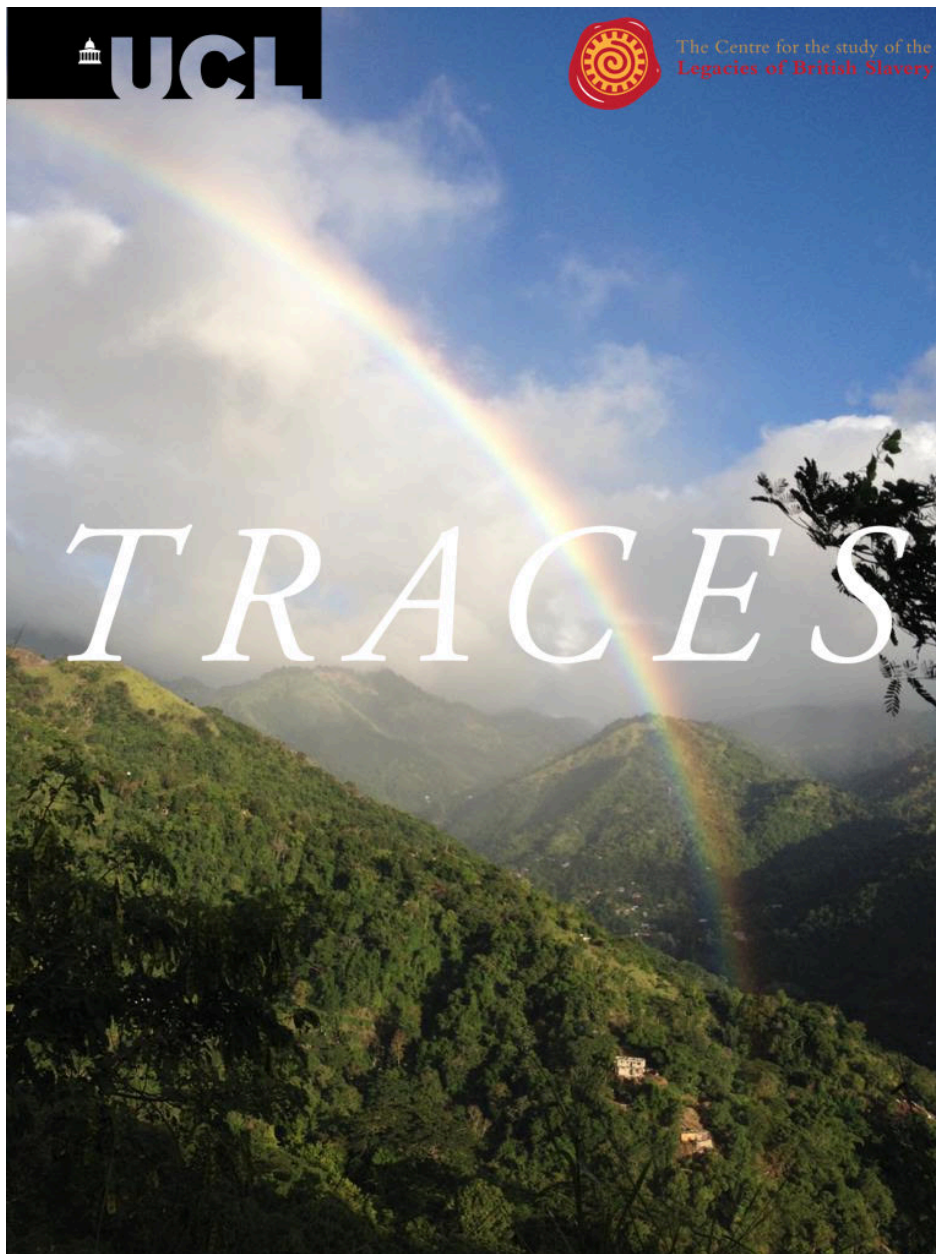




The Centre for the study of the
Legacies of British Slavery





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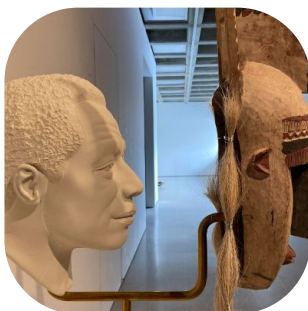
Sharon Pope



FEATURE PROJECT

The Long Juju –

A documentary feature film by Keme Nzerem



OF THIS AND THAT

Moments from the Summer

DIRECTOR'S EDITORIAL

Taking in the View

PROFESSOR MATTHEW J. SMITH

Director of the CSLBS

Of the mesmeric sight of the Grand Canyon, British artist David Hockney famously commented that it was impossible for the eye to capture it whole. There is no centre of focus. The whole chasm—

which can be glimpsed only in parts in the mind or, as in Hockney's case, on the canvas—must be joined to give an impression of what it is. What we “see” when we look at the Grand Canyon is always going to be incomplete, and this is a powerfully humbling fact to accept.

There is an important lesson in this that speaks to concepts beyond a place. We make sense of the past and present by joining disparate pieces of what we see or have been told. Hockney's point was that what people interpret—even when it is right in front of them—is always a result of perspective, and perspective can be manipulated.

This is something I have thought about a great deal in recent months. The forces that fuel raging wars of all sorts use perspective as tinder. Each side attempts to bend perspective to influence action and determine outcomes, bombarding audiences through the manipulative power of digital media. It becomes a feat of energy to question the information we receive and to find balance. It is even more challenging—but nonetheless vital to accept—that we can at best only hold a partial view of the upsetting events that make up our contemporary reality.

A motivation of our work as historians of a disturbing past is to present new interpretations and evidence to help sharpen that partial view. Much of our focus is on this particular task. When our work comes back to us in exciting ways, it is a reminder of the importance of what we do.



The Grand Canyon. Photo: Matthew Smith

Since the racial justice protests four years ago this summer, this has been a validating aspect of the CSLBS. We have seen so many of the conversations on the relationship between slavery and modernisation, capital and human abuse, and the Africa-American-British nexus take place in new spaces and stir new questions. To piece together the many images to

form a partial picture of a whole, we asked Sharon Pope, a volunteer with our Centre, to audit the references to our work in Caribbean, UK, and US online sources over the past four years. To this summer's *Traces* Sharon contributes "Opening the Conversation," the feature piece of the issue. She outlines the original way she set about her task and the wide range of engagements, from reparative actions in Barbados to school projects in England, that have referenced the database. Along the way Sharon, a retired psychologist, offers comment on how the survey of accessible resources expanded her own awareness of the legacies of slavery.

Our feature project is on Keme Nzerem's film *The Long Juju*. In May, the Centre was honoured to co-host with the Sarah Parker Remond Centre at UCL and the London-based Next Economy Trust a discussion with Keme and South Carolinian genealogist, historian and writer *fs*lav Bernice Bennett. Chaired by our close colleague James Dawkins, the discussion raised important questions about how our perspectives on our ancestors change when we learn of their involvement in African slavery. Just as important, as Keme highlights in the film and discussion, is the larger responsibility to future relatives to make them aware of uncomfortable ancestral truths.

Both Sharon and Keme have made clear the important debt they owe to historians who keep these issues central through the hard and dedicated work they do. Historians must also rely on other historians, especially those who rise as exemplars of their craft and through their work have transformed how we see and interpret New World slavery.



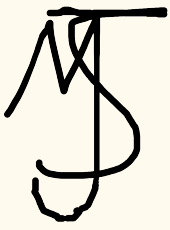
David Hockney, *Grand Canyon, Arizona With My Shadow* (1982)

The late Trevor Burnard, New Zealander, Atlantic World historian, and Director of the Wilberforce Institute for Slavery and Emancipation at the University of Hull was at the very top of that rarefied community; a historian's historian in every sense of the word. Trevor's passing in July after a brave fight with cancer has left a great space in the field of Atlantic slavery and emancipation studies. He was astoundingly productive, publishing books, journal articles, chapters, and edited collections with great drive. His varied body of work, which included a biography on the execrable planter in Jamaica, Thomas Thistlewood, and, more recently, a critical study of Early American history-writing, were all bonded by a commitment to exploring through evidence new ways of understanding Atlantic identities.

Trevor's intellectual energy carried into his public work and advocacy where he was unafraid to give his opinion on the righting of historical wrongs. In a 2021 *Guardian* article on the Royal Visit to Jamaica, a country whose history he wrote a great deal about, he said, "The British government gave nothing to the enslaved people who produced the wealth which Jamaica used to be famous. Now, Jamaica is a poor country. It would be a good thing if Britain recognised its historical responsibility for creating those conditions of poverty, while benefitting from Jamaican wealth."

Outside of his research and writing Trevor was a generous and supportive colleague who especially encouraged early career scholars. It was at the UWI-Mona campus that Trevor got one of his first jobs, a post in US History that I would later inherit. Our paths would cross several years later and from that moment on Trevor took a strong interest in my personal research. He was well-known to the founding members of the LBS Project. Catherine Hall, Chair of CSLBS, opens this issue with a tribute to Trevor. He will be deeply missed by all of us. We dedicate this issue to his memory.

Walk good Trevor.



Matthew J. Smith

TRIBUTE

Remembering Trevor Burnard

CATHERINE HALL

CHAIR OF CSLBS

Trevor Burnard's untimely death in July 2024 will be mourned by those who have known him and the many who have appreciated his work. A prolific author, editor, and collaborator over the years, he worked successfully with many younger scholars as well as established authors.

It is impossible to do justice to the range of his writings. Trevor had a vital few years at the University of the West Indies at Mona and was able to do an enormous amount of archival work in the Spanish Town and Kingston archives collecting a body of research from which he gradually branched out. Early articles focused on economic and demographic issues of migration and marriage and opened up a range of questions from the possibilities of female independence in the early years of white dominance to whether the island should be viewed as a failed settler society. His monograph on the notorious enslaver Thomas Thistlewood, *Mastery, Tyranny and Desire* (2004), expanded his range and established his reputation as a major historian of the brutality of colonial Jamaica and its sexed, raced, and classed formation. Born in New Zealand, he taught in Australia and the UK as well as at UWI, and spent lengthy periods in the US. That range of experience is perhaps part of what enabled him to expand his writing into comparative work on San Domingue with John Garrigus, on Australia with Joy Damousi and Alan Lester, on the voices of the enslaved with Sophie White, on slavery and new histories of capitalism with Georgio Riello, not to speak of work on Berbice and Suriname. Essays with Sheryllyne Haggerty and Aaron Graham (whose own untimely death was a recent tragedy) as well as Emma Hart made further important contributions to Jamaican history. His editorial collaboration with Gad Heuman brought us the *Routledge History of Slavery* (2011) with its collection of classic essays. Most recently *Writing the History of Global Slavery* (2023) bears witness to the range of his thinking.



Professor Trevor Burnard.

I don't remember when I first met Trevor, it may well have been in Australia, but his writings have accompanied me for years and been indispensable for my own work. I particularly appreciated the book of essays, *Jamaica in the Age of Revolution* (2020) which included material that he had been reflecting on over a long period. He was a good friend to the Legacies of British Slave-ownership project, (now CSLBS), entrusting to us the data he had collected on Jamaican inventories, an invaluable resource in assessing individual wealth and now available on our website. I greatly appreciated the critically supportive comments that he generously shared with me on the manuscript of my recent book *Lucky Valley*. As Director of the Wilberforce Institute in Hull from 2019-24, he was able to support a number of excellent projects including the *Guardian's* investigation *Cotton Capital*. Looking over his published work, knowing the conferences he was engaged with and the initiatives he took, we can only admire. He will be greatly missed by family and friends alongside the community of students and scholars of slavery.

ADVANCED SEARCH

Opening the Conversations – A Decade of Influence of the LBS Database

SHARON POPE

CSLBS VOLUNTEER

Sharon Pope began volunteering with the Centre for the Study of the Legacies of British Slavery in Summer 2023 after learning more about British colonial history and discovering the work of CSLBS. She undertook an ambitious project: an audit of global engagements with CSLBS work over the past four years.

In this piece, Sharon reflects on her experiences.



I was a latecomer to the Legacies of British Slave-ownership database. I first became aware of this remarkable research through Professor David Olusoga's BBC series [Britain's Forgotten Slave Owners](#); I went straight to the database and began exploring its content.

I soon discovered [Eleanor Brady Barnett](#), a spinster who owned a group of nine enslaved people attached to Arcadia, Jamaica, whom she sold in 1825. Born in Jamaica, in 1861 she was living in the Parsonage in our village in rural Mid Wales. I had passed the Parsonage countless times walking my children to school. I was inspired to read more about our colonial history and

slavery with a growing awareness of its far-reaching impact on modern Britain.

When I retired after a lengthy career in Clinical Psychology, I did not have a plan; I thought that was the idea. In time, I realised some focus and a new direction was needed. I wanted to pursue my interest in colonial history so I took the audacious step of approaching the team at the CSLBS to ask if they could use a volunteer with dormant research skills. They said yes!



Matthew Stallard, Sharon Pope, Jess Hannah and Matthew Smith at UCL in June

I was given the task of undertaking an audit of global engagements with the work of the CSLBS from January 2021 to Spring 2024. The team wanted to compile an archive of the impact of their work and the ways in which it has influenced policymaking, institutional inquiries, journalism, amateur historical and genealogical projects, artwork, education, and activist causes.

To do this research, I relied on internet searches based on mutually agreed criteria. The main one was any direct reference, citation, or quote on the database and its findings. or indirect reference to payments made under the 1837 Compensation Act. The results were organised and entered into a spreadsheet. Each entry was supported by an appendix which contained the source and metadata.

There were two main areas of media coverage into which engagements fell. Other categories were Commercial, Policy, Education, and Art and Culture. The initial range of engagements found indicated the need for sub-categories of related fields (print and online journalism, podcasts, websites, events, and workshops). Four months into the project, the sheer volume of engagements identified from the research suggested an exhaustive archive would not be possible, and the audit would represent a 'snapshot' of engagements.

"I wanted to pursue my interest in colonial history so I took the audacious step of approaching the team at the CSLBS to ask if they could use a volunteer with dormant research skills. They said yes!"

Searches of print and online journalism revealed more than two hundred engagements across news outlets in the UK, the Caribbean, Central America, Africa, Australia, and the United States. I found that in addition to the UK broadsheets, numerous Caribbean newspapers, websites, and radio stations frequently referenced the work of the CSLBS and the database of slave-ownership. Engagements appeared in such diverse journalistic spaces such as *Al Jazeera* and the *New Statesman*.

Engagements with the CSLBS especially increased when prominent individuals came forward or were revealed to have ancestors who benefitted from compensation payments. The same applied to British universities, commercial companies, and religious and public institutions. I identified media coverage of apologies of descendants of enslavers such as the families of Charlie Gladstone and [Laura Trevelyan](#), the publication of the University of Cambridge's [Legacies of Enslavement](#) report and Lloyd's of London's review and [Inclusive Futures programme](#) of restorative justice.

A similar process registered across the Caribbean. A key theme in Caribbean reporting was the injustice of the compensation payments which figured into ongoing calls for reparations and petitions for apologies from British and European governments and the monarchy. Engagements with CSLBS surged surrounding [Royal visits to the Caribbean](#) by Prince William and Kate Middleton (then the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge) and the Earl and Countess of Wessex in 2022. Around the same time, the [publicity of the Barbados government's intention](#) to pursue former British MP Richard Drax for reparations for his ancestors' pivotal role in the transatlantic Slave Trade saw a spike in engagements with the CSLBS database.

In both the UK and the Caribbean, there is a consistent call for the history of British slavery revealed by the work on compensation to be integrated into school curricula. Benito Wheatley, former British Virgin Islands representative to the UK, put it well when he stated: "it's important to go beyond Emancipation and for young people to understand the implications of slavery and post-slavery history."



A man protests outside the British Council in Kingston, Jamaica, during a visit to the former British colony by the duke and duchess of Cambridge 2022. AP/File.

I also identified references to the CSLBS in non-journalistic media sources such as websites, podcasts, and YouTube videos. I found mentions on local authority webpages in the UK, such as the [Surrey Heritage](#) site, which explores the provenance of four drawings donated by the family of Ralph Vaughn-Williams depicting African Americans. The community-based website of [North Kelvin Community Council](#) invited local residents to take part in an online event to discuss Glasgow's legacy of slavery and colonialism. Activist websites such as Lancaster Black History group, Stop Hate UK, and Anti Racist Cumbria (an organisation profiled in last season's issue of *Traces*) all refer to the CSLBS research in raising public awareness about how the roots of racism in Britain are found in its entangled colonial past.

My audit of commercial engagements indicated many companies, universities, financial and commercial institutions along with Royal Academies, NHS Trusts and religious institutions commissioned studies into their historic links to transatlantic slavery. The work of the CSLBS and the digitised database were pivotal to the research underlying published reports. Several of these reports included recommendations ranging from renaming built heritage, increasing awareness of racial inequality and measures to confront racism.

Such efforts aim at greater openness and transparency about Britain's colonial past but with few substantial changes for the Caribbean. Advocates for reparative justice in the Caribbean, while commending these efforts, have argued that much more is needed to support the larger goals of repair. Where the work of the CSLBS has influenced policy there is a chain of events with the research acting as a catalyst.

Although I found fewer engagements leading to policy change, there are encouraging advancements. Two notable examples are the [United Reform Church](#), which pledged to add its voice to campaigns encouraging the UK government to release "legacy of slavery" countries and communities from debt owed to the UK, and the [Scott Trust](#), the institution responsible for the *Guardian*, which is committed to policy changes for equality and diversity in its spaces. The *Guardian* has created a substantial restorative justice fund to support community projects in South Carolina and Jamaica, places deeply connected to the history of enslavement that enriched its founders. The Centre for Policy Research also produced two papers citing the CSLBS research. In one, it uses the example of the transatlantic slave trade to demonstrate how the rise of a new dominant economic activity can change the distribution of power within a society, and in turn change social values.

Educational engagements with the CSLBS ranged from the mainstream BBC Teach: [Understanding Slavery](#) initiative to

community and heritage groups. The [Lancaster Black History](#) group has excellent resources for teachers and [Glasgow Life](#) has produced a guide for a slavery-themed walking tour for primary school children.

"The work of the CSLBS and the digitised database were pivotal to the research underlying published reports. Several of these reports included recommendations ranging from renaming built heritage, increasing awareness of racial inequality and measures to confront racism."

Artistic and cultural engagements with the research highlight just how varied and diverse CSLBS's impact has been over the past four years. Glasgow Life, for example, featured a [white muslin dress worn by the daughter of a wealthy plantation owner](#) who received compensation for enslaved Africans. The beauty of the dress is juxtaposed with the brutality of slavery and the injustices of colonial wealth. Elsewhere, the Lancaster Black History group [commissioned a local artist to visualise portraits of black Lancastrians](#) who once walked the city's streets, and the Royal Academy of Arts conducted research using the CSLBS as a valuable resource to explore its founders' and members' past links to slavery and abolition. This research contributed to the acclaimed Royal Academy of Arts 2024 [Entangled Pasts](#) exhibition (also reviewed in last season's edition!) which used "visual power to explore art's relationship to empire, enslavement, indenture, resistance and abolition".



White muslin dress worn by Ann Stirling, circa 1824-26

Working alongside the team at the CSLBS and being given such a responsible project has been a privilege for me. There were challenges along the way; getting up to speed with Excel, refining search terms, and simply locating engagements. Once my anxiety-to-excitement ratio returned to baseline, the project was enormously rewarding.

Taking stock of the work of the CSLBS has demonstrated the range of influence from high-profile financial institutions to grassroots organisations addressing racism. For me, the standout aspect has been the way in which the work of the CSLBS has further galvanised the tenacious people of the Caribbean to seek justice.

The launch of the CSLBS database in 2013 undoubtedly shed vital light on the extent to which modern Britain benefitted from the profits of the transatlantic slave trade. This audit suggests that in the present decade, the impact of the research has grown exponentially in its influence. The engagements with CSLBS research that I found together indicate a rich and diverse scope with breadth and depth. There is a will for greater openness and debate about Britain's complex colonial past that is changing perspectives.

At a time when there is pronounced pushback against the revised interpretations of the past produced by new research into British slavery, it is positive indeed that since 2021 there has been sustained and supportive engagement in global spaces with the necessary work of the CSLBS.

FEATURE PROJECT

The Long Juju: A Documentary Film by Keme Nzerem

The shared geographies, histories and contemporary legacies of the abduction and enslavement of

Africans continues to be revealed, researched, and written into public understanding. With the veil of denial and amnesia in the UK being slowly lifted, Black people are increasingly being confronted by, and are reckoning with, complex and traumatic stories and family ancestries inseparable from these transatlantic connections with slavery. Yet the research required to excavate those ancestries, and their associated narrative histories entails complicated transnational genealogical craft, as well as careful ethical consideration. Bringing those stories to life for a broader public requires deep thought around the politics and responsibilities of transatlantic storytelling and visualisation.

The Long Juju is a documentary from [Cloudcreek Films](#) by journalist and filmmaker [Keme Nzerem](#) about his own complex ancestry. During filming, Keme learned that not only were his US ancestors involved in the trade of enslaved people, but that his Nigerian forebears were also connected to the abduction and kidnap of people who would be sold as slaves. To help trace and connect with his complicated and unsettling ancestry, Keme enlisted the help of [Bernice Bennett](#), a renowned Maryland-based author, genealogist, and presenter.

In May, CSLBS were delighted to partner with the [Sarah Parker Remond Centre](#) and the Next Economy Trust in presenting an evening's conversation between Keme and Bernice on black genealogy, storytelling, and the practice of bringing contemporary and historical family histories to life in *The Long Juju*. Their conversation was moderated by Dr James Dawkins of the University of Nottingham, a former member of the Legacies of British Slave-ownership project team whose own research focuses on socio-economic history and the legacies of the slave trade in modern Britain.



James, Keme and Bernice in conversation

Their shared deep interest in the politics, ethics, and possibilities of unearthing and sharing histories of enslavement has much in common with our own. The conversation between Keme, Bernice, and James in so many ways reflected the very concerns that drive CSLBS's research: what do these personal family histories that Keme has uncovered say about much larger and complicated processes of capital, human ownership, colonialism, and their echoes today, and what are our responsibilities in telling these stories respectfully?

The event further demonstrated how very private discoveries are microcosms of unsettled social discussions. Keme's project is motivated by this fact and as he continues to develop the film and present it to diverse audiences like the one at UCL, it will challenge us further to consider the personal in the political legacies of the past.



© Keme Nzerem

A recording of the conversation between Keme and Bernice and the interaction with the audience can be viewed on our YouTube channel [here](#).

OF THIS AND THAT

Moments from the Summer



Jess Hannah, Keme Nzerem, and James Dawkins at the Black Family History event in May



Global Threads team members Destinie Reynolds, Serena Robinson, Ella Sinclair, and Matthew Stallard join artist Holly Graham at Manchester Art Gallery for a tour and oral testimony workshop



Statue of Sir Hans Soane at Chelsea Physic Garden, the botanic garden he built after his return from Jamaica in the late seventeenth century. Sloane, who profited financially from Atlantic slavery, met enslaved people in Jamaica who taught him about the botanical and biological aspects of the Caribbean which would advance his career.



The revised plaque to the Sir Hans Sloane statue, which reflects his time in Jamaica and urges visitors to consider how the gentile spaces of the garden are directly connected to British slavery.



Global Threads researcher Serena Robinson chairs the *Reclaiming History: Power and Visibility* event in June launching C Rose Smith's *Talking Back to Power* exhibition alongside the artist and cellist Gary Washington



A piece in Tavares Strachan's *There is Light Somewhere* exhibition, currently at the Hayward Gallery



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