

EQUIANO



An Exhibition
of an extraordinary life

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An exhibition of an extraordinary life
From enslavement to bestselling author

29th September 2007 to the 13th of January 2008

Opening hours

Mon-Thurs & Sat 10am – 5pm

Friday 10.30am – 5pm

Sunday 12.30pm – 5pm

Gas Hall

Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery

Chamberlain Square

Birmingham, B3 3DH

0121 303 1966

equiano@birmingham.gov.uk

Cover image: Olaudah Equiano the African:
Frontispiece to the *Interesting Narrative*, 1793

© Local Studies: Birmingham Central Library

THE EQUIANO PROJECT

The Equiano Society and Birmingham Museums & Art Gallery received a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund to develop and deliver The Equiano Project – an ambitious multi-layered resource centred on the life and times of the former enslaved African Olaudah Equiano who later became a Royal Navy sailor, a writer and abolitionist.

The Equiano Project also commemorates the bicentenary of an Act of Parliament on March, 25, 1807 that abolished the Transatlantic Slave Trade. The passing of the Act was the first significant legislative attempt to deal with the brutality of the slave trade and slavery. It was not until August 1, 1838 that enslaved Africans were emancipated.

WE WELCOME YOU TO
THE EQUIANO EXHIBITION

GLOSSARY

These are some of the terms you may encounter during your visit to the exhibition

ABOLITION/ABOLITIONIST Before 1807, an Abolitionist meant a person who supported the campaign to end the slave trade. After 1807, it referred to a supporter of the campaign to end slavery

AMERICAS A term that includes North America, Central America and the West Indies, and South America

APPRENTICESHIP The time a person is bound under contract to an employer, learning a craft or trade, often for a low wage. Also, a condition of servitude after 1834. Slaves were compelled to work for their masters for a period of time which would condition them for freedom

CHATTEL SLAVERY A form of slavery introduced by Europeans which views people as 'property' and forces them to work against their will, denying them all basic human rights

CUGOANO, OTTOBAH Born in present-day Ghana in 1750, forced into slavery. In 1787 he published "Thoughts and Sentiments on the Evil and Wicked Traffic of the Commerce of the Human Species"

EMANCIPATION The granting of freedom

ENSLAVEMENT/ENSLAVED The condition of being held captive and forced to work against your will

EVANGELICAL Of, or according to, the Christian gospel. A form of Protestant Christianity

IGBO (IBO/EBOE) Members of an ethnic group in Nigeria

INDENTURE A form of contractual work for a labourer or servant for a fixed period of time, often with the promise of free land or money at the end of the contract

INSURRECTION A rebellion, an uprising or a revolt

MANUMISSION Legal process and documentation granting freedom to enslaved Africans

MAROONS Formerly enslaved Africans who escaped into the mountains and forests, to form their own independent communities

METHODISTS A Christian group founded by John Wesley and his brother in the early 18th century, which broke away from the Church of England

MIDDLE PASSAGE The journey from the West African coast to the West Indies and the Americas, carrying enslaved Africans

NEGRO A term once used to describe people of African descent. Today this is viewed as an unacceptable word. The exhibition only uses this word where it relates to an historical document or object

NONCONFORMIST An English term for people other than Anglicans or Roman Catholics, such as Methodists, Quakers and Baptists

PRO-SLAVERY A person, action or idea that supports slavery

RACISM Treating individuals or groups of people less favourably than others because of the colour of their skin or their racial origins

SANCHO, IGNATIUS (1729 – 1780) born on a slave ship, later worked as a butler for the influential Duke of Montagu in London. First African known to have voted in a British election

TRIANGULAR TRADE Title often given to the transatlantic slave trade, describing the three routes between Europe, Africa and the Americas

WHEATLEY, PHILLIS African poet, from Boston. In 1773 published 'Poems on Various Subjects' in London

INTRODUCTION

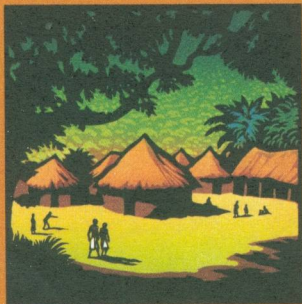
“My life and fortune have been extremely chequered, and my adventures various”

These are the words of Olaudah Equiano (born c.1745 – 1797) who was, and still remains, an inspirational figure. During his life he was an enslaved African, sailor, entrepreneur, writer and abolitionist. In 1789 Equiano published his book, *The Interesting Narrative* describing his remarkable life.

Although Equiano died over two hundred years ago, in modern times he has become an iconic figure on both sides of the Atlantic. At a time when the Transatlantic Slave Trade silenced the voices of millions of people, Equiano spoke up for Africans. Today, as then, he can be seen as a role model through his achievements.

Look out for the first edition of Equiano's book, in two volumes

WEST AFRICA



© Chris Wormell, 2007

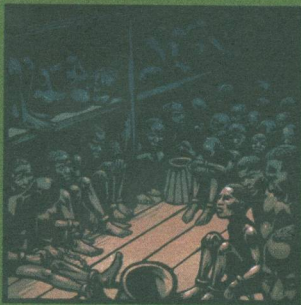
Equiano begins his "Narrative" in West Africa, as a young, happy boy. His account mirrors what we know from other sources, describing the varied social and cultural activities of a rural community.

Maritime trading between West Africa and Europe began in the 15th century, led by the Portuguese, with gold and other goods exchanged. Equiano's own happiness came to an abrupt end when he and his sister were kidnapped.

"One day, when all our people were gone out to their works as usual ... two men and a woman got over our walls, and in a moment seized us both ... and ran off with us to the nearest wood."

Look out for the Benin bronzes loaned from the British Museum in this section

ENSLAVEMENT



© Chris Wormell, 2007

By the mid 18th century, the Transatlantic Slave Trade was a massive business involving the enslavement of millions of Africans. Six months after his kidnap, Equiano was brought to the coast, where a slave ship was waiting to transport enslaved Africans across the Atlantic. Once on board, Equiano was frightened and miserable at the cruel treatment and poor conditions.

"I was soon put down under the decks, and there I received such a salutation in my nostrils as I had never experienced in my life ... the heat of the climate, added to the number in the ship ... almost suffocated us ... and the groans of the dying, rendered the whole ... a horror almost inconceivable."

Look out for objects made in the West Midlands for the African trade.

LIFE AT SEA



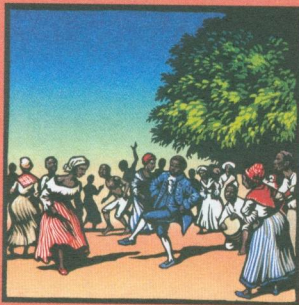
© Chris Wormell, 2007

On arrival in the West Indies Equiano was taken to Virginia where he worked briefly on a tobacco plantation. Whilst there he was sold to Michael Henry Pascal, a Royal Navy officer and they sailed to England. Pascal renamed Equiano "Gustavus Vassa". Britain went to war with France, in the 'Seven Years War' (1756 – 1763). Equiano took part in key sea battles, often carrying gunpowder to the cannons.

"The engagement now commenced with great fury on both sides: the Ocean immediately returned our fire ... during which I was frequently stunned with the thundering of the great guns, whose dreadful contents hurried many of my companions into awful eternity. At last the French line was entirely broken ... which was immediately proclaimed with loud huzzas and acclamations..."

The Royal William in this section is a model of one of the ships described in Equiano's book.

WEST INDIES



© Chris Wormell, 2007

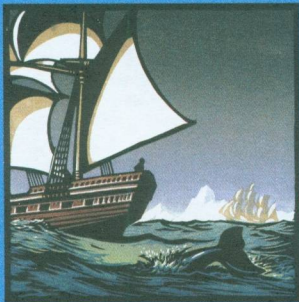
At the end of the Seven Years' War, Pascal resold Equiano into West Indian slavery instead of freeing him. The majority of enslaved Africans laboured on sugar plantations, under harsh conditions, but resisted enslavement in many forms.

Equiano worked for Robert King in Montserrat as a merchant's assistant, trading around the West Indies and North America. He did petty trading, and saved enough money to buy his freedom.

"In short, the fair as well as black people immediately styled me by a new appellation, to me the most desirable in the world, which was freeman, and at the dances I gave, my Georgia superfine blue cloathes made no indifferent appearance, as I thought. Some of the sable females, who formally stood aloof, now began to relax, and appear less coy, but my heart was still fixed on London ..."

The replica of Equiano's freedom suit in this section was made by Ironbridge Gorge Museums Trust.

JOURNEYS



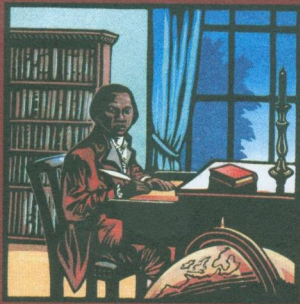
© Chris Wormell, 2007

As a free man, Equiano sailed many times across the Atlantic and visited the Arctic, the eastern Mediterranean, North and Central America, and the West Indies. On shore he had a variety of jobs, including as a hairdresser and servant. Equiano's book, *The Interesting Narrative*, is also an account of another major journey, his spiritual journey.

"The weather now became extremely cold; and as we sailed between north and east, which was our course, we saw many very high and curious mountains of ice; and also a great number of very large whales, which used to come close to our ship, and blow the water up to a very great height in the air ..."

The scrimshaw in this section are made from walrus tusks.

ABOLITION



© Chris Wormell, 2007

Equiano became a public figure just as the campaign to abolish the slave trade was launched in 1787. The popularity of the abolition movement, through petitions, lectures, societies and publications surprised everyone. Equiano's successful book, 'The Interesting Narrative' provided a powerful voice for the sufferings of enslaved Africans.

"Surely this traffic cannot be good, which spreads like pestilence, ... Which violates that first natural right of mankind, equality ... The freedom which diffuses health and prosperity throughout Britain answers you – No."

There are several editions of Equiano's narrative presented here together for the first time.

THE EQUIANO CULTURE CLUBS



Research session with the Techno Elders © Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery.

The 'Culture Clubs' are four groups that have been working with professional artists and The Equiano Project Team over a period of several months. Their brief was to actively engage with and be inspired by Equiano's incredible life story.

The Techno Elders recorded oral histories and produced a giant charm bracelet based on the theme of journeys. These can be listened to on headphones in the 'Journeys' section.

The Hockley Youth Project produced a stunning series of freedom suits based on the theme of Equiano's freedom and his success as an entrepreneur. One jacket is on display in the introduction of this exhibition, the remaining suits can be seen at the 'Unshackled' exhibition at Soho House Museum, open Tuesday – Friday from 11.30am – 4.00pm till 28th October 2007 (and beyond for school groups; please call 554 9122 for details).

Deansfield Secondary School, Wolverhampton produced alternative audio interpretation for selected objects on display in the exhibition. These can be listened to on headphones at the discovery tables or downloaded from www.equiano.org. Look out for the headphone symbol on object labels.

King George V Primary School, Sandwell explored Equiano's life through artwork and creative writing, which is presented in 'Equiano's travelling trunk'.

EQUIANO EVENTS

There is a full programme of talks, events, conferences and other activities in the Gas Hall and beyond between the 29th September and the 13th January 2008. All free unless otherwise stated.

FAMILY EVENTS

(AV Room, all Gas Hall unless otherwise stated)

- Saturday 13 October and Saturday 8 December, 1pm – 4pm: Meet Equiano and draw his portrait!
- Saturday 20 October, 11am – 4pm: Adeoti Arts and Crafts present drumming workshops
- Monday 22 October, 11am – 4pm: Adeoti Arts and Crafts present mask making workshops
- Tuesday 23 October, 1pm & 3pm 3rd floor galleries: Storytelling about Equiano with historical storyteller Fiona Collins
- Wednesday 24 October, 11am – 4pm: Adeoti Arts and Crafts present storytelling. Storytelling about Equiano with historical storyteller Fiona Collins (1pm & 3pm 3rd floor galleries)
- Thursday 25 October, 1pm and 3pm 3rd floor galleries: Anansi stories with Clive Dennis Cole
- Friday 26 October, 11am – 4pm: Adeoti Arts and Crafts presents drumming sessions
- Saturday 27 October, 11am – 4pm: A grand finale to the week with Adeoti Arts and Crafts
- Saturday 3 November 3 and Saturday 4 November, 1pm – 4pm each day various galleries: Eighteenth Century weekend. A chance to meet Oludah Equiano (played by George Eggars)
- Saturday 10 November and Saturday 1 December, 1pm and 3pm: Poetry with Roi Kwabena. A creative event for families

Also look out for family craft activities in the exhibition over the Christmas holidays. All family activities are suitable for children aged 4 – 10 and may also be of interest to older or younger children in family groups. It may not be possible to accommodate large organised groups due to lack of space. Please note this programme is subject to change.

OTHER EQUIANO EVENTS AND CONFERENCES IN BIRMINGHAM

An Interdisciplinary Research Seminar on the Caribbean and its Diaspora.

A free academic seminar, places are limited so registration is essential. To find out more or to book your place contact Sandra Courtman – s.courtman@sheffield.ac.uk.

In association with the Society for Caribbean Studies
AV Room, Gas Hall, Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery

Friday 5th October, 12.30 to 5pm

Journey's through time at Soho House

Workshops and performances around traditional African Caribbean music. Soho House Museum, Soho Avenue, off Soho Road, Handsworth, Birmingham B18 5LB. Tel: 0121 554 9122

Sunday 7 October, 11.30am – 4.00pm

Fighting to be free

A one-day academic conference exploring Midlands' links to the slave-trade and anti-slavery movements. The second day includes a tour of the Equiano exhibition. Places cost £25, pre-booking is essential. In association with the University of Birmingham

Saturday 27th October to Sunday 28th October

Web: <http://cbamh.bham.ac.uk/conference.htm>

E-mail: cbamh-history@bham.ac.uk

CELEBRATING EQUIANO: His Life & Times

Speakers include: Nini Rodgers (Ireland), Alexander X Byrd (USA), Clive Harris (Birmingham), Vincent Carretta (USA), Paul Lovejoy (Canada), Helena Woodard (USA), Arthur Torrington (London).

Presented by The Equiano Society and Birmingham Museums & Art Gallery in association with Museum of Docklands, London (November 16, contact 0870 444 3857) and 'The Drum, Birmingham (November 17, contact 0121 333 2444).

Conference fee £10 (£8 concession)

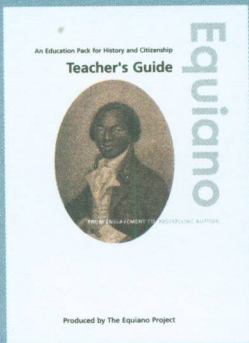
Further information from Arthur Torrington: 077 3727 1437

Friday 16 & Saturday 17 November 2007, from 10.30am

Talks & Tours

There is a programme of talks in the Gas Hall on Tuesday lunchtimes at 1pm, throughout the run of the exhibition, dates to be confirmed. Speakers include Professor Jim Walvin and Bishop Joe Aldred. Please call 0121 303 1966 for more details.

EDUCATION PACK

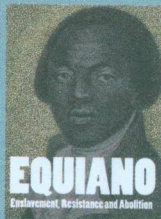


The Equiano Education Pack aimed at Key Stage 3 pupils for History and Citizenship contains eight lessons following the chronology of Equiano's extraordinary life. The pack can be taught as a scheme of work, although each lesson can also stand alone in its own right. The full-colour pack comes with an A2 poster and a CD-ROM containing supplementary material.

Copies are available at the Gas Hall desk or at the Museum shop. To order a copy, please contact the Museum shop on on 0121 464 7999 / 303 3977 or email: equiano@birmingham.gov.uk

Price £12.50

PUBLICATION



Equiano: Enslavement, Resistance and Abolition

Edited by Arthur Torrington, Rita McLean, Victoria Osborne and Ian Grosvenor with a foreword by Lord Morris of Handsworth, with essays by Hakim Adi, Bishop Joe Aldred, Joan Anim-Addo, Vincent Carretta, Andy Green, Angelina Osborne, Clare Parsons, Arthur Torrington, Robin Walker, James Walvin and Helena Woodard.

Softback with flaps, 96pp, illustrated, full colour

ISBN 0-7093-0257-6

Published by The Equiano Society and Birmingham Museums & Art Gallery, September 2007

Published to accompany the Equiano exhibition in the Gas Hall, this book provides new insights into enslavement, abolition, and the black presence in Britain in the eighteenth century. Written by leading authorities in Britain and the US it investigates Equiano and his legacy, African British writers, the role of women activists in the abolition movement, and the connections between Birmingham, enslavement and abolition.

Copies are available at the Gas Hall desk or at the Museum shop. To order a copy, please contact the Museum shop on 0121 464 7999/303 3977 or email: equiano@birmingham.gov.uk

Price £12.50

WEBSITE

The Equiano Project website is the online location for information on all aspects of The Equiano Project and Equiano's life. Containing details of The Project's various exhibitions, events and publications, the site is constantly expanding. Visit this site to order the publication and the Education pack, and to find out more about Equiano's incredible life.

www.equiano.org



THE EQUIANO PROJECT
THE EQUIANO SOCIETY AND BIRMINGHAM MUSEUMS & ART GALLERY

ABOUT EQUIANO NEWS EXHIBITORS TRAVEL REVIEWS CULTURE CLUBS

Welcome to the Equiano Project. Celebrating the life and times of the 18th century writer and abolitionist Olaudah Equiano

Unpacked Exhibition
Soho House Museum

Travelling Exhibitions
Venues Nationwide



THE EQUIANO TOURING EXHIBITIONS: August 2007 – March 2008



The Equiano Touring exhibitions mirror the themes and narratives of the main exhibition and will tour regionally and nationally to libraries, shopping centres, community centres, churches and small museums. Each exhibition brings together nine exhibition panels and four 'Discovery Boxes' that illustrate different parts of Equiano's life. The tour commenced in August 2007 and will continue to March 2008.

The Equiano Touring Exhibitions aim to reach a wider audience across the region and the country. Please see www.equiano.org for tour dates and venues across the UK.

SCHOOLS

Book now for FREE educational sessions with the Equiano Exhibition.

FREE Taught sessions, which have been specially developed for the exhibition, are available for Key Stages 1 – 3 and span a wide range of curriculum topics including History, Geography, Art and Citizenship. The new exhibition will provide a superb and unforgettable backdrop to these sessions.

Information about services for schools at Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, including the Equiano Exhibition, can be found at www.schoolsliason.org.uk. Here you will find an extensive range of resources to support your visit alongside pre-visit and follow-up work, including online material relating to the History collections.

To make a booking: Please contact the Equiano booking team on 0121 303 3890. Fax: 0121 303 1337. Email: Lorna_Harris@birmingham.gov.uk

The Unshackled Exhibition at Soho House is available for schools throughout the Autumn term. Taught sessions for KS2&3 students are available. For more information please contact Soho House Museum on 0121 554 9122.



All illustrations ©
Chris Wormell, 2007

c. 1745
Born Kingdom of Benin
(present-day Nigeria)

c. 1755
Kidnapped and forcibly shipped
across the Atlantic to Barbados,
then Virginia, North America
Bought by Lieutenant Michael
Henry Pascal

1756-1763
Serves under Pascal in British
Royal Navy during Seven
Years' War with France

1759
Baptised at St. Margaret's
Church, Westminster

1762
Sold by Pascal to James
Doran. Forcibly shipped
to the West Indies

1763
Sold for £40 to Robert
King, a Quaker merchant
in Montserrat

1766
Buys freedom from King
for £40

1767
Returns to London

1773
Joins Captain Phillips
with role expedition

1776
Helps establish a plantation
on the Mosquito Coast in
Central America

1786-87
Works as a commissary on
the Sierra Leone settlement

1789
Publishes first edition of
The Interesting Narrative

1789-1794
Tours the United Kingdom and
Ireland promoting *The Interesting
Narrative* which goes to nine
editions, and campaigns for the
abolition of the slave trade

1792
Marries Susanna Cullen in
Soham, Cambridgeshire

1793
Daughter Ann Maria born
in Soham

1795
Daughter Joanna born
in Soham

1796
Susanna Vassa dies aged
34 and is buried in
Cambridgeshire

1797
Olaudah Equiano dies
on 31 March

1797
Ann Maria dies on
21 July



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