the first drafts of the panel text were produced. These were written by museum curators after careful discussion, debate and agreement with the group about what it was that the panels needed to convey in order to support the overall intellectual structure of the gallery. The panels had to express, for example, that London had a significant black presence since the sixteenth century; that Africa comprised sophisticated societies with developed skills that in some cases surpassed their European equivalents long before the intervention of European slave traders in the sixteenth century. The

text was tested with focus groups, members of the public selected to represent a cross-section of the museum's anticipated audience and feedback brought back to the group for consideration. How for example, to reconcile the conflicting views from a black mother who didn't want her son to grow up with negative stereotypical messages about black people being the subject of oppression, but wanted positive messages and role models, and the black elder who wanted the 'whole terrible truth of enslavement, whips, chains and instruments of torture' to be present in the gallery?[11] These issues were debated and solutions found. It was decided that the gallery should have two 'show states', in other words the visitor would have two types of experience in the gallery. The first would comprise a normal gallery visit with text on walls, objects in showcases, touch screen interactives and so on. However, the second 'state' was a *son et lumière* experience that transformed the gallery. Every twenty minutes the gallery lights are lowered and a sound and light show lasting three minutes provide a dramatic intervention. Powerful images play over gallery walls and showcases, and crucially, over one of the objects on display, the Buxton Table,[12] associated with the Parliamentary abolition of the slavery. The voice-over speaks in imperious tones describing what happened to enslaved Africans: 'Your children will be taken away from you; you will be beaten; you will not keep your own name'. The purpose of adopting the two show states was to enable the gallery to contain very hard-hitting messages about the horror of the slave trade without it dominating the gallery experience the whole time, which would have been too overpowering and, quite possibly, dissuade visitors from engaging with it.

At this stage, however, when presenting the group with text to sign off, the museum hit a serious problem. The text, written by the curators after months of working with the group, was simply not recognized by the group as being their own. The museum had somehow managed to miss what was so crucial in the process. The text, written by the curators, carried the authority of the museum, not the consultative group, and did not contain the urgency of the group's desire to convey that this was a new history that had not been heard before. However, the deadline for submitting text for production was two weeks away. The pressure on the museum to take the expedient route and ignore the group's response was considerable, not least because at this stage delays could have a serious cost implication. This was a critical moment in the development of the gallery, a moment that eventually played out in such a way as to strengthen the sense of ownership by the group and to directly inform the tone of the gallery. It was decided that to overcome the problem we would completely rewrite the gallery text, and I asked for the group's agreement to the following proposition: the museum would nominate one curator to work with one individual from the group, nominated by the group, to come up with new text in ten days. The museum and the group would both accept their new text without revision. Given the deadlines, we hardly had a choice, but even so this was an unprecedented step for the museum given that the gallery text is essentially the institutional voice. It was also an act of faith by the group that their aspirations for the gallery could be met through such a plan.

RESPONSES TO THE GALLERY

Visitors to the gallery will make up their own minds as to the accuracy and accessibility of the text, and how engaging it is. The process described previously, however, has delivered the voices of those who passionately wanted to be heard. I believe it speaks with a directness and urgency that is seldom found in museums with their burden of balanced interpretation. It has not gone without criticism. The gallery includes text panels that explain the choice of language employed in the gallery with reference to racial categories and these have proved controversial. This was something of a surprise as they simply explain for the benefit of the visitor how the makers of the gallery decided on terminology used. One panel states,

> We have tried to be careful in the use of language in this gallery. In particular we have tried to avoid using terms that strip individuals of their humanity—since this was a tactic central to the imposition of slavery.
>
> The word 'slave' for example, implies a thing or commodity rather than a human being. We have used the term 'enslaved African' wherever possible.
>
> In the main we have tried avoiding the terms 'Black' and 'White', preferring the terms 'African' or 'European'. But in the Legacies section of the gallery we engage with the term 'Black' as it is used to refer to the non-White post-war migrants that settled in Britain.

The panels then go on to explain the definition of words such as 'Negro', 'Mulatto', and 'Quadroon'. In response one visitor was moved to write,

> With its abject introduction about not wishing to cause 'offence' to any one or to special groups, it then went on to try to rewrite history by claiming to remove from the historical record—or rather your museum's peculiar version of the 'historical record' as presented on the walls of your gallery—all factual references in the displays to 'slave(s)', 'blacks' and 'whites'.

The same individual who wrote to the museum, and copied his letter to the Mayor of London demanding changes, went on to say,

> Are all you people responsible for this travesty quite mad? Just in case you and yours have not realised it, we are a quarter of a century beyond

the supposedly epoch-changing world of George Orwell's 1984 where double-speak was the order of the day. Or I suppose, perhaps I need to be corrected there by reference to what we have experienced for well over a decade under this barren 'New Labour' thing.

Further feedback has been received through a more formal mechanism. The gallery encourages responses and has a comment board that enables visitors to leave a written comment. The museum has kept and transcribed several hundred of these comments, which themselves now form part of the gallery and are available for visitors to read. They include both positive and negative comments, for example:

> The most transparent UK expo on the Slave Trade and Slavery. Astonishingly forceful and value creating.

> It would take a volume to note all the slanted, oversimplified, biased statements here—in the most propagandistic show I have ever seen.

> WHAT IS DONE IS DONE. END. As a white person—you must respect what this country does for you and become English in Your Soul.

> I would like to say that we have come from France (Paris) to study this museum. We are impressed by the courage shown in the description of what will stay as a dark period of our European history. I would like, and my pupils, to thank the museum for such a brilliant experience. (Teacher with 46 pupils).

> I came to the Museum today especially for the sugar and slavery exhibit. My parents are Jamaican, my Dad's family grew Blue Mountain coffee and my Mum's family worked on the sugar plantations, where my Grandfather was foreman. Despite my Grandfather's Senior Position life was still hard for them. My Grandparents were quite radical and taught my Mother to look the plantation owner in the eye when talking to them and to never feel that she was not good enough.

Such responses are welcomed in that they are evidence that we have created a gallery that is thought-provoking and engages the public on matters important to our collective well-being as a society. 'London, Sugar and Slavery' is a 'safe space' in which to debate our differences and our similarities in that museums are perceived to be non-threatening environments dissimilar, for example, to public debates in town halls or television studios. It is therefore easier for individuals to abandon their 'comfort zones' and leave written comments after having seen how numerous others have come forward to contribute a comment. Where else might someone feel able to express their feelings 'as a white person'?

CONCLUSIONS

This permanent gallery is now part of the museum landscape in London and is increasingly used by schools and the general public as a place to learn about London's involvement in the transatlantic slave trade. Interestingly, unbeknownst to the museum, films have been made by members of the public and posted on YouTube that feature the gallery. These appear, like the example made by Stebrodet,[13] to use the gallery as raw material for their own personal reflections on slavery and seem to be made by black British individuals. It is the subject of academic courses, and is on the itinerary of interested historians and academics both in the U.K. and visiting from overseas.[14] It is important that the gallery continues to change and develop. It was designed in a way that permitted certain displays to change enabling new voices to participate and to reflect an ongoing dialogue presenting new views. Subsequent to its opening, changing gallery elements have reflected various strands of this history, from an investigation of slave-owning firms based in London's Harley Street in the eighteenth century to artistic responses from inmates of Wandsworth prison created as part of a social inclusion programme run by the museum. The process of creating the 'London, Sugar and Slavery' gallery and the presence of the new gallery has made a considerable impact on the museum and its relationship with its audience. One example of how the museum curators benefited from the experiences gained through 'London, Sugar and Slavery' was demonstrated during the development of a subsequent exhibition, 'Jack the Ripper and the East End'. Similarly controversial, but for very different reasons, the curators needed to reach a decision about the display of post mortem photographs of victims of Jack the Ripper. These images are historically important in that they are some of the earliest example of forensic and crime scene photography made by the police. They have been widely published and are just three clicks away on Google.

However, the presentation of imagery still capable of shocking the general public was debated, particularly in the context of an exhibition that was dealing essentially with an episode of London's history that was characterized by extreme violence towards women. The curators decided to work with a local community organization based in Toynbee Hall in Tower Hamlets called Safe Exit.[15] The final exhibition featured a film showing an interview with Safe Exit Coordinator Ellen Armstrong where she draws parallels between the lives of local women involved in street prostitution in 1888—the time of the Whitechapel murders—and today, saying that women are driven to street prostitution for similar reasons and are tragically still very vulnerable to violence, rape and murder. The view of Safe Exit workers was that it was right to include post mortem images of Ripper victims because it underlined the reality of violence towards women rather than sensationalizing it. Although not a view shared by all visitors to and critics of the exhibition, the museum had consulted with its local

community and was then transparent about the process in the final display, literally including the voice of relevant community members in the exhibition. It is now difficult to imagine working on any project without adopting such similarly challenging and rewarding approaches as described here.

NOTES

1. Staged at the Museum of London, October 2006.
2. See www.towerhamletsarts.org.uk/?guide=directory&pageref=org.
3. Heritage Lottery Fund is administered by the National Heritage Memorial Fund which was given the responsibility of distributing a share of money raised through the National Lottery for Good Causes, to heritage across the U.K., in 1994. It is a non-departmental public body accountable to Parliament via the Department of Culture, Media and Sport.
4. Renaissance in the regions is the Museums Libraries and Archives programme to transform England's regional museums through central government funding to enable regional museums across the country to deliver results in local communities through additional funding.
5. 'The Making of London, Sugar and Slavery: A Toolkit for Community Participation': http://www.museumoflondon.org.uk/Docklands/Whats-on/Galleries/LSS/
6. Ibid.
7. Quiet Voice [Stephen Rudder], http://www.quietvoice.co.uk/content/view/4/7/. Accessed on 11 April 2011.
8. 'The Making of London, Sugar and Slavery: A Toolkit for Community Participation': http://www.museumoflondon.org.uk/Docklands/Whats-on/Galleries/LSS/
9. Heritage Lottery Fund application document, Museum of London, 29 September 2006.
10. Ibid.
11. 'London, Sugar and Slavery' text evaluation, Museum of London.
12. Table (1822) owned by Thomas Fowell Buxton, member of Parliament responsible for steering the abolition of slavery bill through the House of Commons. It was at this table that members of the Society for the Mitigation and Gradual Abolition of Slavery sat when they drafted the Bill.
13. See, for example, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S66J0ZAlPWY
14. For example, a formal visit by representatives of the Norwegian Archive, Library and Museum Authority (ABM-utvikling—Statens senter for arkiv, bibliotek og museum) was made in 2009 and the gallery is on the ABM-utvikling 2010 conference agenda .
15. www.toynbeehall.org.uk

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bressey, C. (2002) *Forgotten Geographies: Historical Geographies of Black Women in Victorian and Edwardian London*, PhD diss., University College London.

Dwyer, C. and Bressey, C. (eds) (2008) *New Geographies of Race and Racism, Aldershot, UK:* Ashgate.

Lord, B. and Lord, G.D. (2002) *The Manual of Museum Exhibitions*, Walnut Creek, CA: Alta Mira Press.

Rawley, J.A. (2003) *London, Metropolis of the Slave Trade*, Columbia: University of Missouri Press.

Transatlantic Slave Trade Database (2008) Emory University, Atlanta, GA. Online. Available HTTP: http://www.slavevoyages.org. Accessed on 11 April 2011.