We Are Bristol: Reparative justice through collaborative research

Invitation to tender for evaluation of the project

Project details

**Project duration:** 24 Months, starting June 2021

**Funder:** UKRI

**Project Lead:** Prof Olivette Otele, University of Bristol

Bristol’s economic, social and cultural life, and the lived experience of its citizens, have been shaped by transatlantic slavery, with the city struggling to address the legacies of this past. Recent events in Bristol, such as the toppling of Edward Colston statue, have brought into sharp focus the inequalities that still exist and a strong feeling that the history of the city, how it is represented and taught, still remains unresolved. This project will combine the expertise and experience of academics and citizens of Bristol to build a fuller understanding of how Bristol’s history is still impacting on society, and how the city can learn lessons and make changes.

The project’s objectives are to:

1. Explore the mechanisms of knowledge production by analysing the diverse ways material relating to the transatlantic slave trade and enslavement is valued and interpreted, thus working to understand the process of silence and erasure that has informed knowledge of that past within the city, fragmenting collective memories.

2. Develop multidisciplinary academic research to co-produce new knowledge with citizens that will explore the impacts the transatlantic slave trade has had across the city’s communities, thus expanding citizen science methods into the Arts and Humanities, and to academics new to citizen science.

3. Train and develop citizen researchers in a variety of research methods that range from data collection, analysis of historical source material, course design, transcription of interviews, practice-led creative research to co-curation and participatory approaches in creating and sharing new knowledge.

4. Use creative engagement methods that acknowledge the different ways in which citizens can contribute knowledge, affirming the existence of different kinds of expertise and decentring knowledge production.

5. Work in equitable partnerships with key grassroot groups, schools and civic organisations to support transformative actions on issues such as racial discrimination and their impact on all Brtistolians.

The four work packages, led by academics from different disciplines, explore the legacy of the slave trade in Bristol in various forms. The overarching theme that brings them together is the work on reparative justice. There will be a transverse activity cutting across all these streams to provide evaluation, ensure collaboration and learning across work packages and the creation of resources to enable sharing Citizen Science approaches for future research.

**Work package 1: Bristol, Capital and Enslavement**

The Slavery Abolition Act 1833 abolished slavery throughout the British Empire, making £20 million available for compensation to slave owners but nothing to the formerly enslaved. In Bristol, 107 people living in the city at the time received compensation for claims made against 36,426 enslaved people. In total the Bristol awardees received just under £500,000 - the equivalent in 2018 to £612 million (per capita GDP) or £2.19 billion (share of GDP). Much of this money was re-invested in the
city, either in building projects, donations, or investment in the myriad businesses which boomed during the second phase of the Industrial Revolution. Money from slavery has thus been fundamental to shaping the city as we know it today. Led by Dr Richard Stone, this work package will use a Citizen Science approach to investigate the lives and careers of those in Bristol who claimed ownership over the enslaved, and the resultant compensation. Participants from across Bristol’s communities will be recruited, drawing together a variety of experiences and perspectives into the project. These citizen scientists will be recruited by working with key partners such as Black South West Network, and Bristol and Avon Family History society.

The citizen scientists will be trained and supported to investigate the lives of enslaved people ‘owned’ by Bristol’s claimees, including stories of endurance and resistance under slavery, and their subsequent fortunes. The project team will thus be able to explore together the roots of the poverty, inequality, and discrimination faced by the descendants of those who were exploited on the plantations. Linking to the research on Bristol’s ‘slave owners’, the project will be able to connect this both to the stories of the enslaved, and to the sites and institutions in Bristol which their exploitation paid for.

Work package 2: Creative digital memorialisation: bodies in movement and augmented reality

This work package, led by Dr Jessica Moody, Cleo Lake and Kwesi Johnson will explore the memory of slavery in Bristol through Citizen Science methodologies using a combined approach of historical research and critical creative intervention as a way of engaging with lived experiences and community knowledge not otherwise gained through engagement with the tangible and documentary historical record. This work package will work with citizen scientists collaboratively to:

1. Identify key places and spaces in the cityscape of Bristol to engage with through research and creative interventions. These will be identified through workshops conducted in partnership with the Legacies Steering Group and through consultation with the Black South West Network.
2. Research the histories of these sites and their memory through their representation in public discourse, personal, group and collective memory and research how these sites impose on the present day, connecting to the legacies of the past and their affective present.
3. Engage in practice-led interventions and creative engagement as part of the research through art, dance and creative writing to gain deeper knowledge of these sites and to connect to a broad range of publics.
4. Develop alternative methods to facilitate the citizen scientists and share their knowledge and interventions across points 1-3 above with support and training from Moody, Lake and Johnson. Digital innovations and creative place-making will be adopted as part of this alternative intervention through the development of a mobile app which uses augmented reality to map citizen interventions onto the cityscape through an interactive trail.

The trauma of transatlantic enslavement and its ongoing legacies cannot be approached or understood solely through standard historical, scientific or academic methods. This is an area where the creative arts make a powerful and necessary intervention in research and engagement around difficult and traumatic histories.

Work package 3: Campaign training and We Are Bristol exhibition

The aim of this work package will be to engage secondary-school students about race equality past and present, and train them to identify and campaign on issues that matter to them. Workshops will empower students to engage creatively with both historical and contemporary injustices. It will result in a ‘We are Bristol’ exhibition and an adaptable curriculum pack for Facing History and Ourselves, a global network which empowers students to think critically about history and become ‘upstanders’ in their own communities, and which reaches 3 million learners and 115,000 teachers every year.
Funding will support workshops in 4 secondary schools, co-facilitated with a grassroots-based partner. In selecting both schools and partners, we will prioritize including a diversity of perspectives such as LGBTQ+ (Kiki and Freedom Youth), Somali (Bristol Somali Resource Centre &/or Bristol Somali Youth), mental health and disability (Off the Record), and older people (Age Concern). Schools will be selected from across Bristol, including not just central Bristol (Cathedral School), but crucially neighbourhoods that are more geographically isolated from the centre (such as Knowle West; Easton; Filton; or Hartcliffe).

Each school will work with trainers to design small-scale social justice campaigns of their own and use their campaign ideas to create content for their own set of exhibit panels on issues that matter to them. This will result in an exhibition called 'We Are Bristol', with photographs, poetry, facts and perspectives from across the city. Instead of relying on perspectives from the most commonly heard activist voices, the project will effectively 'crowd-source' an understanding of what Bristol's current priorities should be. This initiative will contribute to a larger Bristol curriculum linked to the Mayor's office initiatives via the Legacy Steering Group and History Commission. Dr Burch-Brown will draw from the workshops to create a curriculum pack to be shared through the Facing History and Ourselves global network. The curriculum pack will include sample exhibit panels, a blank template, and lesson plans for teachers anywhere in the world to use with their students to create their own exhibits and design their own social justice interventions.

Work package 4: Transformative inclusive pedagogy

Led by Dr Gournet, this work package addresses issues of race inequality, including the impact of enslavement of Africans in the transatlantic slave trade and how these can be addressed within education. It will equip a group of teachers, who are keen to be agents for change, with the skills of citizen scientists to develop and enhance their own and other educators’ ability to address inequalities. Dr Gournet has collaborated with teachers to create the Bristol Global Majority Network (Bristol GMT Network), targeted at Black and Asian qualified teachers. In addition to the interest in access, retention and promotion, discussions often focus on creating better educational and social outcomes for students who are currently underperforming. COVID-19 combined with the recent BLM movement across the world and the toppling of the Colston statue in Bristol have reinvigorated the debate on a decolonial approach to teaching and the importance of anti-racist education that truly reflects the multiculturality of the city (and the wider world) through diverse and inclusive cannons of knowledge.

This work package will develop training workshops for teachers as citizen scientists to focus on issues related to the city’s past and the way this affects the current school’s environment. The intention is to give teachers the investigative skills to explore the issues, analyse, test understanding and implement change. The transferable skills gained will enable them to replicate the approach to other areas. By developing teachers as citizen scientists this project intends to build their knowledge and confidence to introduce or expand issues of race and the legacies of Empire in the curriculum, as well as sharing learning with other educators in Bristol and more widely. Another benefit is the potential for career advancements that come with collaborating on such a project and taking up leadership roles in the school and beyond. Outcomes of the research will be shared with Bristol Learning City, the Race Equality in Education Group and other strategic education groups/boards in order to implement and embed best practice. Long term, the aim would be the creation of a new role: Specialist Leaders in Anti-Racist Education (similar to Specialist Leader of Education in Maths/English etc).

Transverse activity

Working under the leadership and guidance of the PI, Professor Otele, this activity comprises three elements: communication, evaluation, and the development of resources to share the learning from this project with other researchers and communities:
Communication: The project members will establish ways to share both the research findings from their WPs to support each other’s content, as well as experiential learning around Citizen Science, supported by the Public Engagement team. In addition, the Advisory Group will provide guidance across all WPs. Evaluation: An evaluator will be appointed from within the communities, who will work closely with the Public Engagement team’s Evaluation Officer to develop an approach that fits the needs of both citizens and academics. Sharing learning: The Public Engagement team will develop researcher training, resources and guidance based on the project’s new methodologies and disseminate learning across academic community.

Evaluation brief
The research team is looking for an evaluator to join us throughout the project, from helping us set our baselines through to producing the final project report. We are committed to appointing an evaluator from within the communities we are working with. They will closely collaborate with the research team and the Evaluation Officer based in the Public Engagement team to develop an approach that fits the needs of both citizens and academics. We are looking for an evaluator who will give a supportive, critical view and help evolve the project to reach its aims. We also need an evaluator who will help us build an evidence base to assess the impact of the project and underpin academic publications. We envisage that the evaluator will co-produce the evaluation with our project partners and participants and will play a central role in this process.

The evaluator or evaluation team will:

- Work in a flexible, imaginative and responsive way.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the issues relating to: citizen science principles, university work with socially-marginalised groups and academic partnerships with the voluntary sector.
- Understand the issues around Bristol’s history and legacies of transatlantic slave trade, race, ethnicity, gender and class raised by this research.
- Deal sensitively with potentially challenging issues affecting participants.

Project requirements:

- Liaise throughout the project with the Project Team and Evaluation Officer, providing regular updates on evaluation.
- Work with the team from the start of the project to provide an evaluation framework that is co-produced by all participants.
- Establish evaluation priorities for each Work Package with the Project Team.
- Measure the impact of the project on participants, project partners and the University.
- Communicate with the project team about emergent/potential or unplanned-for impacts and legacies.
- Create an evidence base to evaluate the impact of the project, and to underpin academic publications on methodology and evaluation and training resources. This should include recordings/transcripts/copies of all interviews and questionnaires.
- Produce a final evaluation report.

In our application, we laid out the following timetable, but we are open to alternative suggestions as to how to achieve the project requirements.

- Undertake initial familiarisation with the project, incl. outputs and outcomes for each Work Package and partner organisations (The Legacy Steering Group, Black South West Network,
The Commission for Race Equality, Bristol Gobal Majority Teacher’s Network, Bristol City Council and other collaborators (June 2021)

- Plan and lead the initial workshop on evaluation in June 2021. This workshop will involve all members of the research team and will ask ‘what would success look like?’
- Agree methodology with the Project Team and the Evaluation Officer (June 2021)
- Evaluate the summer schools (part of WP3) planned for June 2021
- Carry out entry interviews/questionnaires with participants (throughout 2021)
- Observe selected No. of meetings, workshops and impact-related events (August 2021 - March 2023)
- Carry out evaluative interviews with all members of the group (University staff, project partners, citizen scientists) (estimated timescale: End of year 1 (May 2022) and 3rd quarter of Year 2 (November 2023)
- Produce a draft evaluation report (March 2023), lead a workshop with the entire project team (researchers, partners, participants) to discuss this (April 2023), and produce a final version (May 2023).

We will accept proposals up to £15,000 (incl. VAT). This should include any travel or other expenses. In addition a £1500 evaluation consumables budget will be available. This will cover evaluation across all Work Packages for the duration of the project.

The deadline for proposals is Spm on Friday 18 June 2021. Shortlisted individuals/teams will be interviewed in w/c 28 June, date TBC. We will aim to make a final decision by 4 July 2021.

Informal enquiries in advance of a full application are very welcome. Please contact Prof Olivette Otele on Olivette.Otele@Bristol.ac.uk or cpe-info@bristol.ac.uk.