



The Zong Report

Clifford Hill

A report on the research of the 'Free at Last?' project, London, March/April 2007

REPORT OF THE ZONG IN LONDON

March/April 2007



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Chair and Director of the Centre for Contemporary Ministry wish to thank all the supporters of this Ministry for their generosity in giving to the Appeal that made this project possible and to the 124 volunteers who cared for the 6,000 visitors during the time *The Zong* was open to the public. They are particularly grateful to the staff team who worked self-sacrificially to prepare the project and to David Redhead of Square Sail and Chris Livett of Thames Luxury Cruisers.

Special thanks to Mr Ken Livingstone, Mayor of London, and the GLA staff for their support and encouragement; and the Rector and staff of All Hallows by the Tower.

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'Free At Last?' is a project of The Centre for Contemporary Ministry (CCM)

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THE PROJECT

Moggerhanger Park in Bedfordshire was the 18th century country home of members of the Thornton family, cousins of William Wilberforce, the leading Abolitionist. Today it is the base of the Centre for Contemporary Ministry, an educational charity specialising in leadership training and the study of contemporary social issues.



Planning by the Centre for Contemporary Ministry (CCM) began in 2005 for an exhibition of slavery past and present as part of the commemoration of the 200th Anniversary of the Abolition of the Slave Trade. Part of the exhibition was to be a model slave ship but in the summer of 2006 it was decided to be more adventurous and bring a real replica slave ship into London as no other group was known to be planning such a project. In order to facilitate this CCM set up a team to lead the 'Free at Last?' project as part of its 'Spirit of Wilberforce' division.

Purpose of the Project

The primary purpose of the project was to expose a period in British history that had been largely disregarded for 200 years. By bringing a slave ship into the Pool of London we believed that this would be the most dramatic means of communicating the reality of the monstrous cruelty, inhumanity and injustice of British involvement in slavery in our colonial territories. But this was not conceived to be simply an educational project. It was an opportunity to face up to what our forefathers did to generations of Africans; to express our deep shame and regret; and to seek forgiveness from those who still suffer from the legacy of those days. We felt that words of apology were not sufficient. We wanted to express our repentance for the sins of the past, including those of the church, and their continuing effect upon the lives of millions of people. So this project was designed to be a step towards **reconciliation** between white British people and people of African and Caribbean origins.

Finding a Replica Ship

In August 2006 we discovered that the Square Rigger used in the film *Amazing Grace*, in which it was named the *Madagascar*, was moored in Charlestown St Austell Cornwall. The owners were willing to lease it for the period we required in March/April 2007. We inspected it in September and reached agreement on the alterations that would be needed to fit the ship out as a replica slave ship. We also negotiated with the Port of London Authority and Thames Luxury Cruisers for the use of Tower Pier and a mooring in the Thames adjacent to Sugar Pier; and hiring a 50-seater ferry to be on duty throughout the days the ship would be open to the public for the trip between Tower Pier and the slave ship.





The Royal Navy

We had earlier approached the Admiralty to explore the possibility of mooring alongside HMS Belfast. This was not possible but the Admiralty expressed considerable interest in the project and offered to send a warship up the River Thames into the Pool of London to accompany the replica slave ship as part of the Navy's commemoration of their role in the abolition of the slave trade. This would symbolise the capture of a ship caught slave-trading after the abolition in 1807.

Funding

The provisional agreements enabled us to fix a notional budget of £250,000. We had less than six months to raise this sum but support from a number of sources appeared to be encouraging. By the end of November 2006, however, it became clear that none of these provisional promises were likely to materialise. We were faced with cancellation of all the arrangements so far made and the abandonment of the project.

Early in December the decision was taken to appeal to our ministry supporters. A letter went out in the second week of December at the height of the Christmas post. But by Christmas Eve we received promises of nearly £200,000 so contracts were confirmed. Donations continued to come from individual supporters in the New Year which enabled us to meet the final budget of £300,000.

The Exhibition

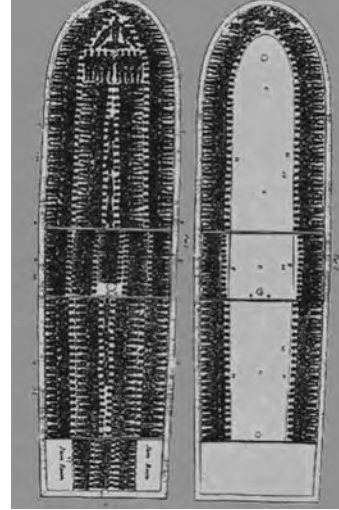
The Christmas and New Year break meant that serious work on the project could not begin until 6 January 2007. This left a bare 2½ months for the research, planning, design and production of the exhibition on the ship and in the land-base at All Hallows by the Tower. This was an almost impossible timetable — to recruit and contract a team with the necessary skills capable of carrying out such an ambitious project.

We were convinced that God had put this project on our hearts and that he would bless the work and therefore we went ahead in simple faith. All the team were committed Christians with each member having a high degree of professional skill needed for the task. There was a shared vision, a willingness to work long hours and a high level of commitment, so the exhibition and all the arrangements were completed on time. A considerable amount of consultation took place between the team and leaders of the African and African-Caribbean communities as part of the in-depth research for the project. Without their cooperation and encouragement the project could not have gone forward.



The Zong

The replica slave ship was renamed *The Zong* for its visit to London as this was the most infamous of the 18th-century slave trading vessels. The original *Zong* was owned by two former Lord Mayors of Liverpool. It was licensed to carry 292 Africans but it sailed from the west coast of Africa in 1781 with 442 men women and children on board. There were insufficient provisions for a journey to the Caribbean lasting almost 3 months and most of the enslaved Africans were severely malnourished as the ship neared Jamaica. Realising that he would not get a good price on the Kingston slave market Captain Collingwood threw 133 over board and claimed insurance at £30 a head. The underwriters disputed the claim and Lord Chief Justice Mansfield in the High Court in London ruled that in English law throwing slaves over board was 'exactly the same as throwing horses'.



Dedication

Some 300 Christians from churches all across Cornwall gathered at Charlestown St Austell for a service of dedication and commissioning before the ship sailed for London. The re-named *Zong*, recently returned from a re-fit in Gloucester, flew the 'Free at Last?' flag from the mainmast. The Royal Navy sent officers and ratings from Plymouth to take part in the dedication which was appropriate because the earliest slave ships to sail from Britain during the reign of Queen Elizabeth the First, under the command of Hawkins and Drake, left from Plymouth. The whole event was covered by West Country and national radio and TV.

Official welcome

On arrival at Greenwich The *Zong* was joined by HMS Northumberland and accompanied up the Thames and escorted through Tower Bridge to its mooring opposite HMS Belfast. The official welcome and opening to the public of the exhibition on board the replica slave ship was performed by Mr Ken Livingstone, Mayor of London, on 29 March 2007. This attracted considerable media interest with wide coverage on TV news and radio.

It was the TV news that brought the public in considerable numbers as we had very little money in the budget for advertising. The scenes of a mixed choir of black and white singers on board the ship coming through Tower Bridge made a favourable impression upon many Londoners and this brought them to see the ship and the Exhibition of Slavery Past and Present.





Seminars

It was decided not to use the evenings on the slave ship for commercial purposes despite fears that we might not meet our budget. It did not seem right to have feasting and revelry on board a ship dedicated to commemorating the suffering of slaves. Instead, the evenings were used for seminars with invited speakers to stimulate discussion on subjects such as the 'Motivation of the Abolitionists', the 'Legacy of Slavery' and 'Slavery in the Modern World'.

Visitors

Despite the lack of advertising some 6000 visitors came to the exhibition during the 10 days the ship was open to the public. This was remarkable because many of them came through the recommendation of friends. Thus there was a steady increase in attendance throughout the time the ship was in London. The survey results revealed that 93% of those attending the exhibition said they would recommend their friends to attend.



Ethnic Groups

On the first two days 80% of visitors were white, but by the final two days 80% were of African origins. Before the ship was opened to the public many people had expressed the view that people of West Indian origins would not wish to come to the ship because it would stir emotions which for them would be too painful. In fact, the reverse proved to be true. Although there were many more Europeans on the first day, by the final weekend Caribbean people greatly outnumbered all others.



The experience of going on board *The Zong* and down into the cargo hold where slaves had been chained and manacled was painful for many African-Caribbeans, knowing that this was how their forebears had been transported across the Atlantic. A coach party from Birmingham brought with them a large wreath which they placed in the slave-pen on the lower deck. This simple action added to the pathos for many visitors, some of whom were in tears when they climbed back onto the upper deck.

Petition

Throughout the time the ship was in London there was a growing request for it to be a permanent feature in London so that the abolition of the slave trade could be suitably commemorated and future generations would be able to see something of a period in British history that has been neglected. In response to this demand a petition was organised calling for the ship to be permanently based in London. Most visitors to the ship signed the petition and some even took the forms home to ask their friends to sign. Some 5,000 signed the petition during the two weeks *The Zong* was open to the public.



African and Caribbean Relationships

The legacy of slavery was not only featured in the exhibition and in evening seminars but it was also frequently referred to in conversations with visitors. People of Caribbean origin have not forgotten that it was their fellow Africans who sold them to Europeans for transport across the Atlantic. This knowledge adds to the socio/cultural differences between Africans and Caribbeans that is to be seen in those communities in London. Most people from the Caribbean islands have English names and are unable to trace their African origins either by name, or by tribe, or by region. It is not uncommon for West Indian young people to feel that the name they bear is still a form of branding that their forebears suffered on the plantations.

Caribbean Reactions

The survey revealed that although most people from the Caribbean had not been taught about slavery in school they had a greater interest in the subject than any other ethnic group. This was shown in the significantly higher proportion who had read books on slavery since leaving school.

It was the older people from the Caribbean who found the experience most distressing although their younger people were more inclined to react with anger as they discovered the history of the slave trade. Almost all the African-Caribbean visitors to *The Zong* said they found the experience either 'sad' or 'distressing'.

The party from Birmingham who placed a wreath of flowers in the slave pen said they were particularly thinking of the 1.3 million Africans who lost their lives on the journey across the Atlantic as well as their own forebears who were enslaved on the plantations in the Caribbean islands.

Young People

Some young people of African-Caribbean origins living in Peckham South London came to visit *The Zong* because they saw it on the TV news and were impressed with the multiracial group of singers on board the ship as it sailed into London. They thought at first that this was 'some white man's attempt to whitewash the slave trade'. But when they saw that the group of singers was black and white, young and old, male and female, they decided to visit. After going onboard they said they had learned a lot because they are 'never taught this stuff at school' and they want to know more about their roots.





The Hidden Period of History

The fact that this period of history had not been taught in school came out in conversation with hundreds of African-Caribbeans. Among the comments of older people was that all the history they were taught in the West Indies was about English kings and queens. They were never taught about their own history.

Many of them said that slavery is a subject that is never even talked about privately in their family groups because it was a taboo subject back home in the West Indies. Slavery was in the distant past and older Caribbeans preferred to leave it there and not to discuss the subject. But among young people there is a real hunger to know their own history which they feel they have been denied for 200 years.

Dealing with Anger and Distress

There were reactions of anger among some Caribbeans but all except a very tiny minority changed their attitude by the time they had finished the 2 hour experience of going around the exhibition and on board the ship. Much of this anger had its source in the feeling that black people had been kept in ignorance of slavery as part of the white man's 200 year conspiracy of silence.



It was our objective that every visitor should be engaged in conversation by one of our staff or volunteers so that any misunderstandings or emotional experiences could be dealt with in the context of reconciliation which was the main objective of the whole project. The success of this approach was underlined as, by the last few days of the ship being open to the public, the majority of those of Caribbean origin came following a recommendation from their friends.

It was also a remarkable fact that after being addressed by members of our staff who explained the purpose of the project, most of the Caribbeans applauded enthusiastically. After the visits to the ship most of them went out of their way to express gratitude to our staff and volunteers for organising the project. Virtually all the Caribbean visitors signed the petition calling for the ship to be a permanent feature in London so that successive generations can learn the history of their origins.



Legacy of Slavery

Racism is endemic in British society as part of the white legacy of slavery. From the 16th to the early 19th century there was an attitude in Britain that regarded African people as less than human. That attitude of superiority has never been eradicated. Although education and legislation can control behaviour, changing attitudes requires a process of reconciliation because racism is often unresponsive to rational processes.

There is also a legacy of slavery within the African community in Britain. Among many Africans there is a sense of superiority in respect of African-Caribbeans. In a conversation between an African woman and a Caribbean woman after both had been on board *The Zong* the African was denying that there is any problem between them. The Caribbean woman said that she is married to an African man whose family always treats her badly and her mother-in-law constantly refers to her as ‘that slave woman’.



Teaching Slavery

Teachers who visited the exhibition affirmed the difficulties of teaching the subject of slavery in a multi-racial context. They said that as soon as they begin to talk about slavery all the black kids’ heads go down although it was their forebears who were the victims of cruelty rather than the perpetrators.

The 200th anniversary of the abolition of the slave trade has, however, brought the subject of slavery into the curriculum of many schools and it needs to be taught with care and sensitivity. This can most successfully be done within the context of reconciliation between the races.

Reconciliation

The exhibition was not only designed to expose the cruelty of slavery and Britain’s role in the slave trade but also the guilt of the church. The Christian faith of the Abolitionists was also featured. It was their conviction that they had been called by God to stand against both the church and state. It was their faith that enabled them to overcome the powerful vested interests of the rulers of the nation.



Hannah More



Granville Sharp



Thomas Clarkson



Henry Thornton



Olaudah Equiano



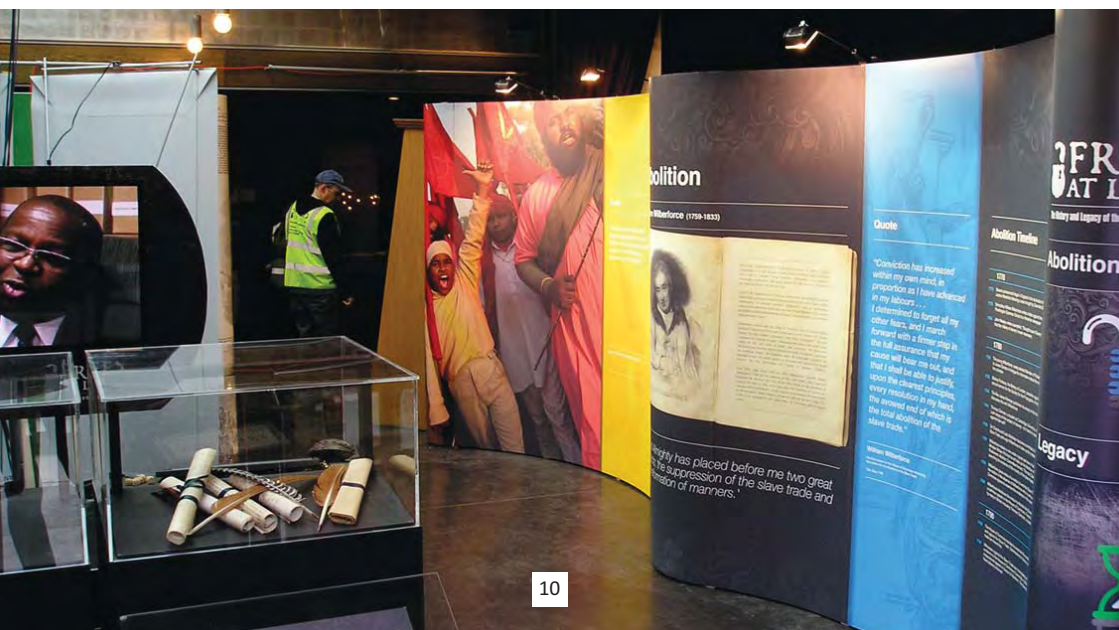
William Wilberforce

When this was stated it led to conversations with most visitors to the exhibition. During the 10-day visit of *The Zong* we used a team of 124 volunteers in addition to our staff so that there was always an adequate staff/visitor ratio. This enabled us to engage visitors in conversation and to deal with their questions. There was always an expert historian on hand and there were also trained counsellors available for those who found the experience on board *The Zong* to be distressing.



All the staff and volunteers were not only familiar with the subject but were also committed to the concept of reconciliation. This was emphasised in conversations with visitors as well as in the free literature that was given to each visitor and other papers that were freely available. Reconciliation was also the focal point of a prayer-time on Maundy Thursday evening held on board the replica slave ship where black and white people were able to face up to the past and to wash one another's feet in the way that Jesus had washed his disciples' feet at the Last Supper before his crucifixion.

This theme of reconciliation was powerfully present in a Service of Commitment in All Hallows by the Tower when *The Zong* closed to the public on the final day of the exhibition. African, Caribbean and English church leaders committed themselves to work together in a programme of community action designed to overcome the legacy of slavery and to deal with the latent racism in all sections of British society. This act of commitment also included recognition of the various forms of modern slavery and a determination to seek ways of combating its scourge.



THE SURVEY RESULTS

Questionnaires

All visitors to the 'Free at Last?' project with an exhibition of 18th century slavery on board *The Zong* and the 'Exhibition of Slavery Past and Present' based at All Hallows by the Tower were asked on arrival to complete a questionnaire. They were also asked to complete the reverse side of the questionnaire on departure. Approximately 6,000 questionnaires were completed.

Purpose

This research had two main objectives:

- 1) to assess the effectiveness of the project in terms of its educational value
- 2) to measure the reaction of visitors to the portrayal of the horrors of the Atlantic slave trade on board *The Zong*

Analysis

1170 questionnaires were randomly selected for analysis. The raw data from this input has been analysed and studied and the results are given below.

Demography

The demographic breakdown of the respondents in the population analysed is seen in Figures 1 to 3. These statistics cover the age of respondents, their ethnic origins and their gender.

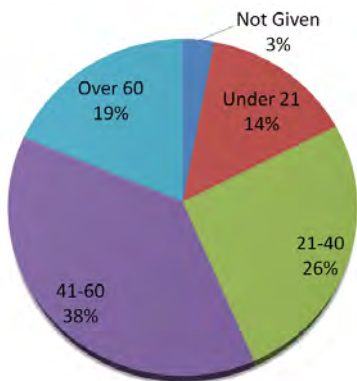


Figure 1

Completed Questionnaires by Age of Respondent

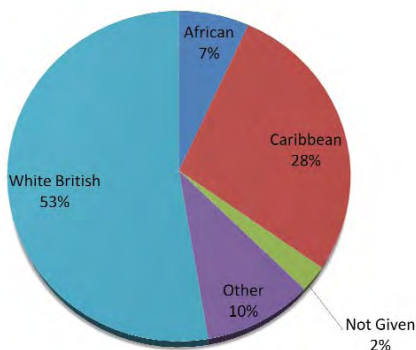


Figure 2

Completed Questionnaires by Ethnic Category

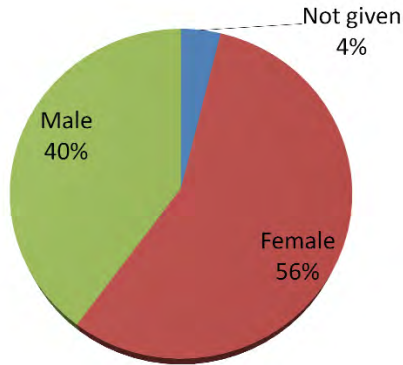


Figure 3
Completed Questionnaires by Gender

Knowledge of Slavery

The first part of the questionnaire was to discover how much people already knew about slavery before coming to the exhibition. Less than half of all the visitors (41%) had been taught about slavery in school. This does not mean that 41% of the British population have a detailed knowledge of colonial slavery. The question was deliberately worded to give an indication of visitors' awareness of Britain's involvement in slavery in the period leading up to the abolition of the slave trade.

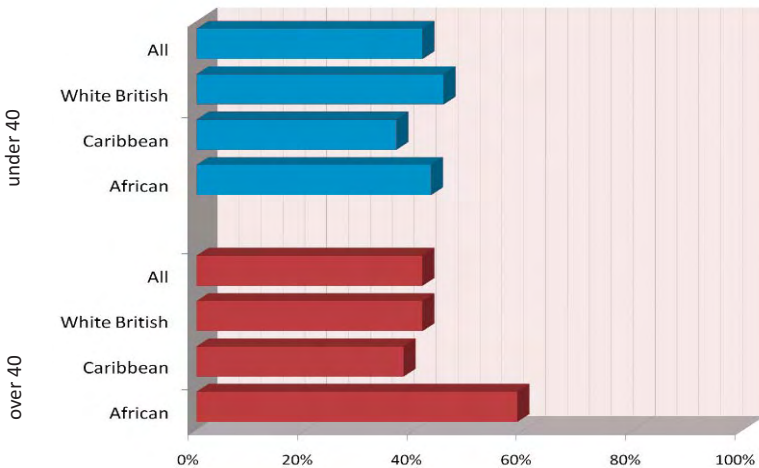
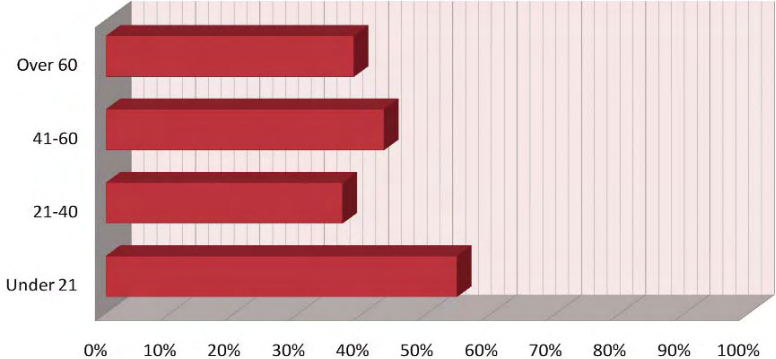


Figure 4
Taught about Slavery at School by Age

The statistics in Figure 4 show that a significantly higher number of older Africans have been taught about slavery than any other group including Africans under the age of 40. This is probably due to the older Africans having received their basic education before coming to Britain. 59% of Africans over the age of 40 were taught about slavery in school compared with only 43% under

the age of 40. The younger Africans showed very little difference in comparison with white British people of the same age which would appear to confirm the above conclusion that the older African respondents received their education in Africa before coming to Britain.

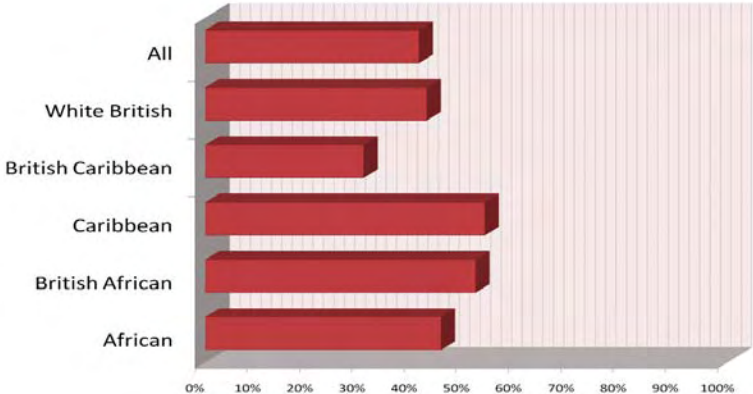
Figure 5
Taught about Slavery at School: White British by Age



It is interesting to note that the younger white British people (under 40) have a greater awareness of the slave trade (45%) than those in the older age group (41%). Further analysis of the statistics revealed that 55% of the 'under 21' age group have been taught about slavery at school which is significantly higher than the next age group, '21 to 40', 37%; and the average, 41%. This confirms the impression that the subject of British involvement in slavery has been largely ignored for most of the past 200 years and that it is only very recently that it has been taught in many British schools.

The ethnic group with the least knowledge of slavery taught at school came from the Caribbean. Even the over 40 age group was only 38% in comparison with the Africans 59%. This is probably due to the fact that British residents from the Caribbean have been here longer than the Africans and the respondents in the research population of Caribbean origins are more likely to have received their basic education in British schools than the Africans. The ethnic statistics are examined in Figure 6.

Figure 6
Taught about Slavery at School: Full Ethnic Breakdown



The difference in the school experience between the ‘British Caribbeans’ and the ‘Caribbeans’ is of considerable interest. The latter scored significantly higher on this question than the former, 55% to 35%. The wording of this question was designed to differentiate between those born in Britain and those born in the Caribbean. But unlike the Africans there is only a small difference in age, with older Caribbeans being marginally more likely to have been taught about slavery in school. It may be that those defining themselves as ‘Caribbean’ have a greater awareness of their origins and a greater desire for knowledge about their roots. The number of questionnaires analysed in these categories, however, was not sufficient to deliver a reliable result. We would need to analyse a larger number of the questionnaires to give a definitive answer to this intriguing question that no doubt has implications for community relationships.

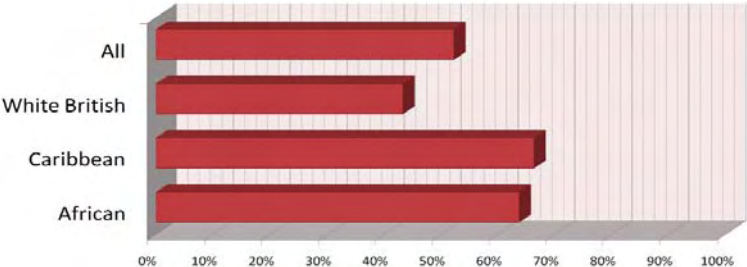


Figure 7
 Respondents who had read books about slavery

Despite low levels of being taught about slavery at school more African-Caribbeans had read books about slavery than any other group; 66% in comparison with 43% of white British. This is a clear indication that the history of British colonial slavery and the transatlantic slave trade between Africa and the Caribbean is of far greater interest to people with Caribbean origins than to the rest of white British society. Similarly, there is a greater interest in this subject among Africans in Britain, who are only marginally less well read than the Caribbeans.

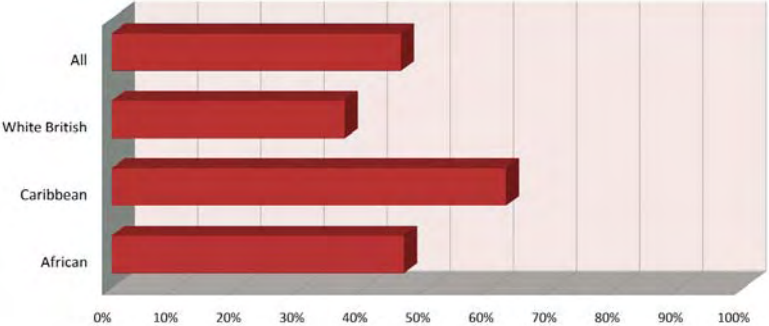
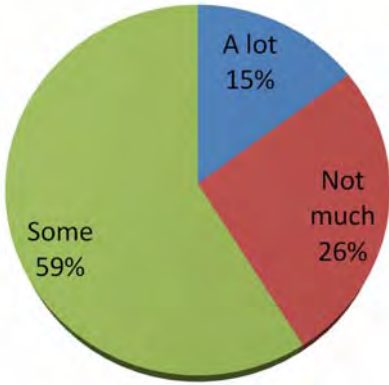
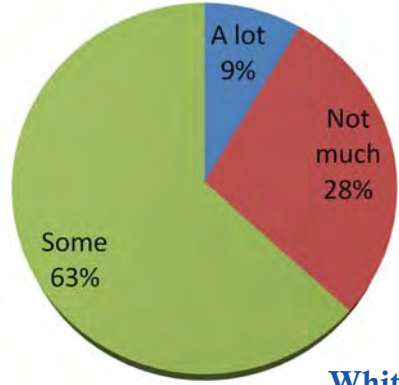


Figure 8
 Respondents who had heard about the Transatlantic Slave Trade

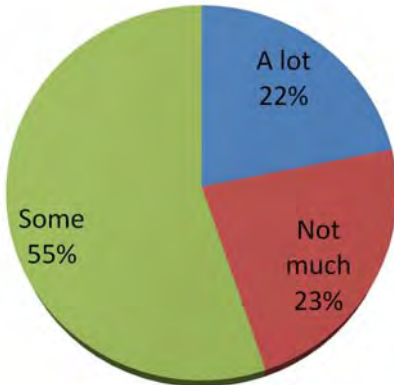
This question revealed that people from the Caribbean and Africa have a greater awareness of the Atlantic slave trade than white British people. The survey also showed that Caribbeans have a significantly greater knowledge of the Atlantic slave trade than either the white British or Africans. 62% of Caribbeans had heard about the transatlantic slave trade in contrast to only 37% of white British. Although the Africans were better informed than the white British, at 46% they were considerably less well informed than the Caribbeans. This underlines the importance of the slave trade for people of Caribbean origins and is of considerable significance for community relationships.



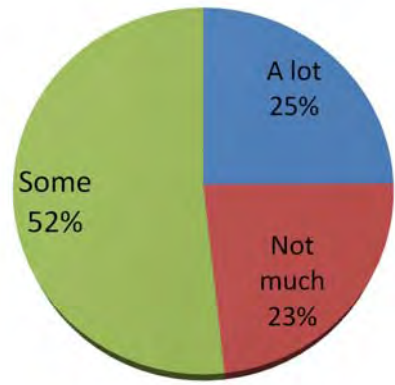
All



White British



African



Caribbean

Figure 9

Respondents knowledge of 18th Century Slavery

Visitors to *The Zong* project were asked for a self-assessment of their knowledge of slavery. Only 9% of white British people said that they knew ‘a lot’ about slavery while the Africans and Caribbeans were much better informed. Caribbeans scored the highest with 25% claiming to ‘know a lot’ and Africans at 22%.

Clearly, there is a thirst for knowledge on the subject of slavery and the slave trade among people from Africa and the West Indies. This is particularly found among people of Caribbean descent. This is a finding that is of great significance not only for the future of community relations in Britain but also for education. Educationalists need to consider at what age this period of British colonial history ought to be taught in British schools and the method and content of such teaching.

Reasons for Coming to Visit *The Zong*

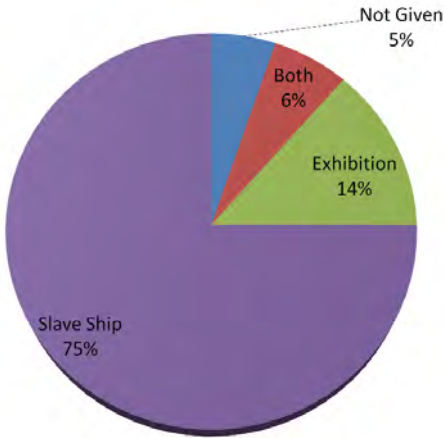


Figure 10
Reasons for
visiting the
Exhibition
and the Slave
Ship

Three-quarters of all visitors came to the exhibition primarily to go on board *The Zong*. Only 14% said that they had come primarily to see the Exhibition, while 6% said that they had come to see both. This shows that the value of the ship as an educational tool far outweighs that of an exhibition. The success of this project was no doubt due to the combination of the replica 18th-century square-rigger and the exhibition which added to the reality of the slave ship and gave factual information.

The on-board display of the horrors of the Atlantic slave trade included sounds, visuals and commentaries from the trade, as well as a reconstruction of the slave pens, manacles and chains that were used. This gave visitors a virtual-reality experience that was more powerful than a purely factual exhibition. The survey was designed to measure the reaction of visitors to this experience.



Reaction of Visitors

A major purpose of the survey was to discover the reactions of members of the public to the on-board virtual-reality experience of being exposed to information about the Atlantic slave trade. The results of this question are given in Figure 11 below.

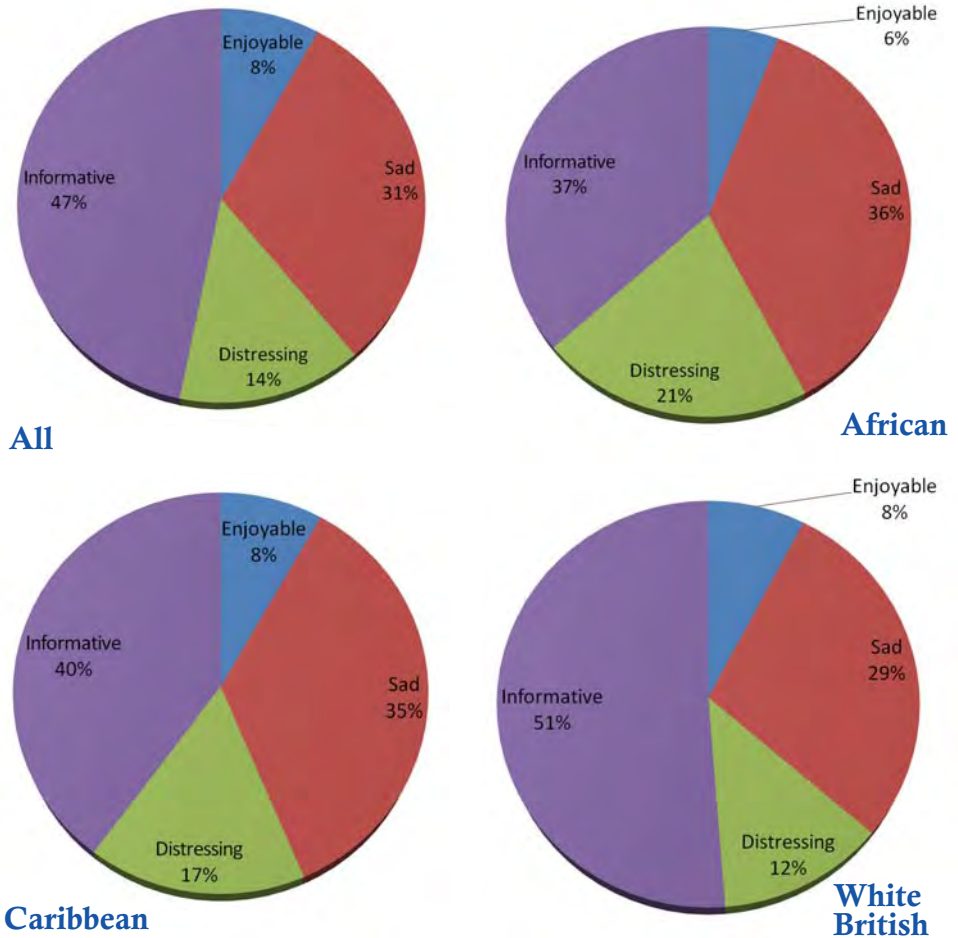


Figure 11

Reaction of Respondents to the 'On-Board Experience' by Ethnic Origin

The reaction of visitors to the experience of going on board *The Zong* and seeing the lower deck where slaves were held was described as a 'sad experience' by 31%. 14% found it 'distressing' while nearly half said that it was 'informative' (47%).

In terms of ethnic breakdown Africans and people of Caribbean descent found the experience significantly more emotional than the white British. 57% of Africans said that it was either 'sad' or 'distressing'; and 52% of Caribbeans also said that it was either 'sad' or 'distressing'. This compares

with the reaction of white British people, only 42% of whom said that this was their experience. For the white British the dominant reaction was that this was an 'informative' experience (51%) in comparison with 37% of Africans and 40% of Caribbeans.

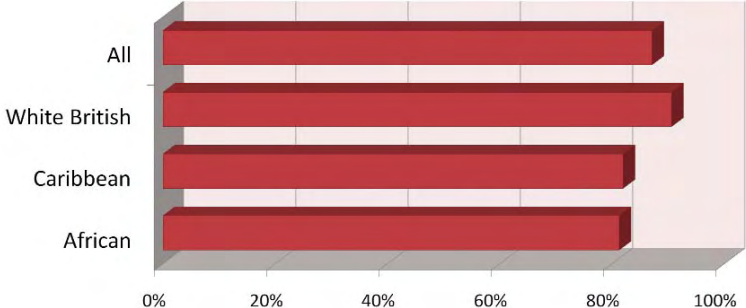
These results are not surprising as they reflect the difference between enforcers and victims of slavery. If there is any surprise it is that only 52% of people with Caribbean origins said that they found the experience 'sad' or 'distressing'. It would be interesting to break this figure down into age categories as volunteers and staff said that it was the older Caribbeans who appeared to be the most distressed by the experience of going on board the replica slave ship.

Educational Value

The project proved to be of considerable educational value which was particularly gratifying to the organisers and the large number of volunteers who gave time to serve the public, paying for their own accommodation and travel expenses.

Eighty-seven percent of all visitors said that they had 'learned a lot' through their visit, see figure 12. This may seem to be an extraordinarily high percentage but the result underlines the significance of the project in terms of social education. It also indicates the considerable lack of knowledge in the general public on the subject of British colonial slavery and the abolition movement. The conditions under which the enslaved Africans were transported across the Atlantic came as a great surprise to most visitors according to reports from staff and volunteers. It was no doubt the shock of going on board the replica slave ship that made a deep impression upon most visitors and this is reflected in the high percentage of those saying that they had learned a lot. The white British (91%) were the group who said that they had learned the most. This is hardly surprising as they were the group who had the least knowledge of slavery and the 18th century Atlantic slave trade. From the ethnic breakdown below, it will be noted that over 80% of Africans and Caribbeans said that they had learned a lot through coming to the project. This positive response was also reflected in the empirical evidence provided by the next question.

Figure 12
Respondents who said that they had learned 'a lot' from their visit by ethnic origins

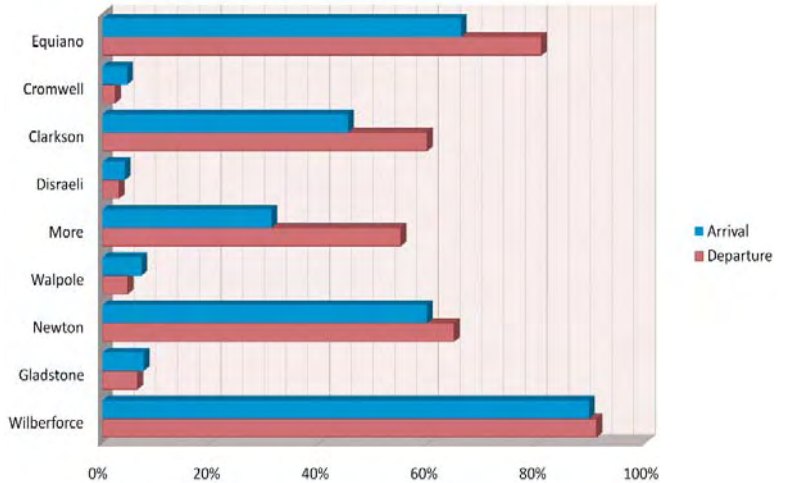


In order not to rely upon the subjective evidence of personal self-assessment of the educational value of the 'Free at Last?' project, the survey included an additional question. This was designed to provide empirical evidence of the knowledge gained by respondents through their visit to *The Zong* and its allied exhibition. The question gave the names of a number of prominent 18th-century Abolitionists together with some historical characters of a different period who could not

possibly have been involved in the 1807 abolition of slavery. The Abolitionists were Olaudah Equiano, Thomas Clarkson, Hannah More, John Newton, and William Wilberforce. The other names were those of Cromwell, Disraeli, Walpole and Gladstone.

Respondents were asked to indicate the names of the Abolitionists in the first part of the survey which was completed on arrival. They were then asked to complete a question using the same list in the second part of the survey on departure. The results showed a significant increase in knowledge in regard to all the Abolitionists. There was a corresponding decrease in the numbers of those who ticked the bogus names. The results are given in Figure 13.

Figure 13
Respondents' knowledge of Abolitionists – before and after their visit to The Zong and the Exhibition of Slavery



The most significant increase was in the case of Hannah More showing almost 100% increase; but there were also significant increases for Olaudah Equiano and Thomas Clarkson. The smallest increases were in the case of William Wilberforce and John Newton. These, of course, are the best-known names of Abolitionists. The outcome of the exhibition was, therefore, useful in raising the profile of the lesser known Abolitionists, particularly in the case of the most prominent African – Olaudah Equiano, and in the case of the most prominent woman among the 18th-century Abolitionists – Hannah More.



Hannah More



Olaudah Equiano

Modern Slavery

The last part of the two hour project featured modern slavery. This was held in the exhibition hall in All Hallows by the Tower and was the final part of the exhibition. Information on modern slavery was deliberately placed last partly in order not to deflect attention from the centrality of the commemoration of the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the slave trade, but also in order to say that slavery did not end in 1807 or even in 1833 with the Act of Emancipation affecting British colonies. Slavery still exists in many parts of the world as was demonstrated in the exhibition which also featured a number of organisations that are active modern abolitionists.

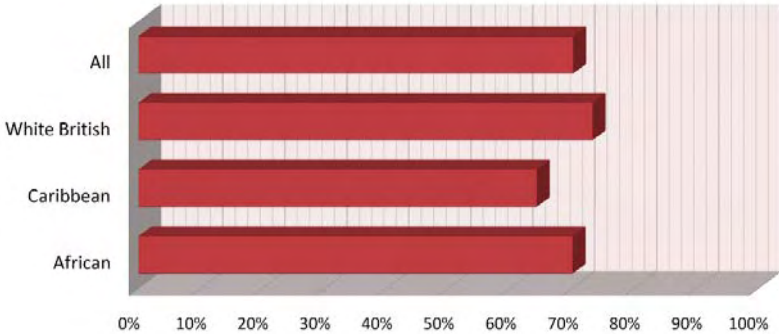


Figure 14
Respondents who said they had 'Heard Much' about Modern Slavery by ethnic origins

In terms of modern slavery Caribbeans had the least knowledge, with white British scoring highest at 73% in comparison with 64% of Caribbeans.

The project gave the opportunity to several organisations that have active campaigns seeking to alleviate the suffering of enslaved people today. Literature was freely available to those who wished to respond to the information they had been given about slavery today.

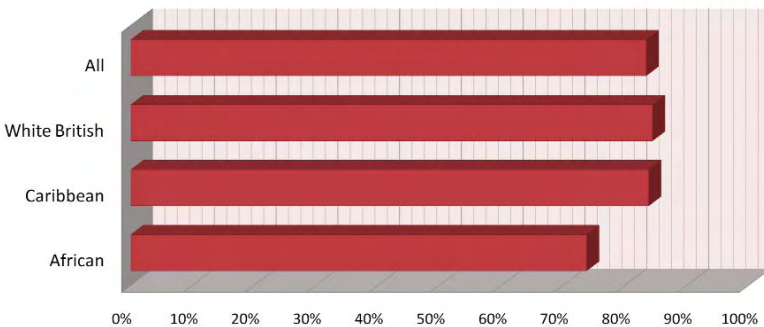


Figure 15
Respondents' awareness of goods made by Slave Labour by ethnic origins

There was clear evidence that the exhibition had the effect of increasing awareness of modern slavery. The survey showed that 83% of all respondents said that they would be more aware in the future of the possibility of their purchases being produced by slave labour.

Evaluation of the Project

Ninety-seven percent of all visitors to the exhibition and the replica slave ship rated it either 'good' or 'excellent'. This is a remarkable result and one that was extremely gratifying to the organisers and the team of volunteers. It was particularly remarkable that only 2% of white British visitors from the general public said that the project was 'not very good'. The British public are not renowned for fulsome praise! This is a clear demonstration that the project met a particular need at a particular time. The ethnic breakdown is shown in Figure 16.

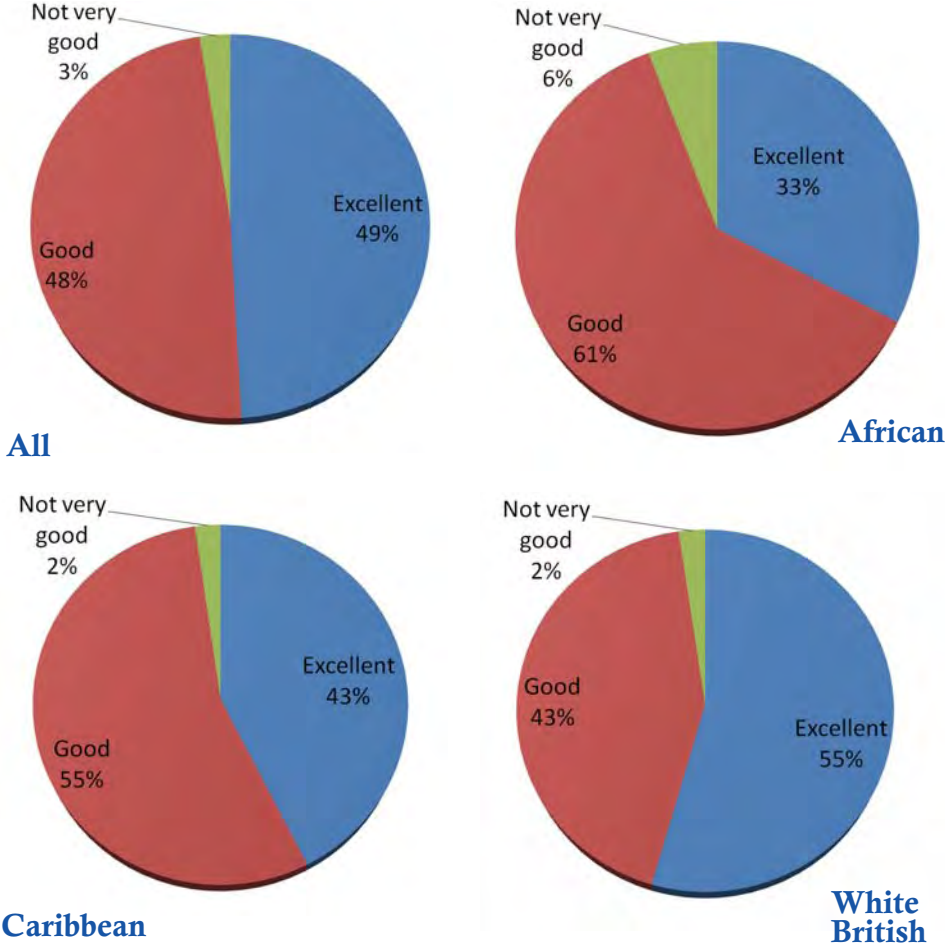


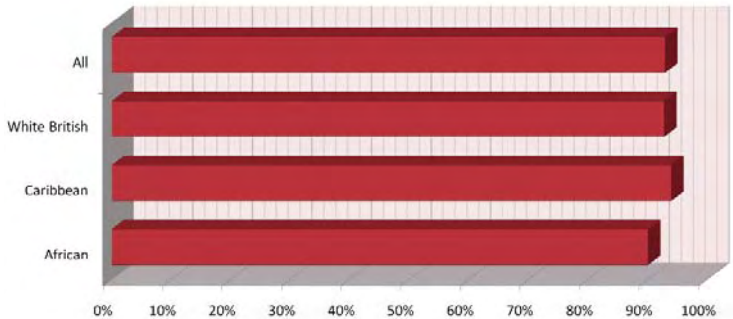
Figure 16
 Respondents' rating of their visit to the 'Slave Ship' and Exhibition

The ethnic breakdown of respondents' rating shows that 94% of African visitors said that their visit as either 'good' or 'excellent'. An even more remarkable statistic is that 98% of visitors of Caribbean origin rated their visit as either 'good' or 'excellent'. This was particularly gratifying to the organisers who had been warned beforehand that people from the Caribbean would not attend as the experience would be too painful for them. Others warned that Caribbeans would react with considerable anger and would condemn the project. Both of these warnings proved to be unfounded. Caribbean visitors were almost universal in expressing gratitude that the project was at last breaking the 200 year silence on the transatlantic slave trade and the inhumanity of colonial slavery that had been endured by their forebears.

Recommendation of the Project

Of equal significance in assessing the value of the project is the result of the question asking if visitors would recommend their friends to visit the exhibition and replica slave ship. 93% of all visitors said they would recommend the project to their friends. Caribbeans (94%) were just slightly the highest of the ethnic groups in recommending the project to their friends. This was particularly significant in light of the warnings that Caribbeans were likely to boycott the event.

Figure 17
Respondents' recommendation to friends in terms of ethnic origin



This high level of recommendation accounts for the large number of visitors of Caribbean origin who came on the final two days of *The Zong* being in London. Many Caribbeans were very disappointed that the ship was not staying in London longer and there was a strong request from them that the replica slave ship should be permanently based in London. They saw it not merely



in terms of its educational value in communicating historical facts about slavery and the slave trade. They wanted to see the ship permanently based in London as a memorial to the 12 million enslaved Africans transported across the Atlantic, but also to the 1.3 million Africans who died during the horrific journeys of the slave ships.

Conclusion

The 200th anniversary of the abolition of the slave trade has raised public awareness of a long forgotten period of British history that has remained hidden for two centuries. Bringing a replica slave ship into London combined with a factually based graphic exhibition proved to be of considerable public interest. It was particularly attractive to people of African and African-Caribbean descent who came in large numbers, adults and children.

It is particularly significant that the survey results show a strong thirst for knowledge of slavery and the slave trade among Caribbean people in Britain. This is no doubt related to the desire to search for their roots and may also reflect a search for personal identity among young people of Caribbean origins. This lack of identity is becoming recognised as part of the legacy of slavery and has relevance to the particular problems associated with Caribbean young men in inner-city areas.

There was a very large demand among the African-Caribbeans for the ship to remain in London and most of them were eager to sign the petition seeking to have a replica slave ship permanently based in London.

The survey results show the considerable educational value of the replica slave ship in telling the story of what happened two hundred years ago. The survey analysis also shows the value of the approach adopted by the organisers with strong emphases upon:

- A British recognition and acknowledgement of the cruelty and injustice of the slave trade as carried out by their forebears
- A willingness among white British people to express deep regret for the things that happened in the past
- A recognition of the existence of racism in British society today
- A recognition of the legacy of slavery that exists in many different forms today
- A presentation of the facts within the context of seeking reconciliation.

TO BE SOLD & LET
BY PUBLIC AUCTION,
On *MONDAY the 18th of MAY, 1829,*
UNDER THE TREES,
FOR SALE,
THE THREE FOLLOWING
SLAVES,
VIZ.
HANNIBAL, about 60 Years old, an excellent House Servant, of Good Character,
WILLIAM, about 35 Years old, a Labourer,
NANCY, an excellent House Servant and Nurse,
THE WIFE belonging to 'LEWIS'S' GROOM, and the WIFE of Mrs D. SMITH.

TO BE LET,
On the usual conditions of the Hire' Ending them in Food, Clo' &c. and Medical

MALE and FEMALE
SLAVES,
VIZ.
ROBERT RAGLEY, about 30 Years old, a good House Servant,
WILLIAM BAGLEY, about 20 Years old, a Labourer,
JOHN ABEN, about 30 Years old,
JACK ANTONIA, about 40 Years old, a Labourer,
PHILIP, an Excellent Tailor,
HENRY, about 20 Years old, a good House Servant,
LIZZY, a Young Woman of good Character, used to House Work and the Nursery,
ELIZA, an Excellent Waterman,
F. CHA, an Excellent Waterman,
NANCY, about 15 Years old, House Servant,
MARY, about 15 Years old, House Servant.

Also for Sale, at Eleven o'Clock,
Fine Rice, Gram, Paddy, Books, Muslins,
Needles, Pins, Ribbons, &c. &c.

AT ONE O'CLOCK, THAT CELEBRATED ENGLISH HORSE
BLUCHER,
WHICH HAS WON SEVERAL RACES.

Despite the abolition of the slave trade in 1807, slavery was still practised in the British Caribbean islands until 1838. Although the owners of slaves were paid £20 million in compensation, nothing was paid to the slaves themselves, leaving a legacy of poverty and under-development – an injustice that has never been addressed.

POSTSCRIPT

The 'Free at Last?' project was in three parts

Part One displayed 18th century slavery and the abolition of the slave trade in 1807

Part Two dealt with the legacy of slavery that exists today

Part Three was about modern slavery

Reaction of White British

The reaction of the white British public to the project as revealed in the reports of staff and volunteers is of considerable significance for the future of community relationships in Britain. *There was great interest in the first and third parts but a cool response to the second part.*

Reaction to Part One

The conclusion to be drawn from this is that white British people are able to view from a distance the cruelty and injustice of 18th century slavery as practised by their forebears. They are able to condemn it wholeheartedly without feeling any personal guilt. It was long in the past, 200 years ago, so it's not a present-day issue.

They are able to applaud the work of the Abolitionists and personally identify with them. This was a sentiment that was reinforced by the Hollywood presentation of Wilberforce and his struggle against the advocates of slavery in the film *Amazing Grace*. Wilberforce was the hero with whom we were easily able to identify while hating the wickedness of the slave owners.

Reaction to Part Three

The third section of the project depicting modern slavery was also very palatable to white British visitors who are able readily to condemn those who exploit children in Third World countries and people traffickers and evil men who trap young women into sex slavery. It actually gives us a good feeling to be able to condemn these modern slave owners because it reinforces our own self-righteousness – we are not like them!

Reaction to Part Two

The second section of the project showing that there is a legacy of slavery in modern society was much more difficult for white British people to accept. It showed that there is a problem on our own doorstep. There are not only continuing problems in the Caribbean islands as a result of slavery 200 years ago but our Caribbean neighbours – the people next door – are actually suffering today from the cruelty and injustice of our forefathers.

This was a perplexing discovery. It remains to be seen how quickly this will be forgotten by the British public or whether anyone is prepared to do anything about it.



To commemorate the 200th Anniversary of the Abolition of the Slave Trade, the Centre for Contemporary Ministry organised the 'Free at Last?' project in London, March/April 2007. Part of this project saw a 'Square Rigger' sailing ship, similar to the notorious slave ship *The Zong*, moor in the Pool of London alongside Tower Pier.

This booklet is a report of that project and analysis of the research undertaken at 'Free at

Last?'. Outlining the change in pre and post visit knowledge of the visitors, it illustrates that each ethnic group's experience of their visit was different from another. This research measures the impact of the project on those who visited the slave ship *Zong* and the exhibition of Slavery Past and Present at All Hallows by the Tower.

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ISBN: 978-0-9533429-6-9

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