

Cambridge University has been accused of opening old wounds, but in curing itself of amnesia it might help Britain understand its past, so says David Olusoga, historian and broadcaster. Cambridge is part of the institution of the rich and famous of the UK and their decision to appoint a white Roman Archaeological historian to research how they benefitted from the slave trade is commendable but disappointing as there are black researchers who would be a good fit. A week later the university of Bristol announced that they too will appoint a don to research to what extent they benefitted from the enslavement of Africans.

As chair of The Movement for Justice and reconciliation I welcome these announcements and MJR will work with these institutions to the extent to which the enslavement of Africans still affects their descendants today. Our remit is to **highlight yesterday's injustices and address today's legacies**.

The Movement for Justice and Reconciliation was born out of a desire to draw public attention to one of the greatest injustices of our time: The legacy of chattel enslavement. Britain and other European countries transported millions of enslaved Africans to the New World, [the conservative estimate is that it could be as much as 30 million] and about 13% died on the Trans-Atlantic voyage. On arrival in the Caribbean the slaves were worked so hard that their life expectancy was only 7 years. When slavery was 'abolished' in 1833, £20 million was paid to British Slave owners - 40% of the Government expenditure that year - the equivalent ~£17 billion today. This debt was finally paid off by the British Tax payers, I'm included here, in 2015. Conversely the slaves received not one penny. Hundreds of years of historical amnesia has kept the British public in ignorance over this grizzly epoch of our joint history.

In December 2013, the United Nations designated 2015-2024 as the International decade for people of African Descent, for **recognition, justice and development**. As a Christian organisation MJR's focus is rightly on Justice. And we believe that the wrongs committed against people of African descent over the past 500 years and the legacy it has left must be addressed. In 2007, the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the slave trade, a replica ship representing the 18th century 'Zong' was sailed into the port of London to remind people of the ravages of the slave trade and enormous way in which the UK benefitted from it. During the two weeks the ship was docked near sugar pier, it attracted almost 5000 visitors many of whom knew little or nothing about the ravages of the enslavement of Africans. Moreover, it became apparent that the level of public awareness of the enslavement of Africans between 16th and 19th centuries was very low in the UK, and yet enslavement has left a lasting legacy that needs to be highlighted and addressed, particularly by those of us in Christian communities.

A major aim of MJR's is to raise awareness of these continued issues and highlight yesterday's injustices and today's legacy by sailing a replica 17th century slave ship around the historic slave ports of Britain – possibly in the summer of 2020. During the voyage, we will retell the story of 'The Zong' (whose master killed 132 African slaves by throwing them overboard to claim insurance money for loss of cargo. His rationale being that more could be made from claiming insurance money than by selling their emaciated bodies on the open slave market in Jamaica). MJR intends to involve local communities and seek to bring about real reconciliation by raising consciousness. Further information can be found on our website www.mjr-uk.com.

In sum, as the educational institutions, such as Glasgow, Bristol, Oxford and Cambridge Universities seek to find ways to redress the benefit they obtained from the slave trade, the UK and other complicit European countries should also acknowledge their involvement and their benefit and right the wrongs of the past.

Rev Alton Bell, Chair, The Movement for Justice and Reconciliation