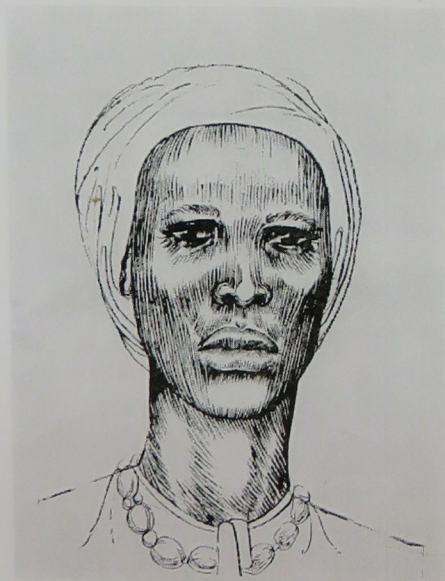


# Freedom Think Tank

**Sung Candlelight Commemoration of the Abolition of  
the Atlantic Slave Trade by Britain**

**June 30<sup>th</sup> 2007**

**St Thomas' Church, Barras Bridge, Newcastle**



Nanny of the Maroons



Toussaint L'ouverture



ENGLISH HERITAGE

## Programme

Images of sorrow and survival

Drumming

Welcome and Introduction

Welcome Table Song and greeting

Statements

Song

- I'm on my way to Freedom Land

Personal Testimonies

Poems

- Slavery is a Freedom (Sunderland African Association)
- And Still I rise (Maya Angelou)

Candle Light

- Haiti Song
- Redemption Song

Leaving procession

- Down by the Riverside

North East of England African Community Association invites all to their party TONIGHT 7pm-midnight at Newcastle Civic Centre Banqueting Hall. Music, Food, Dancing.  
Entry £10 adults, £3 children.

**The Trans-Atlantic slave trade was unique for its scale, its conscious and consistent attempt to dehumanise African people and its continuing world-wide cultural and economic impact. Freedom Think Tank prefers to use 'enslaved' and 'enslavement' to highlight the oppressive process that was the slave trade. In contrast, the terms 'slave' and 'slavery' imply that this was an integral and enduring condition of the people enslaved.**

## THEMES

- **The Richness of African civilisations prior to enslavement**
- **Enslavement and its Erosion**
- **Achievements of the descendants of the enslaved**
- **Legacy of Enslavement**
  - **Racism**
  - **World Disorder**

## Songs

**I am gonna sit at the welcome table**

***Each person greets their neighbours during the singing.***

I'm gonna sit at the welcome table,  
I'm gonna sit at the welcome table one of these days,  
Hallelujah!  
I'm gonna sit at the welcome table,  
I'm gonna sit at the welcome table one of these days.

I'm gonna get my civil rights,  
I'm gonna get my civil rights one of these days,  
Hallelujah!  
I'm gonna get my civil rights,  
I'm gonna get my civil rights one of these days.

Repeat last verse

## Statements

### 1. PRE-SLAVERY

Many ancient African Kingdoms, such as Mali and Benin, were very well organised, and rich, before they were destroyed by the slave trade. For example, Ghana Kingdom, established in the 5<sup>th</sup> century, thrived on the trade of gold and salt. We want people here today to do away with the belief that the history of people of African heritage began with slavery, and that their identity as African people born in the Caribbean is defined solely by slavery and its aftermath.

**We Remember with pride**

### 2. THE SLAVE TRADE

The abominable 'trade' in humans resulted in the kidnapping and sale of more than 20 million Africans to Western slave traders. Slave traders were both Europeans and Africans. Africans were both bribed and forced into selling their people, and did not know the true picture of this new slavery. The true picture was horrible - people were captured, dehumanised, maimed and tortured, and shipped in inhuman conditions across the Atlantic. Those who fell ill were thrown into the sea, and those who survived the vessels of horror were forced to work in plantations in the Caribbean and Northern America in horrendous conditions.

**We Remember with sorrow**

### 3. RESISTANCE

Those who were enslaved fought to escape their enslavement while in Africa, on the ships, and in the Caribbean and the Americas. Many resisted in small ways, others took up arms despite the terrible punishments, such as maiming, torture and death, if caught. Some revolutions were successful. These include the Haitian revolution in 1791 led by Toussaint L' Ouverture who defeated the combined army of Britain and Spain, and that of the Maroons, led by Nanny, which forced the British Government to sign a treaty and give them their own land in Jamaica. There were many other leaders and many other revolts, including in St Kitts, Grenada, St Vincent and Antigua. Many were brutally put down, but they helped bring about the end of enslavement. They were costly for the governments, and disproved that 'the slaves were happy'.

**We remember with appreciation**

### 4. THOSE WHO SPOKE UP

Many of the enslaved who won or bought their freedom led the campaign against enslavement. We remember Frederick Douglas, Harriet Tubman in North America, Sam Sharpe in Jamaica and Olaudah Equiano, Ottobah Cugoano and Ignatius Sancho in England. The presence of free enslaved Africans in the UK helped people to put faces to a brutality which seemed far away from their everyday lives, yet was enriching them. These men travelled extensively within the UK, spoke passionately about the reality and wrote against enslavement, thus challenging the myths of the inferiority of the enslaved African. Equiano also supported the white working class struggles in England and worked with the Quakers and others, such as Clarkson and Sharpe, to mobilise support, while Wilberforce led the campaign in Parliament.

**We remember with gratitude**

### 5. THE LIBERATION PROCESS

The Abolition of the Atlantic Slave Trade by Britain in 1807 was one step along the way. The Slave Trade continued in other European ships, and conditions for the enslaved in the Caribbean became even worse. The British Parliament in 1833, under Earl Grey, passed the bill to abolish slavery in the British West Indies under intense pressure from within and outside the country. However, it replaced slavery with 'apprenticeship', working for the same owners in the same conditions, and shamelessly compensated plantation owners for their loss of free labour! Almost twenty million pounds was paid in compensation. The Parliament also apologised to the plantation owners for snatching away their precious labour! The British parliament neither compensated liberated slaves nor African Kingdoms who lost millions of their citizens to the abominable trade. The enslaved made apprenticeship difficult to enforce and, by 1838, it had withered away. Enslavement continued in other colonies and the USA, and this trans-Atlantic slavery finally ended in 1888. But modern day slavery lives on.

**We remember with understanding**

### 6. THE LEGACY OF LIBERATION

The enslaved created new societies, with the indigenous populations, with the descendants of the slave owners, with the indentured labourers brought from India. Their struggle for equality was hard and long and is ongoing. We remember Sojourner Truth, Marcus Garvey, Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, Paul Bogle, Uriah Butler. We remember the millions who created lives in dignity despite terrible hardships. We remember the many who achieved in the arts, such as Paul Robeson, Maya Angelou; in sports, such as Muhammed Ali, Lara; in science and technology, such as Joseph Pawan who developed the vaccine for rabies and Latimer who laid the basis for the light bulb. We remember the creativity their societies have given the world, jazz, blues, rap, reggae, calypso, steelband and carnival.

**We remember with joy**

## 7. THE LEGACY OF ENSLAVEMENT

The effect of the trans-Atlantic Slave Trade is with us today. It is with us in racism, which blights lives, and kills so many here and world wide. It is with us in the economic disorder, where one group of nations got rich on the profits of slavery and controls trade so others stay poor. Racism and economic disorder force some people into becoming asylum seekers and refugees, into accepting forced labour and tolerating modern day slavery, and allows others to turn away.

**We remember we need to act against racism and economic disorder**

## 8. CLOSING STATEMENT

Who amongst us today would give this terrible trade another name other than a holocaust? The horrors endured by millions of men, women, and children throughout the African Diaspora will never be fully known. In the sheer numbers, depth and brutality, the Atlantic Slave Trade is a testimony to the worst elements of human behaviour and the strongest elements of survival. The Atlantic Slave Trade was abolished because of the actions of many, enslaved **and** free, working in their own way to the same end, freedom for all.

Harriet Tubman said of the *Quakers*.. *almost as good as coloured...* *They call themselves friends and you can trust them every time.*

**We remember together**

## Songs

### I'm on my way to Freedom Land (traditional spiritual)

I'm on my way to the freedom land  
I'm on my way to the freedom land  
I'm on my way to the freedom land  
I'm on my way, praise God  
I'm on my way.

I asked my brother to come with me  
I asked my brother to come with me  
I asked my brother to come with me  
I'm on my way, praise God  
I'm on my way.

I asked my sister to come with me  
I asked my sister to come with me  
I asked my sister to come with me  
I'm on my way, praise God  
I'm on my way.

If they say no, I'll go alone  
If they say no, I'll go alone  
If they say no, I'll go alone  
I'm on my way, praise God  
I'm on my way.

I'm on my way, and I won't turn back  
I'm on my way, and I won't turn back  
I'm on my way, and I won't turn back  
I'm on my way, praise God  
I'm on my way.

## Poems

### Slavery is Freedom (Sunderland African Association)

Slavery is Freedom,  
And I am bound  
By my mind,  
Ensnared  
By my heart,  
And swayed  
By my extremist idea.  
But if freedom  
Isn't slavery,  
Would I not be  
A slave to freedom?

### Still I Rise (Maya Angelou)

You may write me down in history  
With your bitter, twisted lies,  
You may trod me in the very dirt  
But still, like dust, I'll rise.

Does my sassiness upset you?  
Why are you beset with gloom?  
'Cause I walk like I've got oil wells  
Pumping in my living room.

Just like moons and like suns,  
With the certainty of tides,  
Just like hopes springing high,  
Still I'll rise.

Did you want to see me broken?  
Bowed head and lowered eyes?  
Shoulders falling down like teardrops.  
Weakened by my soulful cries.

Does my haughtiness offend you?  
Don't you take it awful hard  
'Cause I laugh like I've got gold mines  
Diggin' in my own back yard.

You may shoot me with your words,  
You may cut me with your eyes,  
You may kill me with your hatefulness,  
But still, like air, I'll rise.

Does my sexiness upset you?  
Does it come as a surprise  
That I dance like I've got diamonds  
At the meeting of my thighs?

Out of the huts of history's shame  
I rise  
Up from a past that's rooted in pain  
I rise  
I'm a black ocean, leaping and wide,  
Welling and swelling I bear in the tide.  
Leaving behind nights of terror and fear  
I rise  
Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear  
I rise  
Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,  
I am the dream and the hope of the slave.  
I rise  
I rise  
I rise.

## Songs

### Haiti Song (played during the lighting of candles)

Toussaint was a mighty man  
And to make matters worse he was black  
Black and back in the days when black men knew  
Their place was in the back  
But this rebel he still walked through Napoleon  
Who thought it wasn't very nice  
And so today my brothers in Haiti  
They still pay the price

When there is anguish in Port au Prince  
It's still Africa crying  
We're outing fires in far away places  
When our neighbours are just burning  
They say the middle passage is gone  
So how come overcrowded boats still haunt our lives  
I refuse to believe that we good people  
Would forever turn our hearts  
And our eyes away

Yeah Yeah  
Haiti, I'm sorry  
We misunderstood you  
One day we'll turn our heads  
And look inside you  
Haiti, I'm sorry. Haiti, I'm sorry  
One day we'll turn our heads  
Restore your glory

### Redemption Song (Bob Marley)

Old pirates, yes, they rob i;  
Sold I to the merchant ships,  
Minutes after they took i  
From the bottomless pit.  
But my head was held strong  
By the hand of the almighty.  
We forward in this generation  
Triumphantly.  
So won't you help to sing  
This song of freedom? -  
it's all I ever had :  
Redemption song,  
Redemption song.

Emancipate yourselves from mental slavery;  
None but ourselves can free our minds.  
Have no fear for atomic energy,  
for none of them can stop the tide.  
How long shall they kill our prophets,  
While we stand aside and look?  
Some say its just a part of it:  
We've got to fulfill de book.

Won't you help to sing  
This song of freedom? -  
it's all I ever had:  
Redemption song  
Redemption song  
Redemption song.

## **Down by the Riverside**

Gonna lay down my sword and shield  
Down by the riverside  
Down by the riverside  
Down by the riverside  
Gonna lay down my sword and shield  
Down by the riverside  
Ain't gonna study war no more.

*refrain*

I ain't gonna study war no more,  
I ain't gonna study war no more,  
Study war no more.  
I ain't gonna study war no more,  
I ain't gonna study war no more,  
Study war no more.

*refrain*

Gonna talk with the Prince of Peace;  
(Refrain)  
Gonna shake hands around the world;  
(Refrain)

## **Objectives of Freedom Think Tank**

Freedom Think Tank is a time limited group.

To influence the agenda of organisations and agencies commemorating the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the abolition of enslavement.

To provide opportunities of communication and learning through networking.

To organise commemorative events on abolition of enslavement of African people with an objective of promoting social solidarity.

To bring into popular consciousness that black people also participated in the abolition of enslavement.

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**Freedom Think Tank thanks you for your support.**

**We also wish to acknowledge the support of the following:**

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- St. Thomas' Church, Haymarket, Newcastle-upon-Tyne
- Black Ethnic Minority Community Organisations' Network (BECON)
- North East of England African Community Association (NEEACA)
- Tyne and Wear Museums
- English Heritage
- The Nigerian Christian Fellowship
- Mohammad Rayaz, Camera Vision
- Eric Pemberton, Banyan