

International Slavery Museum

Opened on 23 August 2007

NATIONAL MUSEUMS  LIVERPOOL

They will remember that we were sold, but not that we were strong. They will remember that we were bought, but not that we were brave.

William Prescott, former slave, 1937

We will remember

FOREWORD

Creating a new national museum takes a lot of commitment and determination. Nonetheless, when we at National Museums Liverpool considered in 2003 what we should do in Liverpool to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the British slave trade in 2007, this is exactly what we decided to do.

Our previous museum gallery entitled *Against Human Dignity* was, in its time, radical and brave. However, after a decade of service, that gallery had become worn and dated, and needed to be refreshed. We decided that the subject matter was too important to be dealt with in a gallery contained within our Maritime Museum, and that we should replace it with a whole museum.

Uppermost in our minds were two things: first, the museum should analyse the impact and legacies of the slave trade, not just the slave trade itself; and second, the museum should open up questions about other forms of slavery and human oppression, especially in the modern world, so as to unlock the full meaning, and full horror, of the transatlantic slave trade. Hence the museum's title - International Slavery Museum.

We have embarked on a long journey, and this new museum will be around for many years, causing people to think about freedom and human rights and the denial of freedom and human rights. The reality of the modern world is that we need to think about these issues more than ever before.



Dr David Fleming OBE, Director,
National Museums Liverpool

MESSAGE FROM THE PRIME MINISTER



Rt Hon Gordon Brown MP
Prime Minister

This year we commemorate the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the slave trade in the British Empire, a turning point in the history of our nation.

The trade in human beings is one of the most barbaric practices in human history. The notion that one human being could hold more value than another appalls us now, yet 200 years ago it was widely accepted. Slavery and the slave trade have left some painful legacies. We are still trying to come to terms with many of those today.

This year people across the UK have visited many of the thought-provoking exhibitions in our museums, galleries and archives marking the bicentenary of the abolition of the slave trade. Through that process of exploration and discovery we have seen a more informed debate emerge around the issue of slavery. It is a debate that has in turn raised awareness of the continuing problem of practices such as human trafficking in the modern world.

That is the power of culture. Our museums and galleries can play a role not just in reflecting our past but also in shaping our future. As places of reflection, contemplation and education, they help us to make sense of a complex world and our place in it. As society changes and the world becomes smaller, questions of identity and community become ever more important.

That is why I am delighted to support the International Slavery Museum at the very beginning of what will be an extraordinary journey, building on the successes of 2007 and moving the story of slavery from an often avoided subplot into the mainstream of our cultural and historical understanding.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gordon Brown". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Rt Hon Gordon Brown MP
Prime Minister

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**"No one shall be held in slavery or servitude;
slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited
in all their forms"**

Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948

*".. the people of Liverpool, in their indiscriminate
rage for commerce and getting money at all
events, have nearly engrossed this Trade."*

Bristol Directory, 1794



SLAVERY AND LIVERPOOL

The wealth generated was a crucial factor in Liverpool's economic development and future success. Research indicates that between a third and one-half of Liverpool's trade from 1750 to 1807 was to Africa and the West Indies, either dealing in enslaved people or the goods they produced. Indeed, it has recently been suggested that at least 40% of Liverpool's wealth at this time derived from slave related activities.

The slave trade helped transform the town into the major city it has become today. Liverpool as European Capital of Culture in 2008 owes a debt to its role as Liverpool, capital of the slave trade.



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SLAVERY AND LIVERPOOL

During the eighteenth century Liverpool was Britain's main slaving port. Between 1700 and 1807, ships from Liverpool carried about 1.5 million Africans into slavery. This represents more than a tenth of all Africans transported across the Atlantic during the four centuries of slave trading.

The first known slave ship to sail from Liverpool was Liverpool Merchant, which left the port on 3 October 1699 and transported 220 Africans to Barbados. The trade grew slowly over the next 20 years but then developed rapidly. By 1750 Liverpool was sending more ships to Africa than the other main slaving ports of Bristol and London put together and the town's ships dominated the trade until abolition in 1807. In the final 15 years of the trade being legal, Liverpool controlled 80% of the British and over 40% of the European slave trade.

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WELCOME TO THE INTERNATIONAL SLAVERY MUSEUM

INTERNATIONAL SLAVERY MUSEUM

On a personal and professional note I am extremely proud to be heading this world-class museum that looks at historical and contemporary aspects of slavery. We aim to make it not only a valuable educational resource for the local community and our visitors, but also a tool of social change in challenging misconceptions often held about slavery and its legacy.

Phase One saw the opening of the museum on 23 August 2007, with galleries about life in West Africa, enslavement, the middle passage and legacy. This date commemorates an uprising on the Caribbean island of St Domingo in 1791 and is designated by UNESCO as Slavery Remembrance Day, a reminder that enslaved Africans were the main agents of their own liberation.

Phase Two opens in 2010 in the adjacent Dock Traffic Office. There will be exhibition, community and learning spaces.

The Research Institute and Education Centre will offer facilities for the public, researchers, and visiting scholars, and will promote an international and interdisciplinary approach to examining the cultural and social effects of the transatlantic slave trade, slavery and resistance on the societies involved. It will facilitate the exchange of knowledge and opinion between scholars in Europe, Africa, the Caribbean, and North and South America. To this end we are collaborating with a range of international partners.

This brochure commemorates the opening of the International Slavery Museum and provides a flavour of the galleries and the work that has gone alongside. I hope you enjoy your visit.



Dr Richard Benjamin,
Head of the International Slavery Museum.

FREE

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sculptors
and Fran

FREEDOM!



Haitian artists were commissioned by National Museums Liverpool and Christian Aid to produce a sculpture for the International Slavery Museum in recognition of the fact that Haitian slaves led the world's first successful slave rebellion in 1791.

The Freedom! sculpture was created in one of the most deprived districts of Haiti's capital,

port-au-Prince, by world renowned artist Mario Benjamin and sculptors from Atis Rezistans - André Eugene, Jean Hérard Céleur and Frantz Jacques Guyodo.

"The International Slavery Museum will be the first of its kind outside North America, a truly remarkable addition to the long list of world class museums this country can boast. Its opening could not be more timely, as we mark the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade in the British Empire.

This new institution will give us the opportunity to explore a hugely significant part of our history, to re-examine our heritage and to shape our future. It will help us to understand both where we have come from, and where we are going."

Rt Hon James Purnell MP
Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport

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"The opening of the International Slavery Museum in Liverpool is a timely reminder of the atrocity that was slavery. It is also a symbol of reconciliation, because as much as Britain benefited from slavery, she also led the way in ensuring its ultimate destruction. Future generations deserve to know the truth, however hard it may be to digest."

G Money, Radio 1 Xtra DJ, 2007

"No man can put a chain about the ankle of his fellow man without at last finding the other end fastened about his own neck."

Frederick Douglass,
Former slave and
American abolitionist, 1883



Storage basket (ngiga),
Orlu area, S.E. Nigeria, 2007



"For to be free is not merely to cast off one's chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others."

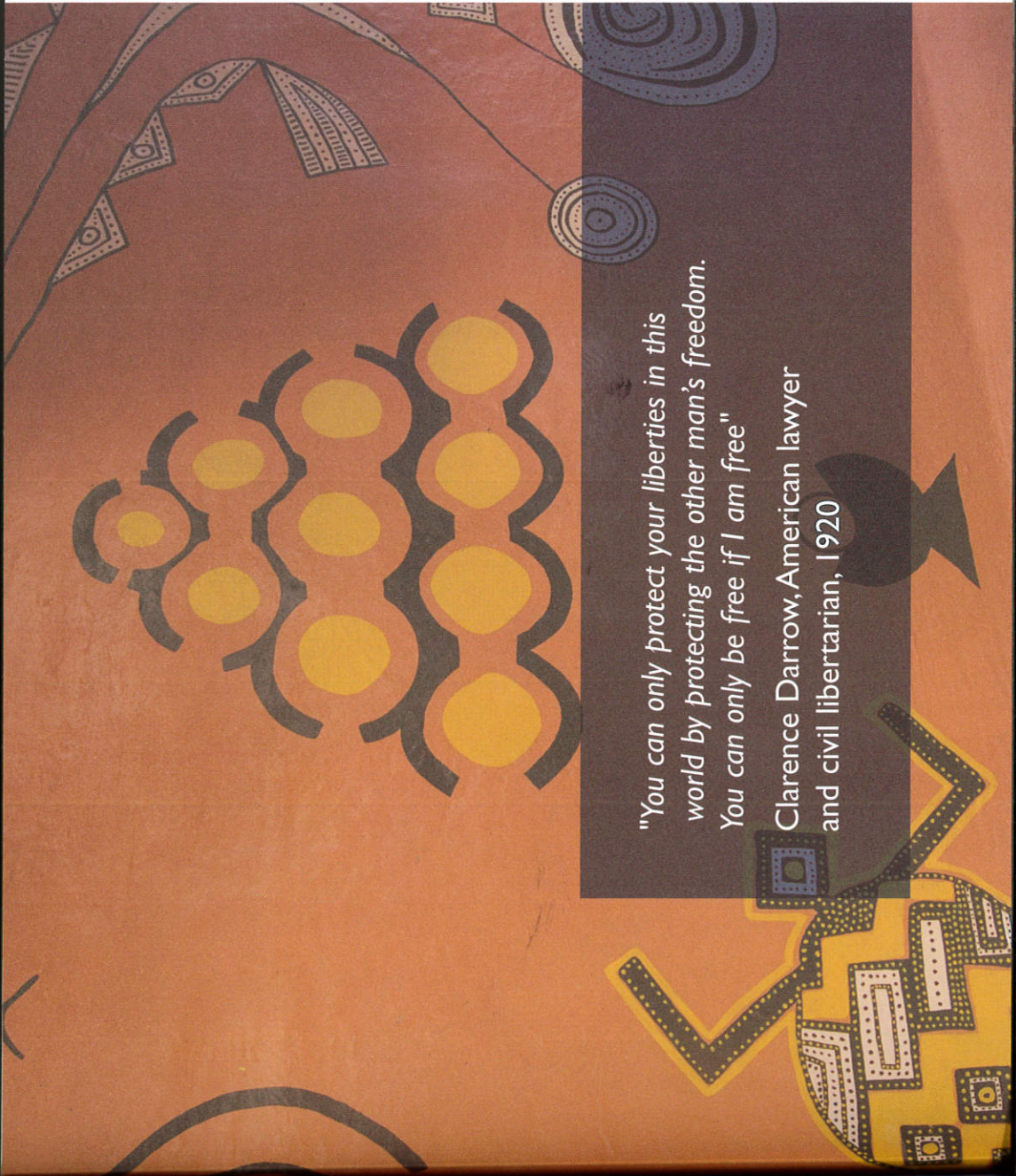
Nelson Mandela, 1995

Phillippe Peyredieu du Charlat and Zachary Kingdon of National Museums Liverpool travelled to Nigeria in June 2007 to meet with Basil Igwegbe, an artist in Orlu Town, Imu State, south-eastern Nigeria. Basil commissioned craftsmen and women in the region to create authentic Igbo artifacts and carvings for the Igbo compound which has been partially recreated in the Life in Africa gallery.

LIFE IN WEST AFRICA

This part of the gallery is based on the family compound of a titled Igbo man. The family unit is still very important in Igbo culture and this is expressed in the architecture of the compound. In earlier times a titled elder usually had more than one wife, so his compound included several buildings.

The most important building was the *obi*, or meeting house. This was the symbolic centre of the compound, where the head of the family kept his personal altars and where he entertained his guests. Other houses were used by the man's wives and children.



"You can only protect your liberties in this world by protecting the other man's freedom. You can only be free if I am free"

Clarence Darrow, American lawyer and civil libertarian, 1920

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At least 12 million Africans were enslaved over a period of 400 years before transatlantic slavery was finally abolished.

Emancipation

Abolitionists hoped that the ending of the slave trade would end slavery itself. Instead, conditions worsened for slaves, provoking more revolts. Their violent suppression led to a renewed campaign against slavery.

Slavery in the British colonies was finally brought to an end in 1838. Slave owners received £20 million (£1 billion today) in compensation from the British government for their loss of slave property.



The Middle Passage embodied all the brutality and trauma suffered by enslaved Africans

"A charnel stench, effluvium of living death
Spreads outward from the hold,
Where the living and the dead, the horribly dying,
Lie interlocked, lie foul with blood and excrement"

Robert Hayden, Poet, 1962



Wrought iron leg irons used to shackle enslaved Africans, 18th century.

"He took a limb of a tree that had two prongs,
and shaped it so that it would cross the back of
my neck, it was then fastened in front with an
iron belt; the stick was about six feet long."

Baquaquá, former slave, 1854

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ENSLAVEMENT AND THE MIDDLE PASSAGE

Sometimes enslaved Africans were forced to march for hundreds of miles to the coast.

Sold several times over on this journey, they passed from one owner to another; their sense of disorientation and dread heightening with each sale.

The message when they reached the forts was clear: the impaled skeletons of those who had tried to run away remained as gruesome warnings to deter escape.

"dis poem
shall speak of the wretched sea
that washed ships to these shores
of mothers cryin for their
young swallowed up by the sea"

Mutabaruka, poet, 1992



death

horribly dying,
d excrement"

two prongs,
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long."



Klu Klux Klan outfit

"The International Slavery Museum will be something that will be of relevance to people across the world. I believe it makes absolute sense that such an important institution as this should be based in Liverpool."

David Lammy MP, 2006

"Our village once was small but strangers came and spread us all over the world. Now our village is vast and our presence extends to the four corners of the globe. The sun never sets on the children of Africa."

Ali Mazrui, academic and political writer, 1986

*"I have crossed an ocean
I have lost my tongue
From the roots of an old one
A new one has sprung"*

Grace Nichols, poet, 1983



Enslaved Africans were forced to deny their own culture and traditions. They were given new names, foods, clothing, languages and beliefs, but used the lifestyles and traditions of their homeland to make them distinctively their own.

There is no continent that does not include Africans, or people of African descent, within its population.

African cultures have lived on despite slavery, and blended with European and indigenous American traditions to create new and vibrant cultural forms.



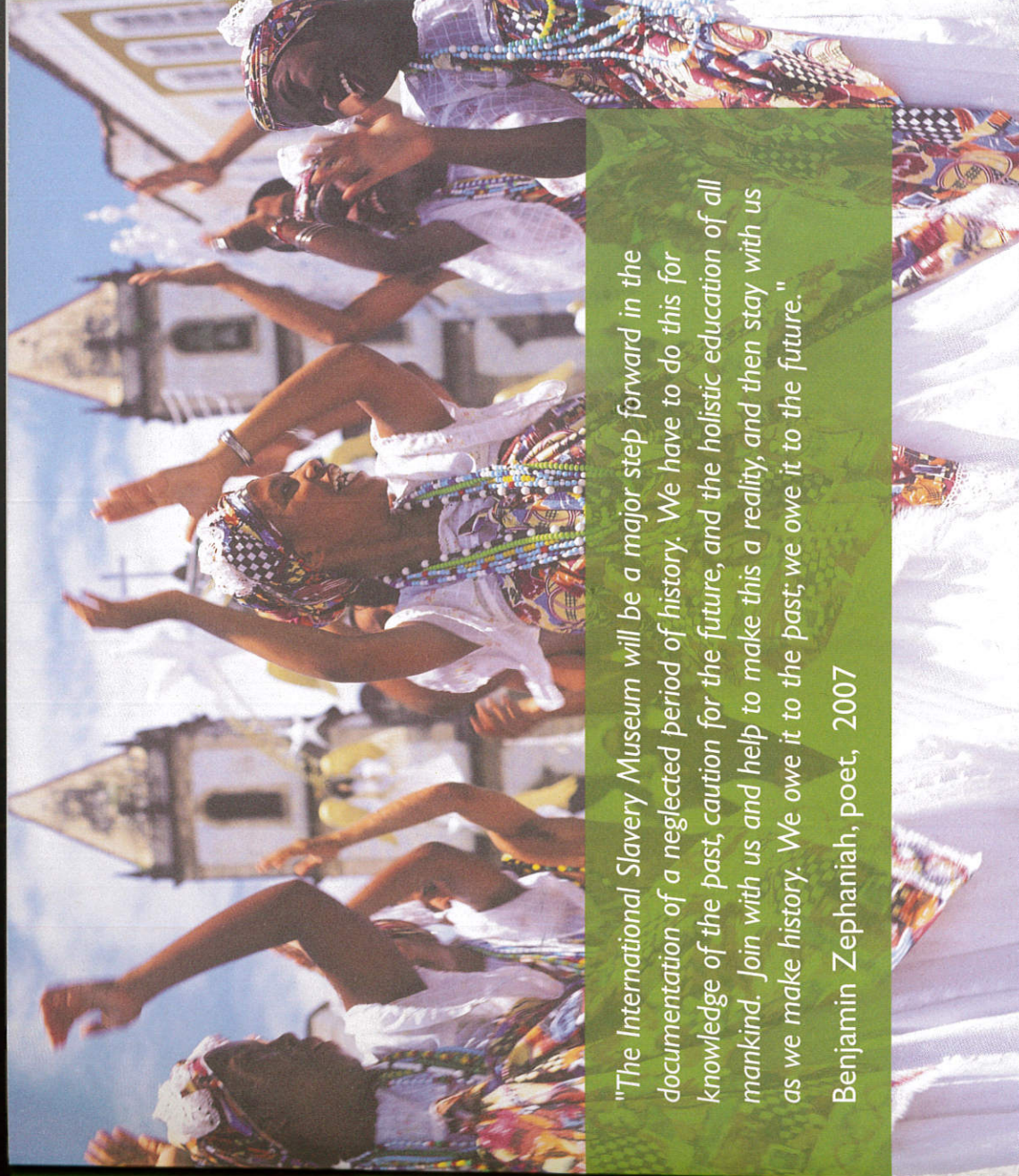
Rey Morenada costume, Alberto Castillo, La Paz, Bolivia, 2006

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"The International Slavery Museum will be a major step forward in the documentation of a neglected period of history. We have to do this for knowledge of the past, caution for the future, and the holistic education of all mankind. Join with us and help to make this a reality, and then stay with us as we make history. We owe it to the past; we owe it to the future."

Benjamin Zephaniah, poet, 2007

THE LEGACY

Since the mid-1960s there has been a call for reparations by sections of the African Diaspora.

Racism and poverty

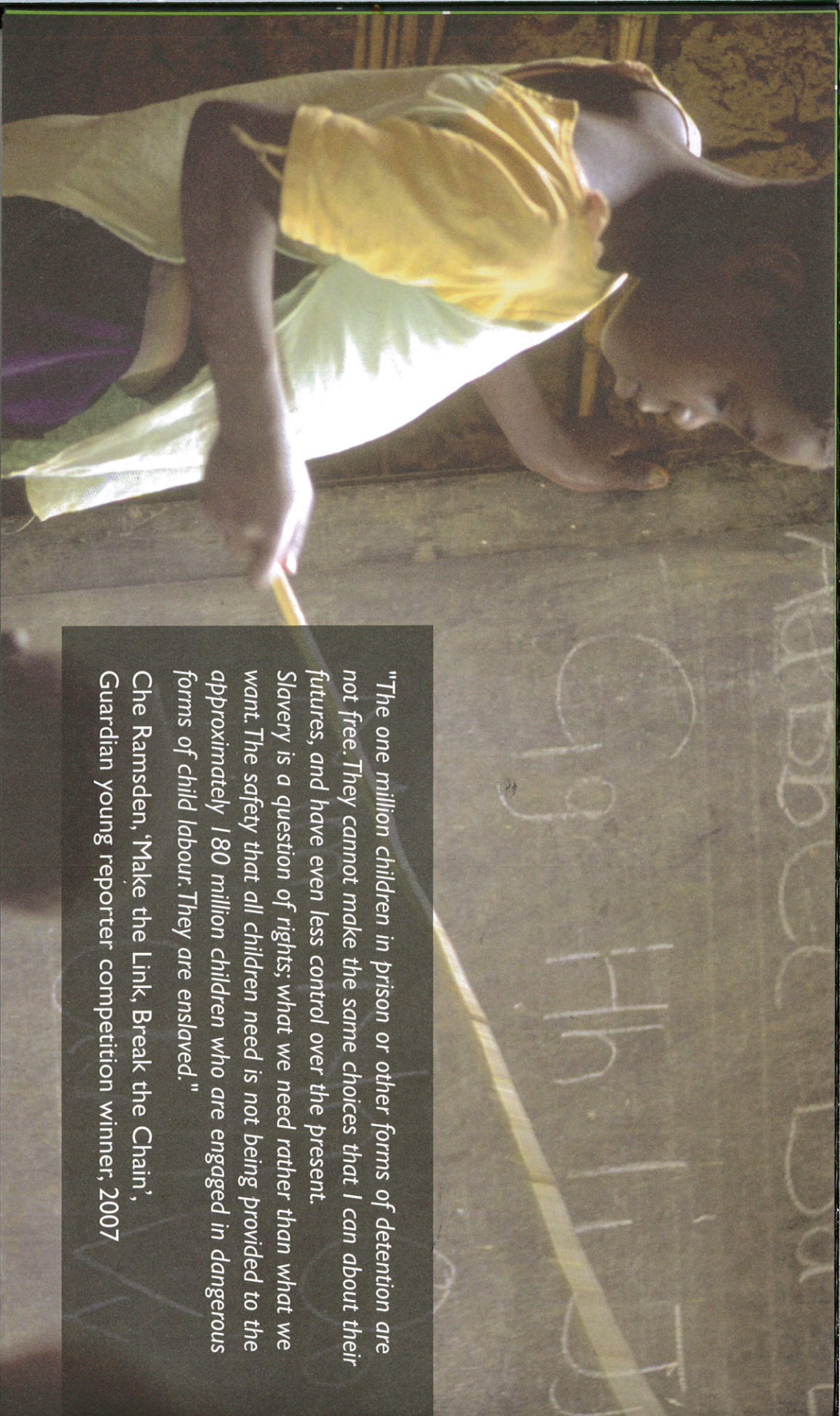
Transatlantic slavery has left a dangerous legacy of racism.

Many African, Caribbean and South American countries have faced long-term underdevelopment because of slavery and colonialism.

An unquenchable spirit

Despite the trauma of transatlantic slavery, people of African descent have helped shape the society and cultures of the Americas and Europe.

The spirit of enslaved Africans has lived on through their descendants and achievements.



"The one million children in prison or other forms of detention are not free. They cannot make the same choices that I can about their futures, and have even less control over the present. Slavery is a question of rights; what we need rather than what we want. The safety that all children need is not being provided to the approximately 180 million children who are engaged in dangerous forms of child labour. They are enslaved."

**Che Ramsden, 'Make the Link, Break the Chain',
Guardian young reporter competition winner, 2007**

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"The partnership with National Museums Liverpool has been central to the success of Make the Link, Break the Chain. They have been both dynamic and supportive as partners and we look forward to a continuing relationship."

Marie Staunton, Chief Executive Plan UK, 2007

'Make the Link, Break the Chain'

This project is a partnership between National Museums Liverpool and children's development agency, Plan International. It involves young people across the world, encouraging them to talk to each other, to ask questions and to critically examine the whole concept and legacy of the slave trade. Through conversation, creative writing, film, music, dance and the use of the internet they explored their separate and common histories to create an understanding of the present and a united vision for the future.



'Make the Link, Break the Chain' involves children from eight different schools in five different countries - the UK (Liverpool), Brazil, Haiti, Senegal and Sierra Leone.

The project has helped create a greater understanding of life in different countries and has helped tackle issues of racism and discrimination, stimulating engagement in contemporary issues that are facing children and young people in their own classrooms, schools, locality and the wider global community.

The results of the project include rich learning resources delivered online. Short films, artwork, music and events based on participants' discussions will be showcased in Liverpool on Slavery Remembrance Day 2007.

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LOOKING TO THE FUTURE



In 2010 the International Slavery Museum Research Institute and Education Centre will open in the 19th century Dock Traffic Office adjacent to the Merseyside Maritime Museum.

Connected to the legacy gallery by an enclosed glass bridge, the Research Institute and Education centre will provide an expansion of the museum by offering opportunities to focus on transatlantic slavery, comparative studies and public programming that will explore wider aspects of slavery, both geographically and historically. It will become, over time, one of the world's leading research institutes in the field of human rights.

Working in partnership with communities, the education centre will be a venue for a diverse programme of public events, including performing arts, lectures and debates. The centre will also include exhibition space within which contemporary slavery issues will be explored.

"As Chairman of National Museums Liverpool and a donor to this museum, I believe strongly that we must understand the history and consequences of slavery which affect all of us today. The International Slavery Museum and the Research Institute and Education Centre which we are now developing to complement it, will be a world centre of excellence and inspiration."

**Loyd Grossman OBE FSA, Chairman,
National Museums Liverpool, 2007**

"I was very impressed by the Transatlantic Slavery Gallery in the Merseyside Maritime Museum during my visit to Liverpool last year. I welcome the expansion of the gallery's important mission of increasing understanding of the scourge of slavery. The International Slavery Museum will further elevate the profile of this critical issue and raise awareness of the significance of promoting democracy, freedom, and human rights around the globe today."

**Condoleezza Rice
Secretary of State, USA, 2007**

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SUPPORT

The International Slavery Museum has gained support from Governments, organisations and institutions including:

INTERNATIONAL

Amistad America

Anti-Slavery International

Barbados Museum and Historical Society

Christian Aid

Gilder Lehrman Centre for the Study of Slavery,

Resistance and Abolition

Government of Ghana

New York Historical Society

Plan International

Smithsonian - National Museum of African American
History and Culture

The Amistad Centre, Wadsworth Atheneum

Museum of Art, Hartford, Connecticut

TransAfrica Forum

UNESCO Slave Routes Project

USA Government

UK NATIONAL

British/African museum group

Commission for Racial Equality

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Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire

Liverpool Hope University

Liverpool Slavery Remembrance Initiative

Northwest Regional Development Agency

The Mersey Partnership

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SUPPORTING US

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For more information go to

www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/ism

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African art, Courtesy of © National Maritime Museum, London

Bob Marley image, Courtesy of Ueli Frey - www.djazz.ch

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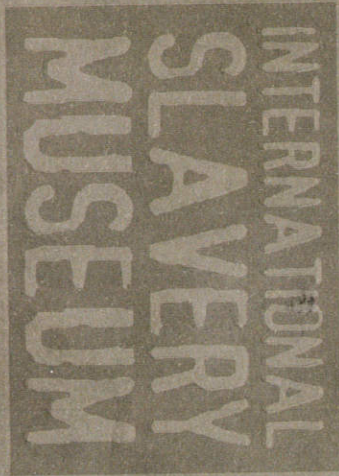
African education, Courtesy of Jim Holmes/Report Digital



We have included a handmade African Pant Paper made in a rural community in South Africa.

Through workshops Hand Made Papers of Africa encourage individual designers to create new designs that make the products imaginative, rich in character and unique in their design.

The communities are taught skills that help them attain financial independence. Workshops are ongoing teaching the communities the importance of creating and working in a Fair Trade environment.



INTERNATIONAL SLAVERY MUSEUM, ALBERT DOCK, LIVERPOOL L3 4AQ

