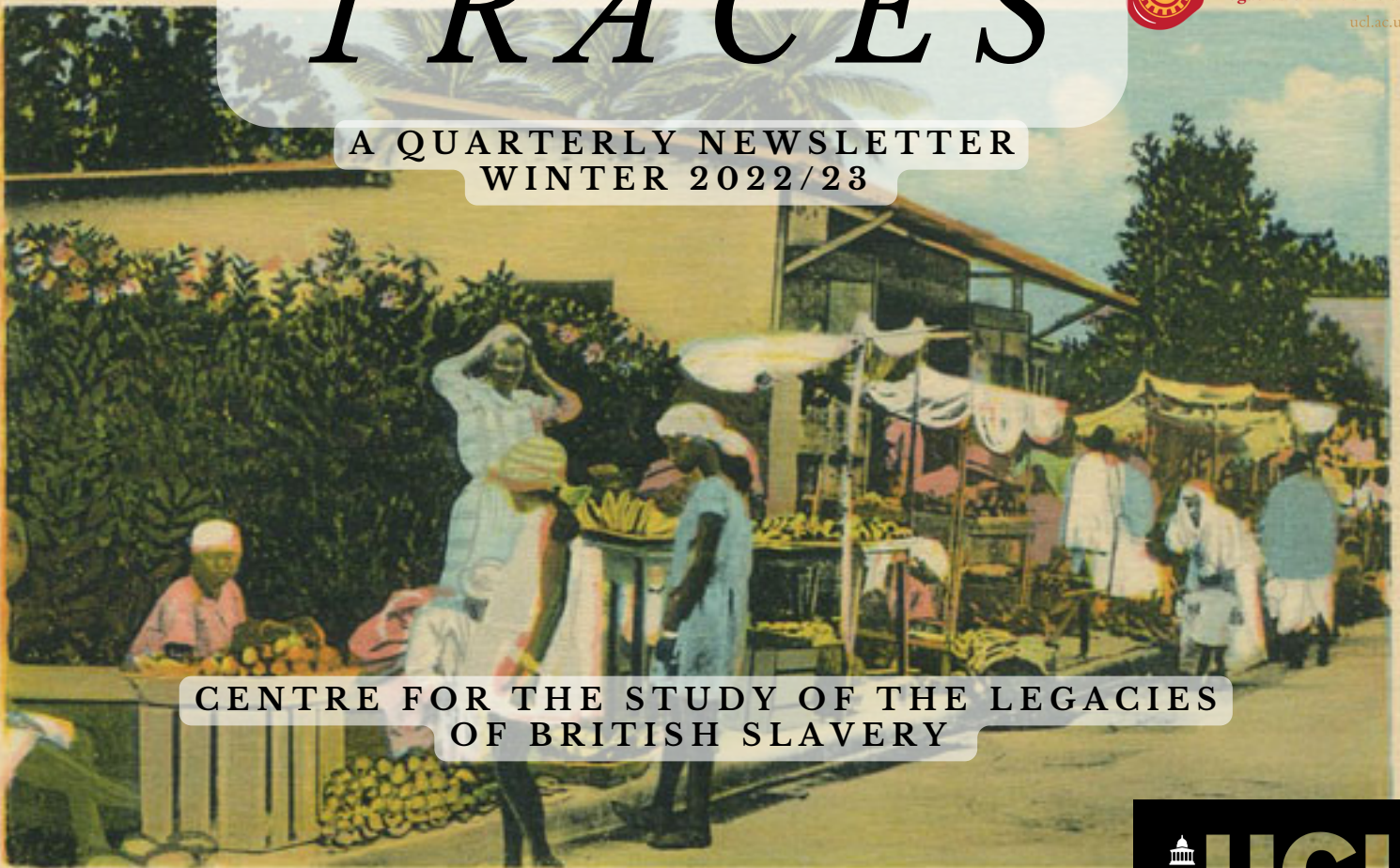


# TRACES



The Centre for the study of the  
Legacies of British Slavery  
ucl.ac.uk/lbs

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER  
WINTER 2022/23



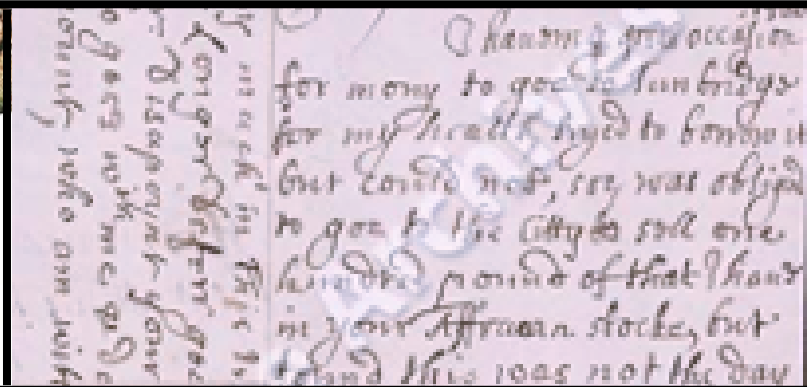
CENTRE FOR THE STUDY OF THE LEGACIES  
OF BRITISH SLAVERY

Trinidad postcard, c.1920s

Roadside Market, Trinidad, B.W.I.—58



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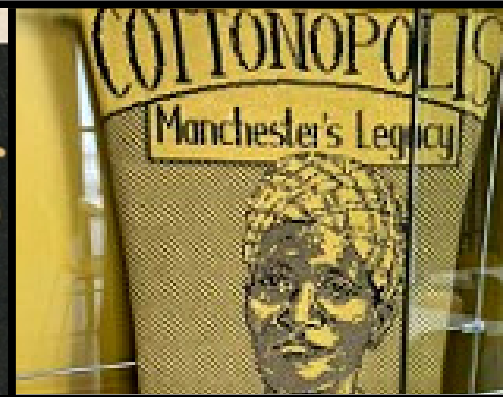
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THE MONUMENT TO ENSLAVED LABORERS  
UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA

## DIRECTOR'S EDITORIAL



# *Alégria, Alégria*

MATTHEW J. SMITH

Seasons are markers of the passing of time. It can be the cold snap and icy breeze that alert us to shifting seasons. It could also be poinsettias in bloom, the smell of whitewash paint or black cake, or the tuning cuatros of parrenderos in the Trinidadian countryside or at fêtes in London. These moments emphasize movements from one year to the next.

We at the CSLBS carry into the new season of 2023 much enthusiasm for the projects and activities we have been a part of over the past year, and an eagerness both to see them mature and to share them with our community.

In this winter edition of *Traces* we feature one of those collaborations: *The Register of British Slave Traders*, under the direction of Professor Will Pettigrew of Lancaster University. Dr Lila O'Leary Chambers is a research associate on the project who has been working at the CSLBS over the past year.

In this issue's Feature Project, Lila writes movingly about her research experience and the impressive findings she has made on what will be a transformative contribution to British scholarship.

“Seasons  
are  
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passing  
of time. ”

We are also grateful to Professor Celia Naylor (Barnard College) for her contribution to our Advanced Search section. Celia's book, *Unsilencing Slavery: Telling Truths About Rose Hall Plantation, Jamaica*, uses a range of sources, including the LBS database, to deconstruct the long-held myth of the well-known Jamaican plantation made famous in Herbert G. DeLisser's 1929 novel, *The White Witch of Rose Hall*. Celia documents life on the estate for most of its inhabitants, enslaved Africans and their descendants, and offers a penetrating discussion of DeLisser's work and its durability in the Jamaican imagination. There is an important digital history component to the project in which all the persons who worked on the estate are named.

Such approaches open myriad possibilities for how we reconstruct quotidian experiences on Caribbean estates during British slavery. It is a theme dear to the heart of Dr Suzanne Francis-Brown (Honorary Research Fellow with the University of the West Indies Museum) who has been working painstakingly on the history of the Papine estate in Mona, now site of the celebrated University of the West Indies campus in Jamaica. Our final public lecture of 2022 was a terrific presentation by Suzanne on her research findings and how she reconstructed enslaved family networks. You can view Suzanne's presentation [on our YouTube channel](#). A major component of Suzanne's work has been in support of campus memorials to the unfree labourers who lived, died, and survived there. Obelisks near some of the former sugar works list their names and make public the history of the land where generations of Caribbean people toiled and learned.

Campus connections to difficult legacies of slavery remain significant issues for universities outside of the Caribbean. In the autumn I had a productive trip to the University of Virginia in a state that was one of the first locations of British colonisation and slavery in the Americas. There I visited the [Memorial to Enslaved Laborers](#) on the University campus.

## “Each phase of the memorial...invites reflection on the spatial confrontations between historic violence and current remembrances”

A marvel of design, intention and community activism, the monument is sited on an area that faces the main road so that it is not hidden from view. Its structure is in the shape of an open shackle that in expanse replicates the dimension of UVA's hallmark rotunda designed by Thomas Jefferson. Each phase of the memorial—from its evocative stream of running water invoking river Jordan, to the empty lines for those whose names remain unknown—invites reflection on the spatial confrontations between historic violence and current remembrances.

The designers ensured that the memorial would be especially illuminated by the sun on 3 March each year, which is the date celebrated as Liberation Day in Charlottesville. Liberation Day is a moment for celebration and contemplation much like the approach of a new year.

As I reflect on the past year, I close with my profound gratitude to all in our small and devoted team, our volunteers, our contributing researchers in various locations, our donors, our partners, our colleagues, and our community for the support. I wish you all in turn a better year ahead.



Matthew J. Smith  
Director

The RBST brings together a team of academic researchers to create a publicly accessible website holding biographic profiles of each slave-trader that details their commercial, philanthropic, familial, political, and educational connections and legacies. In many cases, the influence of these individuals went beyond financial entanglement to actively shaping the agendas and priorities of key institutions of British power during and after the period of British slave trading. The Register brings together cohorts of slave-traders from London, Liverpool, Bristol, smaller ports, and corporate investors in the Royal African Company (RAC) and South Sea Company (SSC) to transcend abstracted ideas of faceless investors and demonstrate the structure and significance of Britain's involvement in transatlantic slavery.

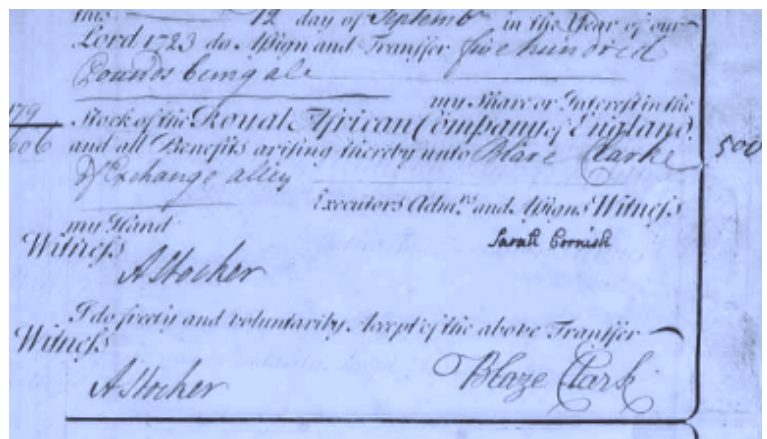
My particular research area has been developing biographical accounts of the over 1,050 women who invested in the transatlantic slave trade, either by providing funding to individual slaving voyages, or, more commonly, through investment in the two primary slave-trading companies of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (the RAC and SSC). For many women, the appeal of investing in transatlantic slavery lay in their ability to secure wealth and status for their broader family networks. Most, though not all, female investors were not married, either single women or widows, with holdings reverting to their husbands upon marriage.

## FEATURE PROJECT

# *The Register of British Slave- Traders: How the trafficking of captive African people shaped Britain*

LILA O'LEARY CHAMBERS

*Between 1550 and 1807 over 3.2 African women, men, and children were forcibly trafficked by Britain to provide the labour which fuel its burgeoning Atlantic empire. To date, the Register of British Slave-Traders Project (RBST) has identified over 13,000 individuals who invested in the transatlantic trade of captive African people during this period. It is a cross-institutional initiative between Lancaster University, the University of Manchester, and UCL's Centre for the Study of Legacies of British Slavery funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council.*



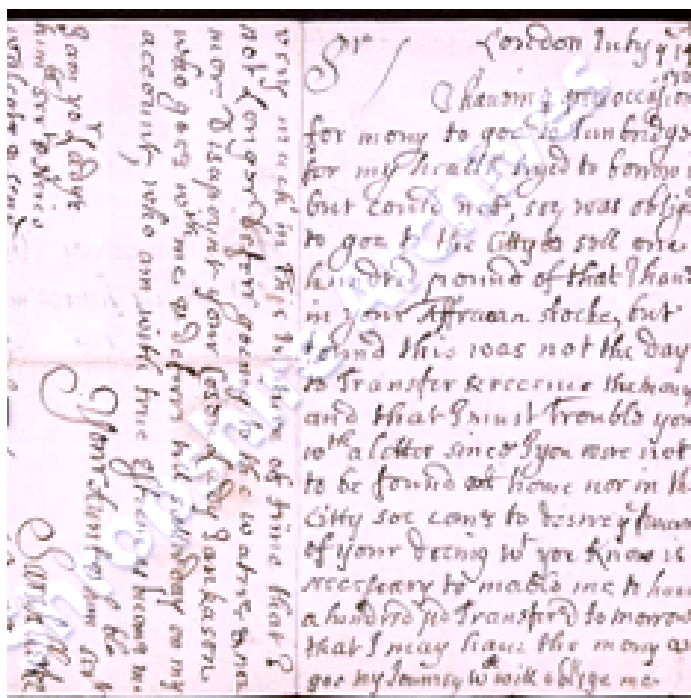
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The wealth they obtained from this financial outlay went to family members, charities, the construction and maintenance of sumptuous homes that still stand today, and into material culture. In some cases, women transferred shares to male family members in order to facilitate their membership in the ruling body of the Royal African Company, connecting them to broader British investment in, and direction of, transatlantic slavery.

While tracing the financial and political links that British institutions and their members held to the transatlantic trafficking of enslaved African people is imperative, less prominent, but no less troubling, were the quotidian ways people in Britain used the economic benefits of slave trade investment to expand their own autonomy at the expense of those held in bondage.

For example, Mrs. Sarah Clerke demanded that her nephew transfer £100 of the RAC stock he held for her in order to fund a spa trip to Tunbridge Wells.

“*A far deeper silence in the archive...can be felt when trying to recover details concerning the African and African-descended women, children, whose lives, bodies, and labour underpinned this system of profit and exploitation.*”



SHROPSHIRE ARCHIVE X151/16/1/2/2

While her letter clearly illustrates the difficulties of economic structures that made many women dependent on male family members, contemporary readers should equally attend to the pervasive and yet obscured way that the enslavement of African people facilitated British leisure, directly and indirectly.

Despite standing as a sizable minority of investors, tracing women in RAC and SSC financial records holds its own distinct challenges. As the example of Sarah Clerke reveals, it was not uncommon for women to hold stock under the names of male relatives. Women also regularly changed their names through marriage, making tracking down their wills or other financial trails more complex. Even with the required investment, they could not participate directly in Company management, at least on the written record.

A far deeper silence in the archive, however, can be felt when trying to recover details concerning the African and African-descended women, children, whose lives, bodies, and labour underpinned this system of profit and exploitation.

In sharp contrast to those British men and women who invested in their commodification, no equivalent of careful administered wills with detailed instructions on the bequeathing of silver plate, a favourite necklace, or treasured book to family and friends resides in the formal archive.

Elizabeth Ashby's instruction that her son George keep a golden book on the charge that "they never part with the same but keep it as an heirloome to the family" takes on greater resonance given the context of her investment in the mass rending of the familial ties between the West African people trafficked by the RAC. (PROB 11/369/407).

Significantly, we have caught occasional and fragmentary glimpses of individual Africans in our research, such as the man recorded only as "Paupey", a "black or Negro servant" of Whig MP Henry Cornish. Paupey's legal status is unclear. He received an annuity in Henry Cornish's will, which may suggest that he was no longer enslaved by that point. He lived as a servant in a household that included Cornish's daughter Sarah, an investor in the Royal African Company prior to her marriage to Henry Holt, another RAC investor.

Even if satisfactory answers are not apparent, the questions that this case raises deserve to be asked:

Did Paupey overhear conversations about the Cornish family's decisions to invest or withdraw their money in the company responsible trafficking more individuals and greater human suffering and commodification than any other in the history of transatlantic slavery?

What might his reactions and experience of those situations have felt like? Conversely, did the presence of Paupey in her home inform Sarah's understanding of her decision to invest in the RAC, or did she remain willfully detached from the possible relationship between the two?

As I continue to research the British women who invested in transatlantic slavery, I hope to reveal both the extent and texture of their involvement as well as many more instances of African and black British experience like Paupey's that are hidden in plain sight.

## LOOKING AHEAD



Lila O'Leary Chambers will deliver a public lecture on her research at the CSLBS on Friday 10 February 2023 at the Institute of Advanced Studies Common Ground, UCL. Details of how to register will be published on the CSLBS website and social media channels in early 2023.

CSLBS Chair Professor Catherine Hall will present a lecture at Lambeth Palace Library on Edward Long, whose *History of Jamaica* (1774) provides an extraordinarily detailed picture of the plantation economy, the slavery business as it operated across the Atlantic, and the forms of racialisation on which the system depended. "Making White and Black: Edward Long, slave-owner and historian of Jamaica" will take place on Wednesday 8 February 2023 at 5.30pm. All are welcome, but those wishing to attend should book a free ticket via [Eventbrite](#).

# ADVANCED SEARCH

## *The Afterlives of the Legacies of British Slavery*

CELIA E. NAYLOR

*Professor of History and Africana Studies  
Barnard College, Columbia University*

In the wake of my first tour of the Rose Hall Great House in Jamaica in 2013, as I grappled with the myths erroneously passing as history in the tour, I had very little hope that I would be able to write an entire book on the Rose Hall Plantation. I imagined that I just might be able to pull together a short essay on the enslaved persons who lived and labored at Rose Hall, but probably only that and nothing more.

Much later on, as I started to read page after page of the Rose Hall Plantation Journal at the Jamaica Archives in Spanish Town, Jamaica, as well as the triennial slave registries that included the names and other limited information about the enslaved persons at this plantation, I became even more focused on the people of African descent who were enslaved at Rose Hall. Given the heightened (and almost exclusive) attention to the myths surrounding Annie Palmer over many generations, however, I wanted to limit how much time and energy I devoted to researching and writing about the white enslavers associated with Rose Hall.

I could not entirely dismiss the white enslavers, white overseers, and white bookkeepers from the book entirely, and the UCL Legacies of British Slaveownership database (now part of the newly named Centre for the Study of the Legacies of British Slavery) was a critical archival ally on this journey.

I had heard about this incredible database in sessions at the annual conferences of the Association of Caribbean Historians in Nassau, Bahamas in 2015 and in Havana, Cuba in 2016. I remember clearly my initial exploration of the Legacies of British Slaveownership database. I could not believe how much information this database included, particularly the specific references and cross-references to British men and women who were enslavers throughout the former British colonies in the Caribbean. Indeed, the database included summaries of critical information from other archival sources about these estates/plantations (e.g., the triennial slave registries throughout selected British colonies in the Caribbean, wills of British enslavers, letters, the House of Commons Parliamentary Papers 1837-1838, and much more)!

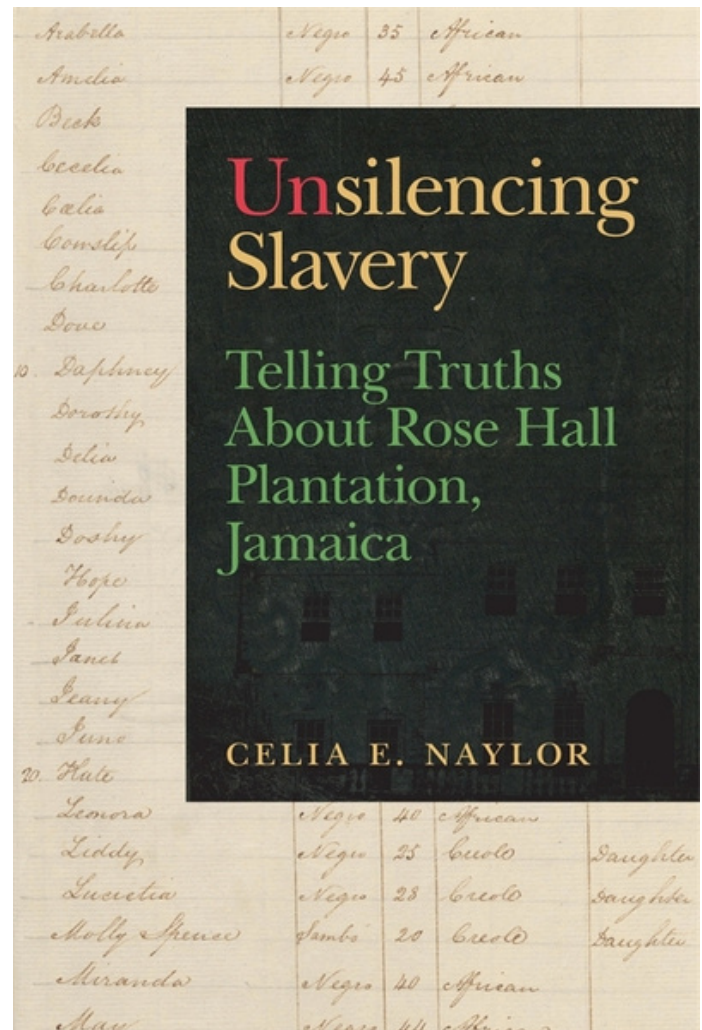
“ *I could not believe  
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enslavers throughout  
the former British  
colonies in the  
Caribbean* ”



For my book on Rose Hall, entitled *Unsilencing Slavery: Telling Truths about Rose Hall Plantation, Jamaica* (and the companion website at [unsilencing-slavery.org](http://unsilencing-slavery.org)), the database provided additional information about white enslavers and other British subjects who were legally connected to Rose Hall during the period of my study, as well as in the decades preceding the focus of my book.

The database allowed me not only to confirm the limited references I had already found in my archival research, but also to expand upon and tease out some of the information I had gathered about other white enslavers who were mentioned in passing in the Rose Hall Plantation Journal. Certainly more needs to be done on Rose Hall (and other plantations) in countless areas of research, and this database will continue to serve a vital function in the journeys of numerous researchers for many generations into the future.

In addition to the various ways that this database and larger project have provided necessary information to me and other persons researching slavery's past, it also offers an important intervention in actions related to the afterlives of slavery in the present moment and into the future.



Given the scope and depth of the archival research of this database and other related projects of the Centre for the Study of the Legacies of British Slavery, partnerships regarding reparations directly related to slavery, such as the CARICOM's Reparations Commission, would seem judicious. This could be part of the vision of what Professor Matthew J. Smith, Director of the Centre for the Study of the Legacies of British Slavery, thoughtfully invoked about the "reimaginings" of the Centre and its vital work.





The Centre for the study of the **Legacies of British Slavery**

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# OF THIS AND THAT *CSLBS on tour* in 2022



*Suzanne Francis-Brown delivers a public lecture at the CSLBS in December: 'Interleaving Records and Policies to Illuminate the Enslaved Community at Papine, Jamaica, 1817-1832.'*



*CSLBS team members Isaac Crichlow and Matt Stallard join colleagues from Hull, Glasgow, Cambridge, Bristol & St Andrews for the launch of Stephen Mullen's new book on the Glasgow Sugar Aristocracy and an early-career networking event at the Wilberforce Institute, University of Hull.*



*Director Matthew Smith examines the Monument to Enslaved Laborers during a visit to the campus of the University of Virginia in November.*



*Lissa Paul responds to audience questions during her public lecture 'Speaking the Unspeakable' at the CSLBS in October*



*"Cottonopolis" knitted cotton banner now on display at the Science and Industry Museum, designed by the Science and Industry Museum, designed by Manchester-based electroknitter and craft artist Green Jay Crafts and created collaboratively by visitors to our Global Threads engagement days in Summer 2022.*



*Global Threads team members Sibia Akhtar and William Douch present to the Science Museum Group's annual research conference at the Science and Industry Museum in Manchester in November.*

