"I don't really want to have hand to hand combat with someone who I know is right": how do volunteers contribute and respond to museum decolonisation?

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Content Warning: this thesis contains racialised language.

Declaration

I, Laurence Maidment-Blundell, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I can confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

Abstract

This thesis presents a study that directly explores the responses and contributions of public-facing volunteers to museum decolonisation and explores the ways in which they are being trained and prepared to communicate colonial and decolonised histories through three different case studies: the British Museum, Fulham Palace and the Horniman Museum. The thesis is cross-disciplinary in nature and brings together theorisation from: *serious leisure*, anti-colonial and decolonial theories such as a *museology of hope* and the operations of a *critical pedagogy of place*. Utilising these lenses and a multi-sited ethnographic approach with interviews, active participant observation and analysis of primary documents, this research: presumes an agentic and bottom-up view of volunteers and volunteering at each locale; explores how volunteers shape their own practice according to their needs and wants; and, interrogates how their sense of belonging, identity, purpose and practice are impacted by the potential changes brought about when decolonial practice is embraced. This thesis argues that support for and opposition to decolonisation and subsequent volunteer retention hinges not only upon the moral and political beliefs of volunteers, but also the ways in which they benefit from and construct their experience and practice as meaningful.

Impact Statement

This piece of research has benefits for those both inside and outside of the academy.

Firstly, this thesis actively contributes to the conceptualisations of heritage volunteering as a form of Stebbin's (1982) *serious leisure* but is unique since it is the first that has an explicit focus on how pursuing decolonisation impacts volunteers and volunteering.

By adopting an agentic-centric approach and recognising their liminal state as insider-outsiders, it provides a much-needed bottom-up perspective regarding how volunteer practice may change because of introducing more critically aligned practice and the implications this may have in terms of place attachment, their sense of belonging, how they utilise their site of volunteering to accrue specific benefits, and most importantly their willingness to continue volunteering.

Secondly, it further adds to discussions related to museum decolonisation beyond the scope of repatriation and restitution or collaborating with source communities. This is because prior research has predominantly focused on the reparative efforts employed by museums to redress their colonial wounds or changes in interpretation present within the master narrative of the museum. Consequently, this thesis also considers the ability of live-interpreter volunteers to redress colonial wounds through combating forms of epistemic violence and a coloniality of knowledge by introducing a plurality of knowledge as part of volunteer practice. Therefore, this research investigates the relative boundaries and practicalities of their potential new practice and to what extent they can become agents of epistemic decolonisation and reconstitution and facilitators of historical empathy for their various audiences.

Thirdly, it directly explores the potentialities and limits of operationalising a critical pedagogy of place as part of volunteer learning and training. This is because pursuing decolonisation will necessitate undertaking training with volunteers that will foster transformed and transgressive understandings of their organisation's complicity in historic oppression tied to colonialism and enslavement and how they continue to benefit from it. As a result, this research directly explores how this intent intersects with volunteer motivation as well as volunteer justifications for participation and non-participation.

Fourthly, this research provides three tangible case studies of organisations who have pursued decolonisation and included volunteers in the process. This research outlines the relative successes and failures at each organisation as well as the specific mechanisms they utilised to overcome volunteer resistance and opposition to decolonial practice. This then provides suggestions for other heritage organisations on how they can effectively engage with and include volunteers in their decolonisation efforts.

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Introduction:

In the wake of the murder of George Floyd and the corresponding Black Lives Matter protests, there has been heightened discussion within society concerning the persistence of racial inequalities and legacies of Empire. This is because colonial and imperial legacies continue to operate within contemporary society and actively contribute towards a partial history of Empire which omits and obfuscates the impacts it had upon colonised peoples and denies the collective trauma that is still experienced (Hirsch, 2022, Lorde, 1984, Museums Association, 2021). Consequently, there is a strong ethical imperative to incorporate a more critical and holistic view of Empire into what we view as British history.

As part of this more holistic view, there is a need to recognise the role that colonial-era and modern museums played in advancing racist and prejudicial views of the world that were used to legitimise colonial domination and subjugation (Museums Association, 2021). MacKenzie (2010) shows that museums throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries operated as 'weapons of empire' as they were strategically utilised to evoke civic, colonial, national and imperial power and instil pride in Empire by emphasising the 'superiority' of the coloniser through notions of 'progress' and 'development.' Based on this, Bennett et al (2014) describe how museums and accompanying 'experts', i.e., colonial-era anthropologists and curators, rendered colonised peoples as 'entirely knowable' and 'inferior' along the binarised categories of 'the rational and the irrational, the civilised and the primitive, the modern and the pre-modern, the scientific and the romantic' and thereby (re)presented these colonial imaginaries to core/metropolitan populations (Brulon Soares and Leschenko, 2018, Castro-Gomez, 2021, Gillepsie, 2008 as cited by MacKenzie, 2010: 4). Consequently, museums were complicit not only in the constitution but also destitution of colonised peoples and their cultures, as the 'Other', for the sake of constructing a sense of alterity that asserted the primacy of the modern Western world at the expense of colonised nations located predominantly in the Global South (Hicks, 2020, 2021).

To address these, museums are increasingly being called upon to act as sites for social activism and to challenge their own neutrality. This is because they are viewed as a key vehicle through which to bring about political, social, and environmental change and being regarded as trustworthy social institutions means that they can become increasingly important arenas to discuss, narrate and represent Empire and its afterlives (American Alliance of Museums, 2021, Dilenschneider, 2023, Linn, 2020, Nightingale and Sandell, 2012, Stoler, 2008, 2011). However, this level of trust is not uniform across all audiences and is very much influenced by ethnic and racial identity of select parties. For example, the American Alliances of Museums (2021) reported that overall trust in museums was higher in people from households who identified as white rather than from those who identified as part of the global majority. To combat this sense of mistrust, Zetterstrom-Sharp and Minott (2020: 45-46) propose that any sort of decolonial and anti-racist practice taken to critically engage with an organisation's colonial and imperial past should be conducted over the long-term, be generative, and underpinned by how race has shaped museological practice. This is especially with

regard to how museums construct, create and represent knowledge about people from global majority backgrounds. Therefore, as part of dismantling the contemporary infrastructure that upholds partial and triumphalist narratives, we can understand the the process of decolonisation within museums can be understood as:

> a series of struggles by which we learn [about] what obstacles, political prejudices, complacencies, misunderstandings, culture-clashes, and infrastructural anomalies are needed to [be] overcome (Tolia-Kelly and Raymond, 2020: 1).

When put into practice, what does this look like? The Museums Association (2021) has issued guidance for how organisations can begin their decolonisation journey and what can be viewed as best practice. Central to this is the recognition that decolonising museums cannot undo all colonial legacies, but rather it can fashion museums into spaces which are more welcoming and sensitive for how various audiences may engage with them by not actively celebrating historic and ongoing forms of colonial violence, whether it be epistemic, spiritual or material. Because of this, what is defined as decolonisation is both context- and place-based, meaning that it can encompass a wide range of intersectional practice, including: challenging whiteness by diversifying organisations; repatriation and restitution; collaborating with external partners to give them control over how objects are curated, displayed and interpreted; addressing absences in institutional narratives related their colonial connections; recontextualising enslavers or other colonial-era figures; or, actively pursuing forms of social and reparative justice (Chevalier, *et al* 2023, Das and Lowe, 2018, Giblin *et al* 2019, Gunning and Challis, 2022, Huhn and Anderson, 2021, Johnson, 2016a, Kassim, 2019, Miller and Eppler, 2021, Ramirez, 2021, Sterling and Larkin, 2021, Sium *et al*, 2012, Weber-Sinn and Ivanov, 2020). Based on this, the Museums Association (2021) state that there are ten principles that should guide any sort of decolonising practice:

- challenge neutrality since neutrality maintains power and silences the experiences and histories of the many that have been overlooked;
- acknowledge power and privilege;
- build relationships through nurturing sustainable, meaningful and equitable interactions with those who are underrepresented and misrepresented within museums;
- value all forms of knowledge and expertise equally, especially since not all knowledge is fixed and there are multiple perspectives;
- be brave since ethical practice, or what is best for your stakeholders, may not align with best traditional practice;
- be accountable by being transparent about museum practices and admit the challenges involved, invite and be open to scrutiny, take responsibility and commit to learning and growth;
- do the work by recognising that decolonisation occurs over the long-term which necessitates action and appropriate resources;
- take care by looking after yourself and all those who are part of the work, especially given the inflamed culture war context at the time;

- be creative by being imaginative and inspired in creating meaningful change within your organisation;
- and aim for justice as it is important to remember who you are doing this for and why and so work with them to achieve justice on their terms.

However, attempts at decolonising museums and other heritage institutions and interrogating how they are responsible for upholding a singular conception of the UK's national narrative have become swept up into the wider culture wars. Davison Hunter (1991) first introduced the term to describe the deep-seated tensions in US society between 'orthodox' and 'progressive' worldviews and the influence these have in shaping cultural issues that are key to the nation's identity. Wolfe (1998) further describes that the antagonism between these worldviews became oriented towards the futurity of the US with 'one fiercely upholding traditional values, and the other enthusiastically welcoming modernity'. As a result, there are differing perspectives based on one's political stance regarding how the UK should engage with the signs and symbols that are emblematic of Empire. In essence, this has been reduced to two main stances: on the one hand, those that call for the removal or re-contextualisation of relics of Empire and, on the other those who view the inequalities and thefts caused by Empire in positive terms and the historical critique of figures associated with Empire as 'erasing history' in ways that constitute an attack on their conception of nationhood (Donnington, 2019, Garton Grimwood, 2021). This has popularised by many on the right of the political spectrum, that any attempts at decolonising museums are 'performative', 'woke' and a part of rewriting history (Clare, 2022, Donnington, 2019).

These stark divides were also seen regarding the status of contested heritage within the UK's public realm. This came to a head with the toppling of the statue of Edward Colston in Bristol on the 7th June 2020 (BBC, 2022). Immediately after Colston fell, Robert Jenrick, the then Secretary for Housing, Communities and Local Government, stated that 'we will save Britain's statues from the woke militants who want to censor our past' and further right-wing newspapers proclaimed that removing the statues of enslavers can be viewed as 'cancelling' or 'erasing history' (Abulafia, 2022). However, such an emphasis was rejected by Olusoga (2020a) who argued that the removal of statues of enslavers is not 'erasing history' but rather seeing it in action as it represented a fundamental moment of change whereby people could no longer tolerate the celebration of a man 'who bought, sold and killed human beings'. The toppling of the statue then led to the Tory government, who was in power at the time, to adopt the policy of 'retain and explain' to prevent statuary commemorating colonial figures or enslavers from being de-platformed, and that any individuals who remove statues without necessary planning permission could face between three to ten-years in prison (Garton Grimwood, 2021). This governmental view was further articulated by the then Culture Secretary, Oliver Dowden (2020: 1), who in a letter to museums and heritage bodies that are the beneficiaries of public funds stated that:

' *'History is ridden with moral complexity. Statues and other historical objects were created by generations with different perspectives and understandings of right and wrong. Some represent figures who have said or done things which we may find deeply offensive and would not defend today. But though*

we may now disagree with those who created them or who they represent, they play an important role in teaching us about our past, with all its faults.

It is for this reason that the Government <u>does not support the removal of statues or other similar objects</u>. Historic England, as the Government's adviser on the historic environment, have said that removing difficult and contentious parts of it risks harming our understanding of our collective past. Rather than erasing these objects, we should seek to contextualise or reinterpret them in a way that enables the public to learn about them in their entirety, however challenging this may be. Our aim should be to use them to educate people about all aspects of Britain's complex past, both good and bad.'

However, such a stance was not universally welcomed. For example, the Runnymede Trust, an anti-racist NGO and thinktank, directly challenged the government's stance and argued that retaining these statues in the public realm may facilitate the exclusion of racially minoritised groups. In their Changing Shape of Cultural Activism report, they state that:

'When statues of slavers and colonisers occupy public space, they convey the message that racially minoritised people are unwelcome strangers – a message that is reinforced when these statues are celebrated and 'defended'. In a democracy, public space should be equally accessible, and equally welcoming, to all members of the public. Yet actively maintaining statues of colonisers and slaveholders perpetuates the exclusion of many people from public space.' (Runnymede Trust, 2021:3).

Based on these tensions, Duffy *et al* (2021) conducted a survey to explore the impacts of the culture war upon the UK according to five main themes: Brexit, the British Empire, Black Lives Matter (BLM), Transgender Rights and Covid-19. Duffy *et al* (2021: 7) organised respondents according to four categories:

- *traditionalists* who made up 26% of respondents who are white, over 55, voted leave in the Brexit referendum, are proud of the British Empire and are opposed to BLM;
- *progressives* who made up 23% of respondents who are likely to be younger and female, are 'ashamed' of Empire, support BLM and voted Remain;
- *moderates* who made up 32% of respondents who support greater rights for women and ethnic minorities, who feel that political correctness has gone too far, are neither nostalgic for the past nor proud of Empire;
- and *disengaged* who made up 18% of respondents who are neutral in terms of their politics and Brexit, are less likely to take a stance on equal rights for women and ethnic minorities and the least likely to take a stance on culture war issues.

Overall, Duffy *et al* (2021: 55) found that 35% of respondents were 'proud of empire', 23% were 'ashamed' and 38% were 'neither' or ambivalent. Within this, 19% of 16 to 24 years olds reported that they feel 'proud' for Empire and a much more significant 44% of over-55s commented on the pride they have of Empire. Similarly, 76% of respondents

over the age of 55 believed that PC culture had 'gone too far' whereas 38% of 16–24-year-olds felt this was the case. These findings were further reflected by Juan-Torres *et al* (2020: 141-142) who found that 60% of young people think it is necessary to acknowledge the wrongs of British history, whereas 70% of people think this is 'pointless'. This is then indicative of how there is a generational divide where older demographics who align with more traditionalist values are more likely to be critical of PC culture and view the British Empire in positive terms.

Further conflicts regarding the representation of Empire in the public realm can also be seen with the popular responses to the National Trust's 'Interim Report on the Connections between Colonialism and Properties now in the Care of the National Trust, including links with historic slavery.' The report commissioned and produced by National Trust (2020) was primarily concerned with researching the links of 29 properties to historic colonialism and Trans-Atlantic Enslavement with the intent of directly challenging familiar and received histories present in collections and at their houses, gardens and parklands. This was done to demonstrate how people of colour as well as oppression tied to colonial legacies and the violence from the trans-Atlantic trade in enslaved Africans are often overlooked in histories and narratives concerning the making of 'modern Britain' (National Trust, 2020: 6). This report was intended to act as a solid foundation upon which the heritage organisation could work with diverse audiences to share stories that have been forgotten, obscured, overlooked or insufficiently explored (*ibid*: 5).

However, the report's findings were not received well from people who viewed Empire in positive terms, so that key academics and the National Trust became subject to furious attacks. Prompted by the then Secretary of State for Culture, Oliver Dowden, these included being subject to a Charity Commission investigation to explore whether the trust had veered from its 'clear, simple purpose' to conserve historic buildings and treasures (Mills, 2022, Sangheera, 2021: 127). Further, critics formed an anti-woke group known as Restore Trust, arguing that the Trust had moved away from its primary 'remit' by embracing what they viewed as 'divisive ideologies' (Morrison, 2024). Such sentiments were reflected by senior conservatives such as Jacob Rees-Mogg who actively supported the efforts of Restore Trust, commenting that the National Trust should remain 'true to its founding principles and stay clear of identity politics' (Whannel, 2024). Whilst there was a concerted effort by Restore Trust to contest what they viewed as 'woke' practice, National Trust members decisively rejected their agendas and proposals at the organisation's 2023 AGM where none of their candidates were elected to the governing body of the Trust (Adams, 2023). This pushback displayed in the foiling of Restore Trust was reflected in the comments of the current culture secretary, Lisa Nandy, when she proclaimed that the era of culture wars is now 'over' and the government was now committed to 'celebrating and championing diversity and [the] rich inheritance of our communities and the people in them', rather than promoting divisive rhetoric (Walker, 2024).

The overall context of the culture wars is particularly important when considering the potential contribution and reaction of volunteers to a heritage institution's attempts to 'decolonise'. Post-Covid and post-austerity, many heritage organisations are becoming

reliant on their volunteers to support their day-to-day running, and so they need to retain them over the long-term. The importance of retention was reinforced during the Covid-19 pandemic where a survey conducted by the Heritage Fund found that 82% of respondents reported a high or moderate risk to their organisation's long-term financial viability, and utilising volunteers was proposed as one mechanism to address any shortfall in provision (Heritage Volunteering Group, 2020: 2). However, the National Council of Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) (2023) reported that overall volunteer participation has been on the decline. As part of their Time Well Spent survey, they canvassed 7,000 people about volunteer participation. Each was asked about their motivation and barriers to their volunteering, the quality of volunteers' experiences and how they saw the impact of volunteering. Most notably, the NCVO (2023) found that there was not only a slight decline in willingness to volunteer from 80% in 2018 to 77% in 2022, but also a decrease in volunteer satisfaction with their practice which was 96% in 2018 and 92% in 2022. Even though the likelihood to volunteer and levels of overall satisfaction are still very high, the decrease in both indicators further accentuates how people seem to be deriving less meaning and purpose from their activity. As suggested by Arka *et al* (2022), Faletehan *et al* (2021) and Smithson *et al* (2018), volunteer retention is more likely when they feel high levels of personal commitment and feel satisfaction as a result of providing their labour that benefits the organisation, themselves or enhances the reputation of a place. Consequently, cultural heritage organisations need to provide an experience that is beneficial and meaningful to individual volunteers but may be wary of alienating them over the decision to interrogate to Empire, thereby, prompting a 'brain-drain'.

Harflett (2014, 2015) suggests that the cultural and social capital of volunteers informs their likelihood to volunteer and whether they perceive their experience as being meaningful. In their work, they conducted a National Trust wide survey of volunteers which included 12,000 respondents as well as conducting 50 semi-structured interviews with volunteers and staff. In terms of demographics, many volunteers are white (99%), are educated to degree level (65%), 90% own their own home, and the majority identify as middle class (Harflett, 2015). They found that volunteers had core common interests and motivations in terms of using their practice as a leisure experience, as a substitute for paid work, to gain work experience and to further their own interests related to cultural heritage and historic homes. On top of this, respondents indicated that their interest in cultural heritage had developed over time either because of their upbringing or lived experience, meaning that volunteer background and family influences were important in shaping their leisure interests and preferences (Harflett, 2014. 2015).

Legget (2021) reflects Harflett's findings in their work on volunteering in cultural heritage tourism in Aotearoa, New Zealand. Legget (2021) examined the composition and motivations of volunteers at three differing museums in Auckland and found that there was an overrepresentation of European New Zealanders in comparison to the Māori counterparts and that the decision to volunteer emerged from their possessed cultural capital. This is because they found: a strong desire to support the delivery of a good quality visitor experience; to protect and share their nation's heritage for domestic and international audiences; as well as a desire to use the experience to further own

interests in cultural heritage and to gain new perspectives. Consequently, the decision to volunteer and its meaningfulness is closely tied to how they are able to bring 'their personal interests with them' (Legget, 2021: 107).

Although museum and heritage volunteering can be viewed as an activity that enables people to further their own interests, it does raise questions about to what extent is this ethical given the implications this may have for replacing salaried work, and how this operates as an exclusionary measure? Fredheim (2018) grapples with these questions by exploring how the discursive deployment of 'endangerment' has resulted in the promotion of neoliberalist ideologies that encourage the need to 'protect' museums and the heritage they (re)produce through volunteering. Through this promotion, volunteering is portrayed as being an innately positive experience that enables the individual to promote a selective interpretation of what heritage means to them, which then glosses over the negatives pertaining to: using volunteer labour as a replacement for salaried work; how gaining career experience via volunteering maintains privilege; how dominant and positive views of volunteering can be assimilatory in nature; and, how marginalised groups can be excluded by making the experience more conducive to people who possess specific social and cultural capital. Jo et al (2023) reinforce these conclusions through their own their work which examines volunteer motivation and the likelihood to volunteer within communities of colour in the US. They conclude that people from global majority backgrounds, and more specifically Hispanics, are more likely to volunteer for and participate within organisations that are geared towards benefitting communities that they are members of, and that their decision to not participate in organisations beyond their immediate environment can be informed by a lack of diversity and shared sense of belonging. Therefore, they call for organisations that utilise volunteering to remove barriers to entry and promote a pluralised form of practice that does not valorise whiteness and is accommodating of various kinds of interest.

When applied to communicating histories of enslavement, Handler and Gable (1997) display how the personal interests of docents can come into conflict with organisational necessities. In their seminal work, Handler and Gable (1997) conducted an organisational ethnography which focused on the daily operations of Colonial Williamsburg and how live interpreters engaged with various audiences. They explored the central tension that was present at the site, namely on the one hand that it operated as an educational institution responsible for providing an authentic representation of 17th Century America for various audiences and, on the other, its operation as a business. This is because they highlighted the problems that came with embracing social history that is critically intended to fashion visitors into social critics who would be able to analyse specific historical and cultural circumstances present in 17th century America. For example, how their place in the contemporary world is linked to oppressive Trans-Atlantic enslavement versus the need to guarantee a positive and pleasurable touristic experience. Because of this, the references made to enslaved peoples and the institution of enslavement were framed either by explicitly focusing on the monetary value associated with the trade or by 'benign' forms of slavery which valorise the enslaver at the expense of a more comprehensive discussion of how racialised and dehumanising logics denied their freedom and legitimated chattel

slavery and the infrastructures these operated through (Gable and Handler, 1993, Handler and Gable, 1997).

Potter (2015) directly interrogates how the agency of docents can shape the reception of histories of enslavement. This is because they recognise that previous literature like Eichstedt and Small (2002) has predominantly focused on the framing or representations of histories within the tour narrative, rather than on the performative role of docents and how they respond to their audiences. For example, Potter (2015) states that a common criticism of docents is that they can systematically annihilate the presence of African Americans when discussing enslavement, but also that a lack of reference to the agencies, labour and presence of enslaved peoples can emerge because of specific tour dynamics related to composition and interests of the tour groups, the spatial context in which the activity is situated, the questions they ask, and what level specific narratives should be communicated. These findings were reflected by Graves (2020: 243, 2023) who noted that docent live interpretation, especially provided in museums which are aligning themselves to social justice and may have critical content, are potentially hamstrung by the tolerance of visitors to engage in forms of intellectual and social discomfort. Consequently, Potter (2015) concludes that any sort of examination of docent communication of histories of enslavement should be cognizant of how the complexities and nuances of the tour, alongside their agency shape the overall experience.

Recognising how the agency of the volunteer can shape the communication of Empire, Keenlyside (2019, 2022) and Anderson and Keenlyside (2021) have critically examined the role of docents as gallery educators in mediating audience encounters with Canada's settler colonial past. This is because they recognised the importance of docents or volunteer guides in connecting audiences to the content of national collections and how their subjectivity frames the way specific histories surrounding pieces of art are communicated. Consequently, the authors devised a framework through which volunteers might problematise their Eurocentrism in ways including: critical reflection that located themselves in relation to more macro socio-cultural debates surrounding the relevance of colonial legacies; how indigenous peoples have been historically erased; and how indigenous histories and voices can be recentred in epistemic decolonisation and reconstitution (Anderson and Keenlyside, 2021). As a result, the aim was to equip and empower docents or volunteer guides with the ability to problematise settler-colonial renderings of history and to enable recognition and discussion of indigenous histories through the collection which had previous been omitted, silenced, or obfuscated.

However, while the work of Anderson and Keenlyside (2021) and Keenlyside (2019, 2022) encouraged gallery educators to consider their own reflexivity and practice as part of engendering instances of transformative learning, there was a lack of investigation regarding volunteer motivation, place attachment, and how encouraging decolonial practice may reconfigure this. As noted by Keenleyside (2022: 136), they did not have the opportunity to conduct focus groups with volunteer guides to examine how their practice changed in the long-term as a result of confronting their whiteness, and so there is a need to examine whether changing how volunteers strategically shape

their practice and membership within an organisation to derive specific benefits from their experience may have implicated their support for embracing decolonial practice.

The methodological limitations identified by Keenlyside (2022) have been addressed by Brenner (2020) who focused on the contribution of volunteers to decolonising Natural History museums in Washington, US. They concluded that attempts to actualise decolonisation through volunteer engagement resulted in increased volunteer support for museum decolonisation, increased empathy for indigenous peoples and encouraged a feeling that they could contribute to the museum's overall decolonisation process. Consolidating these results, Brenner (2020) suggested that museums could adopt seven strategies to enhance the potential involvement of volunteers in decolonisation efforts, these include: incorporating decolonisation-related topics in volunteer training; having clear communication from staff regarding appropriate behaviour and languages; sharing information through online resources; having lectures by external experts to supplement the knowledge base of volunteers; having lectures from Museum staff related to colonialism and combatting colonial legacies; including 'other' perspectives in volunteer training; and, providing further staff training and education so that they can support volunteers as the institution attempts to decolonise itself.

The importance of these seven steps is echoed through the work of Clare (2022) who focused on the impact of the culture wars upon volunteers at the British Museum and Kenwood House, London. Clare (2022) noted that volunteers at both sites felt the need to engage with topics surrounding Empire, but that this also required specific training, e.g., further clarification around the histories of Dido Bell or Sir Hans Sloane and what terminology they should use, so that they feel confident in the histories that they are conveying and can be sure that they do not cause any offence. However, Clare (2022) went further than Brenner (2020) to emphasise the problems that may emerge from volunteer participation in decolonisation efforts. This is because Clare (2022) notes that these organisations lack a means through which to engage more politically 'conservative' volunteers, meaning that they risk alienating them from the organisation by deciding to interrogate their colonial and imperial past. Consequently, they reinforce the importance for organisations to develop a means through which they are clearly able to communicate and justify clearly why they decided to decolonise themselves so that volunteers are more likely to buy into the initiatives.

So, why does this research matter? Decolonising museums is a place- and context-specific process that aims to directly unveil and confront the celebration of colonial and imperial violence to make museums more comfortable, especially for those from global majority backgrounds. However, such practice has been met with divisive responses over how the UK's colonial and imperial connections should be represented and whether it is the role and responsibility of museums as educational institutions to promote a more critical view of these histories. This is where volunteers factor in. Volunteers are a vital stakeholder group for the running of museums and heritage organisations, and arguably they are also the most public-facing group since they operate as visible ambassadors and are therefore indispensable in supporting the daily functions of these institutions. This is further exacerbated by the insider-outsider

position and status of volunteers. This is because whilst volunteers are beholden to their institutions via formal codes of conduct, they are not salaried and legally bound to their organisation meaning that they can employ greater flexibility as part of their practice. Recognising this is crucial since given the culture war context, public-facing volunteers can decide and take it upon themselves to visibly and viscerally support or subvert museum decolonisation. Given this, it is important to be aware of how any introduced changes might reconfigure volunteering and how attempting to introduce more critically aligned practice intersects with how volunteers feel about any attempts to decolonise, how they may shape their practice accordingly and how they can be best prepared to support this.

So, what is at stake? If the role of volunteers is downplayed or even ignored, then the purported transformative potential of decolonisation is undermined. This is because public-facing volunteers, whether as live-interpreters or not, will be fundamental in mediating visitor encounters with colonial and decolonial histories. This then justifies a prerogative to appropriately equip, empower and support them in order to guarantee generative and meaningful outcomes for all parties. If done badly, having volunteers communicating these histories could further exclude marginalised audiences who do not feel comfortable within museums, or not sufficiently keeping volunteers in the know could disenfranchise those who may possess a significant amount of knowledge and experience, thereby, causing a brain-drain. Therefore, in order to prevent either of these from happening, it is important to understand how volunteer subjectivity, in the form of their motivation as well as how they perceive the significance of decolonisation, shapes their practice in ways that they view as meaningful and how this intersects with efforts to make museums more comfortable for all of their audiences.

Positionality statement

Museum decolonisation is a multifaceted topic, especially given calls for cultural institutions to actively confront their complicity in historic colonialism and its contemporary legacies and to fashion themselves into inclusive places that respect a plurality of ways of being, knowing and seeing. With that in mind, any sort of research that situates itself within the wider topic of decolonisation must be aware of the multiplicity of intersecting and competing identities and worldviews that actors and contributors bring with them.

The first aspect of my identity that informed my approach to this research is undoubtedly my ethnic/racial background. Identifying as a white researcher with English and Scottish cultural heritage, I wholeheartedly acknowledge my partial insight into the lived consequences of historic colonialism and enslavement, as well as my relative inability to grasp the full nuances associated with how its legacies have fuelled dehumanising and racist rhetoric across the UK. Moreover, I recognise that I am also operating in places and spaces that are the direct beneficiaries of epistemic, financial, and material legacies of historic and contemporary colonialism as well as the trans-Atlantic trade in and trafficking of enslaved Africans.

Secondly, coming from a professional-middle class background provided me with the socio-economic security to develop my active participation in museums and volunteering, beginning at the age of thirteen at the Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology, and subsequently undertaking this PhD. This is important to acknowledge as without this familial context, I would not have had the time or resources to undertake such extensive volunteering both prior to and during my research, thereby enabling me to develop the necessary expertise and cultural and social capital by which to effectively navigate the networks of volunteering at each of my partner organisations. Moreover, being the son of two academics afforded a degree of privilege based on my exposure to Higher Education, prior theorisation surrounding pedagogy and education studies and being able to receive their wholehearted support in both academic and personal ventures.

Thirdly, it is important to acknowledge the epistemic privileges that I have being both a researcher and PhD student at the UCL Institute of Archaeology. This is because the reputation of UCL and more specifically the Institute of Archaeology may have conferred a certain amount of prestige that underpinned my research efforts which may have opened doors and afforded greater access to partner organisations and perceived expertise on my part. On top of this, being a PhD student at the UCL Institute of Archaeology exposed me to world-class academics and researchers, and in particular my supervisors. So, it is important to be aware of the inequalities in educational and

cultural opportunity that are actively perpetuated by institutions located in the Global North and West.

Research rationale and questions

Public facing volunteers play a critical role in supporting the running of museums, whether as ambassadors of the organisation or interacting with various audiences as live interpreters. However, 'top-down' policy decisions to pursue decolonisation may cause tensions with the grassroots experience of volunteers. Therefore, this PhD directly follows and identifies potential conflicts, synergies and tensions that may emerge from 'top-down' expectations and how they manifest in the 'bottom-up' and grassroots practice of volunteers and meanings they attach to their activity.

My three research questions are as follows:

- (RQ1) How do volunteers respond to their institution's decolonisation efforts?

- (RQ2) What implications may decolonisation efforts have for their volunteering experience?

- (RQ3) In what specific ways does the institution seek to engage, equip, empower, and support their volunteers to communicate decolonised histories?

Structure of PhD

This document contains six further chapters. The first chapter comprises of my main theoretical framework that I have selected in response to my research questions. The second chapter contains my main guiding methodology, Multi-Sited Ethnography, details my research design as well as the methods I used to generate data for each of my case studies, and explains my approach to data analysis and interpretation in answering my research questions. The third, fourth and fifth chapters are my empirical chapters and contain my results from the British Museum, Fulham Palace and the Horniman Museum respectively. Each chapter also includes a comprehensive discussion which summarises my main findings with reference to the main RQs. The sixth and final chapter contains my conclusions which specifically answers my research questions, proposed future avenues for research as well as final thoughts and reflections on the topic.

Theory Chapter:

This chapter outlines the lenses brought together to construct my theoretical framework. Since RQ1 concerns the responses of volunteers to museum decolonisation and RQ2 considers changes to their experience, the first section discusses the differences between psychological and sociologically inclined volunteer motivational theories and discusses the concept *serious leisure*. This aims to provide the reader with an understanding of what motivates people to volunteer, how heritage volunteers situate themselves within their site of volunteering and alludes to ways they may shape their own practice. This then provides the necessary contextual and discursive terrain to build a more focused discussion of what comprises decoloniality, decolonisation, and its impacts on volunteer practice.

The second section of this chapter moves beyond the volunteer to consider macro-level concepts and discourses that make up decolonial theory. I selected this branch of theory to elucidate details pertaining to all three research questions, because it is important to define what decolonisation is to sufficiently investigate how it impacts volunteers and volunteering. As a result, this grapples with the various concepts within decolonial theory by qualifying: what is coloniality; how this operates through the colonial matrix of power; what is decoloniality and the mechanisms that can be deployed in rejecting the workings of the colonial matrix of power as well as the consequences of doing this.

The third section builds on the previous two by incorporating the theoretical insights provided by the key facets of decolonial theory with current museum practice surrounding historic colonialism, Trans-Atlantic enslavement and its contemporary legacies. This section discusses the meaning of a museology of hope. It goes on to describe some elements of the colonial wound present in museums and heritage organisations. Further, this section explores the ways organisations can redress that wound by fashioning themselves as places for and of connectiveness, together with the importance of collaboration in enabling this. This theorisation then intersects with the prior discussion of viewing heritage volunteering as *serious leisure*, especially with regard to how volunteers utilise their site of volunteering for their own benefit and attach meaning to their activity (RQ1), as well as some potential changes to their experience (RQ2). It also provides clarification regarding the key discourses that are being conveyed to volunteers as they encounter colonial and decolonised histories as part of their training (RQ3).

Finally, the fourth section directly address both RQ2 and RQ3 when considering potential changes to practice. It explores the nature of a *critical pedagogy of place* and how this operates to provide pedagogical underpinnings for training volunteers to communicate and engage with colonial and decolonised histories. It also explores the political nature of live interpretation and how live-interpreter volunteers dialogically interact with various audiences and can encourage instances of critical reflection, historical empathy, and transgressive learning.

What is volunteering?

Exploring the impacts of decolonisation upon museum volunteers and volunteering, I wanted to define what the activity is as a way of providing greater context regarding the roles and responsibilities of heritage volunteers. The ILO's standardised definition for volunteering is 'unpaid, non-compulsory work; that is, time individuals give without pay to activities performed either through an organisation or directly for others outside of their houses' (ILO, 2011: 13). Within this, there are two differing kinds of volunteering: formal and informal. Formal volunteering refers to 'giving help through groups, clubs, organisations to benefit other people [in] the environment', whereas informal volunteering involves the 'giving [of] unpaid help as an individual to people who are not relatives' (Low *et al*, 2008: 11, DCLG, 2008: 19). The distinction between the two is based on the location and beneficiaries of such activities as the formal is grounded within a specific organisation and is often guided by a formalised strategic aim to benefit a specified group, e.g., being an *Engage* volunteer at the Horniman Museum and their role in enhancing the interactions that visitors have with the collection, versus providing a service on a more *ad hoc* basis to those that require it.

Within the context of the heritage sector, most of the volunteering is formal because it is conducted via an organisation and is guided by specific strategic aims, goals, and outcomes. Holmes and Smith (2012) state that heritage volunteers can be categorised according to their activity, and they differentiate between public-facing volunteers who generally meet, greet, and impart information to visitors, and those that operate behind the scenes and are responsible for maintaining the site. Consequently, my theorisation views heritage volunteers in a formal sense since their practice is explicitly guided by supporting the daily running of the organisation, as well as following institutionally mandated expectations and obligations concerning their practice.

Why do people decide to volunteer?

The motivation to volunteer is often tied to the meaning that people attach to their activity or the benefits they derive from their practice. This means that these may underpin heritage volunteers' decision to either operate in a public-facing role or in a supporting role. Within scholarly literature examining volunteer motivation, there is a central schism between more abstract and situated approaches to understanding volunteer motivation and corresponding practice. This is because the former grounds the decision to volunteer and continue volunteering upon the concept of the rational individual, whereas the latter takes a more expansive view by considering how the volunteer situates themselves within and in relation to their site of volunteering (Grey and O'Toole, 2020, Musick and Wilson, 2008).

Early influential models like Clary *et al*'s (1998) Volunteer Functions Inventory (VFI) suggested that the decision to volunteer was influenced by an altruistic/egoistic binary (see figure two). This is because functional approaches to understanding volunteer motivation sought to grapple with the reasons and purposes that underlie and generate

actions and beliefs, e.g., feeling a need to give back to the community and deciding to volunteer. Consequently, more abstract or cognitive psychological approaches to understanding volunteer motivation view the decision to volunteer as being one that addresses specific individual needs or to fulfil a specific function (Snyder et al, 2000). On the other hand, sociological and more situated approaches are more sceptical about solely using motives to explain voluntary action (Tilly, 2001: 41). Musick and Wilson (2008: 71) view standardised and universal motives as unreliable and reductionist as they focus more on the individual subject rather than the wider social structures and processes that they are shaped by and how these motives can change over time. O'Toole and Grey's (2016) work on RNLI volunteers supports this, as they demonstrate how the decision to volunteer is not solely a matter of individual choice, but rather draws on various social relations embedded within a particular institution or locale. Musick and Wilson (2008: 73) advocate for conceptualising volunteer motivation in a more dynamic sense by grounding voluntary activity within the specific socio-cultural context in which it takes place, as well as the wider frameworks and worldviews, e.g., specific social networks or wider social norms/values, drawn upon as part of volunteers' activity.

Motivation	Associated Characteristics
Value	Related to altruistic and humanitarian concerns for others
Enhancement	To acquire new learning experiences/exercise skills that might otherwise go unused
Social	To strengthen social relationships
Career	To gain career experience
Protective	To reduce negative feelings about oneself or address personal problems
Understanding	To enable personal growth and ego-enhancement

Figure 1- six features of Clary et al's (1998) VFI

Echoing Musick and Wilson (2008: 73), Schahar *et al* (2019) similarly adopt a dynamic view of volunteering. They state that solely focusing on the inputs and outputs of the activity, i.e., the decision to volunteer and what they actually do, can result in a 'black box' of volunteering which then omits the various 'motivations, discourses and practices' that comprise volunteering. For them, the sole focus on the antecedents and consequences of volunteering has led to predominantly characterising the activity in a number of ways, including: as unpaid labour, being conducted out of free will, conducted for the benefit of others, and through associations like NGOs or formal organisations. This then means that the decision to volunteer and continue volunteering are assessed in terms of free-will determinants rather than in combination with wider socio-political structures and the social environment of volunteering. To move beyond a 'pure' conception of formal volunteering, or an idea of it dominated by the four archetypes, Schahar *et al* (2019) advocate a more holistic or hybrid view. In part, they seek to foreground the agency of the volunteer in terms of how they view their own activity, but also the various 'motivations, discourses and practices' that come together to comprise volunteer participation. For example, this can speak to the moral compulsion of some to support or subvert their organisation's decolonial practice

based on their specific views surrounding the legacies of Empire and their contemporary relevance as well as how volunteers perceive the responsibilities of their organisation to diverse stakeholders. Hence, this may influence ways volunteers modulate their practice in terms of which histories they want to convey, and what messages they intend for their audiences to take away from their encounters. By piercing the 'black box', a relational view of volunteering emerges since it allows for an examination of how volunteering is constructed, strategically managed, and instrumentally used by a variety of actors.

Based on the agentic capability of volunteers to modulate their practice according to their own needs and wants, I decided to view volunteer motivation in terms of positive psychology (PP). As a discipline, PP is fundamentally concerned with how the individual constitutes their positive experiences, navigates negative aspects of life and how various contexts, both human and non-human, influence this. Wissing (2022) states that the first wave of PP drew heavily upon Aristotelian philosophy and particularly how his concept of *eudaimonia* was deployed to explain how humans shape their social worlds in order to flourish. Thus, it was concerned with examining how to sustain positivity for the longest amount of time, provide it for the greatest amount of people, and spread it across the greatest number of contexts. However, this utilitarian focus on solely constituting the positive whilst ignoring the negative aspects of life, led Wong (2011) to develop what became known as second-wave PP. They drew attention to the dialectical relationship between positives and negatives and that their interpretation depended on the cultural context and the situatedness of the person (Wissing, 2022, Van Zyl, et al 2024). Even though second wave PP acknowledged the situatedness of the person and incorporated the negative in examining how people flourish, the preeminent focus on socio-cultural context drew further critiques from Lomas *et al* (2021) who called on positive psychological practitioners to adopt a more holistic view of human flourishing. This is because they recognised that the social and material constructions of place alongside the discourses and systems that flow through them are key to how positives and negatives are defined by actors. Consequently, they call upon scholars to incorporate contexts pertaining to culture, physical situatedness, the socio-political and the economic, alongside questions of power and societal inequities if they are to begin a more nuanced discussion surrounding how both the individual and collective shape well-being.

This research utilises a more expansive view of motivation that not only rejects the concept of the volunteer as the individual rational being, but also goes beyond focusing on inputs and outputs in order to understand their activity. Rather it relies on a more holistic and relational understanding that not merely concerns how volunteers construct their sense of place in relation to their material environment, but also how they situate themselves within the discursive and systemic terrain of their site of volunteering.

Serious leisure: the work of Robert Stebbins

To examine how volunteers construct and strategically manage their own activity, I drew on the concept *serious leisure*. This is because I wanted to account for how the agency and motivations of the volunteer may implicate their willingness to contribute to and support their institution's decolonisation efforts, in keeping with RQ1, and so operates as my main theoretical lens.

First introduced by Stebbins (1982), the Serious leisure Perspective (SLP) is a theoretical lens used to examine leisure activities concerning: amateurism, hobbyist pursuits, and career volunteering. Elkington and Stebbins (2014: 4-5) state that the SLP can be viewed as a spectrum with two poles ranging from the *serious* to the *casual*. On the serious side, Elkington and Stebbins (2014: 4) distinguish between *serious leisure* and *devotee work* with the former being defined as 'systematic pursuit of an amateur, hobbyist, or volunteer activity that [is] sufficiently substantial, interesting and fulfilling for the participant to find a (leisure) career there [by] acquiring and expressing a combination of its special skills, knowledge and experiences', and the latter as 'an activity in which participants feel a powerful devotion, or a strong, positive attachment, to a form of self-enhancing work.' In contrast, *casual leisure* refers to activities that are 'intrinsically rewarding, relatively short-lived [which] require little or no training to enjoy. It is fundamentally hedonist, pursued for its significant level of enjoyment, or pleasure, found there' (Stebbins, 1997).

Stebbins (1982) states that *serious leisure* distinguishes itself from its *casual* counterpart based on the amount of effort employed by the person undertaking said activity. Based on this, they propose six qualities that characterise this as *serious leisure*. These are: 1) the need to persevere and overcome any negative constraints of the activity; 2) viewing their activity in a career sense as they are guided by specific goals and outcomes, e.g., enhancing their status as an amateur historian; 3) encompassing significant personal effort based on acquiring knowledge, training, or skills; 4) providing durable benefits for individuals through self-actualisation, self-enrichment, self-expression, recreation or renewal of the self, feelings of accomplishment, enhancement of self-image, social interaction and belonging, and lasting physical products of the activity; 5) the development of a unique ethos concerning volunteers through the formation of specific subcultures within social worlds; and, 6) strong identification by participants with their pursuits and the organisations on whose behalf they operate.

For my theorisation, *serious leisure* is a useful concept since it foregrounds the agency of the volunteer and the attachment they have towards their practice, and it provides a means to examine how volunteers modulate their practice according to their ability to accrue 'special skills, knowledges and experiences'. Therefore, reflecting Schahar *et al*'s (2019) assertions of needing to avoid a 'black box' of volunteering, examining the various discourses, motivations and practices that inform instances of *serious leisure* will provide a more nuanced picture regarding the responses of volunteers to decolonial practice and how this may either strengthen or undermine the already

established meanings volunteers attach to their practice and site of volunteering (RQ1 and RQ2).

Serious Leisure: costs, dislikes and disappointments

Central to any understanding of heritage volunteering as *serious leisure* are the negatives and why people decide to persevere. Since Stebbins (2016) describes that a key motivation for pursuing *serious leisure* are the durable rewards received as part of such activity, e.g., enhanced knowledge or greater social capital, and so there is a need to understand potential impediments or costs that may prevent participation. Stebbins (1982, 2014) broadly conceptualises costs as tensions, dislikes and disappointments, and that these emerge from: interpersonal problems between participants (tensions); events that require volunteers to adjust their practice (dislikes), e.g., because of power struggles, politics, administrative and management changes or the behaviours of others; and perceived failures, 'poor results' or being 'let-downs by others' (disappointments). Consequently, these costs act as the necessary contextual factors to understand how people who pursue instances of *serious leisure* 'stick it out' since being able to persevere is a 'key orientation driving the effort to acquire the skills, knowledges, and experiences needed to find fulfilment in a serious activity' (Stebbins, 2016: 3).

However, Lamont *et al* (2014) and Lamont *et al* (2015) have critiqued Stebbins for not going into enough depth when specifically exploring how people are able to overcome such costs. Firstly, since Stebbins (2016) adopted a 'common-sense' to understand how to qualify costs based on varying socio-cultural contexts, there has been a marked lack of in-depth examination of the construction of costs or the negatives in lieu of focusing on the positives of *serious leisure*. As emphasised by Hustinx *et al* (2022: 6), instrumental conceptualisations of volunteering predominantly focus on the positives without sufficiently engaging with the negatives; thereby, resulting in a partial understanding of how these negatives may necessarily manifest. For my research, it is important to be cognizant of this, as investigating the impacts of museum decolonisation upon volunteers and volunteering will yield perceived benefits and burdens. Consequently, it is not enough to be sufficiently aware of *what* the perceived costs may be, but rather *why* they emerge and *how* they influence the place attachment and meanings that volunteers hold for and derive from their practice (RQ1 and RQ2).

Following on from this, Lamont *et al* (2015) further critique Stebbins (2007, 2014) for not adopting a dynamic view of *perseverance* since it needs to be viewed on an on-going basis rather than conceptualising the volunteer in the passive sense as just 'stick[ing] it out'. This is because the participant's engagement with *serious leisure* is constantly subject to varying interpersonal, intrapersonal, and structural constraints, meaning that there is a need to specifically examine the mechanisms through which people negotiate these. On top of this, Lamont *et al* (2015) wish to draw attention to the adoption of specific 'cognitive' or 'behavioural' strategies by volunteers as a means of overcoming impediments and how these modulate their future activity. For example, this could relate to feelings of discomfort that someone may feel emerging from the

desire of visitors to discuss the topic of colonial legacies and the mechanisms through which they steer the conversation away from this to combat their unease. Therefore, Lamont *et al* (2015) conclude that there is a need to move beyond sole use of the *cost/perseverance* dichotomy and be more expansive in theorising potential impediments by utilising ideas concerning *constraints/constraint negotiations* as part of understanding the operations of *serious leisure*.

Holmes (2003) identifies that there have been two important models to examine heritage volunteering: the economic and the leisure model. The economic model predominantly views volunteers and volunteering as a form of service delivery. This is because it views volunteers and volunteering in a third sector context, meaning that they are regarded as a key resource to address any gaps present in the provision of the institution and a way through which heritage organisations can reduce their expenditure. Consequently, this has resulted in the increased formalisation or professionalisation of volunteering programmes whereby volunteers follow clearly outlined roles, are expected to follow volunteer charters/codes of conduct, and receive specialist training. The leisure model is more akin to *serious leisure* and directly follows how volunteers actively derive pleasure from their activity. Using Hood (1983), Holmes (2003: 345-346) describes that this is made of six components: 1) the challenge of new experiences; 2) the feeling of doing something worthwhile; 3) feeling comfortable in one's surroundings; 4) having the opportunity to learn; 5) participating actively within an organisation; and, 6) socialising with likeminded people. The motivations covered by the leisure model are similar to the key components of *serious leisure*, with particular emphasis on the durable benefits afforded by volunteers' activity, i.e., a renewed sense of purpose from their activity, a sense of belonging as part of the volunteers' community of practice or being able to pursue forms of life-long learning. Orr (2006: 197-201) builds on this characterisation by describing how volunteering offers a vehicle through which people can 'visit' heritage attractions, develop their own interests, and express commitment to a particular locale. As a result, one can go beyond viewing volunteers and volunteering solely in economic terms, or as a strategic resource that can be used to enhance the visitor experience, but rather as a unique audience who are strategically using and modulating their sustained experience and its boundaries for their own *serious leisure*. In the words of McIvor and Goodlad (1998) as well as Holmes (2003: 345), one can characterise volunteers as 'effectively visitors who participate more actively', or as a dedicated audience who are utilising the amenities of their site of volunteering for their own benefit.

In summary, this section outlines the main theoretical lens that I have adopted to answer RQ1 and RQ2. By utilising *serious leisure* in combination with the 'black box' of volunteering, it enables a view of volunteer practice that is more expansive than just its inputs and outputs. Further, it actively considers the wider social context in which volunteers and their activity are situated, as well as the varying discourses that shape the boundaries of their practice. Therefore, this enables an in-depth examination of both the responses to decolonial practice and the potential changes to the experience that volunteers express in the data.

Coloniality, decoloniality and pluriversality

Using *serious leisure* as the main theoretical lens to qualify volunteer motivation along with how volunteers may shape their activity as part of the Black-Box of volunteering, has provided the necessary discursive terrain within which decolonial practice involving volunteers may be nestled. Therefore, to understand volunteer responses to their organisation's decolonisation efforts (RQ1), the connotations this may have for their experience (RQ2), as well as what general themes they may be encountering as part of their training (RQ3), I utilised a theoretical lens that provides a greater awareness of the operations, persistence and (re)production of coloniality before going on to what can be done to combat them.

Decolonial theory operates as a loose theoretical lens that seeks to combat legacies of colonialism, or coloniality, that persist within society. As a body of thought, it is dedicated to problematising and de-linking from the supposed universality of Western ways of being, knowing and seeing and their imperialistic underpinnings by recovering and reconstituting indigenous epistemologies and ontologies. Through this, it foregrounds relationality and a pluralistic way of living which are founded on an equitable horizon of meaning and value (Walsh, 2018, Shepherd, 2021).

The first element of decolonial theory draws attention to the rise of European modernity, its utopian logics and rhetoric, and the consequences this had for colonised peoples. Firstly, there has been a significant effort employed by decolonial scholars to assert that the Enlightenment was not solely a European phenomenon that has been disseminated throughout the world, but rather an ensemble of discourses produced and articulated throughout different locations connected by a modern/colonial world system (Castro-Gomez, 2021: 29-31). Quijano (1991/2007, 2010), whose work has focused on exploring both the effects of colonisation upon indigenous groups in South America as well as how they operate on a global scale in the contemporary world, states that European modernity that emerged throughout the Enlightenment began in 1492 with Columbus' landing in the Americas. He posits that historic colonialism was central to European modernity's economic and political foundation rather than an epiphenomenon. This is because the movement and forced trafficking of peoples, plant species and wealth between the Old and New World via plantation economies enabled the development of a 'core' and 'periphery' within the modern/colonial world system. Having a constituted 'core' and 'periphery', enabled Europe to constitute itself as a 'unified ego exploring, conquering, colonising an alterity that gave back its image of itself' which used its 'values, intentions, discoveries, technologies and political achievements as its [own] exclusive achievements' (Dussel, 1995: 86).

Underpinning the constitution of this core and periphery was the development of rationalistic thinking during the Enlightenment in ways that meant politics, knowledge and morality became metaphysically ordered around the 'Enlightened' person rather than God (Hardt and Negri, 2000: 78-79). By supplanting God, Latour (1993: 34-35) describes how this placed greater emphasis on the value of human science to make observations of both the social and natural world and how this enabled 'rational beings' to distil these categories into their 'pure' essences around specific dualisms, e.g.,

subject and object, body and mind, human and non-human. Toulmin (1990), a philosopher who has written about how Enlightenment-era science promoted rational ways to organise society, argues that these dualisms were then used to oppose knowledge concerning the *cosmos* (the natural world) and the *polis* (the social world) in ways to create a rationally ordered society underpinned by the centralised power of the state. By doing this, the 'enlightened' person was able to observe how the natural world was ordered and governed by fixed eternal laws and then impose these onto the *polis*. Grosfoguel (2013: 75) and Castro-Gomez (2003, 2007, 2021: 13-14), who have both written extensively about how Western knowledge has been used to categorise, organise and regulate the colonial subject and their worlds, describe how enacting the human and non-human/nature-culture binary or by detaching of the mind from the physical body allowed the 'enlightened' person to assume the 'Zero-Point' or a position of 'objectivity' and 'neutrality' which was absolute. Through this, they became the 'neutral and imperial observers of reality' which granted them the power to institute, represent, and construct a vision of the social and natural world that was then recognised as legitimate and underwritten by the apparatuses of state power within the wider modern/colonial world system (Castro-Gomez, 2021: 13-14).

Central to this constitution of the modern/colonial world system was the institution of *colonial difference* or *race* as categories. This is because both were key mechanisms through which colonial violence was inflicted upon indigenous populations by annihilating the body, the psyche, and the culture of colonised peoples (Fanon, 1961/2004, Maldonado-Torres, 2018). For Quijano (2000) and Mignolo (2021), who has worked extensively on recovering and reclaiming indigenous ways of being and knowing, the emergence of race as a category served as a means to socially classify, dehumanise and render the 'Other' as 'entirely knowable', 'ontologically inferior' and 'epistemically disabled' according to supposed biological differences. Castro-Gomez (2007: 429) articulates that, because of this, Western ways of knowing were regarded as only valid episteme for generating knowledge about nature, the economy, society and morality. Consequently, indigenous memory, experience, desire, imagination, affect, and senses were cast beyond the abyssal line and objectified through classification as belief, culture, and tradition, and were subsequently disregarded (Maldonado-Torres, 2010, Santos, 2007, 2018). These acted as the prevailing logics that were responsible for both the constitution and destitution of the 'Other' within the guise of Western modernity, meaning that 'there is no modernity without coloniality' (Mignolo, 2011: 3).

Mignolo (2018, 2021) develops our understanding of these logics by drawing attention to the infrastructure that enabled their operation, or what he terms as the *colonial matrix of power*. This apparatus acts both as an instrument and a conceptual structure for the domination, management, and control of colonised peoples. As described by Quijano (2014: 249), the colonial matrix of power:

> ...is a space and a mesh of social relations of exploitation/domination/conflict articulated, basically, on and around the dispute over the control of the following areas of social existence: work and its products, depending on the foregoing, the products of 'natural resources', sex and its products in the regeneration of the

species, subjectivity and its material and intersubjective products, including knowledge, authority and its instruments, in particular of coercion, to ensure the reproduction of this pattern of social relations and [to] regulate its changes.

Consequently, the colonial matrix of power can be viewed as a mobile structure of management that is deployed in varying aspects of the social existence. This operates a specific frame of mind simultaneously constituting the interiority of Western modernity - the coloniser and their ways of knowing, being and seeing - whilst destituting its exteriority, i.e. the colonised along with their cultural practice and worldviews (Anzaldua, 2009, Mignolo, 2009, 2020, 2021, Quijano, 2000).

Building on his conceptualisation of the colonial matrix of power, Mignolo (2018: 141-145) specifically draws attention to its structural frame. He describes that there are varying levels of control and management, depending on the activities of specific actors and institutions who create, pronounce, and transform the designs that drive the workings and narratives of Western modernity, e.g. museums, universities, churches. Mignolo (2018: 141-145, 2021) distinguishes between the *level of enunciation* versus the *level of the enunciated*. On the one hand, the level of enunciation refers specifically to actors responsible for determining the structural configuration of the colonial matrix of power which informs how knowledge is produced, regulated, and utilised in the creation of persons and subjects - meaning it can be viewed as the 'how'/'why' or the *terms of the conversation*. On the other hand, the level of the enunciated refers to the specific knowledge by-products from the domains of the colonial matrix of power, the specific ways through which meaning is attached to it, as well as how resulting subjectivities are contorted and shaped. This means that it can be viewed as the 'what' or the *content of the conversation*. For example, this can be seen with self-proclaimed *World Culture* museums (e.g. The British Museum) reinforcing the discourse of *universal heritage* to keep their colonially sourced collections (the terms) and how the deployment of this ideological apparatus informs peoples' beliefs regarding the museum's right to hold on to their colonial collections (the content). This then provides context concerning how specific institutions, like museums, produce knowledge which provides the ideological justification that was and is used to assert the supremacy and centrality of Western ways of being, knowing and seeing. Consequently, the *terms* and *content* mutually interact as part of the infrastructures through which racialised logics operate and shape the subjectivities of various peoples.

Decoloniality is the direct response to oppression, exploitation, and dispossession found in coloniality and colonialism. Fundamentally, decoloniality is concerned not only with challenging and delinking from the narratives and promises of Western modernity, but also liberating knowledge and understanding, thereby affirming the subjectivities of those that have been devalued by the workings of the colonial matrix of power (Mignolo, 2018: 146). As part of this, embracing decoloniality requires the transformation of colonial subjects and subjectivities into decolonial subjects and subjectivities by initiating a process of de-linking from the colonial matrix of power and re-linking with specific praxes of living, thinking and being. Consequently, decoloniality aims at altering the principles, biases and assumptions of knowledge and aesthetic

creation and dissemination by denying a universal or totalising reality with the intent of transforming subjects and subjectivities (Mignolo, 2021).

Prior to discussing how decoloniality can be enacted, there is a need to distinguish between de-Westernisation and decoloniality. This is because although both actions are aimed at problematising the workings of the colonial matrix of power and act as a response to Western hegemony, their emphases are different when it comes respectively to changing *the content of the conversation* versus *the terms of the conversation*. Mignolo (2021: 321) argues how forms of de-westernisation activate non-Western memories, languages, politics, religions and ways of living and is predominantly concerned with disputing who manages and controls the colonial matrix of power, whereas decoloniality aims to delink from it entirely. Distinguishing between the two is particularly important as disputing who manages the colonial matrix of power does not necessarily result in its dismantling, meaning that forms of coloniality can continue to be (re)produced, so that while the *content of the conversation* changes its *terms* can remain unchanged. Consequently, the universal presence of the colonial matrix of power is reaffirmed, thereby, preventing the potentialities of alternative futures emerging free of the taint of coloniality. Within the context of museological practice, one can view enacting de-Westernisation as addressing the *content* of or gaps in an institution's master narratives related to their historical connections to colonisation and imperial domination, whereas embracing decoloniality would require changing the overall *terms* that inform their way of practicing. This would then have a series of knock-on effects, in turn: implicating how the institution interacts with diverse stakeholders; changing what sources of knowledge the organisation draws upon in (re)presenting their colonial past; providing impetus to cease their continued benefitting from colonial legacies; and stressing the need to open up themselves as a pluralistic space for 'contestation, negation, and reinvention' to redress the colonial wound at the heart of the institution (Johnson, 2016b: 130, Brulon Soares, 2023).

Mignolo (2009: 172-176) states that one mechanism that could enable one to delink from the colonial matrix of power is through *border thinking* or what he terms as 'epistemic disobedience'. Firstly, *border thinking* seeks to directly challenge the position of the *zero-point* by drawing attention to how knowledge and the location of the producer have been used to constitute, govern and regulate racialised subjects (Castro-Gomez, 2021, Said, 1978, 1993). This recognises how the *zero-point* is both a geo-historical and bio-political loci of enunciation and that this has been given through the operations of the colonial matrix of power which have privileged and valorised Western ways of knowing which have constructed the world according to specific boundaries. For example, this can be seen through the 'epistemic privileges' of former colonisers to invent classificatory systems to organise the world according to coloniser-colonised, orient-occident, core-periphery binaries or via outdated developmentalist concepts like the First, Second and Third world. Consequently, this then foregrounds how the zero-point is not 'objective and neutral' but rather a position informed by the socio-political location of the coloniser and their successors, meaning that the underlying politics or *terms* behind knowledge production and their accompanying asymmetric power relations are unveiled (Bhambra, 2014, Mitova, 2023).

Secondly, Grosfoguel (2008) and Mignolo (2007, 2009) have called upon people to reject 'being told' or dictated to about anything emerging from those who occupy the *zero-point*. In part, they explain that decolonial thinking should emerge as part of *aesthetic* and *epistemic decolonisation* which is focused on unveiling epistemic silences from the perspectives of those who are or were destituted as part of the exteriority of Western modernity e.g., those that were enslaved, exploited and subalternised. From this, epistemic rights and subjectivities of those who have been racially devalued are affirmed. Consequently, this initiates a process called *aesthetic* and *epistemic reconstitution* through which people start to problematise the claims to universality of Western categories and concepts of thought; reconfigure what our understanding of knowledge or history is; and begin to understand themselves according to their own categories of knowing and knowledge to achieve praxis or forms of re-existence. In other words, once again, this requires problematising the *terms of the conversation* since the foundations upon which Western knowledge and knowing rests, as well as how it is regulated are called into question. This then begins a process through which decolonial healing can occur as it initiates both personal and communal processes of liberation whereby what was considered as 'deficient' by the colonial matrix of power becomes 'revalued' (Mignolo, 2021).

However, the application of *border thinking* as well as *epistemic decolonisation* and *reconstitution* as part of the calls for *epistemic disobedience* has also been critiqued due to its analytical bifurcation. Critics argue that *border thinking* is reliant upon foregrounding the knowledges and experiences of those who occupy the exteriority of Western modernity, this can potentially result in essentialising identities. In Brulon Soares' (2023: 52) view, they are fixed in place rather than being viewed in dynamic terms of how they oscillated between the exterior and interior of Western modernity. Consequently, this means that specific peoples are further consigned to the exterior borders of Western modernity, meaning that the categorical separation between coloniser and colonised or Western and non-Western is maintained. Moreover, Taiwo (2019, 2022), who has written on the need to adopt a more nuanced view of decolonisation, asserts that such an approach in the African context does not view agency in fluid terms, since it does not take into account how formerly colonised peoples were able to co-opt the coloniser's language and practice for their own ends, i.e. how African scholars were able to contribute towards the theoretical development of the Enlightenment or establish their own forms of democracy beyond the yoke of the coloniser, or the complexity associated with strategies of survivance within wider frameworks of domination. As summarised by Taiwo (2022: 183-184),

> '...the ultimate problem with decolonisation discourse is its oft-apprehended failure to take seriously the complexity of African agency and the many ways it has grappled with both colonialism and its legacy - ranging from wholesale embrace of colonially derived languages, ideas, institutions, processes, and practices to attempts at wholesale rejection of the same. We need to engage with this complexity.'

Any attempts to embrace decoloniality require foregrounding the agencies of those tied to historic colonialism and its complex legacies rather than operating with static

interpretative positions that reify the separation between coloniser and colonised. Therefore, the rehumanisation of people that were once and continue to be destituted by the workings of Western modernity requires a dismantling of those regimes of knowledge and value underpinning the colonial matrix of power that enable the (re)production and maintenance of colonial difference and resultant racism, whilst not resorting to notions of separation.

To avoid any notions of separation, the work of Fanon (1961/2004) is particularly useful. His work, which emerges out of the anti-colonial struggles for independence in Algeria throughout the 1950s and early 60s, calls for the employment of absolute violence as a means for transformation. In his view, absolute violence challenges the universal position of Eurocentrism and its socio-political structures by constructing a new politics based on the collective rather than the individual. This is because Fanon (1961/2004) rejected the 'individual humanism of the Western world' that was responsible for propagating racial, ethnic, and national boundaries which then acted as a means to spread racism and legitimise colonial domination and violence. Consequently, the utilisation of absolute anti-colonial violence will provide a route through which the colonised subject can achieve self-determination by asserting their agency and developing a new identity. This will also provide a rupture point through which the relationships between coloniser and colonised can be reconfigured, rather than being solely predicated on violence between both parties. This is because colonial and colonising ways of thinking, being and the relations that inform these become 'evacuated', meaning that a new humanism based on recognising and respecting difference can start to emerge (Fanon, 1961/2004).

Similarly, Mignolo (2018, 2021) asserts that recognising and respecting cultural difference is a pre-requisite of *pluriversality*, which Escobar (2020: 4) describes as the acknowledgement and recognition of the existence of multiple worlds that are all intersecting. This is because mutual recognitions of difference cannot truly occur whilst the colonial matrix of power continues to operate universally since coloniality continues to be (re)produced. As a result, any attempts to engender a coexistence between various knowledges and praxes of living are filtered through the universal position of Western epistemologies and ontologies, meaning that they operate as a form of cultural relativism enabled by the colonial matrix of power rather than operating on an equitable or pluralistic horizon (Mignolo, 2020, 2021, Santos, 2018). In their seminal article 'Decolonization is not a Metaphor', Tuck and Yang (2012) describe how cultural relativism operating like this can be particularly problematic as it can naturalise settler presence and deflect guilt rather than engendering an ethic of incommensurability. This is because they describe how settler-colonials engage with the basics of reconciliation by attempting to relive some of the guilt and responsibility they have without sacrificing any land, power, or privilege. Consequently, this animates a series of strategies and positionings through which settler-colonials absolve themselves of any responsibility for the operations of coloniality. As corollary, any attempts to decolonise become subject to settler-colonial capture and oriented towards settler futurity in ways that dull any transformative potential. An ethic of incommensurability needs to emerge which directly focuses on problematising instances of settler-colonial (or former colonisers') innocence which in turn enables

pluriversality to emerge or acts as *'a new start, [to] develop a new way of thinking, and [to] endeavour to create a new man'* (Fanon, 1961/2004: 293).

These strong theoretical calls towards reconfiguring the relationship between coloniser and colonised as a way of engendering pluralism, or pluriversality, frequently operate as the guiding aspiration for museums and other heritage organisations who wish to pursue decolonisation.

Colonial wounds, collaboration and the *Museology of Hope*: the work of Brulon Soares

Having discussed decolonial and *serious leisure* theory, there is a need to outline my main decolonising lens that is being applied to museums and heritage institutions. Utilising a *museology of hope* as a theoretical lens has provided me with the ability to examine the changes that are constituted as museum decolonisation which will then have implications for volunteer responses, their experiences, and how they may encounter these histories and legacies as part of their training (RQ1, RQ2, and RQ3).

Brulon Soares (2023: 3) explains that any sort of work guiding the decolonisation of museums should be primarily concerned with disrupting and deconstructing the workings of coloniality with the aim of enabling subaltern groups to reconstruct, redistribute and reshape the museum as a political device for the (re)appropriation of their cultural heritage. However, they stress that this should not destroy the museum or re-colonise its contents. Consequently, this means that 'rehumanising people', or re-valuing what was previously devalued by the colonial matrix of power, involves 'deconstructing, reconstructing and redistributing' museums and other heritage institutions (Mbembe, 2003, 2015, 2019, Mignolo, 2021). This directly interrogates the specific regimes of value and knowledge upon which the operations of coloniality rests. In particular, challenging the nature of 'authorised knowledge' offered by the *zero-point* and the violence underpinning it; so that, redistributing the museum's authority to those who occupy the periphery can engender a new relation between those in power and those who have been and are deprived of it. Based on this, Brulon Soares' (2023: 129) view of decolonising museums should be grounded within a *museology of hope* which they describe as:

> (...) not being optimistic and narrating a romanticised view of the past. It is more about now that the past is ours to be taken, re-translated and transgressed. It is about remembering our pains and loss, recognising our shared wounds and acknowledging that the wounded also have a voice, no matter how disturbing it may be.

One facet of this view of how museums decolonise is the anti-colonial emphasis on reconfiguring the relationships between coloniser and colonised. Borrowing from hooks (1993/2013: 26), Brulon Soares (2023: 105) states that museums have a responsibility to acknowledge and overcome the separations they once propagated and that they should refashion themselves into places for, and of, connectiveness. This is because there is a need to engender ways of practicing and working that focus on what connects

us thereby transforming the binaries that separate us and is regenerative so that shared wounds can be repaired. In other words, museums need to facilitate the examination of shared sensibilities of diverse populations according to class, gender, race, sexuality, and other forms of difference which emerge in conjunction with and as a response to colonial dispossession, exploitation and violence.

Firstly, there is a need to recognise how museums destituted colonised peoples via forms of epistemic violence. First introduced by Spivak (1988), epistemic violence explains the ways knowledge was utilised in a universal sense to subordinate the colonial subject and their 'world' in order to reify the coloniser's centrality. Based on the work of Spivak (1993), Shepherd (2018) describes the three differing kinds of violence which are all mutually reinforcing: a violence of objectification; a violence of excision; and, a violence of alienation.

A *violence of objectification* predominantly refers to the ways in which objects and corresponding subjects are rendered fixed and static or are (re)presented on ahistorical terms. Hicks (2020) develops this further by viewing this process as a form of *chronopolitics*, whereby material culture and their representative subjects are denied a place within history or placed on the exteriority of Western modernity, thereby resulting in a *denial of co-evalness*. This was then used as a tool to (re)produce racial alterity and consolidated the museum as part of the infrastructure of white supremacy that legitimised colonial domination.

A *violence of excision* revolves around the removal or the cutting of phenomena from a lived context or regime of care and the forced emplacement of another context. This form of violence builds on the *violence of objectification* by describing how essentialising material culture and corresponding peoples also required removing them from its lived context and supplanting it with an imagined replacement of meaning. As a result, bits of material culture were appropriated to become symbolic and representative of specific historical moments, ideas, ideologies, religions, and other socio-economic modes of organisation. Consequently, this resulted in rendering the colonial subject, their culture and lived experience as invisible and facilitated forms of domicide (Galván-Álvarez, 2010, Vawda, 2019). An example of this can be seen with Tolia-Kelley (2016: 905) who described the anger, pain and sadness of her collaborative partner Rosanna Raymond at seeing Māori *taonga* depicted at the British Museum as mere 'artefacts' or objects. Instead, they should have been viewed as gods or ancestors that possess biographies and potent spiritual power. This meant that the lived context surrounding the *taonga* was denied and excised for the sake of categorising it as 'treasure', which (re)produces forms of epistemic trauma and violence (Tolia-Kelley, 2016, Tolia-Kelley and Raymond, 2020).

A *violence of alienation* refers to how material culture was interpreted from the supposed universal position of Western knowledge rather than indigenous ways of knowing and associated history, memory and practice. Brulon Soares (2023) describes that this form of epistemic violence is present through the position of the 'expert' who not only occupied the *zero-point*, but also used their 'authorised' knowledge to legitimise and naturalise the official discourse concerning studied groups. An example

of this can be seen through notions of 'authenticity'. Jones (2010) states that with the rise of European modernity, investigations concerning material culture became more concerned with the essence of the object, i.e. its form, fabric, and function, to ascertain its origin and nature, or ontology. Valorising the material form omitted the original knowledge systems and socio-cultural groundings, or its lived context, of material culture meaning it was not considered holistically or within various connections and networks to both past and present places and people. As a result, the intangible aspects concerning elements of material culture and the location of the observer were overlooked in favour of supposed universal truths concerning its material form. This then overrode local perspectives and knowledges concerning the observed 'social world' and resulted in forms of *epistemicide*.

Based on these varying forms of epistemic violence, Hicks (2020) points to how museums operated as vehicles that 'transform[ed] life and substances' since they were responsible for dehumanising subjugated peoples and justifying the dispossession of their cultural heritage through normalising the display of human remains, compounding killings against dominated peoples, and facilitating both cultural destructions and looting. Consequently, people were stripped of their technologies, had their living landscapes transformed into ruins, and had moments of colonial violence memorialised and extended across time. These, combined with the differing types of epistemic violence, can be characterised as some elements of the colonial wound.

Secondly, in order to redress the shared wounds between coloniser and colonised, fashioning museums into places for, and of, connectiveness goes beyond rendering them into more inclusive places. Brulon Soares (2023: 105-110, 137) states that the anti-colonial museum, or one that is enacting decolonisation, should become a site of permanent contestation and conflict -or what Fanon (1961/2004) views as transformation engendered by the employment of absolute violence - where both coloniser and colonised expose the shared colonial wound and attempt to redress it. This then positions the museum as a place that attempts to engender instances of critical reflection that enable visitors to question our fixed and oppositional positions in history through the deconstruction of colonialist walls erected between the 'core' and 'periphery', or the interior and exterior. Such an emphasis is also reflected in the work of Thomas (1991) on Entangled Objects in Polynesia. This is because Thomas (1991: 18) advocates moving beyond the analytical dichotomy of 'the Western' and 'the non-Western' because each group was able to mutually appropriate each other's material culture according to their own ways of knowing. Failing to recognise this results in reducing indigenous cultures and encounters to 'childlike' or 'irrational statuses' and further denies their agency (Taiwo, 2022). In order to prevent this, Thomas (1991) proposes that we view the exchange of objects and corresponding histories within the guise of entanglement which then enables the precise examination of broader socio-cultural structures, premises, inequalities and asymmetries that underpin the local encounter from various perspectives. This then reinforces that the categories of the 'Native' and the 'European' are mutually constitutive. Based on these assertions, Brulon Soares (2023: 105) concludes that there is a need to move beyond the boundaries that artificially separate sides of colonisation and modernity by focusing on a shared heritage and the encounters, the resistance, and the mutual appropriations

that resulted from acts of penetration and dissolution that shaped the contemporary world.

One way through which museums and heritage institutions have tried to come to terms with their colonial past and contemporary legacies is through the idea of the *contact zone*. First introduced by Pratt (1991: 34, 1992) and adopted by Clifford (1997) within a museological context, the *contact zone* refers to:

> social spaces where cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today. (Pratt, 1991: 34)

In this vein, the *contact zone* was expected to act as a space to facilitate forms of trans-cultural dialogue and exchange whereby various meanings concerning specific objects and histories are negotiated. As described by Phillips (2005), the aim of this inter-cultural dialogue was to enable the breaking down of binaries between the former coloniser and the formerly colonised since 'members of subordinated groups select and invent from materials transmitted by a dominant or metropolitan culture' as a means of disrupting essentialised, inaccurate, and hegemonic representations of their cultural heritage. Institutions then seek to move beyond the singular voice of the 'expert' towards a plurality of narratives regarding the display and interpretation of material culture and corresponding subjects (Clifford, 1997). This can then be viewed as problematising the *content* of knowledge on the level of the *enunciated* rather than *terms* of knowledge production on the level of *enunciation*.

However, reframing the museum as a *contact zone*, or changes to the content of knowledge on the level of the *enunciated*, has been problematised due to its role in perpetuating *neo-colonial collaboration*. Bennett (1998) states that the 'cross-cultural dialogue' afforded as part of engaging with formerly subjugated communities reinforce the asymmetrical power relations between the museum and source communities; thereby, leading Boast (2011: 67) to describe them as 'asymmetric spaces of appropriation' and Shelton (2003: 184) to state how resulting representations are made 'through voices of their foreign interpreters.' More specifically, Boast (2011) describes how forms of *clinical collaboration* emerge as part of the *contact zone* since they are designed from the outset to appropriate the resources necessary for the museum to continue to reaffirm its own relevance as well as a right to maintain their colonial collections, whilst also silencing those that are not deemed as relevant. Moreover, Brulon Soares (2023) further explains how such processes entail a form of scientific paternalism. This is because in this situation the knowledges, lived experiences and narratives provided by collaborators need to be validated by the 'expert' which results in the objectification and commodification of partners and their activism under the guise of 'co-curation' or 'collaboration'. Thus the status quo of domination, the presence of the colonial matrix of power and its ability to (re)produce coloniality, as well as the free exploitation of peoples rather than promoting the emancipation of formerly subjugated groups is maintained. Therefore, collaboration within the *contact zone* can become tokenistic or a tick-in box exercise as well as a tool for governing

indigenous groups through 'Native Science', or as a means to facilitate the assimilation of the 'Other'.

Based on these criticisms of the *contact zone*, Onicul (2015, 2018) has called for the combatting of the operations of coloniality by adopting the use of an *engagement zone* as part of their work in exploring how indigenous groups in North America can appropriate museums for their own benefit. In part, this emerges as a direct response to the potential ability of museums to subordinate the activism, efforts, and knowledges of source communities for their own purposes. As a result, Onicul (2015, 2018) states that there is a need to de-centre the notion of the 'expert' and the authority of the museum by placing greater power and decision-making ability in the hands of indigenous and source communities. This then moves beyond initial instances of cross-cultural encounter as part of the *contact zone* to enable inter-community engagement and to facilitate the indigenisation of the space (see figure 2). In this theoretical vein, Onicul (2015, 2018) states that the *engagement zone* can be viewed as a ten-point spectrum of interaction that is: 1) a conceptual, physical and temporal space created through engagement; 2) spontaneous or strategically planned; 3) a location of power flux and negotiation; 4) an unmapped and unpredictable terrain; 5) a semi-private, semi-public space where 'on stage and off stage' culture can be shared and discussed; 6) a space in which knowledge can be temporarily and/or permanently interpreted and translated; 7) a space in which insider/outsider boundaries blur; 8) powerful but fragile, unique and impermanent; 9) a space which can be indigenised and created on its own culturally specific terms; and, 10) a process that can produce tangible products of power sharing, such as exhibits, programming, new curatorial practice and ethos, knowledge creation and new relationships.
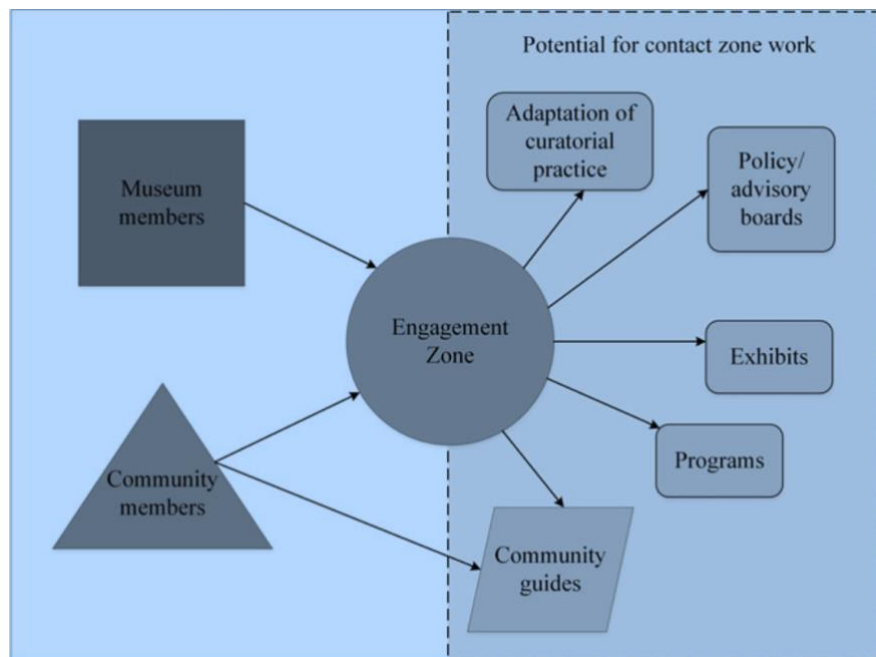
Figure 2- Structural Configuration of Onciul's (2015: 83) Engagement Zone.

Whilst the *engagement zone* initiates collaborations that subvert colonial power relations and redistributes authority towards indigenous and source communities, Brulon Soares (2023) describes how decolonial collaboration can obviate the questioning of how forms of authority and coloniality were and are conceived in ways that reinforce the categorical separation between coloniser and colonised, resulting in a loss of complexity and nuance.

Firstly, decolonial collaboration may result in the production of new displays, exhibitions and narratives concerning previously untouched topics, e.g. forms of resistance employed by enslaved or freed peoples towards ending enslavement, but it may not critically engage with how museums or other heritage institutions were utilised as a device to reinforce racial alterity. As a result, this sort of collaboration can be viewed as being similar to processes of de-Westernisation as described by Mignolo (2021) since formerly subjugated groups take control of apparatuses, including museums, to represent non-Western histories, ideas, memories and worldviews. This means that the infrastructure and historic practice that underpins the authority of the museum to provide a hegemonic narrative of the past is not dismantled, as well as on-going forms of domination which are embedded in the daily operations of the museum. Thus, while the *content of the conversation* may change, the *terms* within which it is couched are left untouched.

Moreover, Brulon Soares (2023) warns that decolonial collaboration can also reinforce the binary between coloniser and colonised which can result in the essentialising of narratives and the loss of nuance. This is because it reinforces the notion that these operate as fixed categories that result in the homogenisation of various parties and overlooks the complexities associated with the lived experiences of colonialism and its legacies (Taiwo, 2019, 2022). Minott (2019) directly comments on this when speaking about their experience of co-producing the Past is Now exhibition and how this was made manifest through enacting the dichotomy of 'victims and villains'. This is because the intended use of this dichotomy was to avoid, rebut and problematise narratives concerning imperial celebration, but instead resulted in the promotion of a singular narrative to appeal to wider audiences. For example, Minott (2019) describes how discussions surrounding anti-colonial violence in both Kenya and India within the wider process of political decolonisation omitted the complexity present in nationalist movements. This is because they lacked space to examine how structures of oppression persisted after political decolonisation for the sake of highlighting the activity of the 'villains'. This resulted in the loss of nuance surrounding the agencies and complexities of various figures tied to independence movements since people were essentialised according to the categories of coloniser and colonised. Consequently, attempts to promote decolonial collaboration or opportunities to indigenise space can gloss over elements of contentious history by presenting it as an 'either-or'.

Based on the problems emerging from forms of *neocolonial* and *decolonial* collaboration, Brulon Soares (2023: 109-112) advocates the adoption of anticolonial collaboration. In their view, anticolonial collaboration confronts difficult issues such as colonial asymmetries and is dedicated to foregrounding and contextualising them by questioning the existence, role and supposed neutrality of the museum and the ways

through which they can redress colonial wounds. This may involve directly challenging the authority of the museum to (re)present specific groups by engaging in forms of epistemic disobedience; unveiling how they perpetuate epistemic violence and a coloniality of knowledge; and, investigating the ways through which museums can 'redistribute' themselves by becoming a device that can be used by subaltern groups to restore their relationships with the past. This directly takes the argument back to the original terms within which a museology of hope was conceived. Consequently, to rehumanise what is or was destituted by Western modernity and the colonial matrix of power, anti-colonial collaboration emerges as a means to rupture the established order and its maintenance. Hence, one can view such processes as being similar to enacting decoloniality and pluriversality by ushering in a pluralistic space that equally values various different ways of being, knowing and seeing.

To enable forms of anti-colonial collaboration to emerge, there is a need to discuss the positionalities of relevant stakeholders who are part of this process. Wajid and Minott's (2019) chapter titled 'Detoxing and Decolonising Museums' is of particular importance as they discuss their own experiences of being part of the Museum Detox network, a professional network that was founded in 2014 to support Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic museum workers in the UK, and how to actualise anti-racist museum work. Wajid and Minott (2019) draw attention to how any sort of transformation, or the combatting of coloniality by privileging the voices and lived experiences of those who have been marginalised, requires the strategic collaboration of both *insider* and *outsider* activists. Insider activists refer to those who conduct formal salaried work on the behalf of the museum and are deemed as appropriate to further the institution's strategic aims, whereas outsider activists are those who are situated beyond the institution and possess the ability to apply popular pressure to institute change since they are not limited by the institution's strategic aims, corporate brand, or reputation. Wajid and Minott (2019) further differentiate between the two since insider activists are often aware of the larger picture, cognizant of what barriers prevent potential transformation, and are limited in their capacity to enact change. This is because they must provide tangible outcomes which are mediated through historically established standards and are subject to an array of micropolitical factors present within the organisation. Outsider activists often possess a restricted view of the realities of the organisation and are not cognizant of how barriers pertaining to transformative change are constrained by resource or legal boundaries. As a result, there needs to be strategic collaboration between these two positionalities as insider activists can fulfil the role of allies by providing greater clarity concerning the institutional terrain surrounding enacting decolonial practice, and outsider activists can apply popular pressure to force the heritage institution to deliver such change.

When characterised as insider and outsider activists, volunteers occupy a unique position. This is because they are still beholden to the institution since they have agreed to follow a volunteer contract or code of conduct which formally outlines how they are expected to act as representatives of the institution and are aware of the inner workings of the organisation, but they are not legally bound to them via a salaried position. This means that they are free to leave at any point without repercussions. Consequently, they can apply selective pressure, similar to that of outsider activists, meaning that

being potential collaborators or detractors, they can be regarded as a unique stakeholder group in supporting or undermining an institution's decolonial efforts.

A Critical Pedagogy of Place: volunteer learning, training and live interpretation

Recognising the role of public-facing volunteers as an important stakeholder group who can either strategically support or subvert their organisation's decolonial practice, I utilised the concept of *a critical pedagogy of place* to explore how organisations seek to equip, empower and support their volunteers to encounter, engage with and communicate decolonised histories. This addresses RQ3, and in particular to provides insight into how the learning and training aspirations of volunteers may intersect with the theoretical underpinnings of a *museology of hope* and how their practice can be viewed as a form of *serious leisure*. Further, it also provides context concerning how their live interpretation may become more critically oriented, which directly corresponds to RQ2, or the implications that decolonial practice will have upon their volunteering.

Critical pedagogy was identified as a theoretical lens within my overall framework because of its capacity to explain how volunteers are equipped and empowered to communicate colonial and decolonised histories. This is because confronting forms of coloniality and engendering decolonial practice necessitates both alternative and transgressive understandings of colonial histories and their legacies on the part of volunteers. *Critical pedagogy* traces its roots back to Paulo Freire (1970/1995) who was concerned with providing an education to the powerless in society. Freire critiqued forms of didactic learning or what he viewed as 'banking education' since it was geared towards 'depositing facts' within learners, rather than enabling them to creatively engage with what they were encountering. Based on this, Freire (1970/1995: 17) explains that learners should be facilitated not only to 'read the word', but also 'read the world' as part of engaging in what he terms *conscientizacao*. This aims to empower learners 'to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality.' By doing this, learners (or volunteers in this case) can perform the role of 'transformative intellectuals' whereby they are capable of identifying cultural myths and redressing their produced injustices and inequalities (Freire, 1995, Kumashiro, 2000).

However, some elements of Freire's version of *critical pedagogy* have been challenged. Firstly, Zemblyas (2018a) states that Freire's emphasis on 'reading the world' can be problematic since it can reify an essentialised understanding of the nature of oppression. This is because it may reinforce a dualistic and static view of oppression according to the coloniser and colonised binary, rather than having a dynamic view which recognises how coloniality might be mutually constituted based on these categories. Secondly, Zemblyas (2018b) builds on the prior critique by saying that splitting the world according to dualisms grounds any sort of critical consciousness and subsequent transformation within the realm of the abstract. This is because 'reading the world' places predominant emphasis on notions of reason and rationality

rather than on the affect, lived experience, the body-political or within the specific historicity of colonial dispossession, exploitation and violence. This then acts as a universalist and Eurocentric approach to conceptualising the nature and impacts of oppression, does not sufficiently grapple with its complexity, and does not necessarily have transgressive outcomes, or what Loltz-Sisitka *et al* (2015: 75) describe as learning 'how to negotiate, live, and transform a world of contradictions, paradoxes, uncertainty and unfairness.'

In response to this, Zemblyas (2018a, 2018b) calls for the re-fashioning of *critical pedagogy* into a decolonising pedagogy where the affect or empathy is central. This is because they posit that any sort of transgressive movement beyond the coloniser and colonised binary requires learners to examine the discursive terrain in which lived experience is situated, as well as the structures through which racialised, classed and gendered differences are or were constructed. As described by Pedwell (2012: 294), learners need to 'understand the structures of feeling, the feelings of structure that produce and mediate us differentially as subjects and communities who feel'. Massey (2005), a human geographer who has written extensively on the spatial operations of power and how it manifests within places, builds on this by emphasising how such a relational approach cannot be divorced from the place and spatial context through which these structures, histories and ideas flow, especially since they are the active discursive terrain through which local and global geometries of power, i.e. the colonial matrix of power and its dehumanising impacts, operate. Massey (2005) articulates that places are formed through the negotiation of multiple constellations and entanglements which develop because of a constant contestation between the human and non-human that underpins what we understand as our social world. Because of this, any sort of critical, transformative and transgressive learning which seeks to directly combat universalist and oppressive constructions of difference (or coloniality) requires attention to the localised socio-political and material construction of place, as well as the constellations and entanglements that underpin it. Being aware of how this enables a more nuanced view of the varying factors that may enable or inhibit critical and effective volunteer learning and training.

Gruenewald (2003, 2008) argues that this approach can be viewed as a *critical pedagogy of place* guided by the notion that any sort of critical consciousness and corresponding praxis needs to follow a pluralistic understanding of how culture and cultural difference (especially lived experience) are concretised by the material environment in which they are situated. Gruenewald (2008) further illustrates that places operate as socio-cultural constructions, meaning that how we make place is central to our cultural and political lives as well as our theories of being and knowing. Based on this, we must view place not only in terms of it being a direct conduit between the material and the social, but also as embodied and sensual experiences. This means that we must situate the materiality of place within a deeper understanding of its entanglement with the non-human, as well as its spiritual, emotional and intellectual aspects (Tuck and McKenzie, 2015b). Their argument takes us back to Zemblyas' (2018a, 2018b) assertions that *critical pedagogy* should first and foremost be guided by how we connect to one another with the intent of engendering empathy.

With respect to museums, *a critical pedagogy of place* concerns the dual processes of *decolonization* and *reinhabitation*. Gruenewald's (2003, 2008) work predominantly focuses on addressing the relative absence of the spatial and ecological contexts in which critical social analyses operate, and so they are particularly concerned with promoting a pedagogy that rescues the ecological commons from the ravages of resource extraction tied to historic and contemporary settler colonialism. Further, it aims to guarantee the sustainability of places for future generations in the face of anthropocentric climate change. Consequently, the concept of *decolonization* is guided by undoing the harms caused by colonisation, and *reinhabitation* focuses on having learners generate alternative understandings on how to live well together in a place without doing damage to others, human and non-human. One can view enacting both of these processes as being similar to engendering transgressive understandings of historic colonialism and its afterlives. By breaking down the coloniser and colonised binary, overcoming notions of colonial difference and corresponding racism engenders the redressing of colonial wounds. By doing this, Ormond (2013) suggests that utilising place enables *critical pedagogy* to directly address the actual lived reality of learners, rather than problematising phenomena based on an idealised and potentially unachievable lived reality. For the context of my research, this could include addressing the content of their live interpretation, how volunteers may connect with their audiences, to what extent this aligns with their motivation to volunteer and readiness to question the expected boundaries of their practice.

In order to actualise the dual processes of *decolonization* and *reinhabitation*, volunteer learning and training can occur either through formal/structured or informal/incidental contexts. Grenier (2009, 2011) explains that formal/structured learning contexts for docents is primarily concerned with the development of expertise whereby they build up their knowledge base and communication skills to interact with various audiences through the curriculum of a dedicated training regime. For example, instances of critical reflection could emerge from going to curator-led talks offered by their organisation or by learning from a series of information packs provided as part of their training that specifically focus on the operations of oppressive structures within the museum. This context of volunteer learning can be viewed as being top-down, or formal, since it is mandated and provided by the organisation. By contrast, Grenier (2009, 2011) asserts the merits of informal/incidental learning contexts conducted by volunteers which result in them gaining knowledge and skills beyond the direction of the institution, or 'learning by doing'. This form of learning ranges from: shadowing fellow volunteers and developing corresponding knowledges and skills based on observed practice; visiting other organisations and experiencing their live interpretation to develop your own; or, by attending a series of extra-curricular activities tangentially related to their volunteering to enhance their expertise. As a result, any encounters with hegemonic and oppressive structures that spur critical reflection and lead to transformation from informal/incidental learning can be viewed as bottom-up because they are grounded in the situated experience of volunteer practice.

Building on these two learning contexts, McCray (2016: 12-13) explains how docents or adult educators also engage in forms of *self-directed learning* to supplement the knowledge they have accumulated. Banz (2008: 46) defines *self-directed learning* as:

a process in which individuals take the initiative, with or without the help of others, in diagnosing their learning needs, formulating learning goals, identifying human and material resources for learning, choosing and implementing appropriate learning strategies, and evaluating learning outcomes.

Citing Merriam, Caffarella and Baumgartner (2008: 107), McCray (2016: 12) states that the main goals of *self-directed learning* are: to enhance the abilities and capacities of adult learners so they can guide themselves in their learning; to guarantee that such efforts are transformational in nature; and to provide emancipatory learning and a basis upon which social action can be actualised. In turn, new learners engaging in *self-directed learning* can be perceived as bricoleurs engaging with a plurality of knowledge sources to fashion change.

When applied to my research, *self-directed learning* is an avenue whereby volunteers may supplement their knowledge base beyond formal/structured and informal/incidental learning contexts. This is because the active interest of the volunteer in the colonial histories and legacies of the organisation may result in them engaging with material beyond the provision of their museum, or what they may experience as part of their practice. Therefore, any sort of engendered *critical consciousness* and alternative understandings of their organisation's colonial connections may emerge as a result of the motivations of volunteers to enhance their capacity and practice as live interpreters.

Writing over sixty years ago, Tilden's (1957) insights continue to offer foundational understanding on the nature of interpretation. In the most-recent version of *Interpreting our Heritage*, Tilden *et al* (2008: 17) outline that interpretation should be viewed as 'an educational activity which aims to reveal meanings and relationships through the use of original objects, by first-hand experience and illustrative media, rather than simply to communicate factual information.' Based on this, Tilden *et al* (2008) states interpretive methods should not simply be viewed as communicating information, but rather as a vehicle through which specific philosophies, cosmologies, emotions, and attitudes are drawn upon and contextualised. In this vein, Robertshaw (2006: 43) defines live interpretation as being 'any presentation using people whether in a historical environment or not which aims to place artefacts, places, or events in context against the background of the human environment of the past.' Robertshaw (2006: 43-45) also states that such activity must be based on historical facts, have an educational intent and be reliant upon the presentational and performance skills of the live interpreter. Therefore, live interpreters need to balance four elements: historical content; educational content; their frames of presentation; and, how they interact with visitors.

Taking this forward, Stern and Powell (2020: 11) state that the explicit aim of live interpretation is to facilitate visitor engagement with both the collection and its history in ways that increase visitor knowledge or foster appreciation, connection or stewardship towards the cultural resources of the site. Ferguson *et al* (2015) builds on this by commenting on how live interpreter volunteers are expected to interact with various audiences, meaning that they need to tailor their communication of the content

of the museum depending on the needs and interests of visitors who comprise various ages and knowledge levels. From this, two models of communication emerge: didactic and dialogic. Didactic forms of communication are bounded and fixed in nature since they mainly conform to instructing or lecturing audiences about the content of the museum, meaning the transmission process is hierarchical, top-down, and one-way in nature (Burdleski, 2016, Grenier, 2011, Soren, 1990). Dialogic communication revolves around engaging visitors in conversation and establishing a more equitable horizon upon which the learning encounter takes place. This then means that the conversation is multi-directional rather than one-way. As a result, the learning process is mediated between educator and learner (albeit scaffolded by the aims and intended outcomes of the educator), as well as situated in the personal experiences and interests of the learner, so that no one party has sole control over the experience (Ash *et al*, 2012, Chatterjee, 2011, Kador *et al*, 2018, Kevin and Salmon, 2020, Mai and Ash, 2012, Roth and Lee, 2007). Consequently, these two modes of communication can be viewed as the main vehicles through which live-interpreters connect and engage with their various audiences.

Considering the political nature of live interpretation, Modlin *et al* (2011) proposes that tour guide volunteers cannot solely be considered as 'mediators' of the visitor experience but rather as active political actors embroiled in selective memorialisation processes. This is because the agency and cultural politics of tour guides (or live interpreter volunteers for the context of this research) possess significant influence on how people participate in the social construction of the materiality of their tour site which then shapes the meanings that visitors co-create, read and interpret from their sites (Calvente and Garcia, 2022, Modlin *et al* 2018, Potter, 2022). In this vein, Alderman (2002) and Handler and Gable (1997) describe how docents should be viewed as active participants in a 'reputational politics' in which the meaning and legacies of complex historical figures, not historical facts, are open to socially mediated selection, i.e. depending on what and who is remembered and forgotten. Potter (2015: 253-254) reinforces this in their observations of tour guide docents. They highlighted how they were able to (un)script their tours or employ forms of resistance to the systematic annihilation of enslaved peoples and the institution of enslavement by incorporating their active presence (Eichstedt and Small, 2002). Tour guides achieved this by moving beyond the mandated points of communication to incorporate their own research and personal points of commentary concerning the lives of enslaved peoples, as well as an explicit use of terminology that reconstituted and rehumanised them. This then hints to how docents can initiate processes of *border thinking* or *epistemic disobedience* by directly challenging the authorised narratives produced by the plantation museum and modulating them accordingly. This framing of practice aligns with Modlin *et al*'s (2011) conclusions that that docents, or live interpreter volunteers, should be viewed as instigators of *historical empathy* because of their ability to draw upon the emotions of their audiences and their constructed notions of place to foster a sense of connection with the lives and circumstances of historic persons.

These aspirations can be viewed as some of the desired training outcomes of organisations who are attempting to equip, empower and support their volunteers to

encounter and communicate colonial and decolonised histories (RQ3), as well as a potential change to their practice via their live interpretation (RQ2).

Key points to take away:

This theory chapter has brought together theoretical lenses to provide cohesive framework that covers: *serious leisure* and how volunteers situate themselves within their site of volunteering; what coloniality, decoloniality and pluriversality looks like; how this implicates museological practice as part of a *museology of hope*; and, what potential impacts this may have for volunteer learning, training and live interpretation. Each of these topics provide the necessary grounding to understand the discussion and presentation of my results regarding the responses of volunteers to decolonial practice; how the significance and meanings they attach to their voluntary activity and site of volunteering may change (RQ1 and RQ2); and the expected changes to volunteer practice and the measures taken to sufficiently equip, empower, and support them as they encounter and engage with colonial histories and legacies (RQ2 and RQ3).

Based on the connections to my RQs, the key points to draw from this chapter are that:
- embracing decoloniality requires challenging the universal presence of Western knowledge and knowing and the authority underpinning it in order to reconstitute what was previously destituted;
- pursuing museum decolonisation as part of an anti-colonial stance entails fashioning museums as a pluralistic space. As part of this, a commitment to redressing its colonial wounds emerges by not only highlighting the shared sensibilities we have in response to colonial dispossession, exploitation and violence, but also requires the institution to operate as a device to enable subaltern groups to heal their relationship to the past;
- these prevailing discourses will intersect with volunteers' place attachment and the significance they ascribe to their practice. This is because volunteers strategically construct, shape and manage their activity as a form of *serious leisure*, and so their responses to decolonial practice will be informed by: how their subjectivity might contribute to how they constitute and perceive the positives and negatives of their experience; how recognising their place attachment may change their appreciation and consumption of their site of volunteering; and whether they have the ability and capacity to navigate any apparent conflicts;
- pursuing decolonisation may result in volunteer learning and training being more critically aligned. This is because museums may want to engender volunteer critical reflection regarding their organisation's complicity with oppression tied to historic colonialism and its contemporary legacies, and so will want to instil transgressive understandings as part of sufficiently equipping and empowering volunteers to communicate colonial histories to diverse audiences;
- live interpreter volunteers possess significant influence in dialogically shaping the narratives they are expected to convey to diverse audiences, meaning that they are inherently political actors embroiled in selective memorialisation practices depending upon what and which histories and peoples they decide to

foreground as part of engendering connection. Therefore, they are a vital conduit, as instigators of *historical empathy*, through which transgressive understandings of Empire can be achieved and the intent of volunteers is a vital factor in supporting or subverting these processes.

Having outlined the lenses that I am utilising as part of my theoretical framework, the following chapter details my specific research design in terms of: multi-sited ethnography as my main guiding research methodology; my relative positionality and way of engaging with interlocutors; my chosen methods that I used to generate data; how I analysed my data; and, the steps I took to fully anonymise all participants.
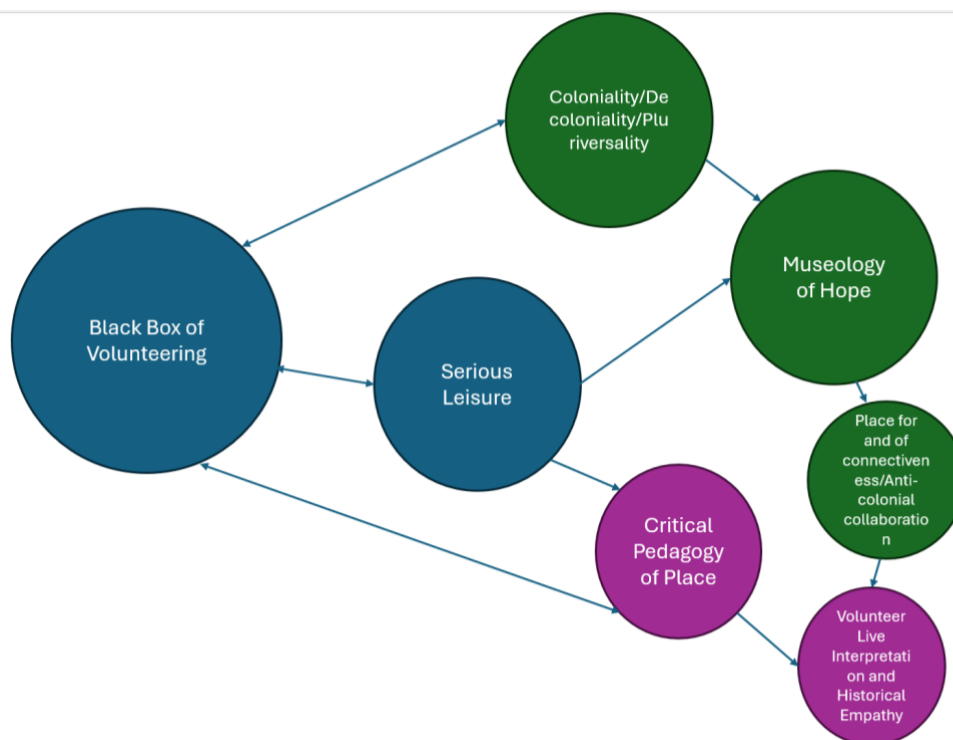
Figure 3- a visual representation of interrelations of my theoretical framework which are outlined in the key points to take away. Unveiling the Black Box of Volunteering serves as the starting point as it details the various 'discourses, motivations and practice' that are assumed to comprise volunteering. Firstly, they are coded in different colours according to their strand of theorisation. The blue details my theoretical view of volunteering, namely as a form of *serious leisure*. The green represents my anti- and decolonial theorisation that I am viewing as the manifestation of museum decolonisation. The purple symbolises actual volunteer practice, namely in the form of live interpretation. Secondly, there are double-ended arrows between the Black Box and coloniality/decoloniality/pluriversality, serious leisure and a critical pedagogy of place. This is because my conception of volunteering is reflexively shifting according to: the agency and positionality of the volunteer and how they shape their experience in relation to their constitution and navigation of positives and negatives; the historical, temporal and spatial contexts through which coloniality and decoloniality, as its response, operates; and finally, the place-based context within which critical volunteer learning, training and live interpretation are situated. Thirdly, *serious leisure* directly intersects with a *museology of hope* and a *critical pedagogy of place* as it elucidates how the agency of volunteers operates within and is conditioned by the system of discourses

that led to the enaction of decolonial practice and generation of alternative understandings in the face of oppressive social structures. These linkages then culminate in the final category of volunteer live interpretation which can be viewed as a direct manifestation of the reparative effort to redress shared colonial wounds, as part of a place for connectiveness that encourages connection with and empathy for historic persons.

Methodology

This chapter begins by offering a detailed discussion of my research choices and my decision to immerse myself in qualitative methodology and constructivism which led to my selection of multi-sited ethnography. It goes on to explore some of the implications of these philosophical orientations, including those for my own positionality and subsequent engagement with interlocutors. I also consider the required applications of trustworthiness and fairness and how these shaped my approach to data generation (via semi-structured interviews, active participant observation and reviewing of primary documents) and subsequent deductive and inductive data analysis. I finally detail the parameters of my ethical clearance and how this shaped my anonymisation protocols.

Why qualitative methodology?

Since this research is primarily concerned with volunteer responses to museum decolonisation (RQ1), how it might change their experience and practice (RQ2), and exploring the ways in which they are being equipped, empowered and supported to communicate colonial and decolonised histories (RQ3), I decided to adopt a qualitative approach. This enables a more in-depth examination into 'how' volunteers situate themselves within and in relation to their community of practice and the wider organisation and 'why' pursuing museum decolonisation can be interpreted as a significant change that would impact their current and future volunteering experience. Denzin and Lincoln (2018) state that qualitative research is often characterised as a situated activity that locates the observer in the world and can operate as a set of interpretive, material practices that make the surrounding social worlds visible through a series of representations. Consequently, Schwandt, Lincoln and Guba (2007) state that researchers need to acknowledge the intersubjective component of qualitative interpretation since it is made within a specific context or a background web of beliefs, practices and traditions, thereby, making any interpretive statements tied to certain social circumstances.

The earlier works of Lincoln and Guba (1985, 1986) state that qualitative research is also underpinned by four axioms. Firstly, a central recognition that there are multiple social worlds that impact social inquiry and how the researcher needs to examine and study these multiple and constructed realities. They are all interrelated, they all influence one another, and are shaped by context. This means generalisations cannot be sought and there is a need to engage in forms of thick description to grapple with the meaning-making processes underpinning phenomena (Geertz, 1973). Secondly, that actions are only explainable in terms of multiple interrelating factors, events and processes that give shape to it and are part of it, meaning that researchers can only establish plausible inferences about these patterns and its corresponding shape. Thirdly, the relationship between inquirer and respondent cannot be objective and concerns the intersubjective because of their mutual interaction and influence over one another. Fourthly, any sort of qualitative inquiry is bound within the values of the inquirer, the choice of the inquiry paradigm, the choice of theory to guide the research,

as well as the wider context in which it is situated. Therefore, research cannot be without bias since it hinges on the positionality and preferences of the researcher. This then posits that there is no absolute or fixed foundation upon which 'truth' is based, but rather is validated by the social context and communal consensus of those operating within a specific community of practice (Lincoln, Lynham and Guba, 2023).

For the context of this PhD, I am aiming to locate myself in the social worlds of volunteers to critically examine how their practice and the layers of meaning they attach to it may be potentially influenced by their institution engaging in decolonial practice. This can be viewed as the social context, or foundation, upon which my research rests. I locate myself as a researcher guided by notions of constructivism rather being an activist seeking to achieve political and social change. Being concerned to explore and follow not only how the social world of volunteers may be changed through decolonial practice, as well as what conflicts may emerge from this, I adopted qualitative and constructivist approaches.

Multi-Sited Ethnography and the spatial conception of the field

As articulated previously, the central concern of my PhD is to examine how pursuing decolonisation impacts volunteers and the meaning they attach to their activity. Following from this, I adopted Multi-Sited Ethnography as my methodological approach because this could reveal how following the top-down mandating of decolonial practice met with the bottom-up experience of volunteers, especially in terms of how they respond to addressing and combating colonial and imperial legacies of their organisation.

First introduced by Marcus (1995), Multi-Sited Ethnography follows the processual connections between sites and attempts to reconstruct the system of relations and trans-local interdependencies that coproduce any particular social settings/phenomena. Marcus (1995) describes six different modes of following: following people; following an object; following the construction and circulation of a metaphor; following a story and the way it influences social memory; following a biography; or following a conflict. Based on the notion of 'following', Boccagni (2019) and Falzon (2007: 2) emphasise that any fieldwork guided by Multi-Sited Ethnography investigates social issues and cultural formations by following people, connections, associations, objects, and relationships that are mutually interrelated. As a result, these phenomena are 'substantially continuous but [may] not [be] spatially contiguous' and operate as the embodiment/elicitor of social practices and memories within various temporal and spatial contexts (Boccagni, 2019, Falzon, 2009). For example, adopting an Multi-Sited Ethnography approach would make it possible to connect the various spatial and temporal contexts that may inform a particular volunteer's love of learning about specific historical figures which could then operate as their prime motivation to volunteer and continue volunteering at a particular locale.

By following connections, relationships, and processes between various spatial and temporal contexts, there is a central emphasis on how space is co-produced between the ethnographer and their informants. This is because multi-sited fieldwork

conceptualises the field not as a geographic space, but rather a conceptual space whose boundaries are constantly negotiated and constructed (Horst, 2009, Massey, 2005). Consequently, what comprises of the 'field' for Multi-Sited Ethnography emerges as a direct response to the ongoing negotiation between the ethnographer and their informants based on their mutual aims, interests, and expectations. This means that the field cannot be regarded as a fixed and bounded entity, but rather one that is continually changing based on interaction between the ethnographer and informant, the social world that is co-produced and the objects or subjects that they are attempting to 'follow' (Akdeniz, 2019, Marcus, 2012). The research field of Multi-Sited Ethnography has helpful congruencies as simulacrum for knowledge flows within the spatial context of the museum, and so it is well suited for following how colonial and imperial legacies can persist within museums and how acknowledging, communicating, and combatting these has implications for volunteers and volunteering.

Reflexivity, positionality and relationship with interlocutors

Although qualitative inquiry relies on the researcher to act as the interpretive instrument, there is a need for researchers to critically examine themselves and their positionality. Being reflexive forces the researcher to come to terms with their choice of the research problem along with their research subjects and multiple identities that they bring to the 'field' (Alcoff and Potter, 1993). In turn, researchers need to be cognizant of how the identities they bring with them and consequently those which are co-created with their subjects of study may influence data generation. Further, the subsequent reconstruction of both voices as part of the text (May and Perry, 2017).

Since this research directly delves into the operations and potential actualisation through volunteers contributing to museum decolonisation, there is a moral and professional imperative to acknowledge the differences between Western and non-Western epistemologies, knowledge traditions as well as the implications this has for 'research'. Tuck and Yang (2012: 18) assert that researchers operating in settler-colonial paradigms often engage with indigenous epistemologies and ontologies, and that any attempts to blend to the two can result in the subordination of the former for the latter. As a result, researchers need to be cognizant of the boundaries between differing knowledge and philosophical systems and recognise their own positionality and limitations as part of preventing forms of settler-colonial and colonial capture (Hird, et al 2022). I was guided by recognition of this ethic of incommensurability in terms of how I view my own research and practice. This is because I recognise the boundaries and limitations of my own position and practice, especially since I am operating in three organisations who are the direct beneficiaries of historic colonialism and its contemporary legacies. Because of this, I acknowledge that as part of my position as a cis-gendered, heterosexual white PhD researcher that I will never sufficiently be able to completely grasp and understand the lived realities of those who are still grappling with the racialised impacts of historic colonialism. Therefore, my selection of specific anti- and decolonial epistemologies incorporated into my practice were meant to identify and

follow the traces of change that are ongoing in these organisations, rather than guiding my activities as a critical instrument geared towards achieving praxis (Carlson-Manathara, 2016).

When considering my relationship to my interlocutors, I was an active participant in each of my organisation's volunteering programme, being active at least once a fortnight. Consequently, I came to occupy the dual identity of a researcher and a participant within the volunteers' community of practice, meaning that my critical distance from my interlocutors could be reduced (De Walt and De Walt, 2011). Immersing myself in the social world of volunteers and volunteering over the medium and long-term provided specific benefits in terms of being able to develop a reciprocal and trusting relationship with each of my interviewees and observed volunteers. This was especially important since there was a required level of trust for these interviews and observations to occur. Otherwise, my activities and presence could have been met with distrust and been perceived as subversive. One such example was raised during my interviews where Volunteer B6 voiced how they had been confronted with similar 'subversive' questions from people as part of their practice, which then speaks to how my presence could be perceived as attacking or undermining the activity of the institution. However, I managed to circumvent this conceptualisation by having my activities, position and presence legitimised by the institution. This then acted as visible reminder to participants of my status as both a volunteer and as a PhD researcher. Therefore, being recognised as a valid member of the organisation's community of practice as well as my medium/long-term presence fashioned my position into being an insider-outsider.

Even though I positioned myself as an insider-outsider, there were times when this was tested. Based on the sensitive nature of the research, interlocutors sometimes voiced opinions that could be perceived as being controversial, whether it be their criticisms of institutional practice or voicing of opinions that would be considered as inappropriate which could impact their standing within the organisation. One significant example of this occurred as part of my interviews at the British Museum where Volunteer B6 used two racial slurs in quick succession when conversing about segregation and racial relations in the American Deep South during the era of Jim Crow laws. My initial reaction was that of shock that this person had used such language, and then I started to think about why this person was comfortable using this terminology, and how to respond to this. Whilst I could have reported their conduct to the volunteering team at the British Museum which may have led to their disciplining, they were not operating in an official capacity as an ambassador of the organisation and so, at that specific moment, it fell outside of the museum's purview to reprimand this volunteer. This then raised the interesting question of to what extent ambassadors of the organisation, especially volunteers who occupy non-salaried positions, should be held accountable for their actions outside of their official duties. Furthermore, reporting this individual would have not only undermined the trust they placed in me by being a fellow Enlightenment Gallery volunteer, but also directly contravened the protections I afforded to participants as part of the research. On top of this, it also raised further questions concerning the purpose of

my activity since I was there to generate data regarding the responses of volunteers to decolonisation rather than as an activist. As a result, these contrasting factors and tensions resulted in feelings of unease that I had to grapple with when interacting with my interlocutors and other volunteers as part of my dual identity as an active volunteer and PhD researcher.

Moreover, as part of trust generated with participants, it was also important that their voices were accurately and ethically represented. As emphasised by Marcus and Fischer's (1986) as part of the crisis of representation, ethnographers need to cognizant of their privileged position and the connotations this has for knowledge production and the claims and representations they make regarding the 'truth' and the 'world'. This is because ethnographers can engage in forms of context- and voice-capture whereby their participants are not accurately and ethically represented since both their words and voice are subordinated to address the research paradigm (Mason, 2002, Tuck and McKenzie, 2015a). This then not only results in a distortion and loss of necessary context within which actions, claims and representations are made, but also cements power imbalances between researcher and researchee since control over representation and voice lies in the hands of the inquirer.

Being aware of these connotations, especially since I volunteered in a public-facing role at each organisation for at least a year, I endeavoured to reduce the loss of context and relative power imbalances present between my subjects and myself. This was achieved through both interacting with my participants over a protracted period so that they were made continually aware of key developments throughout the course of the research, as well as being sent their respective contributions so that they could review them, provide commentary, and request changes where necessary. Through this, participants had the opportunity to not only exercise some control over how their voice was recorded, but also provide further context to the data generated which could result in a more holistic representation of them and their corresponding world.

Retaining Rigour: trustworthiness and authenticity

Prior to any discussion related to my methods, I discuss how my naturalistic inquiry involved a delicate balancing of relevance and rigour with the aim of enhancing the quality of raw data as well as its subsequent reconstruction through analysis and writing. This is because I want to outline the general principles that I adopted to enhance the robustness of my research design before detailing how I specifically applied them- which will be discussed in subsequent sections in the methodology chapter (see phase one and two of data generation and corresponding methods). Instead of relying of positivistic notions of internal validity, external validity, reliability and objectivity, I borrowed from Lincoln and Guba (1985, 1986) and Guba (1981) suggestions that rigour should be framed according to notions of trustworthiness which are: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

Credibility relates to the confidence in the 'truth' or the accuracy of the findings. Achieving this requires: prolonged engagement- lengthy and intensive contact with the phenomena/respondents to assess possible sources of distortion and to identify saliences; persistent observation- in-depth pursuits of those elements found to be salient in prolonged engagement; triangulation/cross-checking of data- by use of different sources, methods and different investigators; peer debriefing- exposing oneself to a disinterested professional peer to 'keep the inquirer honest', assist in developing working hypotheses, develop and test the emerging design and obtain emotional catharsis; negative case analysis- active search for negative instances relating to developing insights and adjusting the latter until no further negative instances are found; member checks- processes of continuous and informal testing of information by soliciting reactions of respondents to what the investigator has reconstructed.

Transferability relates to showing that the findings have applicability in other contexts. This requires engaging in forms of theoretical or purposive sampling which helps to narrow and refine your choices of participants and respondents and developing thick description data- narratives developed about the context so that judgements about the degree of fit or similarity may be made by others who want to apply the findings.

Dependability relates to showing that the findings are consistent and could be repeated. Lincoln and Guba (1985, 1986) recommend engaging in forms of triangulation which shows how differing methods are used in tandem to generate similar themes and trends generated across the dataset, as well as establishing an audit trail which shows how data was generated, analysed and interpreted.

Confirmability relates to the degree of neutrality or the extent to which the findings of the study are shaped by the respondents and not researcher bias, motivation, or interest. For confirmability, Guba (1981) recommends practicing triangulation by generating data from a variety of perspectives through a variety of methods and practicing reflexivity. This entails 'intentionally revealing to their audience the underlying epistemological assumptions which cause them to formulate a set of questions in a particular way, and finally present their findings'. This might include maintaining a journal which contains their introspections as part of the data generation process.

Alongside notions of trustworthiness, Lincoln and Guba (1985, 1986) also call for qualitative researchers to be guided by notions of authenticity. This is because it is not enough for researchers to apply trustworthiness to their knowledge production process. Researchers should also need to be concerned with the outcomes of naturalistic or constructivist inquiries and the socially constructed meanings that underpin any sort of interpretation. One can view this as being guided by the prerogative that social-science research should not extractive and has a bettering impact for participants (Sleat, 2013: 17). Therefore, Lincoln and Guba (1985, 1986) introduced further criteria: fairness, ontological authenticity, educative authenticity, catalytic authenticity, and tactical authenticity.

Lincoln, Lynham and Guba (2023) state that fairness relates to the quality of balance in stakeholder views, perspectives, values, claims, concerns and voices that are part of the text. This criterion is important as it prompts the researcher to recognise how omitting a plurality of perspectives introduces further bias into their writing, as well as how engendering fairness may reduce the marginalisation of specific standpoints. This can then result in differing stakeholders being 'represented' and introduces the possibility that their voices are treated fairly and with balance (Lincoln, Lynham, Guba, 2023: 205-206). This point is particularly important for this research as following and investigating volunteer responses to the decolonisation discourse necessitates a variety of perspectives being represented, and so this was a central concern when writing my empirical chapters.

Ontological authenticity accounts for the changes in the individual's conscious experiencing of the world, and how this is either enhanced or informed by their participation in the research. Educative authenticity builds on the ontological since it concerns how participants develop an understanding and appreciation of others by recognising the different value systems that engender their constructions of the 'world' (Lincoln, Lynham and Guba, 2023: 205 - 206).

Catalytic and tactical authenticity come hand in hand. The former concerns with how the research and data generation process stimulates and facilitates the participant's behaviour, e.g., feeling re-energised or re-oriented towards tackling specific phenomena, whereas the latter is concerned with how participants are empowered to enact change (Schwandt, Lincoln and Guba, 2007).

However, as mentioned previously, guided by constructivism, I am positioning myself both as a researcher and as an interpretive instrument. This means that there is a lesser emphasis on the categories of ontological, educative, catalytic and tactical authenticity since my research is not oriented towards enacting change or directly challenging either false or divided consciousness. Therefore, notions of trustworthiness and fairness were applied to the research design as part of my attempt to enhance both the quality of raw data during the generation process and the accurate, balanced and ethical representation of participants in the final output.

Case Study Criteria

To conduct a multi-sited museum ethnography focused on following the impacts of the decolonisation discourse, I obtained collaborative agreement with three organisations of varying sizes for my data generation. I selected Fulham Palace, the Horniman Museum and the British Museum respectively because of their differing sizes; their similar number of volunteers; as well as how each organisation can be viewed as being nationally and internationally significant because of their collections, histories and practice. Consequently, each organisation can be viewed as an important discursive arena whereby the topics of colonialism and Trans-Atlantic Enslavement are being

grappled with, and as microcosm for how decolonial practice is being embraced and enacted by the heritage industry.

Recapping my research explicitly focused on the reactions of volunteers to museum decolonisation (RQ1), the potential changes to their practice (RQ2); and how they were being trained to communicate colonial and decolonised histories (RQ3). Therefore, in selecting my organisations it was important that they firstly had formally committed to a decolonisation process or were taking steps to acknowledge and communicate their institution's colonial and imperial past and was detailed within the organisation's most recent strategic plan or within their annual reports since 2019/20. Secondly, each had formally either stated or indicated that they were planning to include volunteers within their decolonisation process. Thirdly, they were actively researching their institution's historic involvement in the Trans- Atlantic Trade in Enslaved Africans or historic colonialism and imperialism and were planning to include these insights into their permanent and temporary exhibitions along with volunteers' live interpretation and wider public messaging. Fourthly, organisations had started to implement some of this work into volunteer training and began to have conversations with their volunteers in how their activity may be impacted by this organisational shift. Fifthly, they had an emphasis on active participation by volunteers, e.g., working as tour guides/front of house/object handling volunteers, as a means for communicating their institution's history and heritage. Finally, they had a minimum volunteering commitment of six months to facilitate medium/long-term exposure to the social environment of volunteering and the volunteers' community of practice and this included an expectation to volunteer at least twice a month; and for logistical reasons they were all within London.

However, the stated case study criteria come with their own set of limitations. Firstly, all of my case studies were based in London. As I was self-funding this PhD, I would not have been able to afford to conduct my fieldwork at institutions located outside of London, especially since I included active participant observation as part of my research design. Because of this, the focus was on volunteering at museums located in urban and multi-cultural areas of London. Therefore, it is important to recognise that drawing meaningful inferences about how museum decolonisation impacts volunteers and volunteering in rural and mono-cultural areas may be limited at best. Secondly, all of my case studies can be classified as museums, with Fulham Palace operating as a historic home museum (there are dedicated exhibition spaces alongside the home itself and the objects within it being presented as static in order to recreate the historic circumstances in which people operated). Whilst this PhD provides extensive detail of how pursuing decolonisation may impact museum volunteering, there is a lack of engagement with how it may impact volunteer practice at heritage organisations. This is because a lot of commentary regarding each museum's decolonial initiatives and the implications they have for volunteers and their volunteering are consigned to focussing upon specific objects, their interpretation and the roles and responsibilities that public-facing volunteers may have within specific exhibitions. As a result, this thesis does not investigate how decolonisation impacts volunteering at heritage organisations as distinct from museums, especially in terms of how volunteers may contribute to the preservation of specific places and practices. Thirdly, I encountered significant

problems in recruiting organisations to be my case studies. In part, this can be attributed to both the Covid-19 pandemic and the toxicity of the culture wars that was occurring in late 2021 and early 2022. This is because as organisations were rebuilding themselves after the initial impacts of the pandemic, many of those whom I approached did not have the necessary time and resources to support this line of research. This was compounded by institutional anxieties that engaging with research that could be perceived as controversial may result in popular backlash which could impact their perceived standing and reputation in wider society. As a result, it meant that I had to exercise some flexibility when selecting the organisations that became my case studies.

After determining my selection criteria, I contacted the Head of Volunteering at the British Museum, Fulham Palace Trust, and the Horniman Museum respectively. I met each Volunteer Manager to discuss what the aims and objectives of my research were; what my fieldwork entailed at each institution; the parameters of my ethical clearance; as well as what the potential benefits were for them if they took part. I also shared further documentation with them for their internal approval processes before any data generation occurred. I then had a standard volunteer interview to recreate the volunteer recruitment process as closely as possible.

Phase One and Two of Data Generation

As part of my data generation, I decided to undertake two phases. The first was to ascertain and grasp a sufficient understanding of the broad impacts of decolonisation across the heritage industry and the second was a narrower inquiry once I had established working partnerships with my case studies.

The first phase, conducted between March 2022 and June 2022, involved following and identifying significant points of conflict concerning the narration and representation of Empire within the wider culture war context, and then interviewing academics, cultural practitioners, volunteers and volunteer managers. These individuals were selected based on their experiences of being subject to backlash over their organisation's critical interrogation of their colonial roots. Also, because they had been responsible for equipping and empowering volunteers to engage with historic colonialism and its legacies. The key findings from this round of data generation then informed the line of inquiry as part of the second.

The second phase began in July 2022 and ended in December 2023. This was segmented according to each organisation and generally concerned: 1) the reactions of volunteers to their organisation's decolonisation efforts; 2) followed the ways in which each organisation raised their volunteer's awareness of such practice; 3) covered the training that was provided for volunteers to equip and empower them to communicate colonial histories; and, 4) gauged how volunteers' practice and place attachment to the organisation may have changed and will change into the future.

As part of establishing an audit trail for my research, the timetable of my fieldwork was as follows.

For Fulham Palace: June 2022-June 2023: conducted my volunteer interview and began volunteering at least once a week as a Front of House volunteer. I also made sure to attend volunteer socials and monthly ARG meetings; October-December 2022: attended the first round of training sessions related to the new exhibition and conducted eight interviews. March 2023-June 2023: attend the second batch of training sessions which occurred in late-March, the new exhibition launched in late-April, and I conducted a further nine interviews up until early June 2023. I then ceased my volunteering and withdrew from the field.

For the British Museum: August 2022: Approached the organisation to conduct interviews with object handling and tour guide volunteers. October-December 2022: conducted seventeen interviews with volunteer managers and object-handling and tour guide volunteers. December 2022- December 2023: conducted my volunteer interview, completed my mandatory training, began and continued volunteering once a fortnight as an Object Handling volunteer in the Enlightenment Gallery. June 2023-July 2023: attended further training sessions related to the proposed Africa Tour and the Sloane Lab and conducted two further interviews with object handling and tour guide volunteers.

For the Horniman: September 2022: approached the organisation to conduct fieldwork, had my volunteer interview, completed my mandatory training and began as an Engage volunteer. September-December 2022: based on the return of the Benin Bronzes, I conducted seven interviews with volunteers, volunteer managers, curators and researchers. June 2023- December 2023: attended the summer social and mandatory trainings in advance of the Cha, Chai, Tea exhibition, conducted seven interviews with Engage volunteers both pre- and post-exhibition launch. September 2022- December 2023: operated as an Engage volunteer and actively volunteered at least once a fortnight.

Interviews

Multi-Sited Ethnography as a methodology places significant importance on using interviews to address the researcher's partial comprehension of the 'field' (Hannerz, 2010, Kreps, 2019). This is because following objects, subjects, or discourses will rely upon the researcher navigating multiple social worlds, meaning that they cannot rely upon their sole interpretation of the phenomena. Consequently, interviews were used to answer RQs 1, 2 and 3.

Over the course of my fieldwork, I conducted 60 semi-structured interviews in successive phases with volunteers, volunteer managers and other institutional staff who had influence in shaping volunteer practice. I decided to undertake semi-structured interviews as opposed to structured or unstructured interviews because I wanted to follow a general line of inquiry based on my research questions, whilst allowing for some flexibility so that participants were able to introduce new interrelated topics which they deemed as significant (Brinkmann, 2018). By having a structure, I was able to keep participants on track and generate data that directly related to my research questions.

For phase one, I conducted nine interviews with academics, volunteer managers, and volunteers from my own personal network who had been significantly impacted by the blowback from the culture wars. Participants were selected based on their experience of being a volunteer or working with them. I initially sent each participant an introductory email where I explained who I was; what my research was about; and what their potential involvement would entail. I also sent a participant information sheet and a consent form for them to e-sign and return to me. The topics covered in the interviews were: the nature of the culture wars; why organisations have generally decided to 'decolonise themselves'; what sort of reactions volunteers have had to decolonisation efforts; and how organisations can equip, empower, and support their volunteers to communicate histories associated with Empire. All interviews were either conducted online via MS Teams/Zoom or in-person depending upon what the interviewee felt most comfortable with. All interviews were transcribed, redacted, and sent to participants for their comments.

The second phase of data generation consisted of 51 interviews with academics, CEOs, curators, volunteer managers and volunteers. Recruiting participants involved a combination of purposive and snowball sampling, but this changed depending on the site (Longhurst, 2010, Mason 2002). My selection criteria were guided by similar factors across each organisation since I was guided by Lincoln and Guba's (1985) emphasis on instilling the transferability of findings of qualitative research. Of particular importance was the decision to avoid specific demographic breakdowns of volunteers. This is because I wanted to focus more on the place-attachment that an individual volunteer may have with their site of volunteering, and how pursuing decolonisation may change this. Consequently, the amount of time spent volunteering and their frequency of practice was for me a more important determining factor than the demographics of each participant.

My selection criteria for Fulham Palace were:

- all public facing volunteers (whether Archive Research Group, front of house or tour guide) must have been volunteering for at least one year and are still actively volunteering at least twice a month;
- participants had to have attended the training related to changing displays and interpretation surrounding the Bishops of London and their connections to Trans-Atlantic enslavement.

My selection criteria for the British Museum were:

- had been volunteering at the British Museum for at least one year and must still be actively volunteering at least once a month;
- had to have given a public facing tour or interacted with members of the public via an object handling desk. The volunteers should be located in any of the following galleries: Collecting the World, AOA (Africa, Oceania and the Americas), Islamic, Asia, and the Enlightenment;
- attended trainings related to the organisation's connection to historic colonialism or where their future decolonisation efforts were discussed;

- volunteers that were communicating colonial and imperial histories to various audiences or using objects with colonial or imperial provenance.

My selection criteria for the Horniman Museum were:

- had been volunteering for a minimum of a year and were actively Engage volunteering at least twice a month;
- expressed an interest regarding how their institution's colonial/imperial past is going to be communicated and narrated, or had attended training for the Cha, Chai, Tea exhibition;
- contributed to the development of the Cha, Chai, Tea exhibition, or were responsible for managing and training volunteers.

At Fulham Palace, I recruited participants through a variety of avenues. I placed out a call for participants and an explanation of what my research entailed on their online volunteer platform, but there was minimal response to this. As a result, I mainly approached fellow Archive Research Group, front of house and tour-guide volunteers either at dedicated trainings related to the new exhibition or whilst on shift. Fourteen of the interviews were conducted in person on-site, and three were online via Microsoft Teams/Zoom.

At the British Museum, there was an expectation that I would set up my interviews via the Volunteer Office. Volunteering Staff B2 then sent out a call for participants based on my selection criteria which clearly explained what my research entailed and what was expected of volunteers who took part. Participants who were interested in taking part responded via email and we then arranged an interview to be conducted either online or on-site. I also supplemented this by directly approaching volunteers that I met whilst on shift or during training sessions. In total, I conducted fourteen interviews in person and five online via MS Teams/Zoom.

At the Horniman Museum, I approached potential participants whilst volunteering as an Engage volunteer and through introductions made by Volunteering Staff C5. I normally approached people on shift, at volunteer socials, or at mandatory trainings for the Cha, Chai, Tea exhibition. I conducted thirteen interviews on-site and one online.

The topics for the interviews changed depending on the organisation and the role of participants (see appendix six). However, each set of questions followed a general structure based on my three research questions.

For salaried staff, the interviews explored: the institutional politics surrounding why the institution wants to 'decolonise'; the general reaction of volunteers to this; the training they provided to equip, empower and support volunteers to communicate and encounter histories of colonialism and its legacies; and their predictions concerning how volunteering practice may change because of this.

For volunteers, the interviews covered: their volunteering motivation and their place attachment to their site of volunteering; their thoughts and perspectives concerning 'decolonisation' or the narration of Empire; their opinions concerning training they may have experienced or may need to communicate colonial and imperial histories and their legacies including what could have been improved; and how their future volunteering experience, practice and place attachment may change because of 'decolonisation'.

I also endeavoured to engage in forms of member checking to add to the credibility of the data that I was generating. By using prolific examples, or vignettes, as part of my line of questioning, I was not only able to provoke new strands of thinking amongst my interlocutors, but I was also able to test the veracity of the reconstructed statements that I had made from volunteers. This was particularly important as it gave a fuller picture of *'motivations, practices and discourses'*, or the black box of volunteering, that informed their practice and operated as a form of triangulation to identify similarities across varying interlocutors within their specific community of practice (Schahar et al, 2019).

I decided to cease my interviews at each organisation once I had achieved data saturation. I achieved this when I started to encounter no new themes emerging from my interlocutors, and so I decided it was time to exit the field and start conducting data analysis (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, Naeem et al, 2024).

All participants were sent a participant information sheet as well as a consent form which they e-signed and returned. All interviews were recorded and transcribed using OtterAI. I manually reviewed each transcript and redacted any identifiable details. All participants were sent a copy of their transcript for comments. I then deleted the original audio file and coded the redacted transcript (Appendix Nine).

Participant Observation

To follow how pursuing decolonisation may implicate volunteers and volunteer practice, I decided to undertake active participant observation. By being a public facing volunteer, I was able to immerse myself in the social settings in which volunteers operated and became familiar with how they were expected to engage with various publics. As a result, this fleshed out my understanding of the 'doing' of volunteering (De Walt and De Walt, 2011, Siegel, 2018, Schahar et al, 2019).

I initially employed the use of descriptive observation to gather as much information about the social environment in which volunteers conduct their volunteering. I collected this data through volunteering on a weekly basis, attending mandatory trainings, and other volunteer events, e.g., volunteer open forums and socials. After this, I started to use more focused observation to narrow my inquiry. My observations focused on how themes related to decolonisation and Empire manifested themselves within the everyday volunteering experience, especially concerning the conversations that volunteers may have with various publics, as well as the layers of meaning behind these (De Walt and De Walt, 2011, Geertz, 1973). I generated my fieldnotes both during

and after my volunteering shift. My fieldnotes contained: a summary of the morning briefing as well as the overall structure of the volunteering shift (e.g., where I am volunteering, who I am volunteering with and what activity I am conducting); notable conversations and interactions that I had with fellow volunteers and members of various publics related to Empire; and then concluding reflections and reactions to the shift at its end. This two-fold observation process then enabled me to engage in prolonged and persistent observation (see timetable) in each organisation to enhance the credibility of my findings, as well as to offer another mode of triangulation with data generated from my interviews and reviewing of primary sources, i.e., internal organisational documents.

Primary Sources: internal documents

I also incorporated the use of internal organisational documents to supplement the data generated as part of my interviews and participant observation. More specifically, I reviewed institutional strategic plans; volunteer induction materials; volunteer training materials; and other internal documents related to volunteering.

Firstly, this was done to provide a fuller picture regarding the institutional context and politics surrounding pursuing decolonial practice. This was important as it not only provided further context in terms of how the institution framed and justified their activity, but also enabled me to follow which top-down mandated discourses were present in the 'black-box' of volunteering. This was then compounded by reviewing volunteer training materials as it provided further context in terms of what the institution expects them to communicate, as well as how. From this, I was able to trace how the institution intended to raise volunteer awareness pertaining to decolonial practice, as well as generate a fuller picture of how groups of volunteers operate within their institutions.

Secondly, reviewing these data sources also provided further opportunities to enhance the trustworthiness of the soft or interpretive data generated from my interviews and participant observation. This is because I came to view the internal documents as constituting a form of hard data and so utilising them enabled me to achieve forms of triangulation since I could cross-reference the claims made by volunteers regarding their practice which then enhanced the credibility, confirmability and veracity of the reconstructed statements (Morse, 2018). Moreover, utilising these data sources also provided a basis upon which to establish an audit trail (Morse, 2015, 2018). This is because examining institutional strategic plans and volunteer training materials provided specific lines of inquiry that were raised in the interviews, as well as to observe in my own and other volunteers' practice. For example, utilising these data sources raised questions concerning volunteer awareness of underlying reasons for decolonial practice or provoked to what extent the training sessions were guided by facilitating forms of volunteer critical reflection concerning their language use. As a result, the insights garnered from these sources enhanced the dependability of data between respective methods and so were utilised in an iterative sense to refine the scope of my data generation and subsequent analysis.

Data Analysis

I conducted thematic analysis on an iterative basis according to the two phases. After I had completed the interviews in Phase One, I decided to conduct inductive coding of my transcripts via NVivo not only to organise the data present, but also to identify and generate the categories and themes which would guide my inquiry for Phase Two. I selected this approach as I had not determined my main theoretical framework at that point (see timetable), and so I wanted to use the perspectives of my initial interlocutors to determine and refine my research design and questions. The overriding codes and corresponding themes generated from inductively coding for these interviews were: volunteer motivation and place attachment; volunteer support and opposition to decolonial practice and their underlying reasons; didactic versus dialogic training that sought to equip and empower volunteers to communicate colonial histories; and changes to the volunteer experience and practice because of decolonisation. I then formed a code book based on these master themes so that they could be applied to each case study as part of my data analysis for Phase Two (see appendix eight).

For the second phase, I decided to use both deductive and inductive coding via NVivo for my interviews, fieldnotes and internal organisational materials. Whilst inductive coding enabled me to immerse myself in the data and organised it according to the meanings and voices of my interlocutors, it was important to intersect this with my main theoretical framework as well as my research questions (Braun and Clarke, 2006, Clarke and Braun, 2017). By introducing deductive coding, I was able to engender greater rigour to my data since it organised meaning according to already established theorisation and my guiding research questions which then further enhanced its credibility, transferability, and confirmability (Drisko and Maschi, 2015, Mayring, 2010).

I conducted this round of coding according to a two-phase process. For stage one, I coded inductively for each transcript and added to the codes already present from my initial code book according to each case study. I then applied these same codes my fieldnotes. For stage two, I reviewed my initial codes and compared them against the main tenets of my theoretical frameworks, i.e., decoloniality and its actualisation through museum decolonisation as a museology of hope, heritage volunteering as serious leisure, a critical pedagogy of place and live interpretation, to establish a new case hierarchy and then revised them where necessary (see appendix eight for my codebooks and breakdown of case hierarchies). By doing this, it helped to crystalise the relationship between varying themes that then guided my writing process (Ellingson, 2008).

Research Ethics

For each phase of my data generation, I applied for and received ethical clearance from the UCL Institute of Archaeology's ethics committee. My first ethical approval gave me clearance to conduct interviews with participants, but once I decided to integrate participant observation into my research design, I had to seek further approval. This was granted on the condition that I fully anonymise all participants so that there are no identifiable features present in my fieldnotes and transcripts. I also went through the

internal approval process for research at each of my partner organisations and received permission to conduct research with their volunteer managers and volunteers based on the conditions outlined by the Institute of Archaeology ethics committee (see appendix one for the approval letter).

For the interviews, I endeavoured to send all participants a copy of their interview transcript within six weeks. This is done to guarantee that all research participants have an opportunity to provide commentary and request changes where necessary. After this, I redacted any personally identifiable features present for each interviewee and I give them a pseudonym depending on their organisation, e.g., Volunteer A1, and deleted the original audio file.

For my fieldnotes, I anonymised all participants and members of the public that I interacted with as part of my volunteering. I followed the same procedure as my interviews and gave key informants specific pseudonyms, e.g., Volunteer C5. I am also not at liberty to disclose my fieldnotes due to my ethical clearance.

For internal organisational resources, I received permission from all partner organisations to use volunteer training materials. As required by my ethics clearance, I anonymised and redacted all identifiable features present in the training materials and internal documents to prevent revealing my participating organisations and interlocutors.

However, ethical stipulations made from the outset by UCL had consequences for how I have portrayed my interlocutors within this thesis. This is because I am required to fully anonymise all participants alongside the organisations they are operating within, meaning that I cannot divulge any details related to their specific positionality for the fear that they may become identifiable. This then made it difficult to provide the necessary information, e.g., the ethnicity of the volunteer, their previous occupation/educational background or their lived experiences of legacies of Empire, needed to undertake Geertz's (1973) emphasis on Thick Description. Doing this would have provided a fuller and more holistic understanding of the contestations between personal and institutional politics informing why individual volunteers either support or oppose decolonisation, but also any specific training requirements designed to support the delivery of decolonial histories. In remedying this, I decided to provide a brief and generalised description of each interlocutor. This covered their length of volunteering as well as their roles and responsibilities they held in supporting the running of their organisation. This acted as a proxy to understand their place-based attachment and what they may need to adapt to the changes brought by museum decolonisation. On top of this, I also organised my presented data according to theme to reveal any common strands of thinking that ran across my interlocutors.

Fulham Palace Findings Chapter

Being guided by my three research questions, I followed the deployment, operations, and impacts of the decolonisation discourse at Fulham Palace upon volunteers and volunteering. As a result, the chapter is structured to cover both the institutional and volunteer perspective in order to answer RQ1, RQ2 and RQ3.

The first section of this chapter outlines the institutional history of Fulham Palace in order to provide readers with the necessary timeline of how the organisation has changed over time. I also provide details pertaining to their volunteering programme and discuss my own recruitment and induction process as an active participant observer.

The second section is dedicated to addressing RQ1 and some aspects of RQ2 by providing context surrounding how volunteering at the Palace can be viewed as a form of *serious leisure*. This explores what motivates people to volunteer, how the Palace has strategically constructed volunteering as a leisure experience, as well as how volunteers view their own practice and its resultant outcomes. This then unveils some aspects of the 'Black-Box' of volunteering and constructs the stage upon which volunteer responses to decolonisation may be shaped.

The third section builds on the second and provides an explanation of: the key discourses and motivations that led the Palace to adopt decolonial practice; how they sought to engage and include volunteers; and the outcomes of this. From this, I examine to what extent the Palace's efforts align with a *museology of hope* as part of fashioning itself into *a place for, and of, connectiveness*, or as a pluralistic space. This then provides the necessary discursive terrain to investigate how pursuing decolonisation has impacted both volunteers and volunteering as part of answering RQ1, RQ2 and RQ3.

The fourth section is more grounded in the practical activity of volunteers and the training provided by the Palace. So, it is primarily concerned with addressing RQ3 and some aspects of RQ2. This part of the chapter examines: the operations of a critical pedagogy of place and its manifestation through live interpretation; emergent volunteer discomfort from potential conflict with visitors; the active measures taken by the Palace to visibly safeguard and support volunteers; as well as the specific training methods they utilised to sufficiently equip and empower volunteers to communicate the Palace's ties to historic colonialism and Trans-Atlantic enslavement.

The fifth section directly addresses RQ1 and RQ2. It covers general volunteer opinions related to the Palace's decolonial practice, as well as what impacts future decolonial initiatives may have upon the volunteer's appreciation and consumption of the Palace as well as their practice.

The sixth and final section discusses the significance of my key findings from Fulham Palace with regard to RQ1, 2 and 3.

The findings presented are based on data generated through: reviewing primary documents like volunteer training materials; conducting seventeen interviews with both volunteers and staff members; and writing fieldnotes during my own Front of House volunteering at the Palace from May 2022 to June 2023 as an active participant observer.

Fulham Palace: Organisational History and Volunteering

Fulham Palace is a historic home museum located near Bishops Park, Fulham and it is the historic home of the Bishop of London who operated as the Bishop of the Colonies (see Fulham Palace Things of Note). The site was initially settled by Bishop Waldhere in AD 704 and was in continual use until 1971 when the then-incumbent Bishop Stopford moved into the Old Deanery near St Paul's Cathedral. In 1975, Fulham Palace was leased by the Church of England to the Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham for 100 years and the council undertook the two phases of restoration of the site in 2006 and then 2011, which restored the physical building, the walled garden and resulted in the formation of Fulham Palace Trust. The responsibility of running the site was transferred from the Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham to Fulham Palace Trust in 2011, who in 2019 undertook a third phase of restoration. This was funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund and focused on: 'restoring the Tudor Courtyard, creating new exhibition spaces, bringing the historic rooms back to life, and continuing the restoration of the botanic garden with improved access and the replanting of historic varieties of plants' (Fulham Palace, 2019).

Prior to the Black Lives Matter protests in 2020, there had been some previous research conducted by the then curator alongside the Archive Research Group, a dedicated group of research volunteers, on Bishop Porteus (see Fulham Palace Things of Note). This research focused on his literary circle and their contribution to the abolition movement with the intent of curating and producing a temporary exhibition (Fulham Palace, 2024b). However, upon further consultation with academics combined with the murder of George Floyd and the subsequent Black Lives Matter protests, it was no longer appropriate to focus on Beilby Porteus as an abolitionist, and so the decision was taken to interrogate his status as an absentee enslaver as well as to move beyond him to investigate the complicity of other Bishops of London, e.g., Henry Compton, John Robinson (see Fulham Palace Things of Note). Due to this, Fulham Palace committed in 2020 to exploring and researching how both the Bishops of London and the Palace itself are connected to the impacts of colonialism and the bishops' involvement in enslavement and the abolition of the trans-Atlantic trade in enslaved Africans. Consequently, the prerogative to engage in decolonial action was secular in orientation, rather than it being predicated on Christian doctrine and ethics.

As part of their decolonising efforts, they commissioned and co-produced an exhibition with local African Caribbean community groups and cultural practitioners as well as local schools based on the theme of resistance employed by enslaved and freed peoples (Fulham Palace, 2022). The exhibition then led to updating of labels and panels located throughout the historic home museum as well as volunteer tour scripts which

acknowledged the central presence of historic colonialism and enslavement in the histories of the Bishops of London, especially as the Bishop of the Colonies, and Fulham Palace. The temporary exhibition formally launched in April 2023 and at the opening, Sarah Mullaly, the Bishop of London issued an apology for the action of her historic forebears by stating (Fulham Palace, 2024d):

> *"I am profoundly sorry for the harm that was inflicted by my predecessors through their involvement with the transatlantic slave trade. It continues to be a source of great shame to us as a Diocese, and this exhibition at Fulham Palace comes as a painful but vital reminder of the Church's role in this reprehensible period of our history - one which still adversely impacts descendants of enslaved people, manifesting in a range of issues from systemic inequalities to explicit racism.*

> *"Today, we are committed to having racial justice woven into every aspect of what we do, and we are focused on taking practical steps towards building communities and cultures that are inclusive and fair for all. Earlier this year, the Church Commissioners committed to addressing past wrongs for its involvement in the slave trade with a £100m fund delivering a programme of investment, research, and engagement. Our attempts to right this wrong will never be enough, but understanding and responding to our past can help us create a positive and lasting legacy to serve communities impacted by slavery."*

Whilst reactions to the exhibition itself and the Bishop of London's commentary have been limited, there have been strong reaction to more global reparative efforts by the Church of England. Announced in 2023, the CofE has committed to setting up a fund with an initial investment of £100m in the form of reparations to be given to African-Caribbean communities within the UK with the intent to provide 'meaningful progress towards healing, repair and justice' by addressing barriers to economic parity and quality of life (Church of England, 2024a: 2). Through this, the Church of England aims to provide social entrepreneurs, educators, healthcare givers, asset managers and historians the necessary means through which to address the harms caused by historic African chattel enslavement and colonialism and its legacies (Church of England, 2024a: 2). Reactions to this fund have been mixed. Senior figures within the CofE, like Bishop Rosemarie Mallet, who is the Bishop of Croydon, critiqued the initial £100m earmarked sum by stating that '£100m is a heck of a lot of money, but we also recognise that it is not a lot when you consider the harm done. How do you put a price on that?', and so they are calling for an increase of the fund to £1bn (Sherwood, 2024). Similarly, when reacting to the initial sum offered by the Church, Kehinde Andrews, Professor of Black Studies at Birmingham City University, emphasised that it 'impossible to quantify the lasting impact of slavery or just how much the Church had benefitted from it' (Standley and Campbell, 2024). Consequently, there is a concerted effort to have the Church of England acknowledge and sufficiently grapple with ideological dimensions of Western Christianity that were responsible for dehumanising and constituting the 'Other', or African peoples in this case (Sherwood, 2024).

However, those who oppose any sort of reparative justice within the Church of England claim that the £100m fund is 'anti-Christian'. Negative reactions to the report stemmed from the belief, as echoed by Dr Paul who sits on the Archbishop's Council, that the report into Queen Anne's bounty operates as an *'essentially racist reading of history-that white people are all bad and the oppressors, and black people are nothing more than victims'* (Paul, 2024, Ward, 2024). They further qualify their statement by claiming:

> *'It is anti-Christian. Unbelievably, it calls on the Church to repent for having preached the gospel. African Christians, including the vast numbers of Anglicans in Africa, will be very angry to read that. The authors of the report appear to be completely ignorant of the Church's own beliefs. It will imperil local ministry and mission. Why would ordinary churchgoers continue to give to their local church when it appears we have these vast sums to throw around? Whoever commissioned this report appears to have a death wish for the Church of England.'* (Ward, 2024).

Since the exhibition's launch, they have also commissioned a PhD in collaboration with the University of Kent entitled *'The Church and the Plantations: An Examination of the Bishops of London and their Workforces in the Tobacco Colonies, c. 1680*-1800'. From this, they hope to utilise the findings to further uncover the colonial connections of the Bishops of London and commission and produce further exhibitions related to plant hunting in North America (Hex, 2024). As of July 2024, they have also become one of six museums and heritage organisations who have joined the Museum Association's Anti-Racist Museums programme. The Palace aims to use this programme to tackle 'issues of power, racism and inequality [that are present] within the museum sector and drive forward meaningful change towards becoming an anti-racist organisation' (Fulham Palace, 2024c).

As part of the volunteer programme at the Palace, there are a variety of public facing roles, including: working Front of House, working as a tour guide, working as a garden volunteer, working as a conservation volunteer, and supporting the delivery of the learning and engagement programme with local schools. As of March 2023, they have 240 volunteers of which 40 are Front of House and 20 are Tour Guides (Volunteer Manager A5, 2023).

I undertook my own volunteer interview with Front of House Manager A12 in early June 2022. Sitting in the gardens next to the café, we conducted the interview which covered: my motivation for applying to become a Front of House volunteer; how my research aims and intended outcomes would shape my practice; my prior experience of volunteering in other heritage organisations; how I generally approach customer service roles; as well as what was expected from the Front of House role (Fieldwork Entry-09/06/2022). After this conversation, I started my volunteer induction which involved a morning shift shadowing a more experienced Front of House volunteer. Through this, I became familiar with what to communicate to visitors upon arrival at the Front Desk, e.g., what we had on offer, our opening times, where the toilets were etc., as well as how to engage visitors with the content of the permanent and temporary exhibitions. This was then supplemented by conducting a history-tour given by a Tour Guide volunteer where we went around the Palace and some of the gardens, of which a

highlight was the newly restored Compton bed which emulated the original plant beds that contained plant species from the New World (Fieldwork Entry- 17/06/2022). Both the tour and the shadowing session were a vital part of the induction since it not only gave me the opportunity to encounter and learn more about the social histories of the Bishops of London and their families that lived at the Palace, but also become more familiar with the content of the role. As a result, it was an important moment to be recognised and validated as a member of the volunteering community at the Palace.

Volunteering as a form of Serious leisure

Having conceptualised heritage volunteering as a form of Serious leisure (Orr, 2006), there is a need to see to what extent Stebbin's (1982) six defining characteristics are applicable to Front of House and Tour Guide volunteers at Fulham Palace. For this section, the characteristics which are most applicable are: how they view their activity and whether it is guided by specific goals or outcomes; the durable benefits afforded by their volunteering; the development of a unique ethos or social world for volunteers; and whether they strongly identify with their pursuits and feel a sense of loyalty towards the organisation they operate on the behalf of. As part of this, volunteers were directly asked what the Palace meant to them as a way of establishing not only what their key motivation is/was for volunteering, but also to elucidate the significance of the activity and Fulham Palace as a place more widely in their lives.

When asked about why people decide to volunteer, Volunteer Manager A5 directly commented on an explicit institutional view of volunteer motivation being derived from: a sense of altruism, opportunities for self-enrichment, as well as wanting to support the Palace in its daily operations based on the perceived benefits it provides for the local borough and wider society. In their own words,

> *'So, it's about having something to do, which is worthwhile and meaningful, and it's about serving, giving back to their local community. So, and a lot of people love this site, and they want to help it kind of thrive, and you can see their passion for it.'*

The 'love' and 'passion' that volunteers have for the Palace was reflected by Volunteer A14. They directly commented on the wellbeing benefits afforded by the site as well as the sense of belonging and ownership they have because of their activity and their participation in the volunteers' community of practice. They state:

> *'...I sort of feel ownership. I think there's nothing, nothing better than when the Riverside entrance is open in the church, as you walk in, through the gates, the gate closes behind you and you're kind of in the Palace, and the walled garden, of course, is an absolute gem, a jewel, and I think that lifts your spirits every time you come through there. So, there's a sense of belonging, I suppose, because you're involved. And it's a sense of belonging, because of your involvement, and because of the way you're, you're treated. It's a sort of investment really.'*

This then reinforces the strong affective connection that A14 has with the Palace and its gardens, as well as their affinity with its institutional ethos due to the way that the institution 'invests' in their volunteers. Therefore, this engendered reciprocity reflects how the Palace has become a keystone in the identity of Volunteer A14 and explains their willingness to support its efforts.

Front of House Supervisor A8 directly builds on the significance that volunteering at the Palace has for volunteers by drawing attention to how Fulham Palace intends to cultivate a friendly social environment for their practice. In part, this can be attributed to the need to retain volunteers and their ability to support the running of the Palace, thereby, reinforcing the importance of creating a leisure experience for them. They state that:

> *'That's very much what we, how we want it to be really…. Yeah, we'd like to have that. Yeah, that social aspect. And it's why really with Fulham Palace, we try and put on sort of the coffee afternoons, parties, budget permitting, of course.'*

This then reflects the Palace's dedicated efforts to produce durable social benefits for their volunteers by actively providing opportunities to socialise with one another, thereby, encouraging the development and flourishing of their social world. As a result, this grants weight to the idea that the organisation intends to fashion volunteering into a form of *serious leisure*.

Another key aspect of volunteer motivation relates to the learning and 'self-expression' opportunities afforded by their activity by operating as a live interpreter. Firstly, Volunteer A9 explains that their decision to volunteer was motivated not solely because of their previous appreciation and consumption of the Palace, but rather due to their active interest in the ecclesiastical histories of the Bishops of London and the CofE. They state that:

> *'I used to walk around this area a lot. And I just thought it was a lovely place. And then I started finding out more about it and the Bishops of London, and that's when I started getting interested in applying to become a volunteer. So initially, I applied to become a volunteer in January 2015. And that's when I started.'*

Volunteer A9's emphasis on being motivated to volunteer because of their active interest in the histories of the Bishops of London reflects how volunteers can strategically shape and use their own activity to engage in forms of structured and continued learning as a means of pursuing their own academic interests. As they explain,

> *'So, I find on an ongoing basis, I keep learning different things from a historical point of view, and a factual point of view. So, I've always appreciated and enjoyed Fulham Palace, and the people I meet as well, and the other volunteers.'*

The satisfaction derived from being able to learn more about history was further compounded by the possibility of Tour Guide and Front of House volunteers operating

as live interpreters. By operating as such, this gave volunteers durable benefits in the form of 'self-expression' and 'feelings of accomplishment' since they were directly able to enhance visitor learning and facilitate their connection and engagement with the collections present at Fulham Palace and the surrounding history of the borough (Ferguson et al, 2015, Stern and Powell, 2020). Volunteer A7 describes this when talking about what the Palace means to them:

> 'I think it's just a community and meeting people. And I think, you know, when you retire, it's nice to be able to meet people and talk about Fulham really. As I've just said, I'm a Fulham-ite, so it's nice to tell people about this place, which they don't know about.'

Moreover, this sense of satisfaction was also exhibited by Volunteer A11 when commenting on their own enjoyment from their activity as well as from what they observe in their fellow volunteers. This is because public-facing volunteers can engage with visitors dialogically, meaning that they can both communicate interpretation to and learn from various audiences. They state that:

> 'I sometimes, I'm in a different room, and I hear them talking to the visitors and the knowledge that they're gleaning, you know, and they're passing on, it's joyful to hear and watch them, you know, because I think that these, these people are the ones who are clearly interested in communicating the history, and they, you know, they love being asked and, and they love it, when they get it, they get something right. (...) You know, they can interpret that and sort of talk to people about it, and point out a particular bishop or a particular, whatever, you know, and people go, "oh, how interesting," and I can see that the pleasure they get because I get it when I do it.'

This quote is particularly important as it not only foregrounds the pleasure that live interpreter volunteers may derive from their activity, but it also elucidates how Volunteer A11 strategically uses their authorised position to assume the role of the 'expert' which is then validated by both their fellow volunteers and visitors, especially when they get something 'right'. Therefore, the activity of Volunteer A11 is not only guided by providing accurate and insightful information to their audiences, but also by feelings of 'self-fulfilment' based on the recognition and validation of their status by others as a knowledgeable person regarding the history of the Palace.

Fulham Palace: reasons for decolonial practice

The main motivation for Fulham Palace to undertake their decolonial work was spurred by the Black Lives Matter protests and the murder of George Floyd, as well as the relative inaction of the heritage industry to engage critically with their respective connections to historic colonialism and the Trans-Atlantic Trade in Enslaved Africans. As stated by CEO A4:

'I felt that after the death or murder of George Floyd, (...) it really felt like, you know, enough is enough, and, you know, these things have been going on for such a long time, and they're obviously embedded in colonialism and slavery. So, for me, I felt it was very clear in my mind that we had to do something.'

Based on this motivation, Fulham Palace decided to produce a temporary exhibition that sought to address the Bishop of London's connections to Trans-Atlantic Enslavement as part of their role as 'Bishop of the Colonies' (see Fulham Palace things of note), as well as to establish what influence they had over the individuals they presided over, especially enslaved Africans (Mill, 2023a). A significant element of this exhibition was dedicated to foregrounding the agencies of enslaved and freed peoples and exploring their acts of resistance and how this contributed to both the abolition of the trade and the institution of enslavement within the British Empire.

Fulham Palace Trust commissioned an artist to work with local African and African Caribbean groups to develop content for the new exhibition (Fulham Palace, 2022). This involved collaborating with three local schools and an after-school club based in West London as part of a series of workshops to produce creative outputs focused on the spiritual and physical resistance of enslaved individuals. These themes were: Obeah, hair adornment, songs of resistance and dance (CEO A4, Fulham Palace, 2022). The collaboration with the school group also resulted in a specific consultation session whereby parents actively toured around the Palace and critiqued the both the content and language of already present interpretation in the historic home museum. Researcher A15 recollects that the main commentary emerging from the consultation session related specifically to the absence of discussion surrounding the role, responsibilities, and operations of the Bishop of the Colonies, as well as highlighting where the wealth derived from enslaved labour came from and how it was spent (see figure 4). They state:

'So with the introductory film, a lot of the thing was, where's the balance in the narratives? Where does the wealth, if not slavery, where did it come from? It didn't have to be from slavery, but they just wanted to know. What were the roles and duties of the Bishops of the Colonies, and that's something that kept popping up. They didn't really highlight that a lot, at all before. So you wouldn't, people wouldn't know that you had bishops in the colonies, or what were their roles. So that was something they wanted to see as well.'
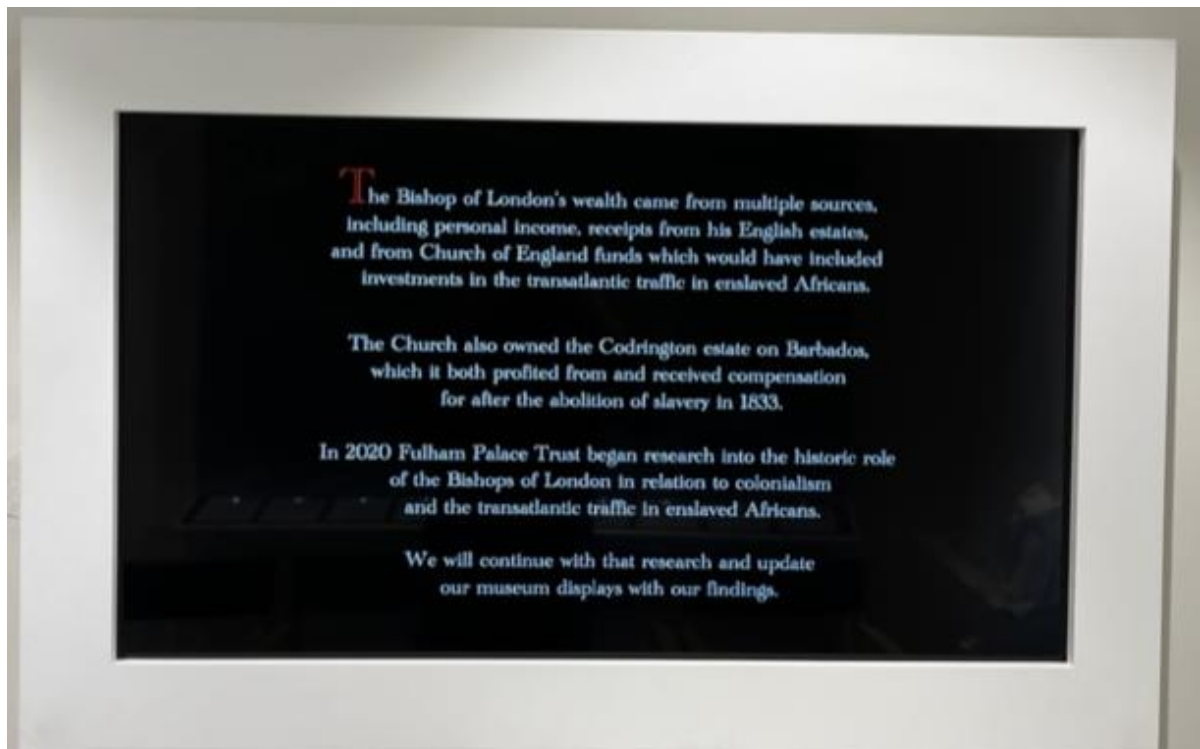
Figure 4- Fulham Palace Introductory Film. This displays the introductory film that is present before visitors go into the permanent and temporary exhibitions at Fulham Palace and contains the suggestions of changes that were voiced in the consultation session that Researcher A15 had with community groups regarding the financial connections of the Bishop of London as the Bishop of the Colonies (Maidment-Blundell, 2024a).

Consequently, Fulham Palace's decolonial activities could be interpreted as being grounded in telling holistic histories by foregrounding the experiences and voices of enslaved peoples in collaboration with non-institutional stakeholders, rather than reifying previous practice of focusing solely on the enslaver. In turn, this constitutes a form of epistemic decolonisation/reconstitution/rehumanisation and shows the Palace's commitment to avoid (re)producing epistemic violence (Mignolo, 2018, Mbembe, 2015, Spivak, 1988, Vawda, 2019). This has then positioned the historic home museum as a potential space to critically encounter the colonial histories of the Bishops of London and as a place for, and of, connectiveness by highlighting the mutually constitutive histories of coloniser and colonised with the intent of having audiences develop transgressive understandings (see figure 5) (Brulon Soares, 2023, Johnson, 2016a, 2016b, Mignolo, 2018). As explained by CEO A4:

> '*I think that we've turned that corner in the fact of knowing that you do have to bring those stories in (…) because that will, hopefully, widen people's perceptions and, you know, make things change potentially faster than they have in the past.*'
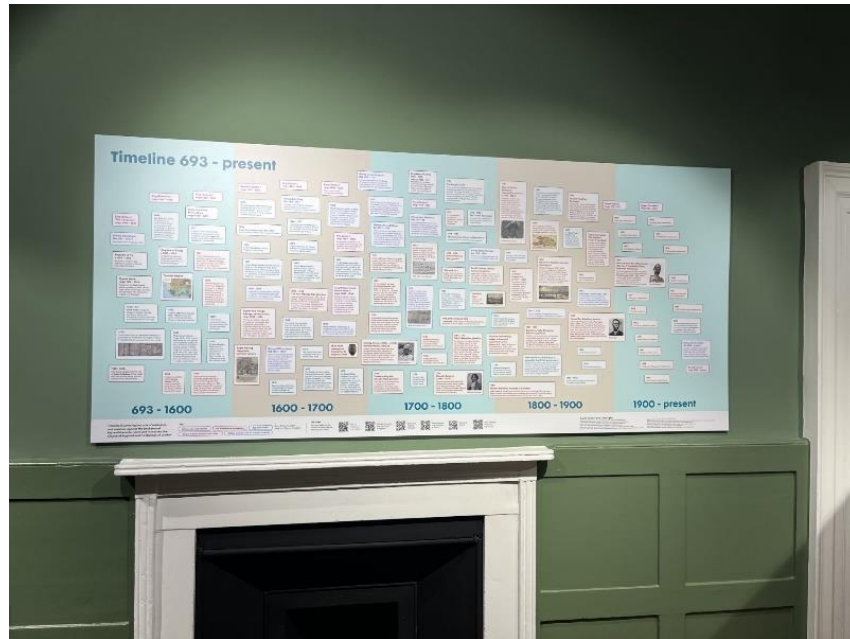
Figure 5- Exhibition Timeline. This is depicting the central timeline of the exhibition which references major world events alongside acts of resistance employed by enslaved and dominated peoples (Maidment-Blundell, 2023a).

Whilst there is the ethical and moral imperative to narrate the histories of enslaved peoples, Fulham Palace's motivations to engage in decolonial activity are multi-faceted. Because of Fulham Palace's smaller size, this exhibition may be used to not only change how the Palace is perceived, but also to establish future partnerships with multiple institutions. By aiming to enhance the profile of the Palace and to receive the perceived recognition that the institution deserves, this then reflects Boast's (2011) emphasis that museums can be self-interested when engaging in decolonial action. As exemplified by CEO A4 when discussing the desired long-term consequences of engaging in decolonial practice,

> *'I think that kind of having a newfound respect or appreciation for Fulham Palace amongst the local area and within museums in London for what we've done, would be great because I think we always come against this same problem all the time is that some people either don't really understand what we are, don't understand us or get confused with someone else. We just haven't got the kind of the name or the recognition. So, I hope that this project will help sort of put us on the map or helped us to start putting ourselves on the map.'*

This then points to two intersecting discourses that are underpinning the Palace's decolonial activity: the ethical and moral impetus to redress historic colonial wounds by actively challenging the perceptions of those who encounter these histories when visiting the Palace and the betterment of the Palace by having it and its practice recognised and valued more by the heritage industry and wider society.

Garnering support: engaging and including volunteers

Prior to any engagement with volunteers, the Palace was sensitive to the fact that the topic of the new exhibition may potentially be met with backlash. The Palace adopted a strategic approach where they wanted to clearly communicate not only what the overall content and theme of the new exhibition would be, but also to demonstrate how such an undertaking would benefit the organisation. Consequently, the Palace directly sought to combat the notion that the new exhibition could be perceived as a form of historical revisionism, and so catered towards the affection that volunteers may have for their site of volunteering as a means of garnering support (Lamont et al 2014, 2015, Orr, 2006, Stebbins, 1982). As described by CEO A4,

> *'It is a very good point that we will be making to them is that we're not taking away from history, we're adding to it. And I think that playing on this "(…) is doing great work" thing works quite well with our volunteers as well. That (…) is going to get a reputation for doing innovative work, and hopefully we will. But that's a really good way to play it with our volunteers because they really above everything else, they love the Palace, and they want to see it being better recognised.'*

When put into practice, the Palace decided to gradually introduce the themes covered by the new exhibition to volunteers. This was done through raising the topic at dedicated volunteer forums, Tour Guide meetings and through daily briefings as part of Front of House volunteering. This was then consolidated by offering two waves of training for Front of House and Tour Guide volunteers, with the first being conducted in November 2022 and the second taking place just before the exhibition's launch in April 2023. As explained by Front of House Manager A12 when commenting the 'soft-handed' approach taken by the Palace:

> *'…it was the talking about the subject from a very early stage onwards, discussing a potential new exhibition, you know, starting with the Porteus subject, so that already prepared people in their minds, there will be a new exhibition, we'll see what it's going to be like. And then it was crucial to keep people up to date about this development in terms of where are we going? What new subjects are we taking on here? What other new perspectives that we're taking on?'*

The benefits of this process were twofold. Firstly, Volunteer A16 commented that consistently and gradually engaging volunteers prevented them from feeling overwhelmed by the amount of perhaps previously unknown histories being uncovered as part of the new exhibition, and how this enabled them to digest it on their own terms. They state:

> *'I guess it's just not to overload people with information, and then it's also it kind of keeps everyone in the loop then as well. It's not like all of a sudden, you're offloading all this information onto one group of people. It's sort of like everyone is slowly getting the same pieces of information.'*

Secondly, Volunteer A11 explained that there was a general sentiment amongst Tour Guide volunteers that the training and constant streams of communication resulted in them feeling 'considered' and 'valued'. In part, this can be attributed to the notion that the Palace has been transparent and forthright about their exhibition development process, and by giving volunteers a partial picture of what was occurring behind the scenes resulted in them feeling more included. They describe that:

> 'Well, they, you know, they enjoyed the fact that they were getting the training, you know, they felt included, and they felt like they could then communicate and pass it onto visitors, and they felt really, you know, valued. And it was like we're being told about this. It's not, you know, like some places you go, and it's all that, like, you know, take a big museum, it's all done behind, and you're supposed to just turn up and smile and say, "oh, yes, that room over there and over there." But here, they felt like, you know, they really were considered....'

The distinction between how the Palace treats their volunteers in comparison to a 'big museum' also speaks to Volunteer A11's view of how the Palace values their volunteers. The view of Volunteer A11 implies that Front of House and Tour Guide volunteers have a greater presence and influence over the organisation's practice, and it is recognised as such, rather than at a larger institution where they are perceived to be siloed, are not privy to the workings of the organisation, and are only expected to support the service delivery. Therefore, constituting volunteers as active stakeholders in the exhibition development process seems to reflect the culture of transparency and openness that the Palace has tried to foster as part of their decolonisation efforts. As implied by Front of House Supervisor A8 and Manager A12,

> 'I mean, we try something, I certainly tried to do is get as much feedback from our volunteers as possible. I know that certainly (...), our CEO is very, very keen to get ideas from all angles, and what we try to provide are occasions where we can have some volunteer forums if you like, where people can present their ideas.'

> '...it's absolutely crucial in terms of messaging, you can't just not tell anyone in the lead up to anything about what's happening. It's.... People are with any subjects like these that can cause controversy, you have to have a feeling for people's understanding and preconceived ideas or knowledge in general and you have to prepare everyone. So yes, that was the main crucial point and being as transparent as we can as well.'

Another key avenue through which volunteers became more aware of the new exhibition and the Palace's decolonial ambitions was through informal channels of communication via the Archive Research Group. The Archive Research Group consists of four volunteers, the CEO of Fulham Palace and an employed researcher who is responsible for liaising with and managing the volunteer participants. The volunteers who are part of the group are responsible for conducting original historical research related to specific exhibitions that the Palace aims to produce, thereby, enabling them

to have access to privileged information (ARG Meeting- 21/08/22, 22/02/23). For the context of the new exhibition, they were responsible for reviewing primary documents related to a topic of their own choice, e.g., Volunteer A1 and their interest in Bishop Robinson and the Treaty of Utrecht (see Fulham Palace Things of Note), and then writing summaries for Researcher A2 to review and potentially incorporate into the new interpretation.

Because of their privileged position, Archive Research Group volunteers were also responsible for providing an alternative source of awareness regarding the content of the new exhibition. This is because they actively communicated what the overall theme of the exhibition would be, as well as some of its emphasis on problematising Compton and Porteus to fellow Tour Guide volunteers, thereby, providing further material that bolstered the discussions and debates concerning the Palace's efforts beyond formal meetings. As described by Volunteer A11,

> 'But we were in different tour guide meetings, we were, you know, debating it, and of course, those working on the archive and working on that [were] able to give us snippets of information.'

Archive Research Group volunteers occupied a liminal position where they could both bolster the informal learning of volunteers and enable their inclusion since they were able to raise the wider awareness of the Palace's decolonial ambitions within their own community of practice (Grenier, 2009, 2011).

Volunteers as Live Interpreters: discomfort, navigating conflict and safeguarding

There was a general recognition that the Palace's decision to produce and exhibit the connections of the Bishops of London to the Trans-Atlantic Trade and Trafficking of Enslaved Africans and historic colonialism could result in potential conflict with visitors, especially considering how this introduced a more critical edge to volunteer live interpretation. This is because visitors may be opposed to the Palace's efforts and stances on such issues and therefore may direct their anger and frustration towards public-facing volunteers. In turn, this may place volunteers in a precarious situation where they come into conflict with visitors since they may be expected to communicate and justify the Palace's activities. Therefore, this could lead to some experiencing feelings of anxiety or discomfort with their newly expected practice.

Volunteer A10 reflects this feeling when recollecting one experience with a critical visitor whose opinions were different from A10's. In this encounter, thevisitor voiced their frustration that the Palace had decided to undertake this topic since they believed: that the Palace should not apologise for the past; that this exhibition undermines core national institutions like the Royal Family; and that solely focusing on the racism experienced by Black communities could result in the 'reverse discrimination towards white people.' This is then indicative of how visitors vocalising potential racist opinions can result in volunteers feeling uncomfortable.

The discomfort felt by Volunteer A10 was further compounded by what they perceived as being an 'unbalanced' exchange based on the different levels of knowledge possessed by themselves and the visitor. They state:

> '...as a historian, and he knew, like he had his opinion. And he had a lot to say. So that was also like, kind of an unbalanced exchange, because I didn't have much like reflection and knowledge on it as personally, and he had a lot.'

Consequently, the inability of Volunteer A10 to engage on equal terms with their problematic visitor can be viewed as a point of insecurity brought about by the expectation to be able to communicate these histories, which reinforces the importance of adequately training volunteers.

The problems of having an 'unbalanced' exchange were also reflected by Volunteer A14 when describing the importance of providing visitors with the ability to criticise the Palace's activities. This is because, in their view, it is the responsibility of Front of House volunteers to collect feedback and to not actively 'argue' against criticism by justifying the decolonial efforts of the Palace. This then speaks to a central tension that can emerge between wanting to defend the Palace's activity, especially considering the place attachment that volunteers may possess, and being receptive to critical feedback as part of supporting the visitor experience.

> 'But then everybody, everybody has a right to criticise, and so I just think you accept the criticism, don't argue, accept that someone's not happy with their experience.'

I also felt unease with some of my interactions with visitors regarding Fulham Palace's new exhibition. This can mostly be attributed to the opinions that were vocalised by visitors, as well as feeling insecure concerning my ability and position to actively contest and correct inaccuracies levelled by visitors, as part of operationalising both a critical pedagogy of place and historical empathy. One significant example of where this occurred related to one visitor commenting on the illiteracy of enslaved peoples and how this meant that they 'knew nothing different' apart from the circumstances of their oppression (Fulham Palace shift- 30/05/2023). My immediate reaction to this passive rendering was to point to a letter present in the exhibition that was written by an enslaved person to the Bishop of London in 1723 (see figure 6) who was asking for help to escape their bondage as a way of debunking this notion. As part of this, I was motivated by the need to actively support Fulham Palace's emphasis on foregrounding acts of resistance rather than promoting the victimisation of enslaved peoples, as well as combatting the dehumanising emphasis of rendering these peoples as without culture, cosmology, and history (Fulham Palace shift- 30/05/2023). Consequently, one can view my practice as being guided by the ethos of initiating forms of epistemic decolonisation and subsequent reconstitution/rehumanisation (Mbembe, 2015, Mignolo, 2018, 2021).

Upon further reflection, I started to feel some discomfort related towards my own practice since I was worried that it may be perceived as a form of grandstanding. This is because I was worried that I had overstepped my bounds as an ambassador of Fulham Palace and had simply conveyed my own opinion about such matters rather than clearly communicating and justifying why the Palace had undertaken such activity. This then speaks to a potential source of anxiety emerging from: the position of volunteers as ambassadors of the organisation; the authority conferred onto them to provide commentary about the topics covered by the new exhibition; and, the implications this has for long-lasting visitor impressions of the Palace.
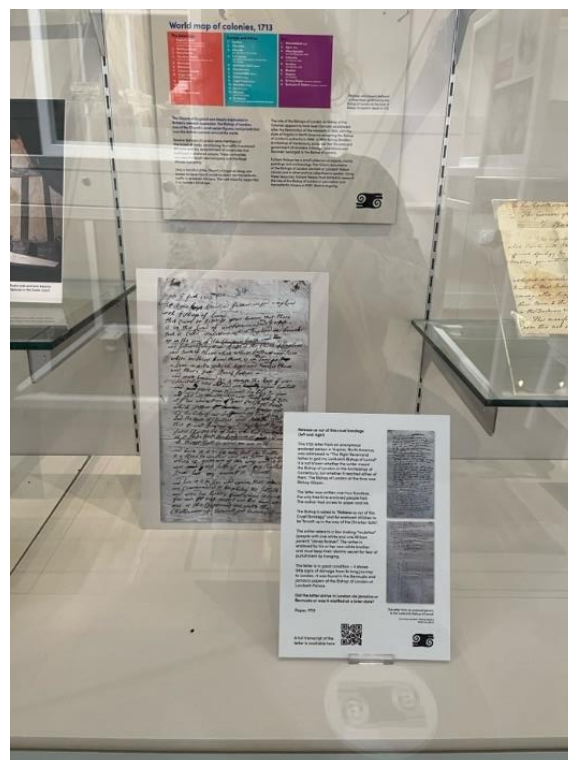
Figure 6- Transcription of 'Archbishop of London' letter. This shows a transcription of a letter that was sent by an anonymous enslaved person which was addressed to the 'Archbishop of London' on the 4th August 1723 (Maidment-Blundell, 2023b).

Volunteer A3 described their unease at potentially problematising individual Bishops of London, especially if they had to communicate the connections of Beilby Porteus to the production and dissemination of the slave bible. The slave bible was published on the behalf of the Society for the Conversion of Negro Slaves post-Abolition of the Trade, which was founded by Beilby Porteus, and had over 90% of the Old Testament and the 50% of the New Testament excised because of its references to escaping slavery and achieving freedom (Lambeth Palace Library, 2023). As a result, the slave bible was meant to reify the institution of chattel slavery and to legitimise the material and structural circumstances underpinning it by actively encouraging the loyalty and submission of enslaved peoples towards their enslavers (Lambeth Palace Library,

2023). Based on the potential fear of having to communicate these histories and its relevance to Fulham Palace, Volunteer A3 explains:

> *'I don't think I would want to get too heavily involved in discussion with people on tours and stuff like that.'*

Their choice to not engage with the topic in too much depth is indicative of how they strategically shape their own volunteering to avoid getting into potential conflict with critical visitors. This then can undermine the aspirations of encouraging alternative understandings as part of enacting a critical pedagogy of place. This then raises a central question as reflected by Volunteer A10:

> *'...is it our role to as volunteers to have this debate with the visitors?'*

However, this sentiment was not shared by Volunteer A6. They stated that it was vital that volunteers communicate these histories as part of Fulham Palace's decolonial efforts, and so a key part of avoiding and navigating conflict with visitors depended upon how these histories are communicated to them. This is because they stressed that these histories should be framed in a way that appeals to the initial visitor motivation, instigates critical reflection, and doesn't promote feelings of blame, guilt, or shame for visitors. Through this, visitors may become aware of the issues at hand, think through its relevance to contemporary society, as well as how they can contribute to such matters whilst appealing to the sensibilities that visitors bring with them (Gruenewald, 2003, 2008, Zemblyas, 2018b). They explain:

> *'It's when they, when they can assimilate the information and turn it around themselves. You know, just use it to start asking questions for themselves. (...) But you want to therefore have them going away with a good feeling, and it's really important how we can convey all the information that we want to about the slave trade, the enslavement of Africans in a way that they've, they feel that they're part of the solution, not part of the problem.'*

From this, it is possible to infer that Volunteer A6 shapes their practice to overcome any potential conflict with dissenting visitors by: grounding their potential learning within their own readings and understandings of the Palace; appealing to their initial desire to visit the Palace; and facilitating their inclusion into the Palace's decolonial efforts and being validated as stakeholders who can enact change (Modlin et al, 2011, Potter, 2022, Wajid and Minot, 2019). As summarised by Volunteer A6 when describing the ideal outcome for visitors who engage with Fulham Palace's decolonial efforts:

> *'...we want people to go away, having that feeling of cleverness, not guilt that I described earlier.'*

Staff at Fulham Palace recognise the importance of providing appropriate safeguarding and so have clearly communicated the boundaries of expected practice. It was made clear that Front of House volunteers should be present and responsive to visitors about the content of the new exhibition, but they should also clearly communicate that they

are not 'experts' and that any further commentary, feedback, or questions should be passed onto the Front of House team or other senior staff at the Palace who can address conflict when it arises (Front of House training- 19/04/23). Front of House Manager A12 explains:

> 'The stance we've taken, or I've taken in particular is that we don't expect the volunteers to be experts in the subject, we cannot expect that because even the staff are not experts.'

And:

> 'And we always offer our support, as well as backup. So, the staff are always in the background, and they're always connected with us through the radio, so they could always let us know if something isn't going well and we'll be there in an instant.'

By asserting that they are not experts, this then allows volunteers to distance themselves from critical visitors and escalate conversations where necessary which then acts as a clear reminder of support for volunteers that they are not alone in such scenarios.

This was exacerbated by Front of House Supervisor A8 commenting that Front of House volunteers are expected to only possess basic references to the histories that the Palace is displaying. In part, this can be attributed to combatting a potential anxiety or source of discomfort that volunteers may have related to the perceived need to *'memorise'* or learn this new knowledge combined with their role in supporting the overall visitor experience. Front of House Supervisor A8 described one such scenario of where this was made manifest and how they were able to support a specific volunteer:

> 'But she did rather worriedly turn to me at one stage and said, "we don't need to memorise all of this, do we?" And I was able to assure her that, no, what we're, what we're looking to do is to provide everybody with a background knowledge context, from which they can draw upon in their interactions with the visiting public.'

This is then indicative of how Front of House staff aim to overcome any potential learning barriers to established volunteering by communicating the necessary level of knowledge required to engage with the topic.

As part of establishing the boundaries of their expected practice, Researcher A15 stressed how important it is for the Palace to provide additional support for volunteers that come from global majority backgrounds. They explain that this can be attributed to the potential emotional labour and mental health complications that can come from communicating traumatic histories as well as the possibility for cultural heritage institutions utilising the presence of their ethnic minority volunteers to promote a vision of them being diverse and inclusive. They state:

'So, I think what people of colour then they can have, or they should have a say in what is being said in the exhibitions or what the presentation is about. Because it's very, as you're talking about safeguards, like, there needs to be more protection for people of colour for various traumatic hangovers, of course, but also institutions abusing their power and using this imagery, and then also tokenism being a thing as well.'

When asked about why potential abuses of power can occur, Researcher A15 further states that organisations can engage in forms of tokenistic practice where they pay lip-service to Diversity, Equality and Inclusion principles whilst strategically utilising the presence of persons of colour to grant legitimacy to their activities. In their own words, Researcher A15 explains how the ethnicity of the volunteer may be used as a source of authority to grant further weight to the histories that are being conveyed:

'So if it's a person of colour, talking about slavery, for example, an exhibit, there's a risk of tokenism, or that person's face being used to promote this topic, slavery and colonialism, or like, oh, because already they demand a sort of authority or like, even if you don't know what their background is, once you see someone who is a person of the colour talking about this, like, people are going to listen, right, and then organisations do take advantage of that, they put pictures everywhere, I've seen that happen.'

By highlighting the potential for ethnicity capture, this reinforces how organisations need to mindful of how the communication of traumatic histories of colonialism and enslavement may result in, depending on their positionality, varying intensities of emotional labour for their volunteers. As a result, volunteers should be empowered to have strategic control as to how their image, practice and presence is used to affirm the impacts of decolonial activity. This then constitutes a focal point of volunteer safeguarding.

Equipping and Empowering volunteers (i): critical reflection, dialogue, and language use

As part of the preparation for the new exhibition, the Palace decided to organise two bouts of training for Front of House and Tour Guide volunteers. The first session aimed: to highlight some of the earlier research into the individual Bishops of London and their connections to enslavement (Blomfield and Hewley); to introduce the wider setting in which the Palace's decolonial efforts sits; to communicate why the Palace had decided to undertake this course of action; and to prompt volunteers about how this may gradually impact their practice, especially with regard to language use when interacting with visitors from global majority backgrounds. As noted by Researcher A2 when discussing the guiding aims of the first training session,

'[They] will be talking about the new information we have on the Bishops. But [their] main thing is really about talking about the language to use, to try and sort of talk with the volunteers, who are particularly welcoming as Front of House and

the Tour Guides, so they understand that sort of wider remit [of these histories] and the kind of people that you might be talking to, people of different ethnicities.'

When discussing the impacts of the training, those who attended responded positively and commented on how it provided them with a foundational knowledge upon which they can further their understanding. When commenting on the quality of the training, Volunteer A6 stated:

'I thought [the person leading the training] was excellent. (…) I think we've got a very good basis to begin to be going on with I feel.'

The Palace also attempted to prompt volunteers to engage in critical reflection surrounding their language use. This is because the Palace emphasis on acts of resistance was reflective of their aim to rehumanise enslaved peoples, and so it was important to constitute them as active historic figures and not solely as victims. Two significant examples that were conveyed to volunteers was pointing out the difference between Trans-Atlantic slavery and the Trans-Atlantic Trade in and Trafficking of Enslaved Africans and slave and enslaved (see figure 7). This was done to draw further attention to the specific culpability of Europeans exacerbating an internal slave trade through their promotion of chattel slavery and how people were forcibly captured, removed from their home, transported to plantations in the New World and held against their will (Fieldnotes- 09/11/22, Gooptar, 2022). Front of House Supervisor A8 reports how this emphasis caused some Front of House volunteers to problematise their own practice, to rethink their language use and modulate their volunteering accordingly:

'A number of our volunteers said, in the training session the other day, that there were certain aspects of language related to enslaved persons and the transatlantic trade that they have not considered before. And so sometimes, in a way, it's just ways of sort of giving people new strategies to convey these ideas and stories.'

Figure 7- Fulham Palace's Volunteer Training Slides. This is one of the slides from the volunteer training session hosted on the 9th November 2022 and it contains guidance on what language is appropriate to use regarding the topic of Trans-Atlantic enslavement (Gooptar, 2022, Nottingham Museums, 2021).

Volunteer A9 also expressed the importance of problematising one's biases, especially if the Palace was seeking to get their public-facing volunteers to critically reflect upon their language use. This is because they assert that there is a need to address one's unconscious bias to support the Palace's decolonial ambitions and that volunteers should also approach any potential training with a degree of openness which is geared to enacting change. This then implies the willingness of Volunteer A9 to critically examine their own positionality with regard to their own stance of the (re)presentations of histories of Empire. However, they recognise that this may not necessarily be popular with other volunteers and could provide a source of conflict/tension for the Palace, especially with those who exclaim that they 'don't have any biases.'

> *'I wouldn't mind having my biases gone through in training, but I realised that for volunteers, I don't mean it to sound patronising. But that might not be something that works. So it might be that more emphasising the fact that you leave your biases at the door. Now, there will be somebody, some people who will sit there, not many, but there will be a few who will say I don't have any biases. We all have biases, I'm sorry, we all do.'*

This is then indicative of the potential challenges that the Palace may face as part of training their volunteers in preparation for their decolonial activity.

Even though the consultation session with Researcher A15 and the parent group resulted in 77 changes being made to the interpretation panels present at the Palace,

this also caused some tension with volunteers (Fieldnotes- 09/11/22). This is because there were volunteers who voiced their opposition to the changing of some of the interpretation present in the Green Room (formerly the Compton Room), particularly the removal of the word 'exotic' being used to describe some of the plants that were hunted by clergymen on the behalf of Bishop Compton (see figure 8) (Fieldwork Entry- 05/12/22). Volunteers who opposed the change asserted that the use of the word was acceptable and rejected its potentially 'othering' connotations which came into direct conflict with the Palace's intentions to be sensitive to its various audiences (Fieldwork Entry- 05/12/22). As remarked by Researcher A15,

> '....*that was interesting, because older people they don't seem to have an issue with exotic. Yeah, and it's really, [under] normal circumstances, it wouldn't be such an issue, but because it's [a] decolonising exhibit, come on, you should, every word that you see, could be interpreted the wrong way, or can be seen as 'othered.'*

Consequently, this speaks to the sense of attachment that volunteers may have for the Palace's already established narratives and how attempting to engender volunteer critical reflection regarding their language use and specifically changing terminology in an attempt to fashion it into a more inclusive place can constitute a threat to this.
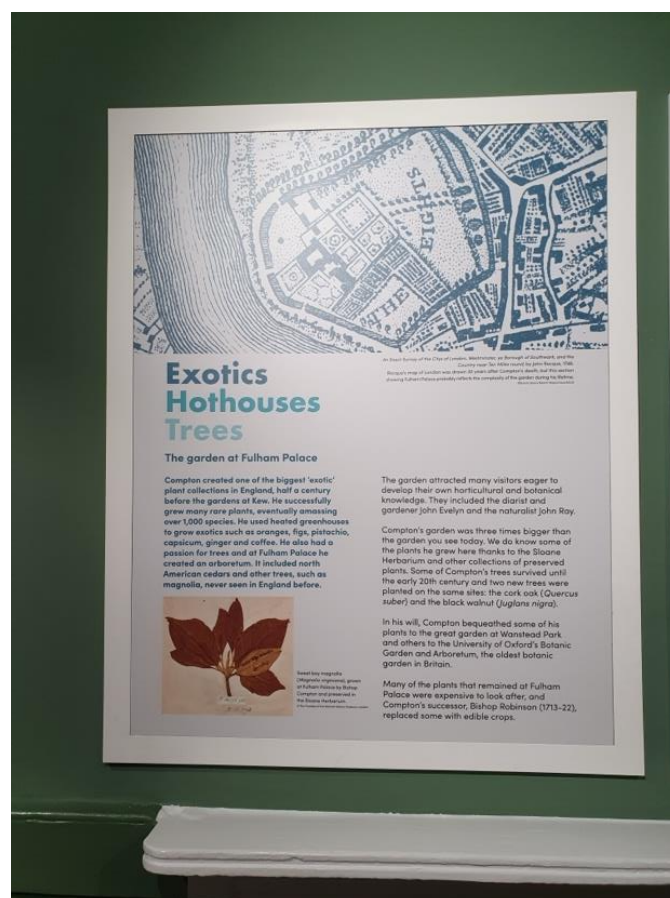
Figure 8- 'Exotic' museum interpretation. This shows the original interpretation concerning Bannister's plant hunting which contains the word 'exotic' (Harrington, 2024).

Following on from this contestation, both volunteers and staff at the Palace stressed the importance of framing the training session as a discussion or dialogue. Firstly, Volunteer Manager A5 describes that volunteers may be reluctant to engage with this sort of knowledge, especially if they felt as if they were being instructed or dictated to. They explain that:

> *'You don't want to, they're not at school, and they maybe don't want to be sat down and be like, "this is what we're doing, and this is how we're going to speak etc."*

Volunteer A9 builds on this by saying that volunteer structured learning should be grounded in a 'to and fro' discussion rather than simply being told the facts. This is because they stress that volunteers should not only learn about the histories that the Palace is trying to communicate, but also how there is a need to understand the wider discursive terrain and places in which they are situated. In other words, volunteers need to learn both the facts and their epistemological underpinnings through conversing with one another which may then improve their overall understanding of the subject matter.

> *'But I think remembering facts, and how we interpret the facts, so part of the workshops and the training shouldn't just be us sitting there with somebody giving us the facts. There should be a to and fro dialogue, because I think people will remember things better as well.'*

The implications of this were described by Volunteer A7 who felt that some of the content of the training was rather ambiguous at times. This is because the training became a dedicated forum which focused on the more abstract and ideological elements of Trans-Atlantic Enslavement and historic colonialism, i.e., the dehumanising logics of chattel slavery or the operations and consequences of *Terra Nulius*, meaning that the specific connections to Fulham Palace were not as clear (Fieldnotes- 09/11/22). Volunteer A7 explains:

> *'I think perhaps a little bit more to do with the, I didn't quite get the exact connections between [the] Bishops and the slavery that was going on there. I mean, I understood all that. But perhaps a little bit more inclusive of the Palace and the Bishops (...).*

And:

> *'You've got to know the history, first of all, but then you need to bring in the connection, a bit more of what the Bishops' connection [is] and the Palace's connection [is], I think.'*

This then indicates the preference of Volunteer A7 to have a more layered approach to training where more macro-topics and histories are discussed but then are qualified through their specific connection to the Palace. This then stresses the importance of having a place-based pedagogy that foregrounds how structures of domination, or coloniality, persist through the histories of the bishops and the material environment of the Palace (Gruenewald, 2008, Massey, 2005, Ormond, 2013).

However, Volunteer A3 and Researcher A15 describes the potential dangers that come with framing training in an overly academic sense. This is because they stressed engaging with the topic at a very high-brow level could potentially be rather intimidating and could act as a barrier to substantive engagement. Consequently, it is important that the one responsible for leading or facilitating the training does so in a way caters to varying levels of familiarity with the topic and that is accessible for all. They both explain:

> *'What level you talk to, whatever these, you know, I wouldn't want to talk to a lot of academics on the subject, because I'd just be out of my depth. I mean, you'd have to get a guy for the right level.'*

> *'... it's not going to be like teaching students, it's not going to be like, "oh, tell me what you think and know." It's just like presented, right. But for certain volunteers, you have to code switch.'*

Finally, both Volunteer A6 and A9 describe how any sort of training geared towards facilitating volunteer critical reflection, or forms of 'decolonization', to instigate changes in or reinhabited thinking regarding the presence, operations and significance of coloniality needs to occur over a protracted period. This is because both feel that the Palace's training efforts should not solely be consigned to a limited number of sessions and should occur on an on-going basis to provide volunteers with all the necessary information as their research efforts progress. This would then provide volunteers with the necessary space and time to critically engage with the material. They explain:

> *'So this scope, or you're always adding fresh information, you're always revising and reviewing your own stance, as you acquire more relevant sort of information...'*

> *'...Fulham Palace would definitely need to provide a lot of ongoing because the knowledge, and the history, and the facts are going to keep on coming up. So on an ongoing basis, Fulham Palace would need to provide workshops and training and written documentation for the volunteers. And I actually think part of that would be helpful that every three months or so, we had a workshop absolutely devoted to interpretation, or a meeting, front of house meeting, where we could share information where we reviewed the facts to make sure that we're aware of the knowledge and has anything changed? Is there something new here?'*

Volunteer A9's assertions also reflect an interesting notion: encouraging volunteers to discuss and debate the histories amongst themselves. This would not only represent

instances of informal and self-directed learning since volunteers may go beyond the efforts of the institution to learn about historic colonialism and the Trans-Atlantic Trade in Enslaved Africans, but it also may provide greater opportunities for self-expression and to derive leisure from their activity. Moreover, encouraging volunteers to discuss the topic and to identify any knowledge gaps would also shift the responsibility of facilitating this education from the Palace onto the volunteers themselves. This may then provide greater flexibility for the Palace since they don't have to dedicate as many resources to guaranteeing that their volunteers are sufficiently equipped to grapple with these topics. Researcher A15 reinforces this suggestion by commenting on the potential benefits of having the Palace encourage their volunteers to conduct their own research and engage in debate within their own community of practice:

> *'I think that maybe they can, because these volunteers they have, if they have time, a lot of them have research backgrounds, or they do research on their own. They're like armchair historians, right, which I've learned in academia they are really, retirees are really good armchair historians. Maybe they could in a non-patronising way, they can maybe ask them what they want to do research on or like choose something in the Palace or something that they've been curious about, or to basically do their own research to explore what links with slavery that they might have or not even slavery, colonialism, something like that, or not even colonialism and it could be something to do with the Native American population, but that is colonialism, something about making them do their own research, and then also having them talk about it.'*

This then speaks to how encouraging volunteers to conduct their own their own self-directed learning alongside debating its significance within their community of practice could enhance the potential learning opportunities present as part of volunteer practice.

Equipping and Empowering Volunteers (ii): preparation for the new exhibition

In the lead up to the Palace's new exhibition which launched in April 2023, there were a series of further training sessions to prepare volunteers. Firstly, the Palace decided to bring in a Diversity, Equality and Inclusion I trainer to conduct unconscious bias training specifically for both volunteers and staff. In part, this can be attributed to providing volunteers and staff with the sufficient 'cultural awareness' required to support the delivery of the new exhibition, as well as facilitating both groups to problematise their own biases and how this may implicate their own interaction with various audiences. As explained by Front of House Manager A12:

> *'...I have such a diverse team, and I was slightly worried as well that we might have, you know, that we, we haven't got the awareness of current issues with this kind of team because I didn't know because it was a new subject for us. So, I just wanted to make sure that that's catered for, and the training was initially planned for before the epidemic anyway, it hadn't happened. So, I just revived the*

discussion. Guys, I think this would be the perfect time now to do this. So, let's, let's do that as well, especially with the upcoming exhibition so that we're, we're making sure that everyone is on the same page as well.'

The training included an in-depth overview of the Equalities Act 2010 and a series of active exercises that were oriented around five general themes: acknowledging your own standpoint and potential prejudices; analysing why you may hold these beliefs; assimilating this knowledge into your own frames of reference; applying it to your own practice; and then being held accountable for this change and recognising how it is an on-going process (DEI training-23/03/2023). Both Volunteer Manager A5 and Front of House Manager A12 commented on the beneficial nature of the training, as well as how effective it was to get them to think about why they refuse to engage with specific media because of their political beliefs (Front of House Shift- 30/03/23). Front of House Manager A12 summarises their thoughts and feelings about the training by saying:

> *'I think the trainer was excellent. She was really brilliant. I mean, that was lovely, because she managed to give such an overview of equality issues by basing it on the Equality Act 2010. So it was really great. So it wasn't just issues of race, or, you know, it wasn't just to do with issues that are now also addressed by the new exhibition that it was general training, which I really found really helpful.'*

As part of the training, it was explicitly stated by the trainer that the Diversity, Equality and Inclusion training can be considered as being an extension of the Palace's ambitions to become one of the most inclusive and innovative historic homes in the UK (DEI Training- 23/03/2023). This then reiterates two intersecting discourses that have been prevalent throughout the Palace's decolonial efforts: the ethical and moral imperative to redress colonial wounds and the desire to enhance the prestige and standing of the Palace. As a result, the training provided cannot solely be viewed as a means to prepare volunteers for engaging with multiple audiences as part of the new exhibition, but also as a visceral and visible testament to what the Palace seeks to achieve in the future in order to overcome any potential conflict with dissenting volunteers. However, the deployment of these discourses does raise pertinent questions regarding the motivations of pursuing decolonial practice. This is because the emphasis on improving the standing of the Palace in the eyes of wider society challenges the premonition that such activity is spurred because of altruism or wanting to pursue social justice. Therefore, it is important to maintain a critical eye on who directly benefits from redressing the Palace's colonial wounds.

Secondly, the dedicated Front of House-training session led by CEO A4 and Front of House Managers A12 was guided by a more practical grounding. This is because it was felt that the previous training sessions conducted in November 2022 had more of an academic orientation and addressed some of the grander themes underpinning the Palace's decolonial efforts. This meant that the training should be geared more towards actual volunteer practice. Front of House Manager A12 states:

> *'So what I found interesting that it was a very academic approach. The first training session with the researchers was quite [an] academic one....'*

At the session, Front of House volunteers had the opportunity to explore the new exhibits and interpretation for themselves, and there was then a follow-up discussion located in Bishop Howley's room. This discussion covered: why the Palace had undertaken the exhibition (the importance of responding to the public outcry regarding racial inequalities in society and the consequences this may have for the Palace); the underlying ethos that had guided exhibition development (the Kids in Museum's charter and the emphasis on focusing on acts of resistance); how Front of House volunteers are supposed to operate in supporting the delivery of the exhibition (acting as live interpreters); as well as providing people with opportunities to ask questions.

However, there was some emphasis that the training session could have been used to facilitate a greater discussion surrounding why some may be opposed to the Palace's activities. Volunteer A10 describes that they wanted to use the session to develop their opinions further regarding potential decolonial practice. This is because they felt that even-though the Palace had contextualised their activity, there was still a lack of a holistic discussion surrounding why there may be opposition or potential pushback to the Palace's efforts. They state:

> 'And I feel like it's important to get your opinion on something to have both sides and learn about both views. And maybe that's what we're missing. Like, why do people think we shouldn't apologise? Because if you think about it, well, it seems the obvious thing to do, I guess, and at least for me, so why would other people not think that? You can debate the controversy.'

The emphasis on understanding 'both views' speaks to their desire of having a more rounded picture regarding the contestation of colonial legacies within UK society, and how the training offered by the Palace should facilitate this.

Volunteers A13 and A14 commented on the positive nature of the training, and that they appreciated the opportunity to explore the exhibits for themselves prior to any sort of discussion surrounding how they are expected to interact with visitors in the space. This is because the relative freedom given to volunteers reflected the specific learning preferences of A13 and A14 who appreciated not having the content of the exhibition thrust upon them. Volunteers A13 and A14 explain that:

> 'I think you assimilate things as you go along, you don't have to have things drummed into you. I mean, we had a couple of pre-exhibition sessions, didn't we? So I think, people taking what they want to really. (...) I thought they were quite good'.

> 'I think it has been excellent. I have no, I have no criticism. But then that's, that's how I, that's how I learn, that's my approach to the things I'm interested in...'

Both Volunteers A13 and A14 further commented on the potential problems that came with both the amount of information present in the new exhibition, as well as the group nature of the training. This is because there was a strong perception that the new

exhibition was too information dense at points, especially the timeline in the Green Room (see figure 5), and when combined with the number of volunteers present, this resulted in minimal engagement with the new exhibition and acted as a particular impediment to learning.

> *'I do think that there's too much information in one part on that wall, and that it was a lot to take away in one session, and a lot of people have said that actually.'*

> *'But when we first, when we were first shown the exhibition before it officially opened, everybody was complaining about how much information that is in that room.'*

As a result, both stressed their need to engage with the material further, and how their learning will occur over a protracted period as they continue to volunteer at the Palace. Volunteer A14 explains:

> *'I think, as you get older, it's much harder to absorb information and a lot of information and retain it. And so, in my case, I thought, "well, I will read them each time I visit the Palace, I will read a little bit more and I will look at it a bit more." So I do it off my own back rather than, and I find that easier.'*

This is then indicative of how the age of some volunteers combined with the amount of information present could operate as a barrier to engaging with the content of the new exhibition, and so stresses the importance of facilitating volunteers to learn on their own terms.

To overcome this barrier, volunteers indicated their preference to gradually engage with the exhibition's content via the dedicated training materials that were provided by the Palace. Volunteers A10, A13, A14, A16 and A17 all commented on the amount of material that had been provided to them in the form of a binder that could be consulted whilst on shift as well as the Palace's online provision via their dedicated volunteer platform (see figure 9). This then enabled volunteers to engage with a collated series of secondary sources that could further supplement their knowledge base beyond the surface level of understanding required to support the visitor experience. Volunteers A14 and A16 reflect this when talking about their previous experience of engaging with the binder:

> *'And also, you know, we're lucky, because we can learn over time about it. Every time you come, you can pick up a folder and read a bit more, and the folder is always being updated, which is great.'*

> *'We have the folder at the desk with all the information you could possibly need. That folder has everything. I tried reading it the other day, there's so much in there.'*

This then indicates volunteer support for this layered approach to learning since it is not only reflective of the Palace's ongoing presence and support that they offer for their

volunteers, but it also directly plays into their motivation to volunteer as a form of *serious leisure*, i.e., their concereted effort to learn more about histories of the Bishops of London as a way of enhancing their live interpretation. As stated by Volunteer A14:

> *'I have more knowledge. And also, there's so much, there's so much to learn. And you've got the availability of learning, because you've got stuff all over the place, there's always files and new information, and things you can do yourself and being aware of before and so just, I love it.'*

My own experiences of the folder were generally positive. I appreciated the effort that was made by the Palace to provide a comprehensive digital and physical index of the content of their new exhibition and research into the role of the Bishops of London as the Bishops of the Colonies which was accessible to all volunteers. More notably, they also provided a series of Q&A sheets that clearly outline their justifications for the exhibition (see figure 10). The provision of these documents is particularly important since it provided a clear resource that gives guidance to volunteers on how they can answer potentially thorny questions with visitors, i.e., why they decided to move beyond focusing on white abolitionists, as well as an entry point to encounter the main arguments underpinning contemporary attempts at museum decolonisation. As a result, volunteers can become aware of both global significance of redressing the colonial wounds and its locally grounded manifestation at the Palace.

11. John Robinson, Bishop of London 1713-23

The coat of arms was made and installed in this room by Bishop Blomfield in his 1830s restoration of the Palace's rooms. Like many Bishops of London, Blomfield was a great historian and reflected back on Bishops he admired during his refurbishments.

John Robinson (b.1650-d.1723) was a diplomat for nearly 30 years before returning to Britain in 1709, and was largely based in Stockholm in Sweden.

On his return to Britain, Robinson was appointed Dean of Windsor and of Wolverhampton. In 1713, as Bishop of Bristol and Lord Privy Seal, Robinson negotiated and signed the Treaty of Utrecht, ending the War of Spanish Succession.

The treaty also granted a 30 year monopoly – the Assiento de Negros - for British ships under the aegis of the South Sea Company to transport enslaved Africans to the Spanish 'colonies' in the Americas, including the Caribbean, where they worked the mines and tobacco and sugar farms.

The monarchs Louis XIV of France, his grandson Philip V of Spain and the British Queen Anne signed the treaty.

Unlike King William before her, Queen Anne thoroughly approved of the trade in enslaved Africans. She wanted to

> 'gain for England a larger share in the international slave trade 'and 'fought to gain the Assiento from France during negotiations over the Treaty of Utrecht in 1712.

'As a consequence of the treaty and Charles II's earlier acquisition of the forts on the African coast, England transported more than half of the slaves sent to all of the New World by mid-century'.

As soon as he became Bishop of London, Robinson sat on the Barbados committee, a part of the Society for the Propogation for the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG) which sent missionaries to the British 'colonies' to convert people to Christianity.

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Bishop Robinson recommissioned Bishop Compton's commissaries and sent new ones to Maryland, South Carolina, Barbados, Jamaica, and Leeward Islands between 1716 and 1719.

Robinson died at Hampstead and is buried at All Saints Church, Fulham.

Satire on the negotiations leading to the Treaty of Utrecht between France, Britain, the Netherlands and their allies (11 April 1713). This Dutch etching depicts Robinson with his face being pushed into the grindstone by Queen Anne. © The Trustees of the British Museum

Further reading:

Figure 9- this is a screenshot of the John Robinson article present on the Fulham Palace's volunteer portal and shows the historical information that volunteers are able to learn (Fulham Palace, 2024a).

How did the exhibition come about and why did Fulham Palace Trust decide to work with an artist and community groups to interpret this history?

Following the research we started investigating how to interpret this information. We again spoke to academic partners, community outreach experts, and funders, and we put together an outline project plan. The advice we received, and learning from previous projects at the Palace and at other organisations, informed our decision to empower people who are descended from those who were enslaved or indentured to shape and lead on future projects, including this current temporary exhibition.

The artist, the project co-ordinator, and the participants are from communities of people which includes those who are descended from those who were enslaved or indentured.

Funding of £29,000 from the Arts Council enabled us to appoint the artist, the project co-ordinator, researchers, curators, a film-maker and an evaluator.

Why was the theme of resistance chosen?

The artist Adisa chose the theme after looking at all the research that had been done into the Bishops of London, colonialism and transatlantic slavery. Supplementary research on resistance was done to support him in preparing for the workshops with the participants.

What about the role of white people in the UK (including the Church of England) in abolishing slavery? Why aren't you telling these stories?

Firstly, the British abolition movement has been written about and covered in books, exhibitions, films and documentaries. It is a very interesting story, but Fulham Palace Trust has very little new to say on the subject. The Church of England and clergy, including Bishop Porteus, did play a role in the abolition movement. However, the transatlantic traffic in enslaved people operated for 200 years with only a handful of Church of England clergy objecting to the horrors of slavery.

It is also true that individual clergy in the Church of England owned thousands of enslaved people, that many plantation owners resisted Christian teaching and better treatment for enslaved people, and that resistance in the Caribbean and North America was as powerful a driver to abolishing the transatlantic traffic in enslaved people and slavery in British colonies as was the growing abolition movement in Britain.

Multiple truths and perspectives can exist at the same time and history is very complicated. The balanced approach to the story of resistance at Fulham Palace adds to what is known, it doesn't take away from existing knowledge.

What about the role of the British navy stopping ships carrying enslaved people, and the role of African kingdoms selling enslaved people?

The British navy did indeed patrol the Atlantic waters stopping ships carrying enslaved people, following the abolition of the transatlantic traffic in enslaved

Figure 10- this shows one of the Q&A sheets that are part of the folder or index that volunteers can consult as part of equipping and empowering them to support the delivery of Fulham Palace's new exhibition (Fulham Palace, 2024b).

Volunteer opinions: decolonisation and the Palace's new exhibition

In keeping with Brulon Soares (2023)'s emphasis that museum decolonisation should be guided by a museology of hope towards redressing shared colonial wounds and fashioning themselves into places for, and of, connectiveness, volunteers were asked how they felt about such a process and the implications this may have for their association with the Palace.

There was a strong consensus that the Palace should engage in decolonial practice, with a specific emphasis on acknowledging and communicating the connections of the Bishop of London to both the Trans-atlantic trade in enslaved Africansand historic colonialism. Volunteer A11 emphasised that it is the responsibility of the organisation to do so since they are recognised as a nationally significant historic home, and so it is vital that this is acknowledged in the master-narrative of the Palace.

> *'I think from a historical viewpoint it's very important. We are a historic house, we are, you know, a heritage house, we are, you know, a designated ancient monument, we, you know, as far as the history goes, I think it's important to acknowledge, you know, the role that we [had].'*

Volunteer A9 built on Volunteer A11's emphasis by describing how important it was to not solely restrict this activity to the Bishops of London and to unveil the historic complicity of other senior clergymen within the Church of England. This is because they recognised how 'religion' had previously been used as a tool to 'gloss things over' and so it is important to draw attention to how religion was used as an ideological tool to enable select powerful people to personally profit from the labour of enslaved peoples. They describe that:

> *'But I think it's very important that first of all, Fulham Palace acknowledges the role as far as the Bishop of London, because religion can gloss things over. I think people are more aware now that religion can't gloss over things like for example, connections to plantations, to enslavements, how funds were made, and also that I mean, a lot of quite senior religious people, whether it's Catholic, whether it's Protestant, whatever the denomination was, quite a lot of them actually personally made fortunes, or if not their wives families, made [or] had large fortunes.'*

Additionally, Volunteer A9 drew attention to the importance of also recognising the racialised logics that enabled the dehumanisation of enslaved peoples and how this intersected with the institution of chattel slavery. This is because they felt that discussions concerning the financial legacies of Trans-Atlantic enslavement can focus predominantly on the enslaver which then overlook both how peoples were reduced to being viewed as property as well as how wealth accumulated from their labour was then invested into the public realm. Consequently, Volunteer A9 felt that this should be incorporated into any sort of 'interpretation and reinterpretation' that Fulham Palace

undertakes regarding their colonial connections in order to break down the barriers and binaries between coloniser and colonised, or home and away.

> *'And it is the racialized attitude of property that... Yes, that it's the property piece that I think that sometimes gets forgotten, forgotten that how much people looked at the property piece as far as enslaved people are concerned. (....) they had no idea, some of them, where the profits from their enslavement were going and how it was going to be used. I think that that definitely needs to be looked at and definitely needs, should not be forgotten as we move forward with looking at the interpretation and reinterpretation, for example, within Fulham Palace.'*

Volunteer A16 described how important it was to engage in forms of epistemic decolonisation and border thinking by viewing 'history' in a pluralistic sense (Escobar, 2020, Mignolo, 2018). This is because they felt that previous curatorial practice had valorised the voices and presences of 'just a few at the top', i.e., the Bishops of London, and so it was important to move beyond them and interpret from 'below'. They state:

> *'I just think it's really important in history, to highlight the voices of all rather than just a few, I think history back in the day was very much just a few at the top, and then the big events and I think it's much, much more important to sort of look now from below, because we've done all that now.'*

Volunteer A6 exhibited a similar sentiment on the importance of approaching history in a holistic sense. For them, it is important to be 'broad' in your view of history, as approaching it through a singular lens can result in one being 'quite revisionist'.

> *'I think, and that's where I think it can get quite revisionist in one sense, as you know, it just needs to be kept very broad. It doesn't mean that you can't feel very negative about a lot of what happened, but it has got to be seen in a broad context.'*

This is then reflective of Brulon Soares' (2023) and Thomas' (1991) assertions that there is a need to engage with and view colonial histories according to the mutually constitutive and entangled categories of coloniser and colonised, rather than imposing a separation between the two.

A key example of this can be seen with the efforts made to problematise prolific figures in Fulham Palace's history like Bishops Henry Compton and Beilby Porteus (see Fulham Palace Things of Note). This is because the Palace was able to foreground how the former indirectly utilised enslaved and indigenous labour and their corresponding knowledges via James Banister to source plants from North America. The latter was found to be an absentee planter and not the great and good abolitionist as he was once portrayed due to his views on how the institution of enslavement could result in enslaved peoples becoming better Christians (Mill, 2023b). The impact of this was illustrated by Volunteer A11 when remarking how they talk about Compton and Porteus on their tour:

'So when we talk about Compton, we talk about the fact that not only did he gather like 1000 species of plants, flowers from, you know, from the Americas and the colonies, but he also, they would have used enslaved people to gather those. So that goes in now, you know, we talk about that. And it gets quite a lot of reaction and interest in people. And then when we're in Porteus library, we're not only talking about the fact that he was an abolitionist of sorts, in fact, more like a reformist than an abolitionist. And prior to that, we always praised him up and made him "oh, he worked with Wilberforce," and he was the, you know, the only high church man to actually do that. But now we get his backstory, it's a lot more juicy and we can talk a lot more about that, and that's interesting, saying, you know, he wants you to reform not so much abolish, and we find that really, you know, fascinating, and putting in the church's responsibility of you know, what went on.'

It is possible to infer from Volunteer A11 that foregrounding the mutually constitutive histories of coloniser and colonised has resulted in a more in-depth and nuanced portrayal of both Compton and Porteus, thereby, indicating their support for such decolonial activity since it is 'more juicy'. This then reaffirms how live-interpreter volunteers can engage in 'reputational politics' as they are actively able to shape the reception of these historical figures (Alderman, 2002, Handler and Gable, 1997). Therefore, the opportunities to problematise specific historic figures and unveil their entangled colonial legacies represent a potential expansion of A11's role as a Tour Guide, as well as new instances to derive further leisure from their volunteering.

The emphasis of embracing Border Thinking/epistemic decolonisation or viewing history in a pluralistic way did cause a sense of unease amongst volunteers. Volunteer A7 described that foregrounding how the Bishops of London were complicit in colonial dispossession, exploitation and violence could undermine and overpower the already established narratives and histories present at the Palace. Therefore, they are of the opinion that any attempts to problematise the BoL should be done with the notion of 'balance' in mind. They state that:

'Well, I think you've got to take a balanced view of all history so you've got to cover everything, but you can't plug only that, it's got to be a rounded thing. (...) But I have to say that we have to be careful not to lose the rest of the history of the Palace and the Bishops.'

The idea of 'balance' was also applicable to the assertions of Volunteer A19 who described that the focus on historic enslavement should not detract from other instances of suffering. This is because they felt that focusing on the Bishop of London's connections to the Trans-atlantic trade in enslaved Africanscould potentially forget how other people have suffered throughout every time-period, especially if they were not 'rich' (Fieldnotes- 27/04/23). Volunteer A6 further reflected this by describing how it is important for the Palace to also combat the epistemic silencing of various disadvantaged peoples, rather than solely focusing on one group. They state:

> *'I was happy to sort of suggest to her, although it may not have come across, that history, it wasn't just the history of black people that was omitted, we know the history of a lot of other social groups was probably omitted as well.'*

The anxiety exhibited by Volunteer A7 was further reflected by Volunteers A11 and A14. This is because they articulated that any attempts to redress the institution's colonial wounds should be approached sensitively, as such efforts could be viewed either: inherently conflictual and could constitute a form of 'race baiting' or potentially 'patronising'. This then alludes to a perceived tension that can emerge as part of fashioning the Palace into a place for, and of, connectiveness.

> *'I think we have to be cautious about remembering that history, you know, (...) there's a lot of debate where, you know, we've had comments from people you know, just in passing saying, you know, this is wrong, because is it really Fulham Palace's place to be doing this, you know, is it not sort of race baiting? Is it not, you know, causing division, a division?'* (Volunteer A11)

> *'I think, well it's obviously incredibly sensitive, but I think there's also a danger, danger is probably the wrong word, it could be seen as being patronising.'* (Volunteer A14)

Volunteer A11's remarks about potentially stoking conflict were further reflected in their opinions concerning the apology given by Sarah Mullaly on the 20th April 2023, the current Bishop of London, for the actions of her historic forebears (Fulham Palace, 2023). They described a certain level of discomfort at the apology since, in their view, the current Bishop of London overstepped their mark and should have restricted themselves to promoting the content of the exhibition. In their own words,

> *'But, you know, people pick up on subjects and it opens the door for loads that have got different opinions. It's like, very recently when the bishop actually apologised for it. I personally think she shouldn't have done that. (...). You know, in that context of opening the exhibition, by all means, talk about the exhibition, talk about the historic content talk about, you know, that the whole thing is fascinating. The resistance, the symbols, the symbolism, the poetry, I love all that. But when she was on camera, and actually apologised on behalf of the church, I found that uncomfortable.'*

This then implies that whilst they support the new exhibition, they believe that the public apology of the Bishop of London may further entrench division in the contemporary culture war context which could result in further criticism being directed at the Palace.

However, there was an implicit recognition that both the Bishop of London and Fulham Palace have the moral responsibility to be forthright about their continued benefitting from colonial legacies, even if this causes reputational harm because of them being widely critiqued. As described by Volunteer A9,

> *'But I think that might be slightly difficult, perhaps for the Bishop of London, the current Bishop of London, but also how Fulham Palace presents itself too and that's going to be really important to how Fulham Palace does interpret that, and then communicate that and share that information, even though it might well be unflattering and I suspect it will be.'*

Once again, this points to the moral imperative for the Palace to engage in decolonial activity, even at the potential detriment to the organisation.

Further contestations between the Palace and volunteers occurred surrounding language use. A prolific example occurred when Volunteer A1 queried why the Palace had not decided to include the full name of the Asiento when discussing the connections of Bishop Robinson to the signing of the Treaty of Utrecht (see Fulham Palace Things of Note) and the subsequent founding of the South-Sea Company (Fieldnotes- 19/04/23). In their opinion, since the Palace had provided a content warning at the entrance of the exhibition, they felt that it was appropriate to use to full name 'Asiento de Negros' as part of the interpretation based on the need to accurately reflect the historicity of what was being conveyed (Fieldnotes- 19/04/23). In response to this, Front of House Supervisor A8 commented on whether it was appropriate to provide the full terminology based on the need to be sensitive to various audiences by not using excessive amounts of racialised language and their understanding concerning the contemporary usage of the term by historians as they refer to it as being the 'Asiento' (Fieldnotes- 19/04/23). This point of tension is reflective of Frost's (2017) assertions that attempting to securitise museum space to enable the development of a safe and inclusive learning environment can impact the context of the exhibition and the extent to which they are able to provide a holistic rendering of its subject matter. Therefore, the potential sanitising of the exhibition, in the eye of A1, reflects an ongoing tension between being historically 'accurate' by reflecting the racialised logics that were present in the early 18th century and the responsibility of the organisation to be inclusive for all peoples.

As part of redressing shared wounds, there was an ongoing commentary that it should not be Palace's responsibility to apologise, but rather that they should instead educate various audiences regarding the ills caused by enslavement and historic colonialism. Volunteer A13 reflected by this by emphasising that the Palace should not necessarily 'atone' for their colonial past, but in equal parts cannot deny it and are therefore obliged to raise awareness concerning it. They state:

> *'I don't, I mean, you can't deny the past. You've got to, you've got to atone for, well let's not say atone for the sins of your fathers, but what happened happened sort of thing and so you've just got to live with it (...). I suppose an explanation for what happened and to make people aware of what did happen, because I think so many people are completely unaware of what happened with colonisation.'*

As part of raising this awareness, Volunteer A3 described the importance of presenting knowledge in an objective fashion. This is because they felt there could be a risk that

the Palace could start dictating to or lecturing their audiences as to how feel about historic colonialism and its legacies. They state that the Palace should:

> '...just present the facts and say that's what we found, give the source, people can make up their own minds and they come up with their own view one way or the other. Don't be too... Don't drill down too deep into explaining it.'

This quote then indicates the preference of this interlocutor for the Palace to assume a neutral stance by producing an authorised and singular narrative of their institution's complicity in enslavement, reminiscent of those with the ability to occupy the Zero-Point. By doing this, the Palace may avoid becoming a dedicated space for anti-colonial collaboration or for 'contestation, negation, and reinvention' of (re)presentations of Empire (Brulon Soares, 2023, Castro-Gomez, 2007, 2021). Therefore, by advocating the need to not 'drill down too deep', this then divests the responsibility of combatting coloniality from the Palace and places it onto their audiences.

Echoing Volunteer A3, Volunteer A6 reinforced the need for the Palace to not engage in forms of moral posturing by stating that the information provided should not be presented in a 'preachy way'. In part, this can be attributed to the worry that Fulham Palace's decision to be more transparent about their colonial connections could result in the exclusion of some audiences who oppose any sort of decolonial action. However, they differentiate themselves from Volunteer A3 by explicitly stating that the provision and communication of histories of enslavement and historic colonialism should be guided by the explicit goal of facilitating the active learning of visitors by engendering critical reflection and potentially transformative outcomes (see figure 11). They state:

> 'I think it's very important that the opportunity, you know, that, that the information that we have is presented. But not, but I feel it's very important that that we present it in such a way that it encourages an active response from our listener and not just in a preachy way.'

Consequently, the support for decolonial activity shown by Volunteer A6 is contingent upon establishing a more dialogic means of communicating the Palace's colonial history rather than constituting its audiences as passive recipients of knowledge. This then points to the active role that Tour Guide and live interpreter volunteers may play in helping their audiences 'read', recognise, understand and take action against the workings of coloniality that persist throughout the institution (Gruenewald, 2003, 2008).

Figure 11- this depicts four resistance figures (Nanny Maroon, Toussaint de Louverture, Paul Bogle, and Yaa Asantewaa) who are positioned to directly face the portraits of the Bishops of London on the other wall to directly call out both the CofE's and their own complicity in the oppression and subjugation of African and Caribbean peoples (Maidment-Blundell, 2023c).

The importance of actively including learners was also reflected by Volunteer A10's assertions about the uniqueness of Fulham Palace's new exhibition. They commented on how they particularly liked the Palace's emphasis on foregrounding the personal experiences and acts of resistance employed by enslaved and freed peoples, and that the interactive parts of the exhibition resulted in a far more engaging visitor experience (see figure 12).

> 'I like that they're focusing on the aspects of resistance and the cultural aspects of the hair, the songs, etc, the poetry, it's like a different way of showing it. And I think that's interesting, compared to just putting the information in a very factual way....'

This then implies that the preference of Volunteer A10 for using more affective based methods as a way for visitors to engage with the topic of colonialism (Chatterjee, 2011, Kevin and Salmon, 2020).

Volunteer A16 also described their appreciation of the Palace's decolonisation efforts because of their collaboration with Parent Action and Resource Centre (PARC) and local school groups. For them, it was important that the Palace engaged in forms of co-creation. This is because enabling local community partners to take control of the curatorial process not only resulted in the Palace de-centring itself, but also meant that the exhibition moved beyond 'highlighting the history and stuff' to a more substantive approach whereby the voices of participants along with the acts of resistance were front and centre. This then speaks to how embracing more politically charged practice can challenge both the authority and perceived neutrality of the Palace. In their own words,

'I think, I think the main difference I've seen with Palace compared to other museums is their work that they did with like the poet Adisa, and then the local schools and communities, because that is actually quite, that has become basically the central part of our exhibition, as well as sort of highlighting the history and stuff, it's sort of more been about, well the exhibition is resistance rather than just, this is what happened, it's very much about looking at, or trying to look at people's personal experiences and how they resisted and stuff like that, and engaging with local communities, local people, I really liked that they got the poet (...), and that has kind of become the main focus.'

This is then indicative of a perceived active stance taken by the Palace to come to terms with their colonial past and is reflective of how subaltern groups can utilise museums, or the Palace in this case, to redress colonial wounds and heal their relationship to the past. This then indicates the support that this volunteer has for forms of anti-colonial collaboration. As articulated by Volunteer A16,

'...because it's very different from other museums that I've seen where it's like, they sort of kind of go, we had connections to the slave trade and colonialism, and it was bad. That's how we got our money. We're sorry, and that is important as well. That's really, really good. But then I think [Fulham Palace's new exhibition] has done something slightly different from that.'

Whilst volunteering at the Palace, a central point of comparison emerged between what Fulham Palace and Lambeth Palace Library were doing since both grappled with the same topic: the Church of England and their connections to enslavement. Lambeth Palace Library had recently commissioned and exhibited *Enslavement: Voices from the Archive* which built on the CofE report by exploring the relationship between Queen Anne's Bounty and Trans-Atlantic chattel slavery. This exhibition also explored the varying viewpoints from clergymen and missionaries regarding the rights of enslaved peoples and the church's stance on abolition (Lambeth Palace Library, 2023). However, Fulham Palace was able to distinguish itself since they framed Beilby Porteus as an enslaver rather than solely as an abolitionist and they included the links of Bishop Robinson to the Treaty of Utrecht which were absent in Lambeth Palace Library's exhibition (Lambeth Palace visit- 15/02/2023, ARG Meeting- 20/02/2023). When combined with the Palace's co-production efforts, this became a prominent narrative and point of pride that was present within the volunteers' community of practice. This is because it qualified the exhibition's perceived impacts in terms of how the Palace had bettered itself as an academic and educational institution. Therefore, the support shown by volunteers for the Palace's decolonial practice is contingent upon enhancing the appreciation and attachment they have for the organisation and the site, as well as the desire to have it better valued within wider society, thereby, reflecting the two guiding discourses utilised by the Palace to engender volunteer support.

Figure 12- showing a listening station containing the creative responses produced by PARC and local school groups in response to the prompt of Obeah (Maidment-Blundell, 2023d).

Pursuing decolonisation: future implications

All participants were asked how pursuing decolonisation may implicate both volunteers and volunteering into the future. The first significant theme that emerged focused on how one cannot view the decolonisation of Fulham Palace as being a one-off event, but rather as part of a protracted, gradual, and iterative process.

From an institutional perspective, it was recognised that Fulham Palace is grappling with similar issues as other heritage institutions, and how the organisation must continually to improve their understanding of their colonial roots. As part of recognising the difficulty associated with this, Front of House Supervisor A8 stated that:

> *'I think the best way is, it's always going to be a learning curve, I think, for society as a whole, for the heritage sector, and for Fulham Palace Trust and other institutions, specifically, it's a gradual process. And you could argue that it's one that will never be complete. But it's an ongoing, an ongoing aspiration, that we can always work towards to try to improve awareness, improve understanding of these issues.'*

Volunteers recognised the importance of viewing decolonial practice as an on-going phenomenon. Volunteer A16 describes that whilst the new exhibition was 'a really good sort of first step, (...) like it was a good way of opening and introducing the topic', it was vital that the Palace and their volunteers should not view this as a one-off exhibition. They think that the Palace should actively build on the awareness, understandings and momentum generated by the new exhibition to pursue subsequent decolonial activity. They explain that:

> 'I think decolonisation will further be like, it's an ongoing thing. It will forever be a work in progress. So, it's not like, I think for me, it's not decolonisation and the Palace isn't just that we have this exhibition, and then we move on, it's very much the like, continuation is like, "okay, we've had this exhibition, now what? Now what are we going to further do to make sure that we continue with the efforts we've already made?"'

Similarly, Volunteer A9 describes how important it is for Fulham Palace to continue engaging with its 'layers of colonisation' since researching the links of the Bishops of London to histories of enslavement could potentially take decades based on the sheer amount of information and knowledge that needs to be uncovered. As part of this, they assert that Fulham Palace has the responsibility to provide adequate and sustained training for volunteers throughout this period, thereby, reinforcing how certain elements of volunteering at the Palace, e.g., engaging with various audiences as a live interpreter, will continue to be shaped by decolonial practice.

> 'But I think it absolutely has to be ongoing, not just one or two, assume one or two workshops would do it. No. This is something Fulham Palace has to take responsibility for that we might need for the next 5, 10, 15, or 20 years, absolutely as more information evolves.'

This then implies that volunteers are aware of the magnitude of the work that needs to be undertaken as Fulham Palace continues to critically engage with their colonial connections and alludes to how their practice will be shaped by this curatorial and ethical discourse.

However, Volunteer A11 suggested that the need to undergo more training as part of the Palace's future decolonial efforts could also act as both a barrier to volunteering and a particular 'dislike' for those that already volunteer. This is because the need to undergo greater training may directly contravene their motivation to volunteer or could potentially exclude new people who desire something different from their experience. As a result, Volunteer A11 stressed the importance of bearing this in mind for the sake of recruiting new and retaining long-standing volunteers.

> 'It just, you know, "oh God, I haven't got time for reading all that stuff, or learning all that," you know, some people, everybody volunteers for their own reasons, you know. (...) Other people just want to come along, enjoy the garden, do a bit of gardening (...) chat to people, you know, everybody does what they want to do, and they get out of it, what they want to get out of it, you know?'

The second prominent theme that emerged as part of the Palace's future decolonial efforts was the need to diversify. Both institutional staff and volunteers described the importance of diversifying the Palace's audiences, as well as the need to combat some of the popular perceptions of the Palace as an 'elitist organisation' (CEO A4). As articulated by Volunteer A11, there is an impression that the Palace can operate as an exclusionary space, since it can be so 'white middle class'.

> *'I did have a conversation with another volunteer a couple of years back, we were having a coffee. And she said to me, she said, "I'm going to ask you a question. So how do you feel about the fact that Fulham Palace is so white middle class?" And I went, "is it?" She said, "oh come on, it really is." She said, "it's not very diverse. We don't, you know, include people." I said, "well, I've met many different persons. I don't know why." But then it made me stop and think, you know, and it did for many years. It did.'*

This impression was further codified through Volunteer A11 remarking on the efforts made by the Palace to attract more diverse audiences and how more should be done. Even though they recognised the amount of effort that was put in by Palace staff to attract more people, they describe that there was a general sentiment amongst potential stakeholders from global majority backgrounds that the Palace is not for them. This then hints at a perceived absence of a sense of belonging and claims of ownership on the part of marginalised audiences which can explain a lack of diversity. Volunteer A11 states:

> *'I know they work hard to be inclusive, you know, but I think we've got a long way to go. Still, you know, but that's not the Palace's fault. We can't put or drag people through, you know. (...) I've been handing out leaflets and things, and the amount of black people who sort of go, "no, I'm not interested in that, I'm not interested in that." You know, it's not that we're not inviting them in, they don't want to come, you know, and they don't want to come to some of the things we do.'*

The implications of this were commented on by Volunteer A9. This is because they allude to the conflict that emerges between drawing attention to the majority white nature of the volunteer workforce at the Palace, and how such an emphasis may be potentially received by their fellow volunteers. They state:

> *'I have raised this, since I started actually volunteering at Fulham Palace. Most of the volunteers at Fulham Palace are white. I have raised this at training, and I've raised this at different committee meetings and there was once when I got glared at by a few volunteers. (...) Yes, this is going back a few years ago now, but I got glared at for it. But it is I know Fulham Palace has been trying to address this and how we encourage people from different backgrounds to come and volunteer at Fulham Palace. But I'm deeply conscious. I mean, you've only got to look around at training most of the time.'*

This then implies that efforts to diversify the Palace's volunteering force can be viewed as a particular point of tension since foregrounding how the historic home may operate as an exclusionary space can come into direct conflict with the preconceived notions of some regarding the beneficial role that the institution plays in their lives. This then points to future conflictual terrain or instances of resistance that the Palace may encounter as they attempt to diversify their audiences as part of their future decolonial efforts.

Volunteer A11 describes that the Palace's new exhibition could operate as one mechanism to facilitate the diversification of the current volunteer workforce and overcome potential volunteer resistance. This is because they comment on the momentum generated by the Palace's inclusive practice, and that since the site has 'opened up' for more people from 'diverse backgrounds', this will inevitably result in a shift in the audiences who consume the Palace and its amenities.

> *'But to keep this momentum going, because we have really kind of opened up for more people to come here of diverse backgrounds....'*

CEO A4 also commented on the representative nature of the Palace and how engendering a sense of belonging for various audiences could result in a broader range of volunteer applications. They explain:

> *'But if you are more representative, in terms of when you advertise for roles, for volunteer roles and staff roles, people can see themselves in the organisation, and then that will lead to a broader range of applications.'*

This implies that a central effort to enabling the diversification of volunteers at the Palace hinges on the ability of people to engender some sort of attachment and connection by feeling represented in its practice.

The third theme that emerged was a potential change in the role of Front of House volunteers as a result of the new exhibition and the learning opportunities afforded by this. This is because there was an institutional expectation for Front of House volunteers to become more responsive to visitors, especially with regard to encouraging them: to engage in forms of critical reflection via the calls to action; to provide feedback on the new exhibition; (see figure 13) and to have volunteers respond to any questions or queries that visitors may have about the exhibition (Fieldnotes-19/04/23, 30/05/23, Fulham Palace, 2022).
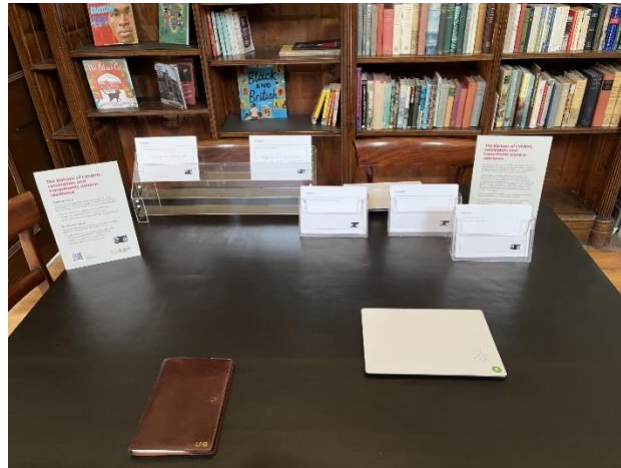
Figure 13- this is showing the feedback station located in the Porteus library which contains a book for visitor feedback as well as a 'call to action' to prompt visitors to define what freedom means to them (Maidment-Blundell, 2023e).

This change was further corroborated by Volunteer A16 who commented that based on their experiences of the new exhibition, their Front of House volunteering may increasingly be oriented towards 'more open discussion with visitors'. They state:

> 'I guess I think from what I've experienced so far, I can kind of see my future volunteering as being more and more open discussions with visitors. I think that's how I see it. Me engaging with my volunteering and stuff like that. That's how I see it, like changing and expanding, is sort of having that open dialogue, and then if we were to do more things in the future, it's very much... Yeah, I think just being a bit more open, a bit more, taking on visitor's questions, feedback, stuff like that.'

The emphasis on 'open dialogue' points to Front of House volunteers not only establishing more dialogic means of interacting with visitors, but also their role changing from being museum stewards to live interpreters. This is because they may increasingly become responsible for facilitating visitor learning and engendering a sense of belonging and ownership of the Palace and its history. When combined with the Palace's decolonial practice and emphasis on epistemic reconstitution and rehumanisation, this may fashion Front of House volunteers into instigators of historical empathy, thereby, introducing the possibility of a more critical edge as part of their practice (Modlin et al, 2011). As noted by Front of House Manager A12 when describing the impact that pursuing decolonisation has had upon Fulham Palace and their volunteers,

> 'I think we have been playing an active part in the local area, at least to really address the subject of racial inequalities and diversity issues. So, I think we're really growing as an organisation in that regard. And in that sense, I would believe that volunteering is impacted as well, because it's much more out there

now, we are addressing it face on. I think it becomes more of a factor in terms of people's minds and awareness as well of issues.'

Volunteers A13 and A17 also indicated their excitement and support for future decolonial initiatives at the Palace based on its potential to enrich the overall visitor experience. This is because there was a tacit assumption that the research conducted by the Palace into the colonial connections of the Bishops of London will lead to the production of new exhibitions, as well as the updating of their current interpretation which may perceived as being rather stale. As described by both Volunteer A13 and A17,

> *'Why not? Why not? Everything beats a dead dog in the temporary exhibition room.'*

> *'I'm excited to see it changing and developing and to see what the new exhibitions would be.'*

The excitement exhibited by Volunteers A13 and A17 was also reflected by Volunteer A9. They offer further commentary surrounding their excitement at the Palace's decision to undertake further decolonial initiatives, as well as how this offers greater learning opportunities for them. When considering the impacts this may have upon their role, Volunteer A9 states:

> *'I think it would broaden it. I think I might find it challenging at times in terms of having to keep learning new things, but I think it would broaden my knowledge. I mean, I'm very excited about this. This is, as far as I'm concerned, this is one of the most exciting aspects of volunteering at Fulham Palace since I started volunteering in the beginning of 2015. I really look forward to keep learning more and more about it. I know that I'm going to start doing a bit of my own poking around and research.'*

The significance of this quote is two-fold. Firstly, this indicates that the new information uncovered as a result of the Palace's decolonial activity may enhance the *serious leisure* aspect of their volunteering, especially considering their excitement at the prospect of further structured learning opportunities and their willingness to build on their subject knowledge by engaging in forms of self-directed learning. Secondly, by stating that this is 'one of the most exciting aspects of volunteering at Fulham Palace' indicates how the social environment of volunteering for A9 has become rejuvenated. This then allows us to infer that this has resulted in a renewed significance of the Palace within this interlocutor's life and a strengthened sense of attachment they have towards their construction of the Palace as a place.

Volunteer A7 also commented on the potential benefits offered by further learning opportunities as a result of the Palace's future potential decolonial efforts. They indicated that they were more than willing to support the Palace in their future practice, especially considering the potential for them to learn more about the Palace's history, but this was dependent upon the overall framing of the new interpretation. This is

because, according to Volunteer A7, it requires an element of 'balance' being present, which then speaks to a potential anxiety that the change sought by the Palace could directly challenge their comfort and familiarity with the Palace and its settings. They describe:

> 'Well, I always like to learn new things. So, you know, that would be fine by me. I wouldn't have any problems with it, learning new things. And I'm quite happy to engage with anything like that. As long as, again, there's a balance.'

Again, this indicates the willingness of volunteers to support future decolonial initiatives is dependent upon not only the personal benefits afforded to volunteers, i.e., opportunities to learn more about history, but also their attitudes regarding the (re)telling of histories of Empire.

Even though Volunteer A7 stressed the need for balance, Volunteer A11 indicated their willingness to support the Palace's future decolonial efforts even if they disapproved of some of their curatorial decisions. When asked why this was the case, they offered two reasons: their attachment to the Palace and the pride they draw from its activities and the freedom afforded by their status as being a volunteer to push back when necessary. They state:

> 'Well, I don't think I can feel any more proud of it than I already do. (...) And I don't think anything they do will change that, you know, I don't think it will, you know, I questioned some bits and pieces, but that's just me, because, you know, I can't, you know, I've lived a few years, and I have opinions. And I, you know, you can tell me I'm wrong and talk to me about it, that's fine. But I'm never going to change having opinions. I don't think that should stop. So, some things I will question and say, why is that? You know, what's that for? Make me understand, and then if you can make me understand or I can put my argument and say well, I don't think it's right, that's fine.'

This quote is fairly significant as it is emblematic of the dual status of volunteers at the Palace as both Insider and Outsider activists since they are aware of the inner workings of the organisation, and they also have the space to critique, contest and potentially shape its outputs (Wajid and Minott, 2019). Consequently, the ability to be recognised as a valid stakeholder and to feel heard, i.e., the opportunity to convey their opinion about the organisation's practice, combined with the sense of pride derived from the perceived contribution of the Palace to wider society enables them to overcome any potential stumbling blocks that they may encounter, which alludes to A11's strategies for constraint negotiation (Lamont et al 2014, 2015). Therefore, whilst volunteers may come into conflict with their organisation's stance, it does not automatically equate to them disavowing the Palace.

Fulham Palace: discussion of key findings

RQ1:

Whilst the Palace's motivations for pursuing decolonial practice are a mixture of self-interest and wanting to make amends for their colonial wounds, its significance cannot be denied. This is because the decision to interrogate the Bishops of London, and especially to foreground the acts of resistance by enslaved and freed peoples marked a distinctive change in Fulham Palace Trust's practice. Consequently, Fulham Palace's efforts to engage in border thinking, or to draw upon the mutually constitutive histories of coloniser and colonised, reflect their commitment to not only ceasing forms of epistemic silencing and violence, but also their intent to fashion the Palace into a place for and of connectiveness where transgressive understandings of enslavement can be engendered. Therefore, one can view the Palace as being a discursive and educative arena through which the relationships between the former coloniser and colonised can be foregrounded and reconfigured.

The explicit emphasis on fashioning the Palace into an inclusive space, or a place for and of connectiveness, dedicated to disrupting and unveiling the operations of coloniality informed volunteers' responses to decolonisation. Volunteers who supported the Palace's anti-colonial stance were receptive because it not only aligned with their moral standpoints regarding how the Palace should operate in terms of benefitting wider society, but also the importance of redressing its colonial wounds that persist as the financial, ideological, material and structural legacies of enslavement present at the site. This was evidenced through the explicit commentary from volunteers who called upon the Palace to further interrogate the church's complicity in enslavement, not just in terms of benefitting financially but also the Bishops of London's role in legitimising the racialised ideologies that resulted in the dehumanisation of enslaved peoples. Consequently, support for decolonisation from these volunteers was contingent upon the Palace making amends for their colonial legacies, even if this was to the detriment of the institution.

This branch of support was also applicable for volunteers who appreciated the Palace's efforts to move beyond the coloniser. This is because the commentary related to viewing history in a pluralistic sense, or by explicitly moving beyond the Bishops of London through epistemic disobedience and border thinking, reflect the desire to have the Palace fashioned into a space whereby people can encounter the histories and subjectivities of those that have been racially devalued. This was then compounded by further commentary related to the historic home museum 'redistributing' itself, i.e., engaging in what volunteers perceived as authentic co-production, whereby overall curatorial authority and control was given to stakeholders external to the Palace. This is because it is reflective of how the *terms* of the conversation have been changed, since the relative power imbalance between the Palace and external groups they claim to be in service of have been reduced. Whilst there is some possibility for the Palace to engage in forms of voice capture to assert the legitimacy of their activity or to enhance the status of the organisation, i.e., forms of neo-colonial collaboration, this perception was not apparent amongst volunteers. Further, it indicates that volunteers viewed the

Palace's conduct and practice as being both authentic and genuine. As a result, the perceived de-centring of the organisation and the generative impact of the new exhibition was a main point of support for some volunteers.

Embracing practice that may result in criticism or challenges being directed at the Palace, especially as a place that is near and dear to volunteers, did highlight some points of opposition. Volunteers felt that it should not necessarily be the Palace's responsibility to apologise for the historic actions of the Bishops of London because of any perceived divisive connotations which may be further enflamed by the perceived toxicity of the culture wars and the critique that was levelled at the Church of England at the announcement of their £100m reparative fund (Church of England, 2024b, Davis, 2024). Rather, they should adopt the educational responsibility to raise popular awareness concerning histories of enslavement instead. This was compounded by opposition emerging over the framing of the histories, especially considering the desire to convey the colonial histories of the institution in a way that promotes 'balance' and no feelings of blame, guilt or shame. Consequently, volunteers commented that any sort of communication of histories of enslavement tied to the Bishops of London should not be done in a 'preachy way', but rather in a way that encourages the active learning of visitors. Moreover, volunteers stated that the introduction of new interpretation and narratives could not only overshadow other instances of historic oppression, but also undermine the interpretation and narratives that volunteers are already familiar with. This then introduces the idea that volunteers are not directly opposed to the content of the histories being conveyed, but rather how they may be potentially framed for and received by various audiences. Therefore, any potential opposition emerging as a response to decolonial activity does not solely come from the political beliefs of volunteers, but rather the anxieties of having a place they strongly identify with being subject to criticism as well as a fear of change.

RQ2:

Volunteers recognised the importance of pursuing decolonisation as part of an iterative and protracted process. Firstly, volunteers recognise the immense amount of work that will be required to sufficiently explore the histories of colonialism and enslavement tied to the Bishops of London. As a result, they recognise that volunteering at the Palace, particularly as a Front of House or Tour Guide volunteer, will continue to be influenced by the Palace's decolonial aspirations. Secondly, this recognition was present in volunteer calls for subsequent decolonial practice. This is because it was felt that the new exhibition represented a significant step to redress their colonial wounds, and so volunteers wanted to build on this momentum to commission further decolonising exhibits. However, A11's assertions about having the necessary space to pushback on the Palace's future decolonial initiatives suggests the merits of viewing them as collaborators. Recognising how volunteers might be heard and valued will not only challenge their position in the institutional hierarchy, but also stress the importance of embracing volunteers as co-creators in initiatives to decolonise.

Volunteers stressed how they viewed the new exhibition as a mechanism to open-up the organisation. This is because they alluded to a prevalent perception that the Palace

operated as both a white-centric space and an elitist organisation. This commentary was further supported by volunteers mentioning how they raised this issue previously and were shot down by other volunteers when talking about the negatives of it being so white, middle class. Consequently, volunteers and institutional staff felt that the new exhibition challenges these preconceptions as it may help to engender a previously absent sense of belonging in the Palace for people from global majority backgrounds, which in turn may lead to a broadening of the volunteer cohort so new faces and voices are introduced.

Some volunteers also stated that their support for decolonisation was dependent upon the personal benefits they could derive from any changes to practice. More specifically, they believed that communicating these new histories will not only enhance current live interpretation and their ability to provide a more fulfilling visitor experience, but also a further sense of purpose and pride acting as an ambassador for an organisation whose pursuits they strongly identify with. As a result, the durable benefits in terms of self-expression and self-actualisation come hand in hand with the Palace's decolonial efforts. Moreover, the Palace's new exhibition yielded further durable benefits in terms of being able to pursue life-long learning. This is because the histories and narratives uncovered by the Palace's research provided volunteers with opportunities to engage in dedicated education and learning - the content of which was subsequently debated within their own community of practice. By doing this, it not only built on the active interest that some may have in the histories of the Bishops of London, the CofE, and Fulham Palace, but also provided a feeling that the social environment of their volunteering was enriched. This is because of the perceived contemporary relevance of the topic and the potential contribution of public-facing volunteers may have in supporting the Palace's efforts.

RQ3:

The Palace's training efforts to sufficiently equip and empower volunteers to communicate and engage with colonial and decolonised histories can viewed as part of enacting a critical pedagogy of place. This is because the Palace's efforts can be viewed as not only directly encouraging volunteers to critically reflect on the on-going harms caused by colonisation, but also to generated alternative understandings of the impacts of Empire that are grounded within the social and material environment of Fulham Palace. Through this, volunteers were encouraged to encounter these new histories and narratives as part of dialogic training sessions which intersected with their motivations to volunteer, the meanings they attach to the practice, and the benefits they accrue from their experience.

My interviews confirmed that the protracted process of communicating to volunteers why decolonial practice was occurring was received positively. This is because it gave Front of House and Tour Guide volunteers both the space and time to gradually encounter these new narratives, meaning that they were not overwhelmed by the amount and depth of histories that were uncovered. Moreover, this gradual process also gave them the discursive space to discuss and debate the significance of these

changes within their community of practice. This would not only enable volunteers to interrogate these new narratives through the meanings that they attach to the Palace, but it also gives them the relative freedom to pushback and seek further clarification from the Palace's leadership regarding the 'why' of pursuing decolonial practice. By doing this, volunteers felt that they were validated as important stakeholders within their organisation's decolonisation process.

Even though there was a top-down aspiration to have volunteers engender alternative understandings, their willingness to undertake this was not universal. For example, this can be seen with the pushback vocalised by volunteers regarding the changing of the word 'exotic' and the rejection of its 'othering' connotations, or the preferred usage of the 'Asiento de Negros'. By rejecting the Palace's assertions of utilising more inclusive language, this displays how engendering critical reflection as part of a critical pedagogy of place can come into conflict with how volunteers strategically construct the positives of their *serious leisure*. This appears to mean that any potential change could be perceived as a negative and may operate as a threat to positive connotations they have of the site. Therefore, encouraging volunteers to develop reinhabited understandings of the ills caused by historic colonialism and its legacies cannot be divorced from volunteer motivation, positionality and the attachment that some volunteers have for the Palace.

It was also highlighted that the structured learning opportunities provided by the Palace needed to be supplemented by forms of informal and self-directed learning. This is because there was a strong perception that the Palace could not provide the necessary depth to sufficiently grapple with the varying nuances of colonial histories and legacies by themselves, and so it was more the organisation's responsibility to provide a necessary basis upon which volunteers could further their own learning. This was actively done and promoted by the Palace through the provision of their in-depth training materials. The Palace clearly outlined the histories present in the new exhibition and explained their justification for moving beyond the bishops to provide a reading list that volunteers could consult further. By doing this, volunteers were empowered to engage with as much information as they wanted to enhance their practice on their own terms, meaning they could not only control their own learning process, but also shape it according to how they constitute the positives of their *serious leisure*. Therefore, this layered approach enabled volunteers to cover all the information that was required by their live interpretation, as well as identify any gaps present before addressing these through further reading or learning.

Equipping, empowering and supporting volunteers to communicate decolonised histories also necessitates adequate safeguarding measures. In part, this can be attributed to the worry that having volunteers communicate and engage with histories of colonial dispossession, exploitation and violence may result in significant emotional labour, which may be exacerbated for volunteers from global majority backgrounds. This combined with the Palace's explicit emphasis on diversifying their organisation, means that they need to have appropriate support mechanisms to enable volunteers either to engage with the topic minimally, or opt-out completely. This was reflected by the assertions made by institutional staff who recognise the innate complexity of

utilising volunteers to communicate colonial and decolonised histories. Consequently, they have provided visible and tangible support for public-facing volunteers by clearly showing how they can act if they do not wish to engage with the topic, i.e., asserting that they are not an 'expert' and upscaling conversations to staff members, or have communicated an expectation that volunteers should only possess a surface level understanding of the topic which can minimally support the visitor experience. By doing this, it solidifies the position of volunteers as passionate individuals who support the running of the organisation; thereby, empowering them to remain within the realms of their own comfort when confronted with the expectation to communicate some aspects of the Palace's colonial histories.

British Museum Findings Chapter

For this PhD, there are three main research questions: 'how do volunteers respond to their institution's decolonisation efforts', 'what implications may decolonisation efforts have for their volunteering experience?' and 'in what specific ways does the institution seek to engage, equip, empower, and support their volunteers to communicate decolonised histories?'. This chapter seeks to address all three by providing: a comprehensive overview of the various potential contributions and responses of British Museum volunteers to museum decolonisation; the potential changes to their practice; as well as their training requests to support any proposed decolonial practice.

The first section provides an outline of the British Museum's institutional history, with a particular focus on the debates concerning their self-proclaimed status as a 'Museum of the World', the popular critiques of this and calls for repatriation as well as further controversies concerning the organisation. I also provide details related to their volunteering programme as well as my own experience of the recruitment and induction process.

The second section of this chapter focuses on how volunteering, either as a Tour Guide or on an Object Handling Desk, at the British Museum can be constituted as a form of Serious leisure. More specifically, it discusses the relative place attachment that volunteers have with their site of volunteering, as well as their alignment with the institution's philosophies, policies and practice. This then provides the necessary discursive terrain upon which to investigate how pursuing decolonisation impacts volunteers and volunteering.

The third section predominantly addresses the first and second research questions and has three parts. The first delves into volunteer responses to the BM's emphasis on acknowledging and communicating their connections to historic colonialism and its contemporary legacies. The second scopes volunteer opinions regarding potential repatriation and how this can come into conflict with the ideological justifications of the BM as a Museum of the World. The third details volunteer conceptualisations of the BM's decolonisation process and what implications this has for their volunteering experience and practice.

The fourth section addresses the third research question as well as some aspects of the second and is made up of two main parts. The first part explores the current boundaries of live interpretation set by the British Museum, the perceived problems this causes, and how volunteers shape their own practice according to these expectations. The second section delves into the training requirements of volunteers to communicate colonial and decolonised histories and provides commentary regarding their preferences in being sufficiently equipped and empowered to conduct said task.

The fifth and final section discusses the relevance of my key findings in relation to my three guiding research questions.

This findings chapter draws upon: 19 interviews conducted with volunteers and volunteer managers at the British Museum; my generated fieldnotes from a year's worth of volunteering as an object-handling volunteer in the Enlightenment Gallery; and internal organisational resources concerning the training of volunteers or are related to the institution's decolonisation process.

British Museum: Organisational History and Volunteering

The British Museum was founded in 1753 through the purchasing of the collection of Sir Hans Sloane by the British Government. His initial collection comprised of botanical specimens, taxidermy and animal parts, rare gems, ethnographic artefacts, coins, fossils, 'curious and venerable antiquities' from Egypt, Greece, Eturia, Rome, Britain and 'even America' (Delbourgo, 2017: xx). Consequently, Sloane was able to tap into various networks of imperial domination and expansion to source animal and plant specimens as well as material culture. The wealth that enabled this collecting was directly tied to profits derived from enslaved labour on his wife's Jamaican sugar plantations and his knowledge and promotion of Cocoa as a beverage which he is thought to have appropriated from indigenous and enslaved African peoples (Delbourgo, 2017, Frost, 2019: 488).

In 1759, the Museum opened at Montagu House. At the time, only learned people and men were allowed access to see the Museum's collections via a tour given by the curators. As the collection of the British Museum grew, so did the need for a new building. In 1823, Montagu House was demolished in preparation for a new Greco-Roman building designed by Sir Robert Smirke to reinforce the 'progress of civilisation' , and this was completed in 1852 (The British Museum, 2023a). During this time, the Enlightenment gallery opened which contained King George's III library, the collections of Sir Hans Sloane, i.e., his animal, botanical and natural history specimens, were split up and sent to other national institutions like the Natural History Museum, and the reading room was opened in 1857. The presence of the reading room saw the British Museum also operating as the British Library until 1973 when it became its own entity and then moved out of the Bloomsbury site in 1997 (The British Museum, 2023a). Currently, the British Museum houses close to eight million objects and in 2023, they received 5,280,860 visits, making it the UK's most-visited attraction (BBC, 2024a).

However, the British Museum has been subject to extensive calls to repatriate objects within their collection, with prolific examples including the Parthenon Marbles. Whilst the organisation is prohibited from returning the ownership of objects to source countries, because the British Museum Act of 1953 which requires approval from Parliament for any sort of permanent deaccessioning of their collections, the organisation has also defended their retention of objects through their status as a 'Museum of the World' (Karp et al, 2006). This status emerges from their claims to operate as an encyclopaedic museum where all peoples can visit and learn about human history. This has promoted the idea that the content of the museum belongs to the entirety of humanity and so is a form of 'universal heritage' (Cuno, 2009). In response to this, there have been numerous critiques which have foregrounded how

this operates as a defence that ignores and trivialises histories of colonial and imperial extraction and violence tied to the 'collecting' of objects. For example, this can be seen with the work of the *Brutish Museum* written by Dan Hicks (2020) alongside the calls made by the Oba of Benin City and the Nigerian Government in November 2021 to return the Benin Bronzes which were looted by the British in 1897 (see British Museum Things of Note). In response to this, the British Museum has been in dialogue with the Royal Palace in Benin City and the National Commission for Museums and Monuments, Nigeria concerning the potential return of the Bronzes as part of the Benin Dialogue group, which was formed in 2007. The British Museum, as part of the efforts of the Benin Dialogue group, are collaborating with Nigerian partners to conduct excavations in Benin City as part of knowledge exchange programmes, alongside facilitating the construction of new museums in Benin City to permanently display objects from the Kingdom of Benin. These may include the Bronzes which are held predominantly by Western based museums and institutions (Povolny, 2018). However, the Group, and by extension the British Museum, has come under increasing criticism for not actualising the return of the Bronzes since long-term loans are preferred rather than restoring ownership (Steffers-Halmer, 2021).

Similar calls have also been made to return objects like Hoa Hakananai'a. Hoa Hakananai'a is a moai from Rapa Nui which was taken by the British Navy from the Island in 1868 and was originally presented to Queen Victoria who disliked the Moai and donated it to the British Museum. It is distinctive in comparison to other Moai due to the carving that it has on their back which are emblematic of the birdman cult present on the Island. The Moai is currently subject to repatriation claims by Rapa Nui and in 2019, a delegation from the island visited the British Museum not only to discuss potential return, but also to guarantee that the Moai's lived context was being adhered to and respected which then resulted in the placing of votive offerings in front of the sculpture (Bartlett, 2018, Solly, 2018). However, in February 2024, there was a renewed social media campaign which called for the return of the Maoi to Rapa Nui, which were further bolstered by calls made by the Chilean President, Gabriel Boric, for the return of the statue (Gregory, 2024). Also, the Asante Gold Regalia which were looted by the British as part of a punitive expedition in 1874 were returned back to the Ghanian Government on a long-term loan in 2024 (Armstrong and Nunoo, 2024).

Furthermore, after the murder of George Floyd and the subsequent Black Lives Matter protests in 2020, the British Museum became subject to further criticism based on their performative solidarity with the protest movement. Even-though the then Director, Hartwig Fischer, proclaimed that the 'British Museum stands in solidarity with the British Black community, with the African American community, with the Black community throughout the world. We are aligned with the spirit and soul of Black Lives Matter everywhere', dissenters were quick to point that this stood in direct contrast to popular perceptions of the organisation as being the emblematic of colonial loot (Brown, 2020). On top of this, the organisation was critiqued based on their stance on Sir Hans Sloane's enslaving connections. This is because there was a profound lack of acknowledgement of his status as an enslaver and the role that exploitation had in making his fortune which then enabled his collecting. This then led to the moving of the bust into a dedicated case which discusses his and the British Museum's connection

more generally to African chattel enslavement. Popular reactions to the moving of the bust were mixed. Whilst the organisation was praised for starting a more honest conversation about the institution's past, they were also critiqued, once again, for not doing enough to tackle concerns about race at the museum, due to a lack of ethnic diversity present at the curatorial level, as well as a perceived lack of inaction surrounding the permanent return of looted objects back to their country of origin, i.e., the Benin Bronzes (Bakare, 2020). Those who critical of the organisation for moving Sloane viewed the Museum's activity through the guise of 'cancelling'. For example, prolific right wing Twitter accounts like Save our Statues proclaimed that the museum had showed 'disrespect and ingratitude to a man whose generosity has helped preserve so much world history for millions to enjoy' (Harris, 2020). Such an emphasis was rejected by Olusoga (2020b) who emphasised that Sir Hans Sloane was not being cancelled or subject to historical erasure, but rather that the enslaved people who were owned by him have been erased. Consequently, Olusoga (2020b) suggests that the movement of him into his case is 'setting him within historical reality [and] is not an act of erasure- it is a small act of recognition.'

Moreover, the British Museum has committed to critically engage with its colonial and imperial roots by reinterpreting its permanent collection, especially concerning objects and histories related to Empire, the trans-Atlantic trade in enslaved Africans, and abolition as part of 'Reimagining the British Museum', of which the research and the production of new interpretive panels are still on-going (The British Museum, 2021, Frost, 2021). The emphasis of the 'Re-Imagining of the British Museum' has also led to the development of a new volunteer-led tour which seek to adopt a more critical stance on the museum's colonial history and heritage. Planned beginning in late 2025, the 'African heritage at the British Museum: a volunteer-led tour' seeks to visibly reinforce how the Museum's history and collection is intimately tied to the history of the British Empire, European colonialism and the transatlantic slave trade, as well as conveying objects, histories and perspective related to African heritage which have previously been overlooked (The British Museum, 2023d: 1).

Even though the British Museum has committed to this reimagining process, popular confidence and trust in the organisation was undermined because of a series of thefts by an employee. It was discovered in August that around 2,000 objects were 'missing, stolen or damaged', of which some were sold for personal gain on e-Bay (Razzall, et al 2024). The fallout from the thefts led to the eventual resignation of the Director of the British Museum, Hartwig Fischer, which then galvanised further calls to repatriate objects to their source countries since the organisation was perceived as being not secure enough to guarantee the safety of contested material culture (Glynn, Saunders and Seddon, 2023). Moreover, in November 2024, the Goodlaw Project, an NGO pressure group, called on the British Museum to provide a dedicated room to exploring Britain's and the Museum's connections to the trans-Atlantic trade in and trafficking of enslaved Africans as part of their reimagining process (The Good Law Project, 2024).

The Museum has 500-600 volunteers (300 are public facing) and five volunteer managers who are responsible for running fifteen different tours around its galleries as well as eight object handling desks. These public facing volunteers generally act as live

interpreters, and they are responsible for engaging people with the histories of the collection and helping them make sense of it (Volunteering Staff, B1).

As part of this research, I operated as an object-handling volunteer in the Enlightenment gallery from December 2022-2023. I had my volunteering interview in September 2022 which entailed a collaborative session with other prospective volunteers and Volunteering Staff B2. Within these sessions, we had the opportunity to touch and handle objects that we would be using as part of our future practice which included an assortment of Islamic Glazed and Roman pottery; the Asante Pipe (see British Museum Things of Note); as well as mummy wrappings which I refused to handle because of the ethical implications of using burial wrappings tied to human remains without consent. Utilising these objects, we were given a basic rundown of how to handle them and were asked to dialogically engage with our fellow interviewees to facilitate their discernment of: what the object is; it's significance/use-context; and, how it ended up in the Museum. After passing the interview, I then undertook two further shadowing sessions in the Enlightenment gallery where I observed how more experienced volunteers engage with various audiences, which then served to immerse myself into the volunteers' community of practice.

Serious leisure: Volunteering Motivation at the British Museum

By characterising volunteering as a form of *serious leisure*, there is a need to examine the social world of volunteers and volunteering; more specifically examining their relationship to the organisation, its organisational culture and the philosophies underpinning it. This is because the overall organisational culture can be characterised as both a product and process influencing and shaping thoughts, feelings, understandings, perceptions, and behaviours of organisational members. This means that is important to understand how volunteers resonate with this as it will not only inform the satisfaction derived from their work, but also their long-term commitment to the aspirations and goals of the institution (Pryce, 2021).

When asked what motivated them to volunteer, Volunteers B16 and B17 commented on the importance of their practice as it provided opportunities for self-fulfilment. This is because they were not only able to learn more about the 'world' and enhance the overall visitor experience, but also have opportunities for self-expression by socialising with their fellow volunteers and visitors from all over the globe.

> *'Well, I guess it's become quite an important part of my life, because I enjoy what I do here, and it has given me a bit of a sense of purpose, if you like, you know, in recent years, I've always been interested and fascinated by history, and culture and religion. And I guess, I like the fact that, you know, just talking about these objects, sort of brings in virtually all of those things, you know, if you're interested in religion, or philosophy, or history or archaeology, you know, obviously, it brings in so many things, and it gives me a way of engaging with people, and I suppose, sharing some of my knowledge and my enthusiasm, if you like, with these things.'* (Volunteer B16)

> *'Well, it's now my working life, and that means getting out and about and meeting lots of people, it means seeing a variety of the world if you like, opportunity for continuous study, if you want that, so all those things, which is a lot.'* (Volunteer B17).

This is then indicative of the strong commitment that volunteers have towards the organisation, as well as 'durable and powerful rewards' afforded by their volunteering, especially in terms of the sense of self-fulfilment and purpose they derive from their activity and the opportunities to learn more about the 'world' (Orr, 2006, Stebbins, 2014). As summarised by Volunteering Staff B2:

> *'Yeah, people care a lot. People have been volunteering here for longer than I've been alive, and they show no signs of stopping. So yeah, they're fully committed.'*

Volunteer B7 further commented on their love of the British Museum, the sense of ownership they have over their activity and how representing the organisation informed their loyalty towards it. Volunteer B7 stated their agreement with the underlying philosophy of the Museum, namely its 'insatiable curiosity for the world, a deep belief in objects as reliable witnesses and documents of human history, sound research, as well as the desire to expand and share knowledge' (The British Museum, 2023a). Volunteer B7 exemplified this 'insatiable curiosity' by describing their affinity with the logic of the founding collection brought together by Sir Hans Sloane:

> *'Ah, what does it mean to me? Well, in a way it goes back to Sloane's original idea about his collection was everything for everyone, particularly those with a curiosity.'*

The desire to expand and share knowledge by enabling the comparing and contrasting of so many different cultures in one place was also shown by Volunteer B12 stating:

> *'What does it mean to me? Well, I think it is, you know, I'm very sort of proud of it. It means, yes, I feel a sense of ownership about it. I think it's a wonderful institution and it does do, some of what it hopes to do I mean, it presents all these different cultures in one place where you can compare and contrast.'*

This then indicates the strong resonance that some volunteers have with the ideologies through which the British Museum imagines its purpose, which then correlates with one of the six defining features of Serious leisure, namely the strong identification with the organisation that they represent (Stebbins, 1982).

Although respondents indicated their love for the organisation, a persistent theme emerged concerning the problems that can come with subscribing to the World Culture philosophy of the institution and the impacts that this has for their personal relationship to the Museum. Volunteer B10 indicated potential strains or tensions that they experience through their association with the BM, meaning that they often have to defend their relationship to the organisation since it is perceived to be emblematic of

British imperialism. This can be viewed as one of the 'costs' or 'tensions' present being a British Museum volunteer (Stebbins, 2014).

> '*I love this place, and I love the institution, because I love learning and I love history and I love the whole idea of putting people in contact with each other. I love all of that. There is also [a] huge, elitist, imperialistic, very British tinge to the British Museum that sometimes I have to explain to friends why I'm so passionate about the place when it's the British Museum, it's so imperialistic. It's like the epitome of Brits going around and taking [what] they wanted.*'

Volunteer B19 develops this further by highlighting the distinction between their personal conceptualisation and consumption of the Museum as a site of socialising and learning and a more public view of the BM as a 'bastion of post-colonialism'.

> '*It's important to me in a personal sense, it's important to me in a personal sense, because having retired, there's an opportunity for me to engage with an intelligent academic centre and to engage with other people, and I'm interested in history so it satisfies all those areas. I think, what does it mean to me in the sense of its public face, a certain frustration, for the reasons that we have discussed, I see it as rather anachronistic as a big monolithic structure, that continues to uphold the legacy of colonialism, it's a bastion of post-colonialism in Britain. That's how I see it, and it really has failed and is failing to engage in a meaningful way with the public who fund it.*'

This hints at a discordant tone for this volunteer as they recognise the value of their activity as it enables them to achieve some sense of self-fulfilment, but it directly points to a source of frustration with representing the organisation. This is because there is a marked difference between their personal consumption and use of their practice and how they feel the British Museum currently engages with wider society. Consequently, B19's emphasis on how they are 'failing to engage in a meaningful way with the public who fund it' is indicative of their costs and disappointments they experience as part of serious leisure. Therefore, there is an ongoing tension between currently established practice and the desires of volunteers who are calling on their institution to do more.

Volunteer Opinions: acknowledging and communicating the British Museum's colonial histories and legacies

As part of addressing RQ1, volunteers were asked about their thoughts and perspectives regarding the museum's attempts to place more emphasis on acknowledging and communicating their colonial connections.

There was a strong perception that the British Museum needs to acknowledge and communicate more about its historic connections to colonialism and its contemporary afterlives. Volunteer B4 felt that recognising the colonial heart of the organisation was of the utmost importance; that it should be central to what the British Museum does;

and how there is a case for the Museum to actively engage in undoing the damage it has caused. They explain:

> *'Well, I think it's vital. It should be part of what we do, part of our raison d'etre (....), partly just to set the record straight and undo some of the damage that's been done over the past, just to enlighten people as to what the two situations are with the other cultures now and in the past.'*

Volunteer B10 further stressed that this 'raison d'etre' emerges from the British Museum's self-proclaimed purview as a 'Museum of the World' and the obligation that follows from this to communicate multiple histories. This can be attributed to the perceived responsibility that the organisation should be of service to all peoples as a centre of learning and knowledge production, and so, in the eyes of B10, they should be honest and transparent about its colonial connections and how they continue to benefit from these.

> *'But I think it's very important that we engage and also the whole point of us to exist is we are a museum of the world. We want to be a learning establishment, we want to pass on knowledge, and we cannot ignore such a huge part, of not just our history, but history, and it has been buried, and shushed, and everything we do here has been built upon that, so we need to come clean, you know.'*

Similarly, Volunteer B12 stated that the Museum should be committed to challenge the elements of coloniality present through their collection and the wider institution. They stressed the importance of such practice being continuous, and how it is also important for individual volunteers and the institution as a whole to problematise their own underlying 'assumptions and biases' as part of epistemic decolonisation and subsequent reconstitution and rehumanisation.

> *'I think it's very good that, you know, that we are, that people are continuing to interrogate the past and objects and our implicit assumptions and biases as well.'*

As part of this, the on-going 'Reimagining the British Museum' project was raised as an example of institutional change, especially concerning the 'need to reflect on who tells the story, whose perspective comes into play, and whose voice is being heard' (The British Museum, 2021). Volunteer B18 indicated their support for such practice and also called for greater balance in museum interpretation by interpreting historical phenomena 'through the prism of the opposition, the rebellion' and by foregrounding the past and present peoples that were and are responsible for producing said material culture. These two points are critical as it directly challenges a violence of objectification, excision and alienation since it foregrounds the subjectivities and worldviews of people who belong to said groups, meaning that they are defined and qualified on their own terms rather than solely on the colonisers'. Therefore, this would enable the delinking from the colonial matrix of power and for epistemic and aesthetic reconstitution to occur since the terms of the conversation are being challenged, and not just the content, as well as an opportunity to reconfigure relationships between

coloniser and colonised (Brulon Soares, 2023, Fanon, 1961/2004, Jones, 2010, Hicks, 2020, Mignolo, 2021, Vawda, 2019). As further exemplified by Volunteer B19 when commenting on Reimagining the British Museum:

> 'They will be reimagined by placing the emphasis on the countries and peoples who produced, not their history, but who are the people who did this and produced it and why is it so important to them and therefore to us.'

However, as part of recognising the lived context of objects, Volunteer B9 queried to what extent colonialism should be emphasised in established narratives of material culture. This is because they felt that placing too much emphasis on the colonial context of objects could have totalising implications which could deflect conversations away from discussing the significance of material culture within their lived context, histories and worldview.

> 'Yes and no, because if you do that, your whole bloody tour will be about slavery and colonialism, and there is actually a point at which you actually have to tell the stories of the peoples and the objects themselves, which frequently have absolutely sod all to do with colonialism, other than the fact that some of them are in the collection now.'

Furthermore, Volunteer B9 stressed the importance of not reducing formerly colonised peoples to solely being victims and how there was a need to recognise their agency when talking about the colonisation of Africa and their entanglement with the Trans-Atlantic Trade in and Trafficking of Enslaved Africans. This is because, in their view, communicating solely the colonial context and its contemporary impacts can centralise white guilt; overemphasise the importance of colonial period within African history; diminish the lived experience and histories of peoples responsible for producing said material culture; and can result in the homogenisation of peoples since the cultural and linguistic diversity of the continent is not recognised. This is then indicative of the central tension between recognising the structural legacies and ongoing harms of colonisation and not denying the agencies of peoples who are dealing with its impacts and reducing them to be viewed only as victims (Taiwo, 2019, 2022). They stated:

> 'So what you have to do is actually tell the stories of the cultures that produced them, because to reduce them to being victims of when they also have enormous agency in many instances, complicity in other instances, none of which is actually, I'm not an apologist for colonialism or slavery, the idea would be insane, but you have to address it and then you have to move into the culture of the continent, and the 53/4 countries, whatever it is now, and allow them to talk. Because otherwise, the whole thing is through a white gaze of guilt and you can flick your colonial bean all you want, it's not really going to go down too well with people...'

A similar point was stressed by Volunteer B19 who commented on the potential re-colonising impacts of framing objects solely within their colonial context. This is

because framing them as such can further result in a violence of excision since they are categorised and defined based on the context in which they were sourced rather than based on their use by indigenous or formerly colonised peoples.

> *'Like, when I was speaking at that seminar, and I was saying, you know, "we actually need to address and that the objects and then the acquisition," and then other people started [chittering away], you're actually continuing the portrayal of the objects as colonial objects. They're not just, that's the problem. These objects were produced by indigenous cultures. That's what they should be about.'*

Consequently, the assertions made by B9 and B19 stress the need to acknowledge the colonial context whilst guaranteeing that it does not overpower the original lived context and significance of objects (Lippert, 2021).

Figure 14- this depicts the recent Four Lives temporary exhibition which acted as a trial run of the sort of recontextualisation of the permanent exhibitions under the Re-Imagining of the British Museum initiative (The British Museum, 2023b).

Another significant line of commentary emerged amongst volunteers regarding the Museum's commitment to 'come clean' by relocating and re-contextualising Sir Hans Sloane. This was done to not only explain his activity as an enslaver and how he was able to accumulate his wealth, but also to provide greater context of more global colonial and imperial exploitation and its ideological justifications occurring throughout the Enlightenment. Volunteer B5 viewed the changes in the Enlightenment gallery in a positive light, and commented on how it was particularly timely considering the BLM protests that occurred during 2020.

> *'... I think it was extremely necessary, and I was glad that they did it. And, you know, just as all these discussions arose, I thought it was quite timely, and I liked the fact that they responded and responded very well.'*

Volunteer B16 offered further positive commentary on the Sloane case, with reference to the Museum's overall tone in which they portrayed his connections to enslavement. This is because they felt as if the Museum was not intentionally trying to take a 'high moral line' about it and left it up to visitors to form their own opinions by simply communicating the history surrounding him.

> '*But I was looking at that case, so every single way they have contextualised it, the way they've written about every single object. I think they've been very clear, and very calm, and it's very plain and factual. You know, there isn't, they've not been tendentious about it. They're not, you know, taking some sort of high moral line about it, but they've just presented the facts, which, in a sense, speak for themselves […]. I think, [that's] a quite clever way forward, if you like, of acknowledging, like, you know, slavery issues, for example. But without having to, you know, grandstand about it.*'

On the other hand, Volunteer B11 voiced their upset regarding the de-platforming of Sir Hans Sloane. Initially, they voiced their displeasure over the bust being moved from his celebratory position on a plinth in the Enlightenment gallery to his case. Gradually, their opinion changed, and they came to view the move in a positive light, but more so because of case's ability to protect the bust from potential dissidents rather than the need to address his historic racism, thereby, indicating the significant attachment they have towards Sir Hans Sloane.

> '*I was cross originally that he'd been taken off his plinth and put in the case, but then I sort of figured out, I thought, well actually, I'm pleased because it does protect him. Because he could be, you know, if people, people seem to react to anybody who had slaves or connected to the slave owning or made money from slavery, which he must have done, and being a terracotta bust, it is very fragile, [and it] could have been broken with a hammer.*'

Figure 15- this depicts Sir Hans Sloane within his new case in the Enlightenment Gallery (The British Museum, 2023c).

Taking this forward, Volunteer B11 described their upset regarding the contemporary representation of historic enslavers and how critics often end up 'forgetting' the context of the time, or how they could potentially overlook the individual relationships that enslavers had with the enslaved, even-though they feel that 'that the story of slavery can't be ignored.'

> 'It upsets me when people forget about the context of the time. People who owned slaves or made money from slavery didn't necessarily mean they were or thought that black people were lesser human beings […]. Like, you can't condemn people who didn't know that who weren't bright enough to work that out for themselves, I think.'

To suggest that historic enslavers 'weren't bright enough' denies their agency. Furthermore, the fact that enslaved peoples were legally classified as property means that they were racially and structurally constituted as 'lesser human beings.' The discourse of context towards understanding specific historical figures can be seen as reflecting and reinforcing the inner workings of coloniality that continue to (re)produce the dehumanisation of enslaved peoples in the present.

Volunteer B6 built on these apprehensions by querying whether it was necessary for the Museum to apologise for the actions of historic enslavers like Sir Hans Sloane. They felt

it was more important to have a visible commitment to combatting modern slavery or current instances of exploitation rather than doing too much to appease their critics.

> *'I do think that, I mean at the minute, I think if you look at this Sloane case, they're bending over backwards to give all the various opinions [...]. I mean, I think it's probably more likely to veer on the kind of, you know, apology side. And you can't apologise for what other people did in the past according to their lights. I think all that apologising for our ancestors is nonsense, because you have to decide, what are we doing now about avoiding a similar situation?'*

This was developed further by B6 commenting that:

> *'And in a way, I think, people are so het up about their, I mean, of course, it's easy for me to say this, because I don't have in our own family tree of anybody who was ever enslaved, and a number of people now are benefitting from the fruits of the whole thing, as education and everything else, and there's almost like a tendency to bite the hand that feeds them in a way, but, you know, if people are so bothered about slavery, they could be looking at slavery that's happening right now on the beaches in the South of England. It's so shocking.'*

Even though they acknowledge how easy it is for them to comment based on their positionality, to state that there is a *'*tendency to bite the hand that feeds them' when describing how descendants of enslaved peoples benefit from the education and other state institutions not only ignores the presence of institutional racism but also trivialises the presence of racial inequalities and operations of coloniality in wider society and its institutions. Consequently, by feeling that greater precedence should be given to current exploitation and enslavement, this then implies that lesser attention should be given to redressing the colonial wounds present at the BM, whether through reparations or other forms of reparative justice.

Moving beyond Sloane, further tensions also emerged surrounding the underlying emphasis on how historical figures should be portrayed. Volunteer B12 felt apprehensive about the degree to which you can critique historical figures based on their complicity in enslaving and trafficking African peoples, whilst recognising the more global context of the British Empire and the central role that exploitation played in its formation and operation.

> *'.... it's the Euro-American centric view, and that for many peoples of the world, it was actually a very dark time, because millions of Africans were kidnapped and enslaved and transported halfway around the world to work in brutal conditions on the plantations, and that Britain became a great global power through the expansion of its Empire, and through the active involvement in the slave trade, and I know we're the ones who finally abolished slavery and so forth, but not until we've benefitted enormously from it, and I think that needs to be acknowledged. But at the same time, I don't think that we should sort of paint all the people that were involved at the time as complete blackguards.'*

This was further reinforced by Volunteer B13 who felt that too much 'blame' was placed upon White Europeans, and that solely focusing upon European complicity can ignore the role and presence of slavery across varying socio-cultural and historical contexts.

> *'I think it's got to, it's important [to acknowledge our connections to Trans-Atlantic enslavement], but I think it must be not exclusively laying the blame on white Europeans. I mean, if you look at it, every single gathering... Greece, Roman, Islam, all these populations practiced slavery, had slaves and all that [...], Saudi Arabia only abolished slavery in 1962, and that's only according to the letter of the law, as we know, it continues and still continues today, so I think this exclusive focus on us white Europeans, I mean, to take the blame for slavery, I think, you know, is over the top.'*

Additionally, Volunteer B7 stressed the need for the museum to not engage in what they viewed as historic revisionism. This was a particular point of tension for them as they emphasised that the Museum needs to simply communicate the history rather than reworking it to fit with 'modern' sensibilities.

> *'We can put a modern view on it, but only up to a point, because if you try and put everything to a modern view, you've got to rewrite history to make it fit in with your personal ideas. No, no, no, that isn't history. So, you've got, you've got to keep the history as it was, and then say, "but today, we will look at it in this way, rather than how we looked at it in the past.'*

This is then indicative of their view of history as being 'immutable truth' and speaks to their expectation that the institution should comply and (re)produce an authorised and universalised rendition of it. Otherwise, this would constitute the institution overstepping its bounds by engaging in what they perceive as overtly political practice.

This was reinforced by Volunteer B6 who disqualified the value of lived experience when conveying and interpreting historical 'fact', especially surrounding the lived consequences of colonialism. This is because they view accommodating and elevating various 'feelings' as an imposition of values and that there is a need to distinguish between objective and subjective 'truth.'

> *'Well, I think once you get onto feelings and elevating feelings, you impose them. Because feelings change, and feelings. You know, I mean, it's the snowflake generation: "oh, you've hurt my feelings, you know, that's hate speech." You know, somebody's telling me the truth, and I have to tailor it to their fragile feelings.'*

Consequently, this reifies, in the view of this volunteer, the position of 'historical fact' and Western ways of knowing as the main way of understanding 'truth', thereby, disqualifying the importance and significance of alternative conceptualisations of the impacts of colonialism. This is an example of the fact-value dualistic distinction that runs through Western ways of thinking.

Volunteer Opinions: The British Museum as a World Culture Museum and redressing its colonial wounds through repatriation

As part of the Museum's efforts to engage with its colonial past, there is a need to explore how the institution is engaging with its tangible colonial legacies in the form of contested objects, the ideological justifications for retaining objects, and subsequent calls for repatriation and restitution.

Volunteers were asked about what steps the Museum could take to come to terms with its colonial and imperial past and its contemporary legacies, and frequently the topic of returning objects popped up. For example, Volunteer B10 stated that this topic has become of increasing importance as of late, particularly concerning objects beyond the Parthenon Marbles, e.g., the Benin Bronzes or Hoa Hakananai'ai. Moreover, they elaborated on how they feel that the Museum has an increasing responsibility to be sensitive towards its various audiences and especially those who are more in favour of returning objects.

> *'I think it will have to change; it will have to change. Because also, if we're not prepared to give objects back, which we'll see because I would have said 10 years ago, if you had asked me this question 10 years ago, and I said, "there's no way the British Museum would give anything back." Now the tide has turned, I think they might have to.'*

As part of this increasing sensitivity, Volunteer B4 stressed the need for 'nuance' when approaching repatriation. This is because they felt there was a need to go beyond a blanket approach to returning objects and recognising the specific circumstances in which objects are sourced and considering the implications of return.

> *'Well, I've got, I've got mixed views on this. There are certainly objects, such as the (Thing of Note Two), which were obtained by force, there's no doubt that these objects are important to that culture, and I can see very little reason for them not to be returned if they're asked for and that's applies to a lot of the objects in the museum. Even those that were bought, you know, they were bought under circumstances of some financial inequality because these were immensely wealthy Europeans buying things from poorer people in colonies, or dominions, and places, places like that. My defence, because I have to be very loyal to the museum, is that we have 5 million visitors every year, if all the objects were dispersed, fewer people would see them and their overall experience of the history of the world would be diminished.'*

The significance of this quote is twofold. Firstly, Volunteer B4 clearly feels that there are cases for returning objects beyond those that were sourced via colonial loot or instances of violence, especially since it is important to recognise the wider power imbalances between the former coloniser and colonised which then informed initial colonial 'collecting.' The volunteer not only draws on the moral case for object return, but secondly highlights one of the key defences for not repatriating objects, namely

access (Cuno, 2009, The British Museum, 2023a). This is because this interlocutor draws on the discourse of the 'Museum of the World' and its location as an institution which attracts millions of physical visitors each year, as well as having a global reputation. Therefore, any potential return could impact visitor numbers, the visitor experience, and global reputation of the BM as a place of scholarly learning. This is indicative of a paradoxical position for volunteers who are supportive of potential return, whilst also subscribing to the World Culture philosophy of the museum.

Volunteer B16 also recognised the complexity or the inherent tensions between respecting the needs and wants of source communities and practicing the ideals of a World Culture Museum. Therefore, it was felt that if the Museum was going to retain objects, they need to provide clear justification for why they should or that they should at least acknowledge the wider circumstances in which they were sourced.

> *'You know, so it's not as simple as saying that, you know, so it's, you'd be losing something if you did send it back. But on the other hand, if we're going to have these objects here, then we do need to acknowledge how they got here, kind of thing.'*

As part of the justification for retaining objects, Volunteer B7 argued that any potential return could infringe upon the ability for other museums to borrow objects from the BM's permanent collection. This is because they cited the perceived success of the loans programme as a method of providing cultural enrichment for various people all over the world; how it could potentially enhance global interest in archaeology and museums; and how it enables the BM to constantly update its collection and provide new offering for their visitors.

> *'But you know, and if you have none of it here, again, so it's a case of having some of the stock, either long term loan or whatever, but the long term loan, in a way is better than giving all the stuff back because once you give it back, then as I say we then have none, and then you know, so but if it's a loan, then you can swap it over for other stuff so that everybody's collection is replenished, and gives people not "oh, I've been there and seen that, wait a minute, they've got a new selection. Let's go and have a look at that." So, it keeps the interest in museums around the world.'*

B7 also stressed the importance of the loan programme beyond providing cultural enrichment for all peoples. This is because they felt that loaning objects to other cultural institutions is indicative of how they feel the Museum should operate in terms of not 'monopolising' objects and regulating associated knowledge production, and how this can be viewed as a reparative effort in addressing historical harms. Consequently, the efforts of democratising access to objects and by extension specialised knowledge then reflect the view of this volunteer that the Museum acts as a benevolent force within wider society which would be undermined if objects were returned.

> *'This is why we need a loan programme. We need people to be able to come here and see but also to be able to go home and see. So that, you know, we're not monopolising it, we're not, you know, we're trying to make it as it should be.'*

As an extension of the accessibility discourse, Volunteer B5 suggested that it is important for the Museum to retain some objects, especially those that enable diasporic communities to be 'in touch' with or experience their cultural heritage.

> *'Because I mean, it's important, incredibly important, and people, history moves, it moves people. So, it would be terrible if people couldn't come and get the feel of or see other things from other countries or things from countries of their descent of their ancestors, or whatever it might be. It'd be awful, if that just completely disappeared.'*

As a result, this volunteer stressed that it would truly be a loss if specific groups were not able to see their own cultural heritage present at the 'Museum of the World', which they think may occur if objects were returned to their source communities.

In response to this, Volunteer B8 raised the prospect of the Museum keeping 3D reproductions as a substitute for objects that could be repatriated and commented on how contested objects could easily be replaced due to the size of the Museum's collections.

> *'So many items, in stores, I've had a tour of the museum stores, and there's so many objects there that we think "okay, well if that section of the museum went or these objects, that there's plenty more where their provenance is good, which could go and be replaced."*

By doing this, Volunteer B9 stated how the museum would receive limited criticism since most of the objects have been 'ethically collected.'

> *'I think in terms of you're going to maintain an institution like this, look, all the Benin bronzes could go back tomorrow, they will be able to fill that space. They have the finest collection of Kuba artefacts that you can find. Mostly ethically collected, you know, there isn't much that you can throw in the way of dirt at them, or shame or attach guilt. They will be able to fill that space and probably in a healthy way.'*

This then could operate as one mechanism through which the BM could redress their colonial wounds, whilst guaranteeing access to recreations of said objects which would then not undermine their current offer.

However, this feeling is not uniform. Volunteer B13 described their hesitancy of using 3D recreations as a replacement for contested objects. This feeling emerged, once again, from the potential impact that it could have on the visitor experience and how visitor learning could be undermined by having less 'authentic' objects.

> *'I mean, I would not like to, I would always like to see some original material here, not have a reproduction of Benin Bronzes. [...] I think, as I said, it gives a better image of these people's culture and histories, than a moulding.'*

This is a particularly interesting point as it shows the preference of B13 to retain the 'original' material as it is perceived as being more authentic or real which can then accurately represent the culture, history, and peoples of Benin City, Nigeria. Therefore, this not only hints at a violence of alienation and excision since the lived context and significance of the object is not adhered to, respected and are interpreted through western centric lenses, but also points to the underlying ideology of the World Culture Museum and its 'responsibility' to provide accurate representations of all cultures to enable cultural education for all peoples.

As part of providing this, Volunteer B14 commented on the positive role of the British Museum acting as custodians or stewards of the past. This is because they directly challenged dissidents who viewed the BM as being self-serving by reinforcing the contemporary role of the Museum in preserving and providing access to material culture and how this may be open to change.

> *'I think, it is wrong to imagine that museums are hanging onto things for their own [purpose], and what the museums do is conserve the objects that come in, whatever they are for, not image purposes, but for... [...] Access, preservation, to take a look, and this is what it is, and it's here now, and what do we, as a society, want to do and that will change.'*

This quote is indicative of the workings of the colonial matrix of power and coloniality. This is because the notion of stewardship enabled by the World Culture Museum ideology affirms the control that the BM exercises in the form of curatorial authority over the display, interpretation, and representation of material culture. This overrides the desires and meanings held by source communities, thereby, cementing the power imbalances present between varying stakeholders.

The positive role of the BM as custodians who were responsible for preserving the past was raised by Volunteer B6, when the Benin Bronzes were mentioned. This is because B6 made reference to the 'awful' state of Benin at the time of the punitive expedition whilst congratulating role of the museum in 'keep[ing]' these objects nice 'for them'. Therefore, any potential return, in the eyes of B6, can only occur because of the benevolent efforts of the BM in preventing their destruction.

> *'...the state of, you know, actually Benin apparently it was in an absolutely awful state, human sacrifice going on, all sorts of things by the time the British got there. Who knows whether those Bronzes would ever have been conserved, but providentially they were brought here. So they're all set there if they didn't want them, and if they get them back, that's because we've kept them nice for them.'*

This quote is particularly important as it hints towards the notions of stewardship that underpin the museum that figure in the museum's rationale and forms of epistemic

violence. This is because this interlocutor reinforces a western conceptualisation of heritage which views these objects as static and not dynamic, thereby, undermining the lived context of the Bronzes and how they operated as a material historical record for a specific socio-cultural group (Hicks, 2020).

In contrast, Volunteer B4 directly touched upon the sort of 'colonialist' attitude present at the Museum, and how this was exemplified through questioning the capability of source countries to be appropriately able to 'look after their objects'. This then indicates volunteer awareness of the operations of coloniality that underpin arguments concerning stewardship and how they manifest within arguments concerning potential return.

> 'There is, of course, a sort of colonialist attitude towards objects in that it was often said that these objects would not have been taken care of, as they have been in the museum.'

Building on this, Volunteer B19 directly critiqued the status of the BM as a 'Museum of the World' and the underlying 'narcissism' present by them acting as the 'guarantors of civilisation'. This is because they directly critique the ideological apparatus that the museum utilises to fashion themselves into custodians or stewards, and how this is reified by discourses through which the topic of colonialism and its contemporary impacts are framed at both local and global contexts. This then implies the perceived legitimacy for retaining said objects relies on the operations of coloniality which valorise the West and its supposed superiority.

> 'What I was getting at is the narcissism that underlies a lot of British attitudes towards colonialism completely, that they are somehow the guarantors of civilisation, as we saw, I mean, it's a Western attitude. It's not just British colonialism, it's colonialism, as it exists throughout the West and all these post-colonial countries have the same attitudes.'

Volunteer B19 goes onto state that the contemporary reception of the impacts of colonialism are reinforced by notions of white supremacy and draws attention to the Museum's role in (re)producing this. Primarily, this is achieved through the reluctance to return objects by questioning the capability of recipients to take responsibility for them, as well as the positioning of the BM as an 'academic institution'.

> 'White supremacy, absolutely. So, there is civilisational force, and it is a patronising benign, and actually that they are a benign, civilising force, they're not even aware that they do it. But it's kind of like we were doing the academic research that's going to benefit mankind and other people can't do it, and it's behind the reluctance as well to return objects, which is shot through the whole discussion, that can we trust them? Would they look after it at all, and we can keep it.'

And:

'...so, whether they intend it or not, by focusing so much on academia, even if that's not primarily defensive, it is, in fact, that is what it becomes because it achieves primacy in its display and discussion.'

Their emphasis on the academic positioning of the British Museum is reflective of Castro-Gomez's (2003, 2007, 2021) work on the Zero-Point Hubris. This is because, in the interviewee's view, the BM's moniker as a 'Museum of the World' or as custodians of the past places them in a neutral and privileged position whereby they can produce authorised knowledge about the social world of the 'other'. Consequently, the Museum's then attempts to separate itself from the racialised hierarchies that they are responsible for (re)producing, i.e., through the retention of material culture and emanating epistemic violence, which distances them from the contemporary impacts of colonial dispossession and violence, thereby, relegating its impact and significance.

Pursuing decolonisation: future impacts on volunteers and volunteering

All participants were asked to imagine what a decolonised British Museum would look like to them and what implications this may have for their volunteering experience and future practice, as part of answering RQ1 and 2.

Volunteer B16 described that embracing decolonisation would transform the BM into an institution that is not only more honest and transparent, but also fashion into a space that is more comfortable. In part, this can be explained by the perception that constant reference to colonial provenances or histories within the museum's display and interpretation will normalise its presence, which in turn would prevent a binarised and conflictual rendition of British history. They explain:

'So, I guess a decolonised British Museum, it would be a similar process would have happened whereby we are comfortable talking about and acknowledging what has gone on. And it's just, it's just more open and more honest and more like normal, but it's just, it doesn't have to be, you know, by acknowledging these things that have happened. It's not an either or between acknowledging these things and totally wanting to trash the reputation of Britain and say Britain is a terrible place, and you know, yeah, it's just so that it would be more normalised, if you like, more front and centre as you put it.'

Therefore, this approach would help to circumvent the popular criticism and conflict present with the ongoing culture wars and may result in fashioning the organisation into a place for, and of, connectiveness through which people can engender transgressive or reinhabited understandings of Empire.

Building on this, Volunteer B10 states that this can only be achieved through maintaining some of the colonial aspects of the British Museum. This is because they worry that embracing decoloniality may result in the erasure of its foundational logics, especially concerning how knowledge was utilised to constitute the world at that time.

Therefore, their view of decoloniality, or enacting epistemic decolonisation and reconstitution, is grounded in problematising the legacies of knowledge that enabled and justified colonial and imperial domination, subjugation and corresponding dehumanisation.

> *'I don't know. If we really, I don't know because it's very colonial in every you know, in every aspect and I think in many ways, I'm not sure we want to change that, because we need to acknowledge the fact that institutions like these were born at a time when that was happening and they are the product of that time and that way of thinking, and that kind of white man vision of the world, and what is knowledge and what is…. So I think it's important that we maintain some of that.'*

Even though it was recognised that there is a need to address relative silences surrounding the colonial history of the institution, Volunteer B14 pointed to the difficulty of addressing all curatorial silences present within the permanent collection. To illustrate such a point, they referred to the extensive curatorial research that was done on the Bark Shield (see British Museum things of note) in the Enlightenment gallery to problematise the original provenance connected to Joseph Banks and Captain Cook. They state how it is not feasible to do the same for every single object.

> *'I would think that is in frame, that contextualization is the norm. I think it could go further, and I think, detail over acquisition, date, provenance, because that can be quite surprising. So, like the Bark Shield, you know, the story that was told and believed, it turns out to be a fiction after extensive research so you can't do that for every object, I don't suppose or would it even be possible, and then you have to delve into some art and Egyptian objects, and where do you start?'*

Moreover, B14 viewed the need to address curatorial silences and corresponding epistemic violence as somewhat faddish and stated how *'people will forget about it'*. This then indicates that this volunteer feels that embracing decoloniality is more of a temporary measure based on current societal attitudes surrounding racial inequalities and the need for social justice since 'something else will happen and will come along [and replace it]'*, rather than viewing decolonial action as an iterative and dynamic process.

> *'But I think that clearly is, well let's say a contemporary concern, which will be pursued over a number of years, and things will change, and people will forget about it and something else will happen and will come along.'*

When asked about the prospect of the BM becoming more socially engaged and responsive to all peoples they claim to be in service of, Volunteer B9 questioned the capability of the BM to embrace decoloniality. This is based on B9's view that the institution's is more reactive rather than proactive in responding to wider social pressure, including that from their own volunteers.

> *'We ask a lot of them, and as I said earlier, right at the beginning, I'm not sure that they're equal to the task.'*

They qualified this further by directly commenting that any sort of change within the organisation will have to be externally driven. As a result, it is the Museum's responsibility to react to this discourse and provide objective histories surrounding enslavement and colonialism that make all visitors aware of them, as part of reconfiguring the relationship between the former coloniser and colonised. Underlying this, there is a working assumption about a dualistic distinction between facts and values. They state:

> *'But I don't know how they can. But I think it's a job that has to be done as much outside of the building as inside the building and if everyone is aware of what that discourse is, then they can read it when they're in the building. [...] Fundamentally, I think you can give information, that's all you can do is give the facts, give them objectively, this happened here, then on that date, and this happened to those people, these people thought that, these people were enslaved for 600 years. Give those facts and then you are part of the change, because people are at least aware of that because you're in a position to do it.'*

When considering how pursuing decolonisation may impact their attachment to and consumption of the BM, there was a mixture of responses. For Volunteer B10, they indicated a willingness to be directly involved with greater decolonial action. They emphasised that enacting decolonisation within the Museum would help to address the discomfort they feel associated with their role and how it may potentially relieve some of the burden that they have when conveying colonial histories.

> *'So, to me, it would make it more comfortable because it would give me you know, we do it ourselves at the moment, all the decolonisation we do, which is minimal, apart from maybe (...) who does a bit more. We do it ourselves from our own backgrounds, our own experiences, around the points we notice with people. It will make it better, we could be a little bit more proud and comfortable, you know, we have addressed those issues.'*

This quote is significant as it indicates the relief that Volunteer B10 would feel if they were officially sanctioned and supported in their efforts to communicate the colonial histories of the Museum, as well as how this could act as a source of pride for them acting as institutional ambassadors. Consequently, this suggests how volunteers may ascribe greater importance to their role and derive more pride from representing the Museum if they were to pursue decoloniality.

Deriving greater amounts of pride from their association with the Museum based on their active commitment to potentially decolonise was mentioned by Volunteer B16. For them, such a commitment would not only enhance the positive light within which they view the Museum but also would help to make their current role 'more interesting'.

'But you know, I wouldn't say it's put me off sort of, or sort of, maybe have a negative view of the Museum. But in a way, it's made it even more interesting, in a sense, because you feel like these are live issues. And I'm to some extent, you know, in my own tiny little way, I am involved in those debates and those issues.'

The most interesting thing about this quote is showing the potential contribution of this volunteer to 'live issues.' This is because it speaks to the desire of this volunteer to contribute towards the Museum's potential decolonisation efforts, as well as to effect change or be involved in restorative and reparative justice since they want to be part of 'those debates and those issues.' Once again, this is indicative of how the role of volunteers may change into the future as they may be making active contributions to the decolonisation efforts of the Museum, especially if they are expected to actively reinforce the Museum's commitment to tackle their colonial legacies. However, what comes through is the relationship between personal political convictions and the degree to which they align with institutional policy and expected practice of volunteers.

Volunteer B11 commented on their willingness to support the decolonial activity of the Museum based on their love for the institution and the opportunity to learn something new.

'To learn a new script, probably, but you know, I'd still happy to do it for as long as I feel fit enough to come in and do it. I mean, it has changed over the last 28 years of doing these tours and the emphasis changes from time to time. I had to go with that, and sometimes it makes me cross and then I sort of rethink that, and actually it's just as interesting but it's just different.'

This quote is particularly interesting, especially considering the same interviewee's stated upset surrounding the re-contextualisation of Sir Hans Sloane, as it speaks to the devotion that said volunteer has towards the organisation, including a willingness to embrace change that is viewed as beneficial for the future of the Museum, and how learning a new script represents an opportunity to expand their historical interest and knowledge. This points to how the new durable benefits that may emerge as a result of pursuing decolonisation can be part of constraint negotiation strategies of volunteers.

However, Volunteer B13 described their decision to carry on volunteering was dependent on how decoloniality manifests. This is because they described that they may not necessarily agree with BM's policies, and so they would not want to actively contribute to and support an organisation's practice which goes against their own moral positioning.

'Oh, I'd have to see what it becomes, if I don't agree with it, I would then say, well, I'm not going to be an ambassador, as you say, for an institution whose policy I don't agree with and I would resign as a volunteer, but this is not the case at the moment and I sincerely hope I'm going to be able to continue on.'

Volunteer B18 commented that some elements of their volunteering could also become more conflictual because of embracing decolonisation, especially considering the proposed new Africa tour. The British Museum has recently committed to

collaboratively develop a new African histories and heritage tour with BM staff, specific community partners, an external steering group operating as critical friends, and volunteers. The British Museum also intends to use this tour as a means to diversify their current volunteering force and to use it as a pilot to co-produce tours with volunteers into the future (The British Museum, 2023d: 1). This tour will have volunteers giving a 60–70 minute tour highlighting 10-15 objects based on the potential themes of African heritage at the British Museum, Africa and the ancient Mediterranean, Africa and colonisation, Africa and Europe (1450-now), and Africa and globalisation/the world (The British Museum, 2023d: 3). To this end, the British Museum (2023d) has stated that there are four key messages underpinning the tour which are: the British Museum's collection offers unique insights into the relationship between Africa and the rest of the world from deep history to the present day; the British Museum is actively researching and interpreting its collection collaboratively to highlight objects, histories and perspectives related to African heritage (many of which have previously been underrepresented); the Museum's history and collection is intimately linked to the history of the British Empire, European colonialism, and the transatlantic slave trade; and the Museum actively collects objects related to Africa/African heritage/Black history today.

There were also four intended visitor outcomes: to understand that the Museum's collection can offer unique insight into the relationship between Africa and the rest of the world; to feel as though they have attended a people-focused tour which is intellectually and emotionally engaging; to feel as though they have attended a tour which is relevant to them delivered by a volunteer who is passionate about the subject; and to be inspired to explore the galleries and themes of the tour in greater depth and to share their experiences with friends and family. When asked what their thoughts and perspectives are regarding the new tour, Volunteer B18 commented that:

> *'Well, I'm not opposed to it absolutely. However, I think that there are a lot of things that will need addressing, if we want it to work, and to be seen as successful by the museum. And I think that one would have to be pretty naive to think that the whole issue around, you know, returning objects, isn't going to come up time and time again, and the particular situation of the British Museum and the kind of legislation which basically prevents it […]. So I think that it's difficult, and I'm not opposed to the idea, in principle, I just think that to do it, out of context is a big mistake.'*

Of particular importance within this quote is potential problem of conducting this tour considering the official stance of the British Museum regarding the repatriation of the objects. This is because volunteers could see themselves getting into greater conflict by talking about topics concerning legacies of colonialism, Empire and enslavement without significant efforts being made by the Museum to repatriate objects or to provide reparations. As stated by Volunteer B18:

> *'Absolutely, and the sorts of expectation that people like me, will necessarily sign up for it. They're deluding themselves, because why would I put myself in*

that position? Because I'd be the one that was getting it and be expected to answer to it...'

As a result, Volunteer B18 stated that whilst they would like to be part of the activity from a distance and to potentially influence its development, they would not give the tour themselves based on the Museum's stance on repatriation and the likelihood of conflict with visitors. They explain:

> *'Well, I would just stick with the Romans. [...] You know, I'm very busy and I certainly have enough controversy in my political life, I certainly do not need any here. However, I would like to try and influence but if you were to ask me if I would be part of it, if they asked me as a volunteer to do a tour of an African heritage talk, I wouldn't, I don't think I would sign up to do it. [...]. I don't think I'd be very good at it because I'll just be raging against the system.'*

This point was further reinforced at the meeting where volunteers became aware of what this tour may entail, as when asked, the senior figures in charge of volunteering were unable to answer what consequences this tour may have in contravening the institutional expectation for volunteers to not engage with anything 'controversial' (Fieldnotes- 05/07/23). This then strengthens volunteer concerns that their role may become more conflictual even as the museum comes to terms with its colonial past, and because of potential visitor dissent that may flow from this. Furthermore, this seems to go to the heart of how volunteers construct their sense of purpose, as well as how their leisure experience may be contravened.

Finally, there are hopes that attempting the 'decolonise' the Museum or transform it into a more ethical and inclusive institution will also result in a more diverse volunteering cohort. Volunteer B19 made specific reference to the demographics of volunteers and highlighted that the majority were retired, white, and middle class and that a perceived general lack of age and ethnic diversity was reflective of the museum's failure to engage with various audiences.

> *'Like it is remarkable that there are so few black volunteers, or any ethnicity other than white, older, retired like me, white, retired, educated people, for whom this is a wonderful thing to do as it is and for which I'm, I am grateful. But there's no need to be anxious about it. Because if they did engage people, I think around such a topic [colonialism], which is seen to be controversial, I think they would get more young people involved.'*

The importance of this was recognised by Volunteering Staff B2 who indicated their desire to move beyond the traditional demographics of volunteers by breaking down barriers that may prevent those from non-traditional backgrounds, e.g., those who are younger or identify as part of the global majority, from volunteering; thereby, rectifying the perceived lack of engagement with communities that feel the museum is not for them.

'I hope that it will help us diversify our volunteer team, so something we're really trying to do is broaden the volunteers that we have here. So not just the stories we're telling, but who is telling those, both in terms of like age, and background and nationality and languages spoken, every kind of metric you can think of.'

This then implies that there is an institutional recognition of the lack of diversity present at the organisation, and that pursuing decolonisation will open the Museum up to various audiences, thereby, resulting in a more diverse volunteer cohort.

Communicating Colonialism: institutional safeguarding and the resultant paradox

As part of answering RQ2 and RQ3, I examined the boundaries of expected volunteer practice and how this came into conflict with actual volunteer practice, particularly with regard to communicating colonial histories.

Volunteers at the British Museum are advised to not engage in further discussion with visitors regarding controversial or difficult topics. Typically, this refers to topics where volunteers are expected to 'not at any time express personal opinions or views which contradict Museum policy or could portray the Museum in the wrong way' and reinforce to visitors that they are a volunteer and to direct them to a member of staff who can handle the conversation (The British Museum, 2020:7). Volunteering Staff B1 reinforced this by emphasising:

'They know that when they're volunteering in the museum, they have to adhere to the Museum's position on it, and that's part of the contract of volunteering at the Museum.'

Consequently, there is a top-down expectation for volunteers to not go beyond the institutional line concerning difficult topics, e.g., the repatriation of Benin Bronzes. Volunteering Staff B1 explained that this top-down expectation also serves as a safeguarding mechanism for public-facing volunteers. This is because the museum seeks to protect volunteers by having them not deal with angry or disgruntled visitors who may view them as being an informal spokesperson for the Museum (Volunteering Staff B2).

'…our approach with volunteers is because obviously they are not members of staff, so we try to protect them from getting involved with members of the public, because it's not their responsibility to defend the Museum's position on something.'

The importance of these safeguarding measures was graphically reinforced by Volunteer B11 who described a confrontation they had with a visitor whilst giving their highlights tour. When discussing the object journey of Hoa Hakananai'a and the measures taken by the Museum to respond to the demands made by the delegation

from Rapa Nui who visited in 2018, they had one visitor record them without their consent.

> 'there was a woman who wasn't on the tour [who] said to me: "so do you think it shouldn't go back to Rapa Nui?" And I hadn't realised that she had a mobile phone in her hand and she was recording it [.....] and one of the people on the tour said to me, "you do know she's recording you, don't you?" And I said, "oh, I see. You can't do that. Can you delete it, please?" "Oh yes, I'll delete it when I'm finished", and she showed me she deleted something, I don't even know if she did actually delete it or not. I felt really, almost violated that somebody has tried to use my personal opinions on it to make a point.'

This quote is particularly important as it not only indicates how tour guide volunteers can come into conflict with visitors, especially those who view the BM as a Bastion of Colonialism (see British Museum Things of Note) or who are in favour of repatriating objects, but also elucidates the emotional harm that conflict with visitors can cause (Frost, 2019). This also implies that volunteers need to be wary of visitor motivations and convictions, especially if visitors might be actively seeking to attack the institution or at least that they may be held to account on its practice, whether justified or not.

This was exemplified by Volunteer B10 who described their awareness of how public perceptions of the BM as a Bastion of Colonialism influences how some visitors view the institution. They state based on their experience of overhearing visitors whilst shadowing another volunteer as part of their training for the highlights tour:

> 'They were making sort of almost sarcastic comments about some of you know, the provenance of the things, and yeah, she says, when we "acquire", just the vocabulary we use was a little bit more.... So I am very aware having shadowed them that's what probably happens when I'm delivering this.'

This then draws attention to how public-facing volunteers need to cognizant of potential opinions of visitors which can lead to conflict emerging on the tour.

When asked about the importance of setting the boundaries of their activity, Volunteering Staff B2 explained that this is one of the main ways through which the institution tries to equip and empower their volunteers. This is because it gives clear guidance on how volunteers should act in such scenarios, what languages they should use, and acts as a vivid reminder that they have the constant support of the Volunteers' Office to navigate potentially difficult conversations and that there are appropriate channels where they can direct angry visitors.

> 'So I think the first thing for me is to make sure that we empower them with their boundaries, and also our expectations of where and when those conversations would take place.'

These boundaries were accepted by Volunteers B13 and B14 who stated their agreement with how volunteers were expected to operate. Since volunteers operate as

the public face of the organisation, they recognised the potential dangers that could come from a volunteer voicing their own opinion which stands in contrast to the official policy of the organisation, as well as how explaining their position as live interpretation volunteers and not 'experts' can change visitor demands and expectations, thereby, potentially enabling them to deflect conflict.

> '...we've got a corporate policy and a corporate stance on most of the contentious issues, and if you're not press trained, and you're not an official spokesperson, you shut up.' (B13)

> 'We want to make clear that's how far our expertise extends. So, well, I think the training is adequate and an expectation that these are difficult and complex questions, which are not susceptible to simple answer is, which is often the line I often take: "that's more or less a very difficult question. I can't possibly say."
> (B14)

Although volunteers do recognise the value of having clear expectations and safeguarding measures surrounding 'controversial topics', Volunteer B16 stated that they intentionally avoid topics that they view as being 'uncomfortable' based on the potential visitor backlash. They stated that they may potentially modulate their practice according to the demographics of their audience to prevent any sort of upset amongst visitors which could then place them in a potentially 'vulnerable' position.

> 'But I'm not going to lie, as in, well, let's just say it [difficult conversations surrounding colonialism and enslavement] may have played a part in my not choosing to consider having that one out [Asante Pipe]. But I might have felt that I would, might be drawn into talking about difficult issues around slavery, colonialism, imperialism, especially perhaps, you know, with black people, African people, and I might have felt quite vulnerable.'

Figure 16- this shows the Asante Pipe that is used by Object Handling volunteers in the Enlightenment Gallery (The British Museum, 2023e).

This feeling of discomfort was somewhat similar to something that I experienced whilst shadowing another volunteer as part of my training. This is because the volunteer, who I was observing, was handling an object belonging to the Shona People from Zimbabwe (see figure 16) and was describing how they used manure in their hair so that it retained its lustre and sheen. Whilst I recognise the reasons why manure was used in that way, a sense of unease emerged from the responses given by people we were explaining this to. Our audience's first language was not English, and so we had to use the word 'Kaka' to explain that manure was placed in people's hair which was immediately met with looks of disgust and the sounds of laughter from both adults and children (BM Volunteering Shift- 08/12/22). This then hints at the dangers of live interpreter volunteers not only potentially creating stereotypical or denigrating representations of formerly colonised peoples, but also how their general practice might be constrained by uncertainties emerging from the potential visitor-volunteer interaction. Because of this, it is understandable why the Museum expects volunteers to not engage with potentially difficult and emotive topics, thereby, establishing itself as one of the dominant strands that informs the 'black box' of volunteering (Schahar, *et al* 2019).
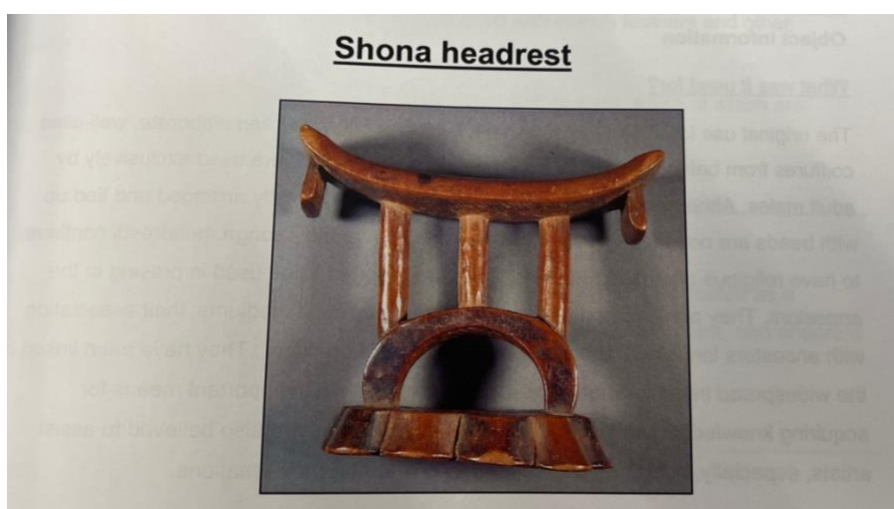
Figure 17- this depicts the Shona headrest that used as part of object handling on 08/12/22 (Maidment-Blundell, 2023f).

However, such an expectation came into conflict with the needs and wants of Volunteers B15 and 16. This is because they described their desire of being able to communicate the colonial and imperial histories of the British Museum based on the expectations of the visitors they are engaging with, as well as how the apparent neutrality that they are expected to assume and exude can cause a level of discomfort.

> '… it also made me really uncomfortable with the fact that we have to deflect questions and say, like, if somebody asks us about colonialism, or the objects

placed here, or where it was taken from or stolen from, like, we have to be neutral about it.' (Volunteer B15).

'... if someone wants to bring up these topics, it's because they care about it so they want you to talk about that, they engage you, and then it's very hard to sort of take that away and just sort of say, "sorry, I really can't talk about it," and on a personal sort of human level, because I care about these.... Personally, I care about these topics, I don't want to not talk about it.' (Volunteer B16).

Consequently, this has resulted in a particular paradox for Volunteers B15 and B16 who feel compelled to converse with visitors concerning the legacies of colonialism present at the Museum when they are obliged not to.

Volunteer B9 circumvented this paradox by directly ignoring the Museum's expectation of avoiding controversial topics and that they do so because 'you have to be frank, and you have to be in a way that the museum often isn't'. This is because they felt that the Museum had previously not done enough to communicate their colonial and imperial connections and that it was their responsibility to acknowledge and communicate these histories to various audiences on their tours, thereby, subverting the institution's expectation of both volunteers and volunteering. This also reinforces how live-interpreter volunteers are embroiled in the politics and processes of selective memorialisation (Alderman, 2002, Handler and Gable, 1997 and Modilin et al, 2011).

'We're not staff, which is a good thing, because, you know, we can pretty much go out there and say what we want to say, the way that we want to say it, because they aren't there, they're not watching us so you can be candid, and you can be straightforward. And again, I repeat, you have to be because the people are standing two feet from you, you can't obfuscate, you really can't.'

This is then indicative of how volunteers may modulate their practice based on the expectations of visitors who may expect them to be 'candid' and 'frank' concerning the colonial histories of the Museum, as well as how volunteers may feel emboldened to do this when there is a lack of general oversight from volunteer managers.

Volunteers being 'frank' with their potential audience can come with its own set of problems. This is because such interactions can be beset with tensions surrounding what the volunteer and their audience perceive to be the 'truth', and so visitors may have differing comprehensions of colonial histories and opinions concerning from whose perspective it should interpreted from. As a result, Volunteer B9 recognises that 'identity arguments that are part of this' and how 'one needs to acknowledge that there is a power play there' based on each person's relationship to Empire and the implications this has had for their lived experience.

Building on this, Volunteer B9 suggested that live-interpreter volunteers need to be aware of how their personal connection to Empire implicates their positionality and how they need to negotiate this when interacting with their potential audiences. This is because live interpreter volunteers may be engaging in forms of Border Thinking or

drawing upon the perspectives of those that have been enslaved, exploited or written out of history as part of their activity. Therefore, they need to be sensitive to the political undertones that this can carry as well as what misapprehensions might be created based on one's biases (Mignolo, 2018, Mignolo, 2021, Walsh, 2018).

> *'You are, by your very nature, by your lineage guilty or you are by your very nature, innocent and a victim. Identity politics is very much a game of sort of balancing that particular transactional aspect. Because though that is of value that can be [used] in a broader sense but monetised effectively and abroad it becomes a currency in terms of political negotiation.'*

This quote implies a mindset that relies upon a binarised and essentialist notion of innocence and guilt and elucidates how the museum's policy is interpreted through the convictions and values of a public-facing volunteer.

By acknowledging the potential powerplay between the volunteer and visitor, Volunteer B9 describes their overall approach to communicating the histories of colonisation and enslavement present within the Africa gallery:

> *'So, I think what one has to do is start from a conciliatory premise, but with armour because this is a battle, it's one that's still going on, and it's only just started after a long debate, it's unfinished business, very unfinished business.'*

Of note here is the emphasis that Volunteer B9 places not only on meeting the expectations of visitors, i.e., by including reference to colonial exploitation in Africa or the sacking of Benin City by the Punitive Expedition in 1897, but also how tour guide volunteers should approach the potential interaction through the guise of 'armour'. The use of this combative metaphor is indicative of the contested terrain that live interpreter volunteers feel they must navigate when communicating colonial histories; that they must acknowledge the different interpretations of the 'truth' that they are narrating; as well as the intensity of interactions surrounding the narration and representation of Empire, meaning that one must protect themselves.

> *'Your defence is knowledge, your armour is knowledge, and your armour is the truth because they don't give you any support [...] because I honestly promise you, we are left in a void, and we are left to the strength of our own backbone in addressing those things.'*

Once again, this reinforces their view that tour guide volunteers need to be sufficiently well-versed in the histories or the 'truth' that they are communicating as it acts as their 'armour' and protection from potential conflict with visitors, and how volunteers need to occupy this defensive position because they felt there was a lack of official support from the Museum to navigate these conversations.

To prevent keeping volunteers in the dark, Volunteer B19 called on the museum to do better in terms of how they communicate, engage with, and support volunteers. This is because they felt that the museum could do more to combat their potential anxiety of

utilising volunteers as the public-face of the organisation, and that greater transparency, communication and inclusion for volunteers could potentially result in the development of mutually agreed expectations between how the organisation views their practice, and what they actually do. This would then act as a reminder of support that volunteers have been calling for.

> *'I think that's probably a dilemma for the British Museum. If then, this is another piece, if they engaged us more and communicated better, and had us involved, then they would be able to reassure themselves that we were actually trustworthy, and they didn't have to be anxious about us.'*

This then shows that volunteers are cognizant of the importance of trust, but hints at their anxiety as to whether the institution follows through on this. Volunteer B19 also expressed the view that they were never told that they were valued and vital in the running of the museum.

> *'See, something I've learned from speaking to you today about many things, but one of them is just that statement you made, "you're so integral to the museum and it couldn't function without you." [...] Nobody has ever said that to us ever.'*

This then hints at the central conflict in the eyes of this volunteer between how they value their own contribution and practice to the achievement of the organisation's goals and to what extent this is recognised and validated by the institution that they are representing.

Communicating Colonialism: the agency of the volunteer, live interpretation and visitor learning

Building on the understanding of how volunteers respond to the institutional expectations of their practice, I wanted to delve into how BM volunteers actively modulate the content of their practice. This is because understanding how they can facilitate visitor learning provides insight into how the institution can sufficiently equip and empower volunteers to communicate decolonised histories.

Volunteers described that they intentionally modulate either their tour script or guidance for object handling based on specific things that they want to communicate. In part, this is in keeping with the expectations of Volunteering Staff B2 who wants their tour guide and object handling volunteers to have a certain amount of freedom in the information they convey, so long as they keep to the key messages which they are meant to communicate.

> *'So for instance, through the script, so we don't ask our guides to learn their script word for word, the same as the volunteers on the hands on desks, they don't have a script, but we give them guides of content.'*

Based on this expectation, Volunteer B19 indicated that they emphasise the socio-cultural and political meaning behind specific objects, whilst also seeking to entertain their audience. This is indicative of the influence that live-interpreter volunteers have in shaping not only the overall visitor experience, but also the key messages underpinning visitor learning. Therefore, one needs to be sensitive of how the agency of the live interpretation volunteer, as well as other competing factors can impact the delivery of their content (Potter, 2015, Robertshaw, 2006).

> 'What I try to do (...) is to entertain, not give an academic, there is, there are academic, I say things. I do say things, but I don't give them loads of dates, but I do emphasise the socio-cultural, political aspect of the objects that have a socio political, cultural basis, or connection, but making it entertaining.'

When applied to communicating colonial histories, Volunteering Staff B1 described that updating the Enlightenment Tour script provided more information concerning the wider geopolitical context of the time, but also strove to re-contextualise Sir Hans Sloane and his connections to Jamaica by providing greater 'nuance'. Based on this, Volunteer B17 described they could now discuss: the ways that he was able to accumulate his wealth by becoming an enslaver through marriage; how he appropriated medicinal knowledge from both indigenous and enslaved peoples; how his wealth accumulation enabled the formation of the founding collection of the British Museum; and how this was a marked change in comparison to previous iterations of the script which omitted his enslaving connections and promoted triumphalist narratives concerning his founding of the museum (The British Museum, 2009, 2011, 2016, Frost, 2020, 2021). This constant reference Sloane and his enslaving connections was viewed as being rather repetitive by Volunteer B17 who stipulated that reiterating this could potentially undermine the quality of the tour that they are expected to deliver.

> 'On the Enlightenment gallery's bit, they gave a lot more information which, frankly was rather repetitive, and there's almost too much. So I do incorporate the essence of it, but not to the extent that was actually written in the script. I think quite a few of the volunteers take that same point of view. We agree with introducing it, but you don't need to restate the same thing, with just very slightly different than every other paragraph, which is, to some degree what they were doing.'

This is fairly significant as it is indicative of a central tension between utilising volunteers to communicate the colonial past of the institution and the desires of volunteers to deliver what they view as a good quality and informative tour. This hints towards a distinction between the institutionally mandated frames of communication and how volunteers interpret and render them. This then acts as an interpersonal tension as part of their *serious leisure* between institutional expectations of volunteers and what is done in practice (Stebbins, 2014). This then provides a clearer picture of the varying motivations and practices that inform the 'black box' of live interpretation as part of British Museum volunteering (Schahar *et al*, 2019).

Beyond the changes to the script, Volunteer B11 also described how they use key items in the Enlightenment Gallery, like the Akan Drum, and their object biographies to communicate the activities of various actors and to provide the 'nuance' surrounding enslavement. This is indicative of how the objects on the tour can be used to foreground various perspectives of those tied to the Trans-Atlantic Trade in Enslaved Africans, thereby, enabling visitors to critically engage with a multiplicity of historical accounts rather than valorising one particular perspective. As a result, the activities of B11 can be viewed in terms of facilitating holistic and transgressive learning for their visitors because of their emphasis to move beyond the static interpretive positions of coloniser and colonised.

> *'Originally, it was described as a North American drum and accepted as such, until very recently, when somebody decided to look at the wood that [it is] made from and realised it was West African wood. So, the script now encouraged us to describe the fact that it could be a slave drum. Or it could have been a drum owned by an African Prince, whose father had sold the slaves to the slave trader, and decided to go on the voyage himself to see that he got a good price for the slaves or something, and then how the drum itself might have been used in slave plantations in this way to perhaps entertain the slaves, keep them happy, and then taken away from them when they realised that they were using them to communicate between the different places for rebellions. The drum itself has quite good story within the whole context of the Atlantic slave trade.'*

Figure 18- this depicts the Akan Drum that is used by Enlightenment Gallery Tour Guides to discuss the activities of various actors as part of the Trans-atlantic trade in enslaved Africans(The British Museum, 2023f).

However, such tours are not without their limitations. Volunteer B17 commented on various limiting factors that influence the way in which they communicate their content, and the implications this would have if they were expected to communicate the colonial history of the institution and its contemporary legacies. Firstly, this concerned: the timing of the tour; the group-based nature of the activity; the amount of information that they are conveying; and the ability of visitors to absorb this volume of information.

> 'There's a lot of material there, and if it's unfamiliar to you, and you think to absorb all that completely new material, 90 minutes' worth of it is a lot of material. [...] The thing is, on the public tours, you can't do it too much for an individual's tastes, because you've got a group of people, you have to take that into account.'

These are clearly seen to act as constraining factors that influence the ability of the live interpretation volunteers to foster an environment which enables for in-depth discussion and critical reflection regarding the content of the tour, meaning that the communication of it is more didactic rather than dialogic.

Secondly, Volunteer B9 alluded to another problem: gauging the level of prior knowledge that visitors have. This is because visitors may not necessarily have sufficient knowledge to ground themselves in the content being conveyed, thereby, highlighting the need to convey potentially complex histories in an accessible manner.

> 'But you can't make the tour, you have people coming in, who can barely point out three countries on the map in Africa.'

This is particularly applicable when foregrounding topics like British Imperialism and decolonisation since, based on the demographics of your audience, they may have varying experiences of and interests in the legacies of Empire, meaning that it can be difficult to draw upon the interests and lived experiences of your participants as a basis for valuable and worthwhile discussion. As emphasised by Volunteer B18 when discussing the potential audiences for the planned Africa tour that is still in development:

> 'So they will be white British people, black British people, and possibly kind of scholars and people like that. You can't assume any background knowledge of the complexities of British imperialism and decolonisation. That's one of the problems.'

As a result, B9's, B17's and B18's claims reflect the inherent tension in addressing the relative silences surrounding the colonial histories of objects and the institution and making such information accessible to people of various backgrounds.

In response to this, Volunteering Staff B1 stated that the object handling desks may be a better setting to establish dialogic communication with visitors. This is because the interaction between visitors and volunteers is generally more conversational and more interactive, meaning that object-handling volunteers act more as mediators of the

learning process by being able to surrender their overall control of the discussion. This then enables visitors to interrogate the context and significance of items on their own terms.

> *'I mean, I'd say hands on is more conversational. So, it's probably easier for a visitor to ask questions or to interrogate something....'*

This emphasis was directly reinforced by Volunteer B5 who stressed the ability of object-handling volunteers to establish more dialogic means of interacting with visitors. They felt that object-based learning enables visitors to learn on their own terms by being able to make tangible links to things that they feel are important to them. This then invites them to set the terms of the interaction between the visitor and the volunteer and have greater influence not only in the direction of the conversation, but also its potential learning outcomes.

> *'You know, the links that people make, and then you end up also, then you end up talking about things that are important to people and issues that are important to people. So, I think objects [are] superb, it gives them something to focus on. But it doesn't scare them off by you saying: "now, what do you think?"*

Based on the possibility of having a more one to one interaction, Volunteer B5 goes on to emphasise that this may be the preferred way to communicate the sensitive context surrounding colonially sourced items, and other potentially 'difficult issues to talk about.'

> *'So I think it's a really good way of relaxing people and introducing them, not you, but them introducing possibly difficult issues to talk about.'*

The importance of letting other people to take control of the object handling process as a pedagogy was also reinforced to me by Volunteer B16 who I was shadowing as part of my volunteer training. The overall aim of the experience was to enable prospective volunteers to experience how trained volunteers interact with visitors, especially concerning language use and how they foreground the object biographies connected to the visitor's understanding of history and material culture (Object Handling Training Notes- 24/11/22). Within this, Volunteer B16 stressed to me that object handling volunteers need to be sensitive towards the potential needs and wants of visitors, and so should ask probing questions about the materiality of the object and its cosmological significance in response to what visitors raise (BM Shadowing Session Notes- 21/02/23). This is then reflective of Chatterjee's (2011) and Kevin and Salmon's (2020) assertions related to the capability of objects to connect the abstract with the personal and situated, and how it enables visitors to communicate their experiences and feelings from their own standpoint. Therefore, Object Based Learning encourages both dialogic and place-based approaches to learning with regard to the lived consequences of historic colonialism and its legacies.

Equipping and Empowering Volunteers: Learning and Training

Having identified how volunteers modulate their own practice and the ways in which they are able to facilitate visitor critical reflection and learning, I wanted to delve into the specific training requirements of volunteers to communicate colonial histories, as part of answering RQ3.

Volunteer B16 called for greater training provision from the Museum. They recognise the importance of grappling with such topics and so desire greater guidance and leadership from the Museum regarding what specific languages and messages could be conveyed to visitors.

> *'But I think, I mean, maybe one of the key things is as volunteers for an institution, I think we need leadership, if you'd like, from the institution, we need to…. Part of the training would be a key message, if you want, from the training would be, you know, we want you to engage with this, we want you to put out certain messages, if you would like to participate in this, you know, these are the sorts of messages you can put out, these are the kinds of languages you could use to do it.'*

In rectifying this, both Volunteering Staff B1 and Volunteering Staff B2 highlighted how the Museum strives to provide clear guidance and information surrounding the Museum's activities, especially when volunteers converse with visitors about contested objects, colonial legacies, or the contemporary activities of the Museum to redress their colonial wounds. An example of this can be seen with the official request made by the Nigerian Government in October 2021 to repatriate the Benin Bronzes (Adams, 2021), which led to increasing volunteer interest in the topic and the need to clarify what the Museum's stance was, with Volunteering Staff B1 stating:

> *'So, we added a training session, and it was really for the Africa team to talk to the volunteers about what the museum was doing and about things like the Benin dialogue group, what that was, and the museum's involvement in archaeology related to the creation of a new museum, and so on.'*

This then indicates that the curator-led training provided by the Museum was framed by: providing greater explanation surrounding the interpretation changes in the gallery, e.g., making greater reference to the Punitive Expedition; explaining the Museum's response to popular critiques and demonstrating to volunteers that the Museum is engaging in on-going capacity building efforts as part of the Benin Dialogue Group; and, giving greater clarification about what can be said if someone asks about repatriating the Benin Bronzes. This overall intent was summarised by Volunteering Staff B1 concluding:

> *'We just want volunteers to know that there is stuff happening so that they can feel that it's not the museum's refusing to engage or it's just sticking its head in the sand, but that it's aware of what's going on and some of the complexities [of these]. […] But hopefully it makes them feel that they can support the museum,*

> *it's easier to support the museum because they're aware of stuff that's going on rather it just being that they're not hearing about it.'*

This is indicative of how the museum intends to provide structured learning opportunities for volunteers so that they have the latest information surrounding current practice and to combat any misapprehensions that volunteers may have about the museum due to a perceived lack of communication or support. This contradicts the earlier perception expressed by Volunteer B9 around a lack of support and practical guidance. Although there was a concerted effort made by the institution to provide training for volunteers, Volunteer B8 who attended the Benin Bronzes session commented on how it was 'underwhelming'. This is because they desired to see tangible change from the Museum regarding the Benin Bronzes rather than just reiterating their current action with relevant stakeholders as part of the Benin Dialogue Group, as well as updating some interpretation.

> *'They had it sort of after hours, and so for probably a couple of hours, a little presentation, a bit of talk about the Benin dialogue group and the new museum being built, and I was a bit underwhelmed by it all to be honest, and I was thinking: "oh, is that really it?"'*

The surprise displayed by this volunteer implies that the Museum's attempts to utilise training as a means of garnering support were not entirely successful and reflects how volunteers strive to hold the Museum accountable for action surrounding their colonial legacies. This perhaps reflects a point of tension that can emerge when trying to involve volunteers in decolonial practice.

Moreover, the museum's attempts to foster the structured learning of volunteers did not always result in them feeling supported. Volunteer B9 commented that their inclusion of instances of colonial dispossession and violence or the mentioning of enslavement came from their own efforts to learn about such history on the continent. This implies that volunteers often have to undertake their own self-directed learning beyond the efforts of the institution to address such topics.

> *'But I had to go and find that information, and I had to try and make sense of it, and actually, that information was quite useful in addressing the sensitive and difficult question of slavery and colonialism, which you can't do the Africa gallery without addressing, you just can't do it, and there was nothing in these so-called scripted tour inspirational materials, if you want to call it that, to actually help you.'*

This then points to the perceived limits of the training materials provided to volunteers to grapple with topics like Empire.

Volunteer B19 reiterated this when talking about the limitations of the training materials given to volunteers. This is because they felt that the Museum should take on the responsibility to provide a specific curriculum or comprehensive training focused on current developments within museology. More specifically, they are calling on the

British Museum to provide volunteers with the knowledge of how the museum is governed and structured, how it is funded, as well as how it has changed over time. By doing this, B19 feels that volunteers should be able to receive an enhanced understanding of the role and responsibilities of the museum, and how they are expected to act based on current museological theory. They state:

> *'There should be people, there should be training, and the training isn't just giving us written text now that I've discussed it, we should get a proper engaged week of lectures, or once a week a morning or whatever, training in museology, [...] I just think, like I said, what is the museum? Who funds it? What is its structure? [...] What is its role? Can we have a discussion about its role as it's changed over time? How is it expected to develop? If they want to engage us rather than being peripheral, hands off, except when they want us hands on, so that's actually it's like hands off, is very much hands off.'*

This quote is particularly important as it indicates the need to provide training beyond reading lists and updates on tour script changes and that if volunteers are expected to be 'hands on' as part of the museum's decolonial efforts, they require a more in-depth understanding of what is happening behind the scenes, as well as why it is happening based on pressure within academia, the heritage sector and from wider society. Consequently, this could then act as a potential foundation upon which more volunteer training and learning can be built, thereby, facilitating the inclusion of volunteers and enhancing their capacity as bricoleurs to pursue their own forms of learning (McCray, 2016).

As part of this foundation, Volunteering Staff B2 stressed the importance of opening up a non-judgemental space whereby volunteers are able to discuss the potential issues surrounding decolonisation or repatriating objects and reflect on the implications this can have for their practice. By having this dedicated discursive space, volunteers may be able to: have support from the volunteer's office to work through any feelings of discomfort that may emerge from the expectation to engage with colonial histories, thereby, boosting their confidence and enabling them to take ownership of their activities; to interrogate the content provided so that they are able to gain a greater understanding of what they are conveying; and to have a dedicated conduit through which they can voice their displeasure concerning their volunteering or the actions of the Museum and potentially enact change. These sentiments were voiced by both Volunteering Staff B2 and Volunteer B12:

> *'And I guess lastly, you just try and give them some opportunities to ask questions for themselves. So through those curator sessions, but also through having us in the office, like they're always welcome to come and express opinions, we'll be a safe space to listen to them, to ask questions. [...] So, I think we're very clear in both our words and our actions that we will listen to what they say, and we want to empower them to have those conversations, but part of that is giving them the space to like, have some discord and throw up their opinions and say why they're not happy about certain things and where we can, we'll action those.'*

and:

> '...I think just training, just training people, making, you know, sharing the thought processes that have been gone through by the powers that be, and giving us [the] opportunity to interrogate them if necessary, and so that we have a real understanding of what we're doing.'

For Volunteer B9, it was not enough to provide volunteers with the opportunity to interrogate the new colonial histories that are expected to be part of their practice. This is because they feel that the training should foreground the relational nature of the activity by not only teaching volunteers how to operate with *'candour'*, but also helping them to problematise elements of white guilt and the feeling of being defensive when communicating colonial and decolonised histories.

> 'I think if somebody can train people in candour, and addressing the contentious without being defensive, taking themselves out of the, that kind of, that there is a transactional element to guilt and innocence in any discussion, and it's one that is very, very much something that has a living foundation.'

By highlighting the living foundation behind such conversations, this places emphasis on training volunteers so that they separate their own positionality from the histories that they are conveying. In other words, they need to be able to de-centre themselves and not inflect the material that they are conveying with their own attitudes or potential guilt they may have about Empire. Volunteer B9 reinforces this by stating:

> 'So all you can do is be respectful with objective information, not trying kowtow, or do "oh, I feel so guilty" because you're centring yourself, but what about you? No one gives a shit about what you think.'

The emphasis on de-centring the volunteer was compounded by Volunteer B15 who stressed the importance of providing active listening training. This is because they view listening not as a passive act, and so there is a need to be aware of the notions of reciprocity that are engendered as part of the potential visitor-volunteer interaction.

> 'That's, that is such a good idea, like having, teaching people how to open space to hear any opinion, not get offended by any opinion, whether it's your opinion or not, like holding space, like active listening, it's a really nice, that's a really like good way of putting it, because like, some people go in there, and they want to start an argument with you like, I feel like there are people who want to start an argument, they want to be angry. There are some people who want a constructive conversation and neither of those things are better or worse than the other like, it's just opening space for people to talk about.'

This is an interesting point as it hints to a potential change in the role of the volunteer beyond simply conveying information to the visitor by indicating that volunteers may have the responsibility to validate peoples' lived experience and opinions regarding the Museum's practice and making sure that they feel valued and heard.

Based on this, Volunteering Staff B1 highlighted the value of exposing volunteers to various audiences as well as their socio-cultural realities. Citing the example of the co-produced touch-table between volunteers and a local Muslim community group located in the Islamic gallery, Volunteering Staff B1 stated the benefits that came from such an encounter since 'for a volunteer who isn't Muslim, having the experience of working with someone who is and talks about objects differently, they obviously learn a lot from that.' It was stressed that a main imperative for training should be to provide instances of cross-cultural encounter and to help volunteers to become more familiar with the significance of objects within a particular cultural tradition or worldview. This is then indicative of some of the underlying priorities for structured learning provided to volunteers by the Museum, and hints to future instances of training being collaborative in nature (Grenier, 2009, 2011). As summarised by Volunteering Staff B1:

> *'I think in terms of training, the volunteers, there are things that we can do to expose volunteers to different perspectives, so they can hear from people who belong to particular communities who have particular cultural traditions, talking about what things mean to them, and I think that can have a lot of impact.'*

Volunteer B11 reinforced the benefits of this sort of training when talking about Hoa Hakanana'ai. In 2017, a delegation visited from Rapa Nui who informed the BM that they not only needed to provide votive offerings to the depiction of their ancestors as part of respecting its lived context, but they were also pronouncing the name wrong since 'Hoa Hakananai'a is what we used to call it. It should be Hoa Hakananai'a.' As a result, a dedicated training session was provided for highlight tour guide volunteers to inform them of the current pronunciation, as well as the further updates regarding the display and interpretation of the statue. As described by Volunteer B11:

> *'You know, it's because we had an extra training session on it once, but not everybody could go to the training session, and it's really only when you hear somebody pronounce the name, you know actually how it should be pronounced.'*

Consequently, utilising the lived experiences of the delegation as a basis for initiating epistemic decolonisation and reconstitution as part of training provided volunteers with the opportunity to become more familiar with the cultural practice of those from Rapa Nui; to update their practice; and to stop (re)producing a violence of alienation through mispronouncing the name.

Volunteer B18 highlighted the potential dangers that could emerge from having dedicated training sessions where volunteers discuss the lived consequences of colonialism with descendants of people whose ancestors were enslaved or exploited. In part, this stemmed from their prior work experience surrounding anti-racism training and the problems that can emerge from using the experience of one particular person as a universal basis to understand and engage with colonial legacies and resultant racism.

> *'I think it's difficult. I mean, who's going to.... I mean, back in the early 80s, there was this thing called Racism Awareness Training. I don't know if you've come across it, and I was involved, and I was never totally happy. I worked for (...), and it didn't last, and it's come into an awful lot of criticism, and the main criticism is really going to put people like me in a really difficult position, because somehow I was the person who was supposed to share my experience of life. Let people ask me all these questions, and somehow resolve their Issues, concerns, racist ideas, lack of historical understanding....'*

What is most evocative about this quote is the potential emotional labour that can emerge from being responsible for educating other people about the lived consequences of colonialism, as well as the dangers that can come with homogenising lived experience, especially when thinking about instances of oppression within the wider socio-political entity that was Empire (Taiwo, 2019, 2022).

For example, Volunteer B18 made reference to particular problems that they identified during the volunteer consultation session for the planned new Africa tour and how these can emerge with any sort of volunteer training surrounding Empire, namely the homogenisation of various histories of colonial dispossession, exploitation and violence and the lived consequences of it. This can be attributed to varying levels of understanding amongst volunteers of colonial violence within specific locales, and so they emphasise the need to approach each instance sensitively and with an awareness of how it may implicate people of differing cultural backgrounds and positionalities.

> *'I think you would have to distinguish between people like me who, as an African person, or somebody from Nigeria, obviously has been brought up, and, you know, has this sort of understanding and a sympathy with the arguments about, you know, reclaiming stuff, and somebody like the woman who seems reasonably well educated, and certainly very articulate in that talk, who basically said, it was no different from the Egyptians, the amount of Egyptian stuff, you know, to have to work alongside people, I'm sure she's brilliant at what she does and all that kind of business. But given that we're volunteers, there can be no kind of base of where we're coming from and our understanding and take on it, and I mean, to make a comparison with the ancient Egyptians objects in this museum is just completely ridiculous.'*

Additionally, Volunteer B18 pointed to another comment made by another volunteer at the consultation session when talking about the responsibility of the Museum to engage with their colonial past and stressed the importance of not trivialising any such efforts.

> *'...this is what we've inherited, and that takes a hell of a lot of unpicking and the idea that, you know, somebody said, "oh, get Olusoga as a guide" and, you know, it's not as simple as that.'*

This quote is not only indicative of their warning of using solely one person's expertise or essentialised assumptions about lived experience as a basis to unpick the elements of coloniality present throughout the institution but also points to how they feel that

volunteers need to recognise the significance and the enormity of enacting decolonial practice and not trivialise it by equating different instances of colonial dispossession, exploitation, and violence. Consequently, volunteer managers need to be cognizant of the potential totalising impacts that can emerge from training surrounding the lived consequences of colonialism within a particular group and how such training should be polyvocal in nature.

Finally, the prospect of opening spaces to allow the opportunity for 'discord' or to interrogate colonial histories did cause some anxiety amongst volunteers. Volunteer B19 explained that their apprehension emerged because of the potential repercussions they may face if they voiced opinions that either went against the dominant views in their community of practice, or inherently critiqued the organisation. More specifically, they described the anxiety they felt during a formal lecture given to volunteers as part of the dedicated volunteers' week where they critiqued the Museum's activities surrounding material culture that was looted by the British after the Battle of Maqdala.

> *'Oh, I forgot to give the bit that fired me off straight away, you know, when I was saying to you that I was thinking, "you guys say something", was this woman who is in charge of the objects which includes the Emperor's crown from Ethiopia in the V&A. [...] She was there, and she started to talk, and along the way, she said, and I must admit, some of my own prejudice came out of this because she said it as follows: "the V&A gave some of the objects that we have in the collection to one of the Ethiopian churches, and they were most grateful, and some of the people came up afterwards and actually thanked us for looking after the objects for so long". That infuriated me. [...] But it was the absolute ignorance. I mean, it exactly illustrates yes, exactly what I was telling you about, completely, like you think: are you playing dead that you don't understand this? The patronising.... Anyway, I don't need to elaborate. That was what prompted me to say what I said, but there was silence. There were no reactions from anybody in the room, there were the same number of people that were in the room when you and I were there, so I guess what, I don't know, 15, maybe 16 people, nobody said a word. The only person who said anything was (...) [Volunteering Staff B1], and (...) said what (...) has said before, when I have ever raised the issue or made any glancing reference to what we're talking about colonialism, repatriation, he always says, well (...) said this time and the time before, (...) said, "there is a statement on the British Museum website about these issues," and that's the mantra.'*

After this scenario, Volunteer B19 commented that they feared backlash from the Museum by them communicating their views concerning entitlement of the V&A when interacting with local Ethiopian communities and the need to repatriate said objects. As a result, they felt that this could lead to them being asked to stop volunteering.

> *'...I was genuinely a bit anxious after I spoke up at that first seminar that I was at, that I was going to get an email telling me: "thank you, (...). It's been very nice to hear your opinions. Goodbye."*

This example provides a very clear picture of how important it is for volunteer managers to clearly communicate the parameters surrounding the 'discord' that volunteers can throw up. By doing this, it would act as another layer of support for volunteers grappling with topics surrounding 'colonialism, repatriation', and may help to safeguard them from being potentially ostracised from their volunteering community.

The British Museum: Discussion of Key Findings

RQ1:

The responses of volunteers to any sort of decolonial practice being embraced by the British Museum are filtered through their consumption and place attachment to the organisation. The earlier showcase of evidence demonstrated that the relationship volunteers have with the British Museum is mediated through the durable benefits of their activity, i.e., using the organisation as a place for cultural education or their sense of identity and purpose by being a public-facing volunteer, as well as the institution's perceived responsibilities in terms of how it contributes to wider society. The results showed that whilst volunteers benefit enormously from their consumption and identification with the British Museum, with some even saying that they feel some sort of 'ownership' over the organisation due to their *serious leisure*, volunteers called upon the institution to do better. This was particularly pronounced concerning the organisation's attempts to come to terms with their colonial past, which then demonstrates their concern about popular critiques of the organisation of not doing enough around race or its position as a 'Bastion of Colonialism'.

Public-facing volunteers at the British Museum recognised and stressed the importance of acknowledging and communicating their colonial connections. This is because there was a strong perception that the Museum had previously not done enough to engage with their ties to historic colonialism, as it was especially befitting considering its self-proclaimed status as a Museum of the World. As corollary, volunteers called upon the British Museum to appropriately contextualise and interpret material culture according to their socio-cultural worldview and lived context, meaning that it should be explicitly guided by a commitment to combat any notions of epistemic violence. Further, it was felt that the BM should operate as a platform upon which to deconstruct notions of difference that are informed by the operations of coloniality. However, support for this did stress that acknowledging the colonial dispossession, exploitation and violence tied to pieces of material culture should not overshadow its lived context, for fear that this could have re-colonising impacts since by reinforcing a violence of excision. Therefore, volunteers who were in favour of decolonial practice stated that any attempts to embrace epistemic decolonisation and reconstitution should place the cosmologies and subjectivities of those that have devalued front and centre.

These assertions came into direct conflict with volunteers who felt it was not the responsibility of the British Museum to apologise and make amends for their historic ties to colonialism and the Trans-Atlantic Trade in Enslaved Africans. In part, this was

informed by the prevailing notion that reinterpreting historic figures constituted a form of historical revisionism and the belief that they should not necessarily be judged based on contemporary societal standards. This can be seen as reflecting the wider debates surrounding the 'de-platforming' of Sir Hans Sloane. Moreover, this was further compounded by the idea that focusing on historic enslavement and colonial violence overshadowed other forms of oppression, namely modern slavery, and so those who opposed any sort of decolonial practice felt it was more important to make adequate steps to tackle this instead of societal-wide and historically informed racial inequalities. Therefore, strong objections to decolonial practice revolved around the political beliefs of volunteers concerning the presentation and reception of colonial-era figures, as well as scepticism regarding the legitimacy of colonial legacies in influencing contemporary society.

Even though there were clear separations between those whose supported and those who opposed decolonial practice, things became murkier when applied to any sort of repatriation. Some volunteers evidenced a more paradoxical position where on the one hand, there was a strong sentiment that objects with colonial-era provenance should be returned, and on the other whilst they should be retained, the Museum needs to provide a clearer case for doing so. For example, volunteers recognised how repatriating any objects could potentially undermine their offer and the socio-cultural education provided by the Museum, since access to objects would not be guaranteed. This was reinforced by the explicit commentary from volunteers who viewed the BM as operating as trusted stewards, and so any source community who benefits from potential repatriation, does so because of the expertise and efforts of the British Museum. However, volunteers acknowledged that this prevailing attitude was reflective of the workings of coloniality and white supremacy, especially since it codified the notion of the BM as the 'guarantors of civilisation'.

Based on the importance of providing socio-cultural education, volunteers proposed alternative means to make amends for their colonial past, namely the operations of the loan programme or the potential use of facsimiles. For the former, it was argued that being able to exchange and loan objects to other institutions was a vital part of democratising knowledge, meaning that the BM was not simply hoarding material culture for their own benefit. This then speaks to how support for notions of universal heritage and providing socio-cultural education for all peoples can supplant with the needs and wants of source communities. For the latter, the introduction of replicas into the museum's display does introduce the possibility of repatriating objects whilst also abiding by the perceived responsibilities of the institution as being in service to all peoples. This is because the museum would be able to 'redistribute' itself by placing source communities first which could then engender their consent for the BM's use of recreations to display their cultures and cosmologies. However, opposition to this emerged from volunteers who felt that replacing contested objects would undermine the authenticity of the visitor experience, since replicas were perceived as being of lesser educational value. This is then indicative of how volunteers who oppose the return of objects can ignore the (re)production of epistemic violence, whilst reaffirming the importance of universal heritage, thereby, demonstrating the influence of the world culture discourse has in shaping volunteer responses to any sort of decolonial practice.

RQ2:

As part of answering RQ2, the operations of the World Culture discourse were central to any conceptualisations of the British Museum as a decolonised space. Volunteers described how they felt that any attempts to grapple with their colonial past should reframe the organisation so that it becomes geared towards helping people reconcile their own relationship to and understandings of Empire, or as a place for and of connectiveness. Central to this is the need to critically display, recontextualise and problematise the provenance of objects so that the workings of coloniality are unveiled to demonstrate how the world was racially constituted according to hegemonic logics at that time, and how it currently informs discourses surrounding ownership of the past. Such a change would not only directly implicate volunteers' consumption and relationship with the organisation, but also yield further durable benefits. This is because embracing decolonisation would enable volunteers to feel more comfortable in their role as ambassadors of the organisation, since such tangible action vis-à-vis their colonial past may reduce the likelihood of them receiving criticism for their association with the British Museum. This then means that some of the potential 'dislikes' or 'tensions' present as part of their *serious leisure* might be mitigated.

Additionally, public-facing volunteers may also experience further durable benefits in terms of a renewed sense of purpose and pride emanating from their practice. This is because there was a strong perception that being able to talk about historic colonialism and its legacies would enable volunteers to contribute to the organisation's decolonisation process, meaning that they may become increasingly responsible for engendering visitor critical reflection with the aim of delivering transgressive and transformative understandings of Empire. From this, the meaning and significance they attach to their practice could be strengthened which could then reaffirm their commitment to volunteer for the British Museum over the long term. Moreover, the strong attachment that some have with the British Museum was a central mechanism to reconcile any sort of opposition to decolonial practice. This is because there was explicit commentary on how this practice would yield new histories, narratives and perspectives, through which volunteers can learn about and expand their own academic interests. This then speaks to how any potential future changes emerging from decolonisation can yield further personal benefits for volunteers as part of their activity, meaning that the likelihood of retaining them into the future is specifically tied to whether they view their practice as being meaningful, their place attachment and the perceived beneficial outcomes of their practice.

Whilst there are significant positive connotations attached to future volunteering, there were also perceived negatives with a particular emphasis on how volunteer practice may become more conflictual. In part, this emerged because of the central tension surrounding being more transparent about the British Museum's colonial connections, i.e., the proposed Africa tour, without returning contested objects or providing reparations, meaning that volunteers may be subject to criticism that the organisation is not doing enough. Consequently, the potential need to defend the organisation and justify why they are not returning objects would add emotional labour and engender

potential discomfort as part of their practice. This was compounded by the current limits to volunteers' live interpretation, namely the established institutional policy of engaging with nothing controversial. This is because there was an expectation that communicating both colonial and decolonised histories will require volunteers to directly contravene this, especially since there is specific emphasis of encouraging visitors to explore the topic in greater depth after attending the Africa tour as well as guaranteeing that it is 'intellectually and emotionally engaging' (British Museum, 2023d: 1). This would necessitate giving volunteers the appropriate skills to be responsive to visitor concerns and questions, particularly considering contemporary racial inequalities and to what extent these are attributed to historic colonialism and its legacies. Therefore, if volunteer managers and institutional staff at the BM do not accommodate for this, it might not only hamstring the ability of volunteers to adequately engage with their audiences, but also undermine some of intended visitor outcomes in terms of engendering sustained visitor interest in the topic.

Finally, diversifying the British Museum and their volunteers is an integral part of embracing decolonisation. This is because it was acknowledged that the British Museum needs to be more proactive in breaking down their barriers to volunteering so that those who have been historically excluded and marginalised are able to volunteer. Having a more diverse volunteer cohort might introduce new perspectives and voices within the volunteer community of practice and act as a visible testament to the organisation's intentions to be inclusive. Whilst this can be perceived as a positive step for the institution, being inclusive does not mean that it becomes a place for and of connectiveness. This is because a more diverse volunteer cohort combined with a more explicit emphasis on acknowledging and communicating their ties to historic colonialism does not fully redress the wounds present at the institution since contested objects are still retained because of legislation (The British Museum Act of 1963) and through positioning the institution as a Museum of the World and promoting a discourse of universal heritage (Bienkowski, 2015, Cuno, 2009, Greenfield, 2007, Karp et al, 2006). Whilst the organisation may introduce a wider range of perspectives and voices, this does not necessarily mean that it is embracing anti-racist practice since the elements of coloniality can still be (re)produced into the future.

RQ3:

Supporting volunteers to communicate colonial and decolonised histories necessitates appropriate safeguarding measures. As noted previously, being a public-facing volunteer can carry the risk of getting into conflictual encounters with visitors, particularly with those that disagree with the Museum's current practice. Consequently, it is necessary to safeguard volunteers by encouraging them to deflect and upscale conversations where necessary. This then enables volunteers to feel comfortable in their role, removes any further barriers that may impede people from operating as a public-facing volunteer, and prevents the danger of any institutional harm occurring from a volunteer going off-script. However, because there is a commitment to validating the concerns and questions of visitors, volunteers have become uncomfortable with their own practice, especially when shying away from histories of colonialism and enslavement. This has led some volunteers to integrate

their own knowledge into the content of their live interpretation so that they can be more radical than the institution they represent, thereby, directly contravening the British Museum's expectations of their practice.

This approach did raise further grievances surrounding the lack of institutional trust in empowering volunteers to do this. This is because there was a strong perception that volunteers had to equip themselves by conducting their own self-directed learning to become familiar with the histories that they feel compelled to communicate. This meant that navigating any backlash and conflict from visitors relied on them feeling comfortable enough to grapple with the topic, especially considering the perceived impacts of identity politics in shaping the terms of interaction. As part of remedying this, volunteers called upon the British Museum to provide structured learning opportunities that move beyond simply providing more information. This is because it would act as a visible statement of trust that volunteers are viewed as sufficiently capable to grapple with these topics, as well as providing them with practical strategies to navigate potentially conflictual encounters. These ranged from: providing an entire curriculum dedicated to giving volunteers a working understanding of the development of museology as a discipline and how it has shaped the British Museum; facilitating dialogic training sessions where they can debate and encounter colonial histories; and, enabling volunteers to become aware of their own positionality and how it shapes any sort of dialogic interaction with visitors. This then raises interesting questions concerning: to what extent are these training concerns emerge from the need to provide good quality live interpretation; how volunteers can be utilised strategically to support the actualisation of museum decolonisation; as well as how this can enhance the sense of enjoyment or durable benefits they derive from their practice as a form of *serious leisure*. Consequently, equipping, empowering and supporting volunteers to encounter and communicate decolonised histories requires a blend of institutional imperatives and volunteers' reasons in engaging in *serious leisure*.

If volunteers are increasingly being viewed as a strategic mechanism through which decolonial practice can be actualised, having volunteers become aware of the varying lived experiences of Empire and corresponding material culture has been viewed as a way to achieve 'reinhabited' understandings. The underlying logic for this was that having volunteers encounter why someone is opposed to the current display, interpretation and retention of contested objects may enable them to understand the dissenting perspective. Volunteers can then accommodate for this as part of their interaction with visitors and can use it to supplement their live interpretation. Whilst this is an attractive proposition and may initiate the beginnings of critical reflection, utilising a singular perspective as a universally applicable panacea can be somewhat problematic as it can not only homogenise the complexity of phenomena tied to Empire, but also the various subjectivities who experience its afterlives in various geographical contexts. Consequently, utilising lived experience to disrupt the workings of coloniality needs to be carried out in a pluralistic manner as to not invalidate the significance of the phenomena at hand.

This concern is also applicable when talking about safeguarding volunteers as part of their training. Although having dialogic training sessions may result in the operation of a

critical pedagogy of place, volunteers who dissent from the museum's practice or vocalise opinions that go against the majority in their community of practice may be subject to backlash. This establishes a particular prerogative for volunteer managers at the British Museum since they need to minimise any reputational harm that could occur whilst guaranteeing that these training sessions operate within a trusted and safe discursive space. This points to the central tension between engendering transgressive and transformative learning outcomes for volunteers and guaranteeing that volunteering at the British Museum is an enjoyable experience.

However, this desired comprehensive set of training may not be feasible due to institutional constraints. This is because undertaking the prolonged training needs and wants of volunteers may not only be incredibly time consuming, but also very resource intensive and so it could be unrealistic for the British Museum to provide these. In rectifying this, the Museum should adopt a blended or layered approach whereby formal training sessions can be used to provide updates to volunteers regarding the content of their practice. Additionally, key messages can be communicated in conjunction with dedicated reading lists or suggestions of where volunteers can supplement their knowledge base. By doing this, it would provide a foundation upon which interested volunteers would refine and focus their self-directed learning and strengthen the likelihood that they are also acquiring accurate and good information, thereby, decreasing the likelihood of inflecting their practice with misinformation.

Horniman Findings Chapter

This chapter explores and follows how the decolonisation discourse has shaped volunteers and volunteering at the Horniman. This section draws upon fourteen interviews with both Engage volunteers and institutional staff; observations drawn from my own practice as a Engage volunteer from September 2022-December 2023; as well as internal and key documents that detailed their decolonisation process and were given to Engage volunteers.

The first section of this chapter provides an overview of the organisational history of the Horniman Museum, with an explicit focus on their institutional practice in the last eight years. I also include further details related to their volunteering programme and discuss my own recruitment and induction process as an Engage volunteer.

The second section of this chapter examines and elucidates to what extent Engage volunteering can be constituted as *serious leisure* by directly commenting on the relationship that volunteers have with the organisation and detailing how they generate durable benefits through their experience. By having an awareness of the *'discourses, motivations and practices'* that make up Engage volunteering, this unpicks detail the 'Black-Box' of volunteering and sheds light on the wider discursive terrain in which decolonial practice may be situated (Schahar et al, 2019). This then provides the necessary detail upon which to examine how volunteer motivation, positionality and attachment may impact their responses to decolonisation, as part of answering RQ1.

The third section builds on the previous section and presents of volunteer opinions concerning the Horniman's decolonisation practice, or the enacting of a museology of hope, and considers the implications this may have for volunteering which then addresses RQ1 and RQ2. This is split into four main parts: their general reactions to the Horniman's decolonial practice; their thoughts and perspectives regarding the decision to return ownership of the Benin Bronzes; what they think about the current Cha, Chai, Tea exhibition; and, the future implications that pursuing decolonial practice may have on their association with the Horniman.

The fourth section addresses RQ2 as well as some aspects of RQ3 and concerns Engage volunteers' live interpretation and the consequences that communicating colonial histories may have for their practice. More specifically, this delves into: the potential sources of discomfort exhibited by Engage volunteers at the prospect of communicating colonial histories and legacies; the safeguarding measures promoted by the Horniman for their volunteers and their reactions to this; as well as the strategies suggested by some Engage volunteers to navigate any potential conflict.

The fifth addresses RQ3 and is concerned with equipping and empowering volunteers as part of operationalising a critical pedagogy of place. This part covers: the training and learning requirements of Engage volunteers to communicate colonial histories; the problems that the institution may encounter as part of this process; and volunteer opinions on the training provided for the Cha, Chai, Tea exhibition.

The sixth and final section summarises the key findings from the chapter and discusses their significance with reference to my three main research questions.

Horniman: Organisational History and Volunteering

The Horniman Museum can trace its roots back to the Surrey House Museum which opened in 1890. The Surrey House Museum was the initial building that housed the collection of Frederick Horniman whose wealth was derived from his family's business: Horniman Tea (The Horniman Museum 2024a). In the following nine years, the Surrey House Museum received over half a million visitors and started to be organised according to the division of art and nature. Throughout this time, the collection continued to grow and the gardens adjoining the building were opened in 1895. However, the building containing the Museum became unfit for purpose and so in 1898, a purpose-built museum was constructed to the cost of about £40,000 (The Horniman Museum, 2024a). In 1901, the Horniman Museum officially opened and responsibility of running the organisation transferred to the London County Council for the purpose of providing the 'people [with] a place of public recreation and instruction' which aimed to 'create a class of knowledgeable and disciplined imperial citizens that felt included and invested in the British imperial project' (Cooper, 2023: 23). The collection at that time comprised of 30,000 items covering natural history, cultural artefacts, and musical instruments (Cooper, 2021). In 1912, the Museum underwent an extension that was funded by Frederick Horniman's son, Emslie Horniman, to build a new library and lecture theatre (The Horniman Museum, 2024a).

Since then, the organisation has gone through many different curators and directors, like Janet Vitmayer and Nick Merriman, who have most recently been responsible for expanding the museum and its collections. In 1999, the African Worlds exhibit opened which was the first permanent co-created exhibition in the UK dedicated exclusively to showcasing African art and culture from both the continent and its diaspora (The Horniman Museum, 2024a). In 2002, the Horniman Museum underwent a new redesign by Allies and Morrison which provided new galleries, including the music gallery, added amenities like the café and shop and doubled the size of public spaces within the museum's grounds (The Horniman Museum, 2024a). In 2018, the redeveloped World Culture Gallery opened after a six-year long reviewing period addressing the question what does it mean to be human? The emphasis of this redevelopment was to enable visitors to encounter and engage with a plurality of ways of seeing and to have them understand their own place within and in relation to these constituted worlds (The Horniman Museum, 2018). Alongside this, in 2018, The Studio opened showcasing co-created exhibitions by local communities, artists in residence and Horniman staff. The Museum currently has over 350,000 objects split between its anthropology, natural history, and musical instrument collections and in July 2022, it became the Art Fund Museum of the Year and received £100,000 as a prize (The Horniman Museum, 2024a).

Because of the Covid-19 pandemic and the Black Lives Matter protests, the Horniman Museum underwent a period of critical introspection which resulted in the formation of the Reset Agenda (The Horniman Museum, 2021). The Reset Agenda refers to seven strategic points which the Horniman adopted as part of their practice. These priorities are: to engage wider audiences through programming and communication; to diversify staff and volunteers; to consult people and work in partnership; to address the history of the Horniman business and institutional collecting; to enhance the Museum's digital provision; to make the Horniman greenhouse gas neutral and more biodiverse; and, to maximise income generation. The implementation of this agenda also intersected with wider discussion concerning the status and representation of Frederick Horniman, the museum's founder. This is because the website, Topple the Racists, had branded Frederick Horniman as an 'arch-colonialist' and claimed that he had owned a 'Tea plantation', from which it is possible to infer the use of indentured labour (Cooper, 2022). However, this turned out to not be true since Frederick Horniman and Horniman Tea by extension purchased tea through East India Company brokers instead (Researcher C7, 2022). Nevertheless, the introduction of the Reset Agenda alongside the impact of this popular representation of Frederick Horniman reinforced the need to engage wider audiences at the museum (Merriman, 2024). This sought to be achieved by diversifying their workforce, in terms of staff and volunteers, and consulting, collaborating, and working in partnership with appropriate parties and stakeholders to address their colonial legacy.

Such an emphasis was first undertaken by the Horniman through their pilot project 'Rethinking Relationships and Building Trust around African Collections', which began in 2019. Led by J.C. Niala and Johanna Zetterstrom-Sharp, the aim of the project was to shift the gaze away from discussions concerning the ownership and location of African objects to thinking about how the Horniman's collection could be utilised in order to develop new relationships and ways of practicing with museums and colleagues located in formerly colonised countries. This was achieved by Horniman employees working in close capacity with academic and non-academic stakeholders located at National Museums Kenya, the University of Nairobi, Maasai community members in Kenya and Tanzania, as well as members of the British Nigerian and British Kenyan diaspora located in the UK (Niala, 2021). Through collaborating with these stakeholders, new interpretation was developed for relevant objects in the World Culture gallery, and so oral testimonies from practitioners were placed alongside already existing object documentation and corresponding curatorial interpretation. Alongside this, the Horniman Museum undertook a Community Action Research project which saw them training non-academic stakeholders in how to conduct provenance research using their collections, and most notably Sherry Davis, which then led to the co-produced exhibition Ode to Ancestors. This exhibit displayed and recognised the knowledge contributions and labour of Kenyan archaeologists in the development of the discipline (The Horniman Museum, 2022). Both of these projects then shifted curatorial authority and power to collaborative partners as part of stimulating new perspectives and built greater institutional trust that the Horniman could effectively and meaningfully reckon with their colonial legacy (Merriman, 2024: 20).

In January 2022, the Horniman Museum received a formal letter from the Nigerian National Commission for Museums and Monuments which requested that 'Nigerian (Benin Bronzes) antiquities under the control of the Horniman Museum and Gardens be released to the Federal Republic of Nigeria'. This formal request then led to extensive provenance research being conducted by Johanna Zetterstrom-Sharp, the Senior Curator of Anthropology, which ascertained that 72 objects in the Horniman's collection were looted from Benin City as part of the punitive expedition in 1897. To gauge popular sentiment regarding the potential return of the Bronzes, the Horniman conducted three rounds of consultation with: members of the Nigerian diaspora in the UK, and particularly the Bini community, local school children and Horniman members who fulfilled the role of frequent visitors (Merriman, 2024). All three stakeholder groups generally agreed with the prospective idea of returning the Bronzes to Nigerian authorities, predominantly on moral grounds as it was recognised that they were stolen, and that some of Bronzes could be loaned back to the Horniman but only following consent from the Nigerian National Commission for Museums and Monuments. The findings from the consultations were then consolidated into a report which was submitted to the Horniman's trustees who on the 7th July 2022 accepted and endorsed the recommendation of returning the Bronzes (Merriman, 2024). On the 7th August 2022, it was announced via an exclusive in the Sunday Times that the Bronzes would be returned, marking this as the first instance of a museum formally returning ownership of any of the Benin Bronzes. Subsequent updates were also made in the World Culture gallery to acknowledge the return of ownership, the current relationship that the Horniman has with the Nigerian National Commission for Museums and Monuments, and the contemporary significance of the Oba in Benin City. In November 2022, the Horniman Museum formally gave back the ownership of 72 Benin Bronzes to the Nigerian National Commission for Museums and Monuments (The Horniman Museum, 2022).

Whilst the return of the Bronzes has been lauded (discussed by Merriman (2024)), the case surrounding ownership of the Bronzes has become more complex. In 2023, the Restitution Study Group, a dedicated lobby group based in the United States which campaigns for reparations for descendants of enslaved peoples, formally sent a request to the Horniman to block the ownership transfer and a 'co-ownership petition' to the Charity Commission in Summer 2022 which was rejected (Restitution Study Group, 2022, Merriman, 2024). Their argument for blocking the return hinged upon the Oba's and the Kingdom of Benin's role in trans-Atlantic enslavement and that since some of the metal that was used to smelt the Bronzes was received in return for enslaved peoples, their descendants should possess co-ownership of the Bronzes and have access to them (Tricia, 2022). Moreover, returning the Bronzes was further complicated based on the action of the then President of Nigeria, Muhammadu Buhari, who transferred ownership of the Bronzes from the Nigerian Government and the National Commission for Museums and Monuments to the Oba of Benin, Ewaure II. This has raised formal questions concerning which entity is responsible for keeping and maintaining the Bronzes (Harris, 2023).

In October 2023, they released an exhibition titled Cha, Chai, Tea. The aim of this exhibition was to provide visitors with an awareness of the global significance of tea,

the varying socio-cultural contexts in which the beverage was and is consumed, as well as to problematise the colonial connections of Frederick Horniman and Horniman Tea more widely, especially with regard to their indirect complicity in fuelling the opium epidemic in China. They are also currently working with various artists and community groups in India, Kenya, Nigeria, and Oceania to interrogate the colonial provenance of their objects (The Horniman Museum, 2021, 2023a).In August 2024, the museum agreed to return ten objects to the Warumungu community of Northern Territories, Australia, and in December 2024, unveiled the new Benin Kingdom display that was co-produced by artists and cultural practitioners based both in London and Nigeria (The Horniman Museum, 2024b, 2024c).

As of March 2023, the Horniman Museum had 140 volunteers and 66 of these are Engage volunteers. Engage volunteers operate as live interpreters and facilitate the engagement and learning of visitors with the Butterfly House, the Natural History and World Culture galleries, and any temporary exhibitions present at the Museum (Volunteering Staff C5, 2023).

Prior to starting as an Engage volunteer, all volunteers are required to go through both an interview and self-induction process. Engage volunteers are interviewed and asked about their motivation for the role and why they specifically want to volunteer at the Horniman. My interview was slightly different and involved sitting down with the volunteer manager at the time and Volunteering Staff C5. We discussed the scope of my research, what I was intending to do with Engage volunteers, and the potential benefits it had for the Horniman. As part of this conversation, it was made clear to me that the Engage role was predominantly focused on facilitating learning encounters with visitors of all ages so that they form some sort of connection with the content of the collection as well as its underlying messages. After the interview had concluded, I began my self-induction processes which involved a brief tour of the facilities with Volunteering Staff C5 and then exploring by myself in order to answer a quiz sheet (see figure 19). Following and filling out this quiz-sheet was very important as it not only enabled me to become immersed in the social and material environment in which my practice was situated but also gave me the opportunity to consult the interpretation that I would be delivering for visitors on subsequent shifts (Fieldwork Entry- 30/08/22). Moreover, the insights garnered from my induction were consolidated by two further volunteering shifts where I shadowed fellow Engage volunteers at handling desks in the Natural History and World Culture galleries. By doing this, I was exposed to how Engage volunteers were expected to interact with audiences of varying ages, since most of the people we interacted with were children, which then enabled me to shift my choice of tone and language use accordingly (Fieldwork Entry- 13/09/22, 22/09/22). Consequently, this experience prepared me to answer any potential questions that visitors may have, as well as update my approach to Object Based Learning so that it was more dialogically framed.

Orientation trail

The experience of our visitors is very important to us. This self-guided trail is designed to orientate and familiarise you with museum facilities and information that so that you are able to answer the most basic questions from visitors. Don't worry – it won't be marked!

Museum entrance hall

- On the doors, what are the Horniman opening times? _10am – 5:30pm_
- Which parts of the Horniman require an admission ticket – see board behind ticket desk?
  For specific exhibitions (cost and level), Aquarium + Butterfly House
- Who is able to donate through Gift Aid? _UK Taxpayers_
  How much money can the Horniman reclaim from Gift Aid? _25p/every £1_

Walk down the ramp towards the galleries

Natural History Gallery

- The dodo became extinct around _1690_ on the island of _Mauritius_
- On the panels, how long has the walrus been on display? _136 years_
- Why it is larger than life? Ask a visitor host _Taxidermist overfilled it_
- Behind the ostrich case, which of these two is real – platypus or leathery turtle? _platypus_
- Go up the stairs at the far end of the gallery and find the date of the clock _mid -19th century / Ordered into the trip museum ~ 1901_

Nature Base

- Name the two live species in here _Mice, bees_
- At the far end, turn the interactive to hear the sound of a hedgehog _– vacant sounds ✓_
- What colour is Britain's native squirrel? _Red_

Go down the stairs and turn right into the World Gallery.

World Gallery

- In Asian Encounters, what is the purpose of the Ancestral shrine? _to pay your respects to your ancestors/parents → give a votive offering (burn incense in a censor + light candles)_
- In African Encounters, how many terms for camel are there in Tamasheq? _50_
- In European encounters, where was glass first made? _In the Mediterranean_
- In Curiosities (right at the back), what is the brown tea set made of? _Clove_
- Nearby on the left, is the emergency exit; swipe your card across the red light and open the door. What lies the other side?
  Security and reception

Go back to the other end of the World Gallery and leave by the left hand door.

Turn right, briefly, to locate the lift to the aquarium on your left, and the stairs to the aquarium on your right.

Then turn round and enter the space straight ahead known as Gallery Square

Figure 19- this shows the self-induction orientation trail that Engage volunteers are required to conduct in order to immerse themselves with the content of the exhibitions present at the Horniman (Maidment-Blundell, 2024b).

Volunteering as Serious leisure: durable benefits, place attachment and volunteer motivation

Volunteers were asked what the Horniman meant to them to both qualify their motivation to volunteer and their place attachment. By doing this, it was possible to ascertain: how intense their sense of belonging is; what significance volunteering has within their lives; to what extent these matched with Stebbin's (1982) six defining characteristics of Serious leisure; and to identify the key underlying discourses, motivations and practices that inform the 'black box' of Engage volunteering.

Reflecting how Engage volunteering can be perceived as a form of Serious leisure, one theme that emerged was the intense place attachment that Engage volunteers had with material and social environment of the Horniman. For Volunteer C8, they described how their volunteering experience had become a keystone in their current identity post-retirement. This meant that they have used their volunteering experience to provide an avenue through which they have reoriented or renewed themselves. They explain:

> 'It means as a person who's retired from paid work, I really like the business of belonging to the Horniman, in a way, being part of what it does. I think when you retire, you've got to recreate your identity in a way, and I value that identity as a volunteer here.'

Volunteer C8 further compounded the importance of this by elaborating on their appreciation of the Horniman's current practice and the perceived benefits that the institution provides to the local borough of Lewisham and wider society. This is because they stressed their appreciation of the current visitor experience at the Museum by being able to view 'a combination of things that are on display', as well as more tangible steps they have taken to address potential barriers that may prevent marginalised communities from accessing the Museum, thereby, diversifying their audiences. They state:

> 'And, but I also really, like the Horniman's wide approach. Well, not only the sort of combination of things that are on display, but also just the determination for outreach work and, you know, to increase, always trying to keep increasing the diversity of the visitors.'

Building on this, Volunteer C11 explicitly commented on their 'love' of the Horniman, and how their motivation to volunteer is altruistic in nature. This because they commented on how they view the Museum as being an innate public good, and so it is important for them to be able to support the Horniman's operations as an extension of giving back to the community. They explain that:

> 'So, I love the Museum. I think it's doing a good job. So, to be able to, for me to give back to [the] community is also good.'

This then indicates the sense of belonging, purpose, and pride that Volunteers C8 and C11 may derive from their experience as well as how their decision to continue volunteering is tied to notions of altruism and benefitting the various stakeholders who lay claim to the organisation.

Volunteer C10 also described how their place attachment to the Horniman was codified through its 'quirky' nature and its current institutional ethos, especially considering the implementation of the Reset Agenda (The Horniman Museum, 2021). For them, they stated that they appreciated how the Museum was beginning 'to sort of open up a dialogue about change' and how this was indicative of their willingness to make amends for their colonial roots. In their own words,

> *'It's also a museum that I really like, and I like the quirkiness of it and the ethos of it. And I think it's, it is starting to sort of open up a dialogue about change, and so on, and it's got a very wide range of things going on.'*

This indicates the place attachment that Engage volunteers may have towards the Horniman is filtered through their own moral positionings regarding the (re)production of colonial legacies and the active steps taken to embrace decolonial practice.

Commenting on its 'quirky' nature, Volunteer C12 explained that they found the current setting of the Horniman, especially as a cabinet of curiosity, as possessing a certain 'charm'. This is because they had grown up with the Horniman as being their local museum, and it had been a vital gateway through which they were able to learn about Natural History, Musical Instruments, and various peoples through the World Culture Gallery. Consequently, the educational opportunities provided by the Horniman's previous and current provision layered with their C12's prior consumption of the Museum can in part account for their strong sense of attachment. They state:

> *'There's a charm to it, kind of due to the size and the different buildings, the way it looks. I think it's a pleasant environment and it's educational for all ages, because obviously I came here as a kid, I loved it as a kid. Yeah, it's very pleasant, I think, is how I'd describe it.'*

Volunteer C6 reiterates this when commenting on how the Horniman enabled them to explore and develop their own interests. They explained that they have an active interest in museology, and more specifically in decolonising museums, and so being able to situate themselves both as a visitor and an Engage volunteer enabled them to directly experience what they perceived as cutting-edge practice regarding contemporary 'cultural issues'. Consequently, C6's place attachment is codified and qualified not only through the learning opportunities afforded by the Horniman's permanent collection, but also how it operates as a discursive arena which reflects the theoretical development of the role of the 'museum'. They explain:

> *'...as I've gotten older, it's sort of been of a bit more of a place where I can explore my interests. It's been, it's always been known to be at the forefront of cultural issues, which is something I'm very interested in. So, I find that very*

useful and it's also [a] good museum space to sort of see kind of what museums used to be and what they are now.'

When asked about what the Horniman meant to them, Volunteer C9 provided commentary regarding its role as a form of social infrastructure. This is because they felt that the museum's continuous presence offers various benefits for local stakeholders who may require: a safe space, a space to socialise, and a place of learning.

> *'It's a local museum, and I think it has kind of educational role. It also has a reassuring role in some ways, because it's a stable, relatively stable part of the community, and it provides a facility and a place that people can go where they feel safe, and they might find something interesting, and they can meet people and talk to people, and so I think it's a kind of contributes to community in lots of different ways and it's very valuable in that way...'*

Volunteers C13 and C14 also commented on the Horniman's 'reassuring role'. For both, they explained that their activity as an Engage volunteer and the ability to be situate themselves in the material and social environment of the Horniman was vital for their emotional, mental, and physical wellbeing. This is because for the former it represented an opportunity to distance themselves from their professional career and to feel 'at peace', whereas the latter commented on how the Museum operated as a safe space during a bout of serious illness, and so it is a place that is closely tied to their happiness. They both state:

> *'It's become a very special place to me now because of like, the different parts of the museum, I just feel very much at peace when I come here. I feel like I belong in this place. You know, that's what I realised after starting to volunteer, I was like, "okay, this place is for me." And I do see myself working in such an environment later on as well, and it's just very nice to come here and escape my other working life at (...).'* (Volunteer C13)

> *'So yeah, it's been a really significant place for me recovery wise, and I think in the workshop that we did with Nick Merriman, I said that it was like for me it was a sanctuary, it's where I feel I feel really happy, actually here I feel really really happy.'* (Volunteer C14)

Consequently, the sense of belonging and place attachment demonstrated by Volunteers C13 and C14 show how their consumption of the Horniman and corresponding Engage volunteering can be closely tied to durable benefits related to self-actualisation.

Following on from this, Volunteer C9 commented that being able to operate as an Engage volunteer offered durable benefits in terms of being able to socialise with fellow volunteers and various audiences. This is because they valued their practice as a live interpreter since they were responsible for facilitating visitor learning, meaning that

they were afforded opportunities for self-expression and self-enrichment when interacting with inquisitive visitors. They explain that:

> '*It's an opportunity to meet different people and engage with different people who have come here for different reasons. I like talking to kids, we've got eight grandchildren. So, I'm kind of used to talking to kids, and I find I like the kind of originality of the questions, and yeah, it's the social. It's the social engagement, which I think is most valuable for me personally.*'

Volunteer C11 builds on this by describing that the durable benefits afforded by their role. These relate to the structured learning opportunities provided by the Horniman as part of their training, as well as the satisfaction they derive from their activity. When summarising the significance that volunteering at the Horniman has within their own life, Volunteer C11 stated:

> '*Well, I think it sort of broadens my knowledge. I can view on things like you know, all those animals in the past, present, ecologically, and they have all those, the fossils, the corals in the aquarium, and also that it gives us a chance to learn about things, to look at the butterflies, and a lot more things, it also provides activity for families which is good, isn't it?*'

Therefore, one can view the Horniman as being a central place through which Engage volunteers are able: to renew/recreate their identity and gain a sense of purpose; to further their own academic interests; to enhance their own physical and mental wellbeing; and to socialise with various peoples. These then operate as some of the key unveilved 'discourses, motivations and practices' that are present within the 'black box' of Engage volunteering (Stebbins, 1982, Schahar *et al*, 2019).

Volunteer opinions: the importance of decolonial practice

Engage volunteers were asked what their general thoughts and feelings were about the Horniman's efforts to decolonise. There were three general topics that emerged in response to this line of questioning: the active position taken by the Horniman to be more forthright about their connections to historic colonial dispossession, exploitation, and violence and its contemporary afterlives; the decision to return the Benin Bronzes; as well as the Cha, Chai, Tea exhibition.

There was a general sentiment amongst Engage volunteers that it was important for the Horniman to acknowledge and communicate their historic ties to colonialism. In part, this can be attributed to the moral compulsion of Engage volunteers who feel it is the responsibility of the institution to redress their colonial wounds and to educate visitors who may be ignorant of such connections. Volunteer C13 explains that:

> '*I think it's very, it's extremely important because, one, it's very important for me, because I feel like everybody should be aware of what has happened, and how to avoid that in the future as well. If we raise awareness about all the colonialism*

that happened, then then obviously, we are making everybody aware, and I feel like it's, it's kind of overlooked sometimes, especially by the British community.'

As part of facilitating this education, Volunteer C6 commented on how it should be 'one of the most important things' that the Horniman can do, especially considering how they portray themselves as being inclusive and how much emphasis they place on breaking down barriers to entry. Therefore, C6 believes that the Horniman should be responsive to local stakeholders and their corresponding cultural heritage, which then reinforces the importance of being honest and transparent about their colonial connections. They state:

'I think it's very important. I think it's probably one of the most important things I think, especially the Horniman really prides itself on community outreach and community engagement, and the Horniman is in South London, which is such a diverse community, you cannot be, you can't say that you're trying to increase your community engagement and bring people in that haven't come before, when your institution is built on, or benefits from the like, [the] systematic oppression of people that you're trying to bring in.'

Volunteer C6 further stresses that the framing of this practice should be done so in a way that facilitates inclusion rather than exclusion. This is because they feel as if any sort of decolonial practice should be guided by the explicit goal of facilitating reconciliation by promoting education for various audiences rather than being self-referential and centring the Horniman by proclaiming how 'horrible' they were. They explain:

'So, you have to engage with it, you have to understand it, you don't have to, you know, you don't have to shout how horrible you are. It's not about that. It's just about understanding it and using it to educate. Like I said, it's like a microcosm of learning.'

This then implies the potential support that Volunteer C6 may have for a museology of hope which is centred on reconfiguring the relationship between the former coloniser and formerly colonised as a way of promoting a new way of practicing.

Volunteer C14 also stresses this in talking about how it is the responsibility of the museum to 'break barriers' as part of their process of 'moving forward'. This is because they feel it is the museum's responsibility to be 'reflective' of its colonial past and how the legacies of this manifest in the present and are therefore compelled to act upon them. This then indicates the preference of this interlocutor to see their organisation engage in generative, substantive, and tangible action rather than paying lip-service to redressing colonial wounds.

'Speaker 2: I think museums, even though they house the past, should always be moving forward and in the present and reflective of the present moment. And I think, you know, if we can do that, we almost break barriers as well, at the same time in you know, and again, it's all depends on personal, personal stories and

experience, but I think it's important that it's done. Because otherwise institutions can be viewed in a very...
Speaker 1: Archaic sense.
Speaker 2: Yeah, and we need to move forward.'

Volunteer C4 also explained how important it is that the Horniman's potential decolonial practice should not just be restricted to material culture present in the World Culture gallery, and so they should also recognise the object journeys of both stuffed animals and plant specimens in the Natural History gallery. This is because they recognised how early plant hunting was utilised as a mechanism to categorise, name, and promote a universally applicable rendition of the world. As a result, C4 felt it was important that the Horniman recognises the colonial and epistemic violence that emanated from that. They explain:

> *'I think it is very important for the (Thing of Note One) to acknowledge that not just in terms of like the World Gallery and the artefacts there but also in the natural history gallery because all of that was actually part of the colonial project, and part of like colonial science and colonial botany as well, sort of collecting specimens from their understanding them and such.'*

Consequently, the emphasis on breaking down barriers and reconfiguring relationships should not only be restricted to the human, but also the non-human and its entanglement with historic colonialism.

However, as part of this tangible action, a central tension emerged amongst Engage volunteers regarding the difference between fashioning the Horniman into an inclusive environment where all peoples feel respected and represented, versus actively challenging visitors. This included encouraging visitors to engage in critical reflection regarding the presence and significance of colonial afterlives. In part, this can be attributed to whether it is necessary to embrace anti-racist pedagogies and practice as part of decolonising museums and the worry of this being perceived as both inherently conflictual and the Horniman overstepping its bounds. This sentiment was summarised by Volunteer C9 stating:

> *'I think it's really difficult because I think that, I think for many people, it's very uncomfortable to accept Britain's colonial past and the fact that a lot of the wealth in the country came from abusing people in other countries in one way or the other, whether it's through the slave trade, through the opium trade, through war, colonisation, you know, all kinds of things, which are pretty, pretty terrible, and so it's how do people separate their own kind of self-esteem and sense of identity from the history of the country. I think that's a really difficult thing to do, and in a way, maybe, maybe you could say that the role of museums like the Horniman is to help people kind of assimilate those two stories, really the story which separates them from responsibility from the past, while at the same time acknowledging the past. I think that's a really difficult thing to do.'*

This then raises the question: how should the institution 'assimilate' this tension? For Volunteer C2, they felt it was important that the Horniman's decolonial practice was guided by notions of inclusivity and tolerance, but that this should not be used to dictate to both volunteers and visitors in terms of how they should act, behave, and feel regarding historic colonialism and its legacies. In their own words,

> 'I see them as I think they're politically correct, but they're not overdoing it (...), you don't have to be woke about everything you do.'

This was further exemplified by Volunteer C2 talking about the perceived tolerance present at the Horniman for various peoples and their corresponding ways of being, knowing and seeing. As a result, they felt this did not operate as an overt political agenda.

> '...colour, creed, race, all those things are adhered to but not in a fake way, it's not used to smash you over the head with anything.'

Consequently, this then implies, in the eyes of Volunteer C2, that the preferred version of decolonial practice is something that naturalises tolerance between varying groups and avoids conflict since nothing is used to 'smash you over the head', rather than actively challenging the .

In contrast, Volunteer C10 stressed that any sort of change or the achieving of praxis requires the Horniman to actively challenge their visitors to critically reflect upon the nature of coloniality and how it is (re)produced (Fanon, 1961/2004, Walsh, 2018). This is because they felt that there is an active need to take a distinctive stance as part of engendering epistemic decolonisation and reconstitution which requires initiating visitor discomfort and introspection. This would then begin to dismantle elements of the colonial matrix of power and enable people to *reinhabit* their understanding of Empire (Gruenewald, 2003, 2008, Mignolo, 2018). As articulated by Volunteer C10,

> 'But actually, if you really want change, you have to start challenging as well.'

As part of this challenging, Volunteer C10 stresses how communicating concepts related to decolonisation could be overly abstract and theoretical which could act as a barrier to initiating change. To remedy this, they suggested that the Horniman should ground any sort of epistemic decolonisation within an explicit emphasis of humanising people and their corresponding material culture. This would then enable people to engage with the displayed lived experience of those grappling with colonial 'ruinations' and internalise its relevance (Stoler, 2008, 2011). They explain:

> '...when people know each other, and they know each other stories, they humanise it. And that's what we need to be doing in the museum is humanising things more so that people actually then start to think about it more and not make it too theoretical.'

Based on the views of Volunteer C10, enabling epistemic reconstitution/ rehumanisation and challenging visitors to engage critically would then fashion the Horniman into a discursive space dedicated to the 'contestation, negation, and reinvention' regarding the narration and representation of Empire (Brulon Soares, 2023, Johnson, 2016a, 2016b).

An example of this tension emerging from reframing the Horniman into a site of contestation can be seen with the varying opinions regarding the degree to which the Horniman should problematise its historic founder. Amongst Engage volunteers, there were split opinions regarding the reception of Frederick Horniman. Some viewed him in a positive light because his initial collecting had eventually resulted in an institution and place that they cherish, and there are those who felt the need to problematise his collecting, its relationship to colonial violence and its underlying logics, as reinforced by the proclamations made by Topple the Racists (Cooper, 2023).

Volunteer C11 describes that they felt a specific affinity with Frederick Horniman, primarily based on the perception that the founding of his collection 'gave back to society' and this solidified his status as a noble philanthropist. They state:

> 'Well, I think he did very well, the person who created the Horniman, he has given to society.'

This positive framing of Frederick Horniman was reiterated by Volunteer C11 who asserted that even-though they accepted and recognised the Horniman family's complicity in deriving wealth from fuelling the opium epidemic in China and propagating Sinophobia as part of selling Horniman Tea, the current iteration of the Horniman as being both publicly accessible and free somewhat absolved them of this. In their own words,

> 'Yes, because you see the Horniman was created by this Quaker family, isn't it? And they make a huge profit on Tea, isn't it, to get all these things. So now they are giving back to society, isn't it? Because they open[ed] up the Horniman for free, isn't it?'

Volunteer C11's framing of the Frederick Horniman as both an altruistic and philanthropic figure can act as a discursive disguise which can elide and potentially overlook the extent of colonial and imperial violence that lies at the heart of the institution.

Similarly, Volunteer C2 stated how they actively try to avoid becoming aware of Frederick Horniman's complicity with colonial dispossession, exploitation, and violence out of the fear that it may impact their place attachment and result in them being unable to 'love' the institution. They explain:

> 'But I wouldn't like to think that the guy that actually started it was a fiend of any type. Do you know what I mean?'

And:

> 'I kind of try to avoid knowing just too much about the Horniman Family (…), because I don't really want to feel like I shouldn't want to come in or anything. You know, I don't want to not like the place because I actually love it.'

Therefore, the sudden refashioning of the Horniman into a space where the narration and representation of colonial figures, like Frederick Horniman, are contested and problematised could result in a source of tension between C2 and the institution.

Volunteer C8 said that even-though they value the current iteration of the Horniman Museum, fashioning it into a space for contestation requires unveiling the elements of coloniality that underpin both Frederick Horniman's collecting and the earliest iteration of the institution: the Surrey House Museum. They stressed the need to problematise the version of the 'world' that Frederick Horniman wanted to convey via his museum. They explain:

> 'I admire his determination to, quote, bring the world to Forest Hill and, you know, you can look behind that, what did that mean?'

And:

> 'What was the purpose of it at the time? And it was part of a massive thing for the Victorians, wasn't it? The Great Exhibition and all that.'

By querying what the underlying logics were, this draws direct attention to the need to recognise the wider role of museums at the time of the Horniman's founding. This is because they were strategically used to categorise and organise the 'world' to not only assert and legitimise the supposed cultural and ethnic superiority of the coloniser at the expense of the colonised, but also instil pride in the imperial project for those living in the metropole (Fanon, 1961/2004, MacKenzie, 2010, Quijano, 2000). Therefore, in the eyes of Volunteer C8, one cannot view Frederick Horniman as being a solely benevolent figure, but rather one embroiled in the promotion of the imperial project and subsequent colonial violence.

Such an emphasis on problematising Frederick Horniman or specifically challenging visitors did raise some concerns for Volunteer C9. This is because they wanted to strike a balance in how 'Mr Horniman' was portrayed since they acknowledge the importance of recognising how forms of colonial violence persist into the present, but they wanted to guarantee that acknowledging or communicating this did not undermine the already established visitor experience or promote feelings of blame or shame. They explain:

> 'So, for me, personally, I try and be honest, but you don't want to be honest in a way which damns or condemns or makes people feel it's hopeless or were in some sense devalued by the experience. But on the other hand, you can't say that everything that Mr Horniman did was probably a good thing.'

This then reflects an interesting tension between not being overly celebratory of the Horniman's historical founder, whilst feeling compelled to be honest and transparent about their complicity in colonial dispossession, extraction and violence.

Returning the Benin Bronzes: volunteer opinions

As part of asking Engage volunteers their opinions about pursuing decolonisation, a frequent theme was restitution and repatriation, and especially the Benin Bronzes.

Engage volunteers were generally in favour of returning objects that were perceived as colonial loot. One such example can be seen with Volunteer C8 who stated that it was important for the Horniman to return the ownership of the Bronzes because it was not only the morally correct thing to do, but it is also important that they make sure to communicate why the Bronzes were returned to visiting audiences. They state that:

> 'Well, I think good, you know, it's the right thing to do, and it's good that people who visit the museum know that that's happened and why it's happened.'

This then implies that any attempts to redress colonial wounds that were present as part of the retention of the Benin Bronzes extend beyond simply returning them to their original owners.

Furthermore, Volunteer C2 said it was positive that the return occurred, and that they appreciated that the Horniman had decentred itself by abiding by the needs and wants of the Nigerian government. This is because they stressed the importance of engendering both consent and realistic expectations as part of the working relationship to return the Bronzes, and so welcomed the fact that the institution was appropriately renumerating the source community for retaining some of the Bronzes. They assert this by commenting on the 'adult' nature of the 'compromise':

> 'I mean, but I think that's a pretty adult, cool compromise, it's very decent. So, they said, you can keep them but here's something for it. So that I think that's, yeah, what more do you want?'

This then indicates how volunteer support for decolonial practice, or restitution in this case, hinges upon the morality of individual Engage volunteers as well as the efforts that the institution is taking to 'redistribute' itself to enable subaltern groups to take control over how their cultural heritage is (re)presented (Brulon Soares, 2023).

Volunteer C13 also reflects this when commenting on how important it is for them to see the Horniman placing the needs and wants of source communities ahead of their own institutional ambitions. C13 explains that it is not only vital to respect the lived context and cultural significance of the objects currently on display, but also that overall control should be held by the source community that claims ownership.

> *'First, we should be getting their permission, if we can keep the objects themselves. If we do have the permission to keep them, then we do, and we can display them, but then if we don't, they should be returned to their respective countries.'*

According to Volunteer C13, abiding by the needs and wants of source communities would not only undermine the traditional authority, or position within the Zero-Point, that museums have possessed to provide universal and authorised renditions of the 'World', but also would address the relative power imbalances between the museum and source communities regarding the use of material culture (Brulon Soares, 2023, Castro-Gomez, 2003, 2007, 2021).

Volunteer C14 further commented on how placing the needs and wants of source communities ahead of the Horniman's not only provides an avenue through which the relationships between various stakeholders can be reconfigured, but also how this process can enable forms of healing and reconciliation to occur. This is because they view the initial potential return of objects as a space of liminality and potentiality through which a 'better relationship' can be forged. They explain when describing the potential impacts of return:

> *'I think there is an instant, almost like a relief period, and then, you know, who knows? Who knows what can happen in the future, you know? But it paves the way for a better, I think, for a better relationship, which, you know, goodness me, would be wonderful.'*

Consequently, C14's support for decolonial practice and corresponding anti-colonial collaboration could be interpreted as a desire to have the *terms of the conversation* reconfigured so that both epistemic and material control of material culture is held by those who have had previously devalued by the workings of Western modernity.

However, the decision to return the Bronzes, or engaging in forms of restitution more widely, did raise some questions concerning the implications this may have for the educational offer of the Horniman. Whilst Volunteer C12 describes the importance of having constant acknowledgement and presence of the afterlives of colonialism present in the museum's master narrative and interpretation, mainly in the form of addressing epistemic silences present in object provenance, they asserted that there is 'value' through retaining some objects here in the UK. They state:

> *'In a literal sense, I think being realistic, it's similar to what I said about constant acknowledgement of colonialism and how it's the very base of the Horniman because you can return objects you know, to where they're from, like they have done, but there is also value in them being here as a learning tool.'*

The emphasis on the Bronzes, or objects present in the Horniman's permanent collection, acting as a 'learning tool' was also recognised by Volunteer C9. For them, they felt that objects that had been sourced via colonial collecting or looting represented a particular 'tension' in the museum's offer, and therefore could be used

to establish a dialogue concerning the lived context and significance of the material culture and then its respective entanglement with European colonial powers. Therefore, any attempts to return said objects, e.g., the Benin Bronzes, or to replace them with facsimiles would undermine the ability of the Horniman to initiate a critical dialogue with their various audiences regarding the nuances of cultural ownership of objects and corresponding calls for their return. They state:

> *'But that tension is what makes it interesting and opens up the dialogue and discussion about things onto, and once you, you know, have everything made out of plaster casts and dummies of everything, then, in a sense, you, you're diminishing the value, because you're not creating that tension and the controversy that you need, in a sense that having the Benin Bronzes here means people can have a discussion about whether they should be here or not, and they can have some awareness of the symbolism and the stories that went behind them.'*

Volunteer C9 further exemplified this when discussing how the copper used as part of smelting the Bronzes came because of metal bands that were exchanged by the Portuguese in return for enslaved peoples. This is because they argue that the cultural ownership of the Bronzes cannot solely be reduced to one group, and so there is a need to have a dynamic view of ownership that places them in a wider context of entanglement (Thomas, 1991). They explain that:

> *'So, some people have argued that the Benin Bronzes were really a Portuguese creation, not a Nigerian one, although clearly, they represent Nigerian mythological and whatever characters. So that sort of identity about who owns what and why? And what do you mean by ownership? And why does one person own something and somebody else not? And would they exist at all if they hadn't been here? Because it might have been melted down or used for something else? So, I think it's a very complicated thing.'*

This then implies the preference of C9 to view the Bronzes in a layered sense which accounts for the varying socio-cultural milieu that they have passed through.

Following on from Volunteer C9, Volunteer C1 also described how important it was to retain objects, or some of the Bronzes in this case, for local stakeholders who may be part of their corresponding diaspora. This is because having an element of their cultural heritage represented in their local world culture museum provides an access point through which they may be able to learn more about their own ethnic identity, cultural practice, and corresponding histories. They state:

> *'…people have come over from ex colonial states and settled here, and then seeing their culture in like London museums, enabling them to see kind of aspects of their culture that otherwise they would have to fly home to see it with a very expensive plane ticket, you might not be able to afford it, you know, all of those things. I think there are, you know, benefits to that.'*

Once again, this evokes the competing discourses that come with potential repatriation: redressing colonial wounds versus guaranteeing access to said objects.

Cha, Chai, Tea: aims and objectives of the exhibition

As part of the Horniman's decolonial practice, they commissioned a temporary exhibition titled 茶, चाय, Tea (Chá, Chai, Tea) which aimed to explore the global significance of Tea whilst also interrogating the colonial connections of Frederick Horniman and Horniman Tea. As part of the exhibition, Curatorial Staff C3 explained that there is a need to explore the intersection between the wealth accumulated by the Horniman family via their Tea company, and their promotion of Sinophobia and indirect complicity in fuelling the opium epidemic in China at the time of the Opium Wars. However, whilst some elements of the exhibition are dedicated to this, Curatorial Staff C3 did stress that the overall focus is on the various cultural contexts and practices surrounding Tea consumption.

> '...the purpose of the exhibition really is to explore the Horniman's imperial history but tell the story through means which centre the communities that were most impacted by the wider legacy of it, essentially.'

Consequently, this positions the exhibition as a space that is actualising forms of epistemic decolonisation and reconstitution by providing interpretation focusing on the historic and contemporary consumption of Tea predominantly from South, South-East and East Asian perspectives.

Curatorial Staff C3 also stated that the exhibition is guided by two concepts: 'resonance' and 'connectedness'. For resonance, the aim of the exhibition is to have visitors experience and interrogate the significance that Tea has in the lives of various peoples, meaning that it is oriented towards foregrounding the relationship that people have with it today. They explain when talking about the dynamic emphasis of the exhibition:

> '...we want our visitors to be very clear about actually, the history of tea is not, it's not a history of tea, it's a social lens of tea basically that very much impacts us today and our relationship with it, and it's an interrogation of that.'

This is further consolidated by Curatorial Staff C3's emphasis on notions of connectedness. This is because the exhibition seeks to emphasise the commonalities that all peoples share via Tea, meaning that the exhibition goes beyond being viewed as a Contact Zone merely providing instances of cross-cultural encounter or as an Engagement Zone since it is not indigenising space. Rather it is facilitating anti-colonial collaboration since it operates as a mode through which the relationship between coloniser and colonised can potentially be reconfigured (Brulon Soares, 2023, Onicul, 2015, 2018, Pratt, 1991). They explain when talking about the entanglement present in the exhibition:

> *'So, it's about actually, we're all connected through Tea, and we want people to feel that connection to other communities that they might not have engaged with, as well. So that's kind of the way, those are the core principles of it.'*

This then fashions the exhibition space not only into a place for and of connectiveness since visitors are encouraged to contemplate and contest the supposed fixed and oppositional positions of coloniser and colonised, but also a pluralistic space where they are exposed to differing ways of being, knowing and seeing regarding the use and significance of Tea as a beverage.

Cha, Chai, Tea: volunteer opinions

Engage volunteers were asked their opinions of the Cha, Chai, Tea exhibition. Respondents, namely Volunteers C12, C13, and C14, indicated that they viewed the exhibition positively, with commentary emerging that they view the space as a place of healing and learning.

Volunteer C13 proposed that the Cha, Chai, Tea exhibition represented a significant step for the Horniman in making amends for its colonial past since they were not 'gloss[ing] over' their complicity. One example they cited was the presence of a letter that was sent by the Chinese Ambassador, Lin Zexu, to Queen Victoria which directly foregrounds how British merchants fuelled the opium epidemic in China as part of their 'strong desire to reap a profit' (see figure 20). For C13, they felt the Horniman's inclusion of this, and the political-economic and societal context in which Tea consumption became popular in Great Britain has 'addressed the mistakes that Britain has made' since the institution is guided by forms of truth-telling and engendering epistemic justice. They explain:

> *'Like, even I remember, there's a poem in the exhibition, stating, like, Victoria never replied to a letter, which was sent by China. (…). I feel like they have addressed the mistakes that Britain has made, and quite explicitly, like, they're not trying to gloss over it, you know?'*

Consequently, this then speaks to the perception of C13 in viewing the exhibition space as a place for healing and is indicative of the workings of the discourse of resonance as emphasised by C3.
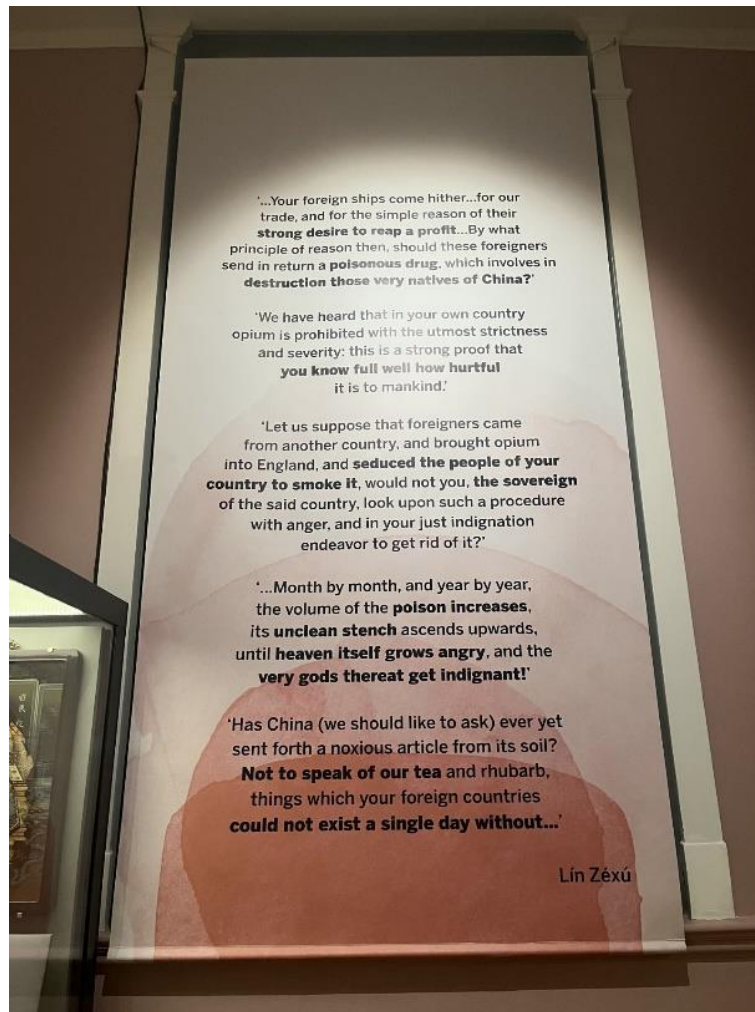
Figure 20- this banner contains some of the Lin Zexu's prose present in his letter to Queen Victoria (Maidment-Blundell, 2023g).

Volunteer C14 held similar views regarding the necessity of the exhibition since they also viewed the exhibition space as a place for healing. This is because they assert that no 'dark sides' of a nation's past should ever be 'erased or omitted or glazed over' and how confronting these unflattering histories can provide opportunities for dialogue and result in transformative and transgressive outcomes. They explain:

> *'Okay, in my opinion, history, even the really dark sides where we don't necessarily want to be faced or confronted with something that our nation has done, or any nation that is, it should never be erased or omitted, or glazed over, because it's important that we learn from the past where we can, you know, and that then opened up another conversation as to what's going on in the world at the moment.'*

C14 further qualifies the significance of this standpoint when describing their interaction with one visitor who was critical of the exhibition's content and framing. They recollect when describing the encounter:

> *'I responded in the sense that I felt that, you know, it's important that the museum felt that it was important and valid to the entire process, the entire journey of Tea and also its impact on the world and how it's impacting still, you know, today that those, those kind[s] of darker times are touched upon.'*

From this, it is possible to see the discourses of 'resonance' and 'connectedness' at work. This is because C14 asserts and justifies the importance of the Horniman curating and producing this exhibition since it not only 'touch[es] upon' historic colonial and epistemic violence, but also moves beyond these. This is achieved through recognising their afterlives or 'impacts on the world' and the 'entire journey of Tea' by engaging with a plurality of socio-cultural contexts (see figure 21).

Figure 21- this is an example of one of the installations in the Cha, Chai, Tea exhibition dedicated to exploring the 'entire journey of Tea' through people's current relationship with and consumption of the drink (The Horniman Museum, 2023a).

The second theme that emerged from Engage volunteers was the role of the exhibition as a place of learning. This is because all interlocutors commented on their prior unawareness of the colonial connections of Frederick Horniman, and so being able to immerse themselves in the exhibition space allowed them to become more familiar with how the Tea trade enabled his collecting. Volunteer C13 explains:

> *'It's just increased my knowledge more because I didn't, I didn't know that. Like I didn't, I didn't know that Horniman, the founder Frederick Horniman used to trade tea...'*

Volunteer C12 also commented that the exhibition enhanced their understanding of Empire and its afterlives beyond the confines of the Horniman Museum. This is because the content of the Cha, Chai, Tea exhibition enabled them to learn more about British

colonisation and European imperialism throughout the 19th Century, as well as the global coverage of the contemporary Tea industry. As a result, this reinforces the importance of the exhibition space as a place for critical pedagogy. They state:

> *'So, I didn't, I have not studied much history. So, I obviously knew about the tea trade of the British Empire. I didn't know about the Opium, Opium Wars, and I didn't know how still extensive the tea trade is today, even though it's different.'*

As part of this learning, Volunteer C13 also commented on the benefits of having material culture present in the space to elucidate the object journeys and histories of the Tea trade, Frederick Horniman, and the subsequent Opium wars. This is because they recognised that discussions surrounding colonialism, empire and its legacies can appear to be somewhat abstract and ephemeral. As a result, having material culture present in the exhibition space grounded those connections and made them more visible and visceral. In their own words,

> *'...seeing the boxes of tea, like the containers, that kind of really, you know, highlighted that, like, you know, it made everything more real.'*

The emphasis on making 'everything more real' is indicative of the potential benefits of utilising material culture and subsequent Object Based Learning to grapple with potentially controversial and contested histories (see figure 22).

Figure 22- displaying the Tea crates that were used to import Horniman Tea (Maidment-Blundell, 2023h).

However, Volunteer C14 did provide some critique for the exhibition as a place for learning, especially when tracing the combatting of coloniality (Minott, 2019). Firstly, they commented that the exhibition seemed to lack or have no apparent 'journey' that people could follow based upon their observations of visitors within the space. As a

result, visitors may haphazardly engage with the exhibition's content as they meander through the space.

> 'But the majority of the time, they bounce because they don't really know how this then corresponds to that etc. etc. So I just, I just feel that maybe that something needs to happen with, with that journey...'

According to C14, the apparent lack of structure also has implications for the depth of potential visitor learning. This is because they noted the amount and layers of interpretation present in the space, and so not having a clear guide of what to follow may result in visitors either experiencing information overload or having a cursory glance on what is on display.

> 'I've noticed that they're not actually really looking properly at times. So, and it's a shame, because there's, there are so many different objects and things on so many different levels. But you don't see them necessarily really taking the time....'

This then contributes to C14's perception that the lack of structure acts as a potential impediment to visitors developing a layered and nuanced understanding regarding: the historic consumption of Tea; the colonial exploitation and violence tied to it; and, the decolonising emphasis of the exhibition.

Pursuing decolonisation: future impacts on volunteers and volunteering

Beyond considering the initial opinions of Engage volunteers regarding the Horniman's decolonial practice, they were also asked about how it would implicate both their future consumption of and their relationship to the Horniman.

When asked, one theme that emerged amongst respondents was how pursuing this sort of work would enable them to derive greater pride from their activity and how this would strengthen their sense of attachment to the Horniman. An example of this can be seen with Volunteers C11 and C12 who commented on how the Horniman's decolonisation process aligned with their perceived responsibility of it as an educational institution. As a result, the Horniman's active commitment to raise popular awareness about their colonial connections has instilled a greater sense of pride that C11 and C12 feel being both an Engage volunteer and an ambassador for the museum. They explain:

> 'Yes, it would make us better, isn't it? And we're able to, you know, be glad to belong to it, isn't it?' (C11)

> 'I don't think you should hide it. It's facts, its history. It's part of education. You should learn about it. So yeah, I think I would feel more proud here.' (C12)

The enhanced significance of or 'pride' derived from Engage volunteering as exemplified by Volunteers C11 and C12 was also shown by Volunteer C6. They commented that pursuing decolonisation would 'enrich' their volunteering since their Engage role may expand to be more communicative about colonial afterlives present at the Horniman, especially considering the return of the Benin Bronzes. They explain that:

> 'Like, I always thought like, "could you not put a volunteer next to the Benin bronzes?" And just be like, "have you seen these? Do you know what these are?" And then you can just like, and you can have that conversation with children, you can say, you know, 150 200 years ago, this happened, and we have them here and they're going back now. Like, what do you do when you take something? (...) I think you can have those conversations with kids, and I think it would be really interesting to see it, and it would definitely enrich my volunteering experience.'

This quote further raises how the 'pride' felt by Volunteer C6 could be partially informed by not only enhancing visitor learning via their live interpretation, but also how they may engender forms of critical reflection which could initiate forms of epistemic decolonisation and potentially reconstitution. This was confirmed by Volunteer C6 elaborating on their perceived capacity to make a 'difference' regarding how people confront and understand colonial histories and its legacies:

> 'Again, because it's something I'm very interested in. Like, I'm almost making a difference, like in a very small way, it would be quite, I would feel quite proud of it. So, I think maybe that would be one way it would change.'

Volunteer C13 built on C6's assertions by explicitly commenting that the visible presence of the Horniman's commitment to decolonise resulted in them feeling more 'confident' and 'proud' to be an Engage volunteer. They further clarified that this is the result of what they perceive as being ethical practice, and how they were more than willing to communicate, defend and justify the organisation's activity. This was guided by an explicit aim of transforming visitor preconceptions of the Museum being emblematic of colonial loot.

> 'I would feel more confident to come here, after that, because they've made this ethical decision. So, I would be proud to be part [of it]. I mean, I still am proud, but I would be even more proud to you know, be working at the museum because sometimes people do kind of have this, they have like this view of museums that they are just a place for stolen artefacts so I would like to change that, in people's minds that it's not just that, you know, it's a lot more to it.'

This then indicates the change that Engage volunteers may wish to be part of extends beyond simply facilitating visitor learning regarding the Horniman's colonial connections and is also concerned with challenging negative preconceptions that various audiences may have.

The emphasis on actively contesting visitor preconceptions of the Horniman did cause some unease for Volunteer C9. Once again, this emanated from the anxiety that the

Horniman could be perceived as dictating to its various stakeholders as to how they should approach and think about Empire and its afterlives. Consequently, they state that being 'excessively politically correct' about such topics could operate as a muzzle for alternative perspectives or potential dissent, and if this was the case, this would lead to them ceasing their volunteering. They explain:

> 'Well, I think if it was becoming excessively politically correct, and so there was like, kind of, we're only allowed to say certain things in certain ways, like we were in Russia or something like that, then I probably wouldn't want to come anymore, really.'

However, Volunteer C9 does make a distinction between Engage volunteers communicating lived experiences of colonialism in varying contexts versus supporting an overt political stance which is encouraged by the Horniman. When considering the impacts that this would have on their own volunteering, they state:

> 'But if it was, say, just talking about lived experience in different contexts, and that would be fine really. Because then, you're then talking about empathising with different perspectives, rather than being told what to think and how to think it.'

This then indicates the preferred terms of live interpretation for Volunteer C9 and introduces the idea that Engage volunteers are moving beyond facilitating connections for visitors with the Horniman's collections and more towards prompting alternative understandings of Empire and its 'ruinations', which could then engender historical empathy (Modlin et al, 2011, Stoler, 2008, Zemblyas, 2018b).

By contrast, Volunteer C10 describes that pursuing decolonisation would also further enrich their volunteering experience. In part, this can be attributed to the potential boredom that C10 may experience by engaging various audiences with same content week in and week out, This means that the new narratives and histories uncovered by the Horniman's decolonial practice will enable them to update the live interpretation they provide. They explain:

> 'Well, I would be very happy to be more engaged in that, and in fact, it would probably keep me inspired, because I am going to get bored at some point with talking to children about shark's teeth or whatever we are doing, and I'm just sort of aware that you know, I mean, I really like the Horniman, and I'd like to be involved in it.'

From C10, it is possible to infer that the new histories and narratives unveiled by the Horniman's decolonial practice will: reinvigorate their social environment of volunteering because of a new sense of purpose derived from their activity; offer durable benefits in the form of structured learning opportunities; and strengthen their association with the Horniman's mission and their willingness to act as an ambassador for the organisation.

This was echoed by Volunteer C4 who described that they would be more than willing to continue volunteering as the Horniman grapples with their colonial connections. This is because they stated that addressing the epistemic silences related to the provenance of objects would help to enhance their live interpretation, since they will be able to provide more 'context' regarding their object journeys. In their own words,

> *'I would definitely still continue to volunteer, I think I would possibly appreciate it more, because at least there would be more context provided in terms of some of the artefacts that I explained and such.'*

The enhanced appreciation of the Horniman and its decolonising activities was also raised by Volunteer C14. They stated that the decolonising activity of the Horniman would enhance their already strong attachment, and how it would encourage them to undertake forms of self-directed learning to become more aware of the varying nuances associated with histories of Empire. In their own words:

> *'I would probably want to be here more, and I think I'd probably end up knowing me and how I behave when I really love something, and I have the time for it. I would become, I'd say a lot more immersed in what's going on. So yeah, I probably would just carry on sticking like a limpet. I think I probably do a lot more personal research…'*

Whilst it is important to acknowledge their enhanced sense of attachment, their use of the word 'limpet' to describe their position within the Horniman's institutional hierarchy raises an interesting question regarding the future position of Engage volunteers. This is because it indicates a perception that the relationship that senior officials have with their volunteers is more top-down and transactional in nature, rather than it being more equitable and horizontal. Consequently, this foregrounds the notion that Engage volunteers may have a limited influence in enacting change within the wider organisation in the future and how they may be regarded as an annoyance.

In rectifying this, Volunteer C1 articulated a desire to not only have greater awareness of the decolonial workings of the Museum, but also some input into how it is actualised. This is because Engage volunteers feel that they are vital in the public offering and daily operations of the Horniman, and so Volunteer C1 feels that they should possess 'more of a voice' and be regarded as valid stakeholders who should have some input in any sort of organisational change. This then asserts the position of Engage volunteers as insider activists in their capacity to support and modulate the organisation's decolonial practice (Wajid and Minott, 2019). As stated by Volunteer C1:

> *'I think it would be nice to kind of give volunteers more of a voice within the kind of like the decisions that are being made in the museum rather than just being told, this is what has been decided, and you're going to do this.'*

This was recently recognised by senior leadership at the Horniman who invited Engage volunteers to take part in a Values and Future Directions workshop. The aim of this session was to 'review recent achievements, set out future challenges, and assess our

existing values and behaviours.' The outputs of this workshop included a mission statement alongside a comprehensive list of the key behaviours and values that staff and volunteers are expected to exude and be guided by in delivering their mission (see figure 23) (The Horniman Museum, 2023b, Fieldnotes- 14/09/2023). Within the session, Engage volunteers worked alongside staff members to answer four questions concerning: 'how do we treat visitors?'; 'how do we treat each other?'; 'what does the Horniman stand for?'; and 'how do we describe our favourite colleagues?' This gave them the opportunity to provide explicit commentary regarding not only their social environment of volunteering, i.e., what the Horniman and their practice means to them, but also how they think the organisation should operate into the future. A persistent narrative that emerged from the session was both the 'inclusive' and 'forward-thinking nature of the Horniman' which operate as points of pride (see figure 23). This combined with the implementation of the Reset Agenda raised specific points related to breaking down barriers that prevent access to museums, providing holistic cultural and natural education for various audiences, and being responsive to both their local and global stakeholders (Fieldnotes- 14/09/23).

The potential for volunteers to exercise their 'voice' was also present in the recent interview process for the Horniman's new director. This is because Volunteer C9 had the opportunity to sit on the interview panel for the new CEO, and they describe that general volunteer involvement was 'sound' and how they appreciated and 'valued' their experience. Of note, was their remarks that this was the first time that the museum had done this, which then alludes to the potentially increasing influence that Engage volunteers may have within decision-making processes at the Horniman (Fieldnotes- 16/04/2024, Volunteer C9, 2024).

1. Mission

The Horniman connects us all with global cultures and the natural environment, encouraging us to shape a positive future for the world we all share.

2. Proposed Values

- We are an **inclusive** community that is **welcoming** to everyone
- We treat each other, our visitors and all our stakeholders with generosity and **respect**
- We are **friendly**, open and positive, embracing collaboration and fresh ways of thinking.

3. Proposed Behaviours

Our culture is based on the above core values and the delivery of our mission, plus **behaviours** that prioritise:

- Acting sustainably and encouraging biodiversity
- Celebrating diverse voices and perspectives
- Behaving ethically and with integrity
- Hard work, creativity and enterprise.

Figure 23- this depicts the outcomes of the Values and Future Directions Workshop which included input from Engage volunteers (The Horniman Museum, 2023b).

Finally, one theme that emerged was the need to diversify the current volunteer workforce at the Horniman. Engage volunteers commented that, as part of the iterative and gradual journey of decolonisation, the Horniman needs to be more reflective of the local borough of Lewisham and have a greater range of peoples and voices acting as ambassadors for the organisation. As noted by Volunteer C10,

> *'But you know, you're going to really start moving towards the decolonisation and you're also going to need a more diverse set of volunteers, as well.'*

As part of removing the barriers to entry, or attempting to the diversify their volunteer workforce, Volunteer C1 suggested that the institution could specifically target historically marginalised groups or engage in forms of positive discrimination as part of the recruitment process. They explain:

> *'I mean, obviously, [deciding to volunteer], that is a kind of self-selecting process. But I think there are ways that you can kind of make it, you know, if you expressly do kind of like positive discrimination, selection, stuff like that.'*

However, this came into conflict with Volunteering Staff C5 asserting that the organisation tries to be as inclusive and welcoming as possible when recruiting volunteers. This is because it could not only undermine the Horniman's value of having an 'inclusive community that is welcoming to everyone', but also may be legally problematic since it would contravene the Equalities Act of 2010 (Government Equalities Office, 2015).

> *'So generally, we invite everybody who expressed interest, because it's the volunteering role, and we don't want to exclude anybody, regardless, their ethnicity or like....*
>
> *Speaker 1 Sexuality, socio-economic class etc.*
>
> *Speaker 2 Yes, exactly. So, everybody is, yeah, we give a chance to everybody.'*

This then reaffirms the importance of community outreach work and removing limiting factors that may prevent people from giving their time to volunteer.

As outlined in their Reset Agenda, the Horniman has recognised that there is a need to have a volunteer cohort that *'more closely reflect[s] the London population'* (The Horniman Museum, 2021: 1). To achieve this, there has been a concerted effort to remove barriers that may prevent volunteering, e.g., covering for travel and giving a stipend for lunch, and to engage in community outreach with *'specific school[s] or community group[s] that [they] have done targeted work with'* to become Engage volunteers (The Horniman Museum, 2024d: 14). By providing these, it opens up the opportunity to volunteer for various groups as it is then not solely restricted to those that have the financial means and time to engage in forms of *serious leisure*. When describing the benefits and importance of such a process, Volunteer C14 states:

> *'I think it's really important that the volunteers and the members of staff are diverse, dynamic people from everywhere and anywhere and you know, differing backgrounds. I think that's always a really rich kind of tapestry to have as well.'*

Therefore, Engage volunteers indicated that a component of pursuing decolonisation will require and hopefully result in diversifying the volunteer workforce at the Horniman.

Communicating Colonialism: discomfort, live interpretation and safeguarding

One theme that emerged when asking about how volunteers may become responsible for communicating colonial histories and its contemporary legacies was the importance of message management and discipline. This is because there was a prevalent awareness that, given the enflamed culture war context, Engage volunteers could cause institutional harm by conveying narratives that went beyond mandated practice or conformed to their own personal opinions. As a result, volunteers and their practice needed to be somewhat regulated to prevent this from happening. As noted by Researcher C7 when commenting on the difficulty of having volunteers communicate colonial histories:

> *'I guess the difficulty with involving volunteers is that you're putting them on the front line of potentially, like quite a quite a fraught debate and that does pose issues, I think around well-being first and foremost, but also around kind of message discipline, I think.'*

This implicit danger was also acknowledged by Volunteer C1. This is because they recognised that any sort of discussion surrounding colonialism, or the provenance of objects that may have been looted, with people who claim descendance from impacted communities may resort to them feeling urged to apologise for the actions of the Museum. This may then directly contravene the established practice and policies of the Horniman, thereby, alluding to a particular point of tension that Engage volunteers occupy as ambassadors of the organisation.

> *'...there are a variety of places around the (…), and I'm talking to visitors, and they kind of say like, "oh, that's from my country." There is a kind of almost like discomfort to it, for me. I mean, obviously, that's very kind of like, that's my discomfort, that's on me. But it kind of like, like, I almost want to like apologise.'*

Based on these worries, the Horniman decided to provide an explicit suggestion that volunteers should not engage with difficult conversations. For example, Engage volunteers occupying the Cha, Chai, Tea touch-table were expected to direct visitors to the relevant sections of the exhibition that discussed colonial dispossession, exploitation and violence, or encourage them to provide commentary on the feedback cards and to get in contact with the email provided (see figure 24) (Fieldnotes-

06/10/2023). This was confirmed by Volunteer C12 commenting on how the institution expects Engage volunteers to navigate any potential conflict:

> *'We were told to sort of, you know, kind of ignore them, not sort of, not ignore them (...). Kind of deflect to answer their questions truthfully, but not in a way that is going to give them a reaction or something that they can use as a sort of smoking gun.'*

Part of regulating Engage volunteers was informed by the need to guarantee their wellbeing. This is because there was a strong perception that they may be drawn into potential conflict with visitors, and so it was necessary provide volunteers with a reliable avenue through which they can either avoid or de-escalate scenarios. As articulated by Volunteers C2 and C6:

> *'I don't really want to have hand to hand combat with someone who I know is right.'*

> *'...[it] would be equipping people to say, "I don't know." This is not what I'm, just having that ability to say, "this is not what, let me get someone else for you here. Let me point you in the right direction."'*

This is particularly important considering the status of the volunteer as an insider-outsider, since they are ambassadors of the organisation, but they are not salaried by the Horniman (Wajid and Minott, 2019). Therefore, one can argue that there is a duty of care that must be present for volunteers, and they should not be expected to defend the Horniman's practice. As alluded to by Volunteer C8:

> *'I think that's a really interesting question about what because the psychological contract that we have with the Horniman is different from paid staff, and yeah, you're right, that needs to be sort of in the conversation, doesn't it?'*

Although safeguarding measures are needed, encouraging volunteers not to explicitly engage with the topic of colonialism was met with a sense of frustration by Volunteer C10. This is because they felt that the strategies promoted to avoid any sort of conflictual encounter combined with the lack of consultation (at the time of the interview) with Engage volunteers regarding the topic represented a form of paternalism. This can be attributed to a perceived undermining of the expertise accumulated by C10 as part of their working career and their prior experience of engaging with topics related to colonialism and decolonisation. They state:

> *'You know, what does that mean? What does it mean not to engage with contentious topics?'*

And:
> *'It's really trying to dumb it down, isn't it? In a way.'*

Volunteers C2 and C12 raised further grievances. Volunteer C2 articulated that having the institution potentially mandate specific narratives that they must convey as an

ambassador of the organisation represented a partial overreach and encroached on their ability to take ownership of their practice. This is because they were worried that mandating how volunteers are supposed to talk about the topic of colonialism could undermine what they perceived as being authentic and substantive engagement with visitors. They describe:

'I don't want to sound like a programmed robot either...'

This was further corroborated by Volunteer C12 stating that following a specific 'script' or mandated talking points could inhibit their conversations with visitors regarding the Horniman's colonial past. This is because they felt that having such a structured approach could be viewed as being rigid, not responsive and not sensitive to the concerns or questions that a visitor may have. They explain how potentially talking about colonialism differentiates itself from their normal practice and the structures they use to guide encounters with visitors:

'I almost have a script in my head of the question I'm going to ask the visitor, the stuff I'll say to them, but if I get asked something about colonialism, I don't want to have a script about something like that. I want to, you know, a more natural answer, a proper conversation. It doesn't feel right....'

The views of C2 and C12 then speak to a prevailing discourse present being an Engage volunteer: conversing with people and trusting volunteers to address these topics sensitively. Therefore, there is a need to recognise the agentic capabilities of Engage volunteers as live interpreters, and to be attentive to how the visitor experience and communication of colonial histories is shaped by what volunteers view as either a 'natural' or substantive interaction.
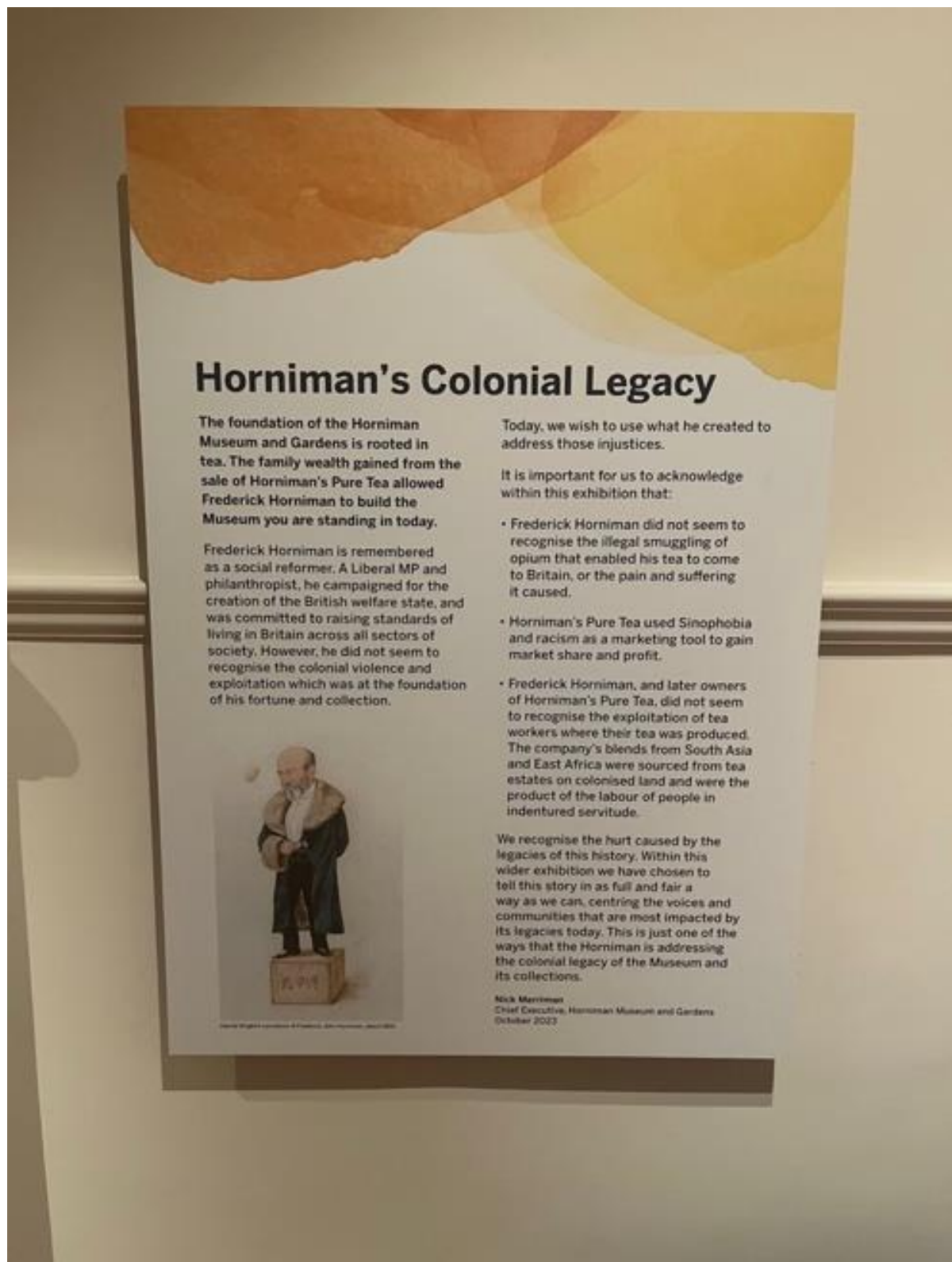
Figure 24- this is one of the panels present in the Cha, Chai, Tea exhibition that outlines the reasoning behind the Horniman's decolonial practice and an avenue through which Engage volunteers can de-escalate any sort of combative encounter with critical visitors (Maidment-Blundell, 2023*i*).

However, as part of this 'natural' engagement, Volunteers C1, C9 and C13 did raise an interesting point regarding the appropriateness of talking about colonialism to children. For Volunteer C1, they commented on a prevalent anxiety present amongst Engage volunteers, particularly at the time of the return of the Bronzes, surrounding their ability to sufficiently communicate difficult topics. This is because there was a worry that considering their role is particularly focused on providing live interpretation for children and families, they may need to talk about colonialism and its legacies. As summarised by C1:

> 'But I think there is a kind of level of one of the other volunteers I was talking to was kind of saying, "well, it's difficult to like, how do you chat to kids about colonialism?"'

This anxiety was also present in the statements made by Volunteer C13. This is because they felt that children may not sufficiently be able to grasp the sensitivity of the topic, let alone be able to understand its complexity. Therefore, Engage volunteers should be cognizant of this and focus on topics present within the Cha, Chai, Tea exhibition that deviate from colonial violence.

> 'It's a very sensitive topic, and I feel like children wouldn't be able to understand it, you know, it's a bit complicated. So how would you? How would you get that across to a kid?'

Volunteer C9 also stated their preference is to avoid the topic completely when interacting with children. This is because they feel that it is the primary responsibility of Engage volunteers to facilitate the learning of children that is responsive to their motivation for visiting, meaning that their discussions should predominantly focus on the contents of the Natural History and World Culture galleries. They explain:

> 'I don't think that should be their primary mission because everyone you engage with is here for a different reason. Why would you bludgeon a child with, you know, all sorts of stories about colonial mistreatment of people?'

By using the word 'bludgeon', this implies that any attempts of utilising Engage volunteers to talk about colonialism could undermine the perceived sense of innocence that children may have regarding these topics. As corollary, this may prevent them from enjoying the space and result in potential harm or feelings of discomfort that could underpin any future consumption of the Horniman.

However, it should be noted that this may not necessarily be applicable for children from global majority backgrounds, or visitors from older demographics. This is because Volunteer C10 made explicit reference to the perceived success of Engage volunteers' interactions with teenagers and adults. They claimed that integrating narratives concerning colonialism and decolonisation as part of their practice may result in a more fruitful visitor experience. They explain:

> *'And I think the teenagers who come in, we don't really engage with them very well. I mean, if you get older school children, and they treat it as a playground to run around largely, but you could actually have a much better dialogue programme going with that, where that would maybe decolonisation and those kinds of discussions would be more relevant.'*

Both Volunteers C6 and C10 did suggest that there were effective methods that Engage volunteers should adopt to not only navigate potential conflict, but also engage with various demographics with topics like Empire. Volunteer C6 notes that volunteers can be sensitive with their communication of colonial histories, and how this is partially informed by sufficient training and awareness of the afterlives of exploitation that are made manifest within the museum space. In their own words,

> *'If as a volunteer, you understand the significance of a space, then you are a lot more equipped to deal with it in a sensitive way. But it's, you don't, it doesn't have to be about like, standing there on a like, on a box and like telling the visitors all about this stuff. It doesn't have to be like, it can be more nuanced…'*

This then implies that communicating the Horniman's colonial histories does not need to be at the forefront of Engage volunteers' practice, but rather a topic that can be raised in response to the active interest of their visitors.

This was further supported by Volunteer C10's suggestion that such encounters did not necessarily need to be combative and can be guided by more of a soft-handed approach oriented towards changing the visitor's thinking. They assert that deploying the use of effective open-ended questions will not only help visitors engage critically with potentially opposing viewpoints, but also the wider structural and material circumstances that engender their reasoning.

> *'…it's just getting people to think a bit more. I mean, you don't, you don't necessarily have to get into an argument just to get somebody. I mean, it's just, I think, if you've got the right questions at your fingertips more, then you can just prompt people a bit to say, "well, why do you think somebody's going to think differently to you?" Is there some way that we can kind of move that dialogue along a little bit?'*

Therefore, one can view the soft-handed approach as not only engaging with visitors dialogically, but also through a guise of a critical pedagogy of place because of C10's insistence of engendering alternative understandings of phenomena related to colonialism. A fruitful way of understanding this is to conceive Engage volunteers as critically aligned pedagogues.

Volunteer C6 did also raise the possibility of Engage volunteers operating as active listeners. This is because they stipulated that since Engage volunteers are live interpreters, they ought to possess a sufficient awareness of the colonial wounds present at the institution, so that they can understand why visitors may experience feelings of discomfort within the space. They explain:

> *'As a space, you know, this is a purpose-built museum building built on the Tea Trade, someone might be uncomfortable being in it, and just having because if you just have that awareness, then you're able to try that little bit harder to just make it fun…'*

This then potentially introduces a new pastoral dimension of Engage volunteering since volunteers may become responsible for helping visitors navigate their own discomfort with the space, especially if they were to communicate colonial histories.

The potential limitations of this were recognised by Volunteers C1 and C13. Volunteer C1 drew attention to how the positionality of the Engage volunteer will not only shape the way in which they interact with visitors, but also how visitors may perceive them. This may then inform visitor willingness to touch upon a potentially sensitive topic. By way of example, they discuss how their own ethnic identity may limit their understanding of the affective connections that visitors from global majority backgrounds may have with the Horniman and its contents:

> *'…my view is definitely limited by the fact I am white, and British, you know, I'm not going to pretend I can speak for the way that certain people like feel about these objects from their home cultures that are in our museums.'*

In remedying this, Volunteer C13 pointed to the benefits of having a more diverse volunteering 'team'. This is because they cited how their own ethnic heritage could help distressed visitors navigate the content of the Cha, Chai, Tea exhibition, since there may be some common alignment in terms of how they feel in the space. They explain:

> *'And then I feel like in my, especially in my team, volunteering team, I'm the only person of colour so I feel like if there is someone else who is of colour or like, of Indian origin, they can speak to me if they feel too uncomfortable speaking with someone of…*
> *Speaker 1: Yeah, who's white.*
> *Speaker 2: I'm trying not to be racist.'*

This alludes to how ethnic identity may implicate the boundaries of live interpretation offered by Engage volunteers, as well as their differential capabilities to grapple with topics concerning colonial legacies.

Preparing volunteers (i): their training needs and wants

In order to prepare for the Horniman's decolonial practice, Engage volunteers called for greater formal training, or structured learning opportunities, so that they can be sufficiently equipped to communicate these histories, and empowered to be responsive to any visitor questions.

When asked about what sort of training they'd like, two key topics emerged: greater information related to the provenance of objects and dialogic training sessions where volunteers can converse and debate with one another regarding the colonial histories and legacies of Frederick Horniman. This desire for greater knowledge and skill suggests how Engage volunteers feel they require sufficient information to enhance their live interpretation and desire an adequate space through which they can grasp the varying nuances associated with historic colonialism. Volunteer C10 demonstrated this when talking about their preferred training session to encounter decolonial practice:

> 'But I think you would need to understand it better, and you'd need to have the space to discuss it so that you do understand the nuances more as well, and have opportunities to develop some of those kinds of open questions with informed people…'

Volunteer C8 suggested that these sessions should be guided by an explicit goal of encouraging Engage volunteers' critical reflection by identifying their own knowledge gaps related to historic colonialism and to problematise one's biases. This is because they feel that getting into the 'nitty gritty detail' of museum's colonial history and legacies will enable people to examine their own 'assumptions' and 'curiosities' which may result in alternative, transformative and potentially transgressive understandings of the colonial wound. They explain:

> 'So, the sorts of training as I was saying, would I think include, which is quite a nitty gritty detail, but include ways for us to explore our own curiosities about and our own assumptions about objects, tea, you know, whatever the content is, and to up the emphasis on asking and telling, balance…'

This then reflects C8's preference of volunteer training being guided by a critical pedagogy of place which is dedicated to helping people *reinhabit* their understandings of historic domination and its afterlives (Gruenewald, 2003, 2008).

This quote also implies that undertaking such training will also reinforce the boundaries of the role of Engage volunteers, and to what extent they can initiate epistemic decolonisation, reconstitution and rehumanisation. This is because they stress the difference between dialogic and didactic modes of communication, 'asking' and 'telling', and so it provides Engage volunteers with a potential awareness of how knowledge is co-created with visitors as part of their activity and how they may potentially change their *terms* of reference (Mignolo, 2018, Potter, 2022).

However, there were problems with this kind of prospective training, namely its depth, frequency, and intensity. For depth, Volunteer C1 argued that expecting Engage volunteers to problematise their own biases based on learning more about Frederick Horniman's colonial connections could constitute a form of information overload. Further, this could act as a potential barrier to Engage volunteering. Consequently, they recognise the need to give Engage volunteers enough knowledge for their live interpretation, in the form of an information sheet, which may not be enough for people to problematise their own biases.

'And there's only so much information people are going to retain, a lot of people, you know, we're doing it once a week, in a morning, you're not going to know every single facet of the life of the Horniman family, and so I do respect the kind of potted version of the history that we're given, in some ways is necessary.'

C1 did recognise that the information sheets could provide a necessary basis upon which to conduct future research. This is because they recognise that it is the onus of the individual Engage volunteers to supplement their knowledge base, meaning that any sort of critical introspection could be initiated by the Horniman's provision and then actualised through their own efforts (McCray, 2016). They state:

'I could go research it on my own, and I'm more than capable of doing that.'

This then indicates how a blend of structured and self-directed learning may be used to deliver critical consciousness as required by a critical pedagogy of place.

C1's commentary about time commitment is also applicable for the frequency of training. In contrast to C8's emphasis, having people problematise their own 'assumptions' and 'curiosities' over a protracted period may not align with the time commitment that people have for Engage volunteering. This then displays an interesting tension between those who view their Engage volunteering as a form of *serious leisure* and are motivated by the durable benefits of alternative perspectives afforded by the training, versus those who may use their volunteering experience more transactionally.

The final problem emerging with such an in-depth and critical training regime is perhaps its intensity. Volunteer C10 stipulates, based on their career experience, that encouraging people to challenge their own assumptions and beliefs requires a large amount of emotional labour and skilled facilitation. They clarify when discussing the practicalities of having people confront the structural workings of white supremacy:

'...that's not an easy thing to do, and you sort of set an expectation on people without really giving them the skill to do it well, and none of us can do it every day.'

The emphasis of skilled facilitation was shared by Volunteer C8:

'You know, and I'm aware of the diversity amongst the volunteers, people of Indian heritage, Caribbean heritage, you know, I think, will require some skilled facilitation, and training around that, helping people to really be self-reflective...'

From this, it is possible to infer that given the perceived diverse nature of the Horniman's volunteering force, encouraging volunteers to voice and problematise their own opinions concerning Empire will require external expertise to guarantee that the experience does not become conflictual. This then raises two questions: one, would the Horniman be willing to front the necessary cost to provide this? Two, what safeguarding measures would the organisation implement to prevent both emotional

and reputational harm for individual Engage volunteers who are confronted with and raise opinions that are deemed as inappropriate?

Preparing volunteers (ii): raising awareness of decolonial practice and the Reset Agenda

As part of training Engage volunteers about the Horniman's decolonial practice, Curatorial Staff C3 and Volunteering Staff C5 stressed that volunteer support for decolonisation was contingent on efficient and transparent communication. This is because they recognised the 'core' and 'central' role Engage volunteers play in supporting the Horniman's practice, as well as their influence in shaping institutional culture. C3 explains:

> *'The volunteers, I think, first and foremost, are core as a central part of how this museum runs, and they should also see themselves that way, less to do with just the content and how it supports decolonisation through the work that we do, but also actually how we treat each other as well and who we are and what they need from the institution as well.'*

As a result, the position of perceived importance occupied by Engage volunteers reinforces the need to have them adequately aware of the Horniman's on-going practice. This was reiterated by C3 stating that there is an institutional expectation of volunteers to understand why decolonial practice is happening:

> *'But we can expect someone to know actually, this is why our line is this way, this is kind of why we've done it this way.'*

Whilst this expectation was in place, both Volunteers C6 and C14 commented on how they were unaware of why the Horniman pursued this course of action. For example, Volunteer C6 stated that they were never made aware by institutional staff that the Bronzes were being returned, as well as what was the justification for them being given back. They explain:

> *'And I knew that they had Benin Bronzes, and then I've since known that they've given them back. But I think that's an interesting point is as a volunteer; we've not actually been given any information on that. No one's told us anything about it.'*

Since they only became aware of the restitution based on their own reading, C6 called on the Horniman to provide greater explanation to Engage volunteers regarding their 'objectives'. This can be interpreted as a desire to have a greater understanding of the workings of the Reset Agenda.

This was further exemplified by Volunteer C14 who described how they would be unable to provide a sufficient answer regarding why the Horniman had decided to put on the Cha, Chai, Tea exhibition. This is because they identified that their lack of knowledge emerges from their unfamiliarity of what are the Horniman's organisational

priorities, as well as the guiding principles underlying their practice. This can be attributed to a perceived failure to address the topic sufficiently, either as part of training or through conversations with Volunteer Managers. They explain:

> *'So, I don't know whether I'd be able to say why, like the actual pinpoint reason if there is one.'*

This then speaks to a difference between the institutional ambition to have volunteers sufficiently aware of why the organisation is pursuing decolonisation and what is present within the Engage volunteers' own community of practice.

Preparing volunteers (iii): Cha, Chai, Tea Training

Leading up to the Cha, Chai, Tea exhibition, Engage volunteers were first introduced to its overall theme and general content as part of their summer social. Curatorial Staff C3 provided a brief presentation which covered: what generally decolonisation looks like; what the aims and objectives of the exhibition are; the key principles guiding the ways in which the Horniman interacts with their stakeholders; and more information regarding the colonial connections of Frederick Horniman (see figure 25).
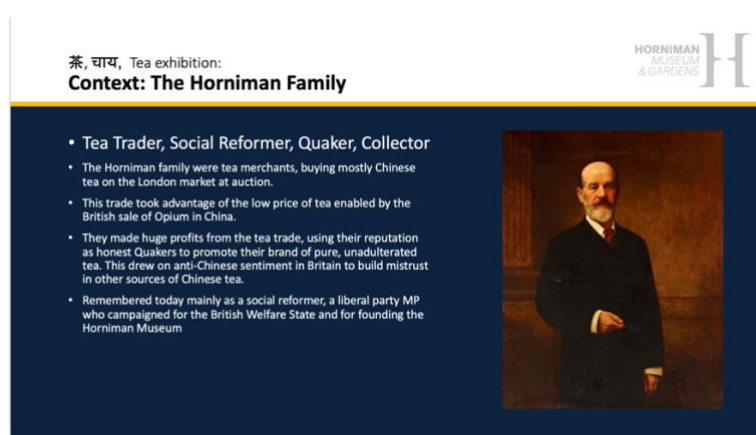
Figure 25- this is one of the slides from the Tea presentation given at the volunteer summer social by Curatorial Staff C3 (Curatorial Staff C3, 2023).

When asked, Volunteer C8 stated that they appreciated the presentation. They commented positively on being able to learn more about Frederick Horniman, especially considering how they were previously unaware of his status as a Quaker and how this was used to assert the purity of his tea.

> *'There was something I learned about, I've forgotten now, but about Horniman himself he was a Quaker, and I didn't actually realise he was a Quaker...'*

Beyond this, they also alluded to how the training session also strengthened their support for the Horniman's practice. This is because the presentation contained a strong emphasis on 'connecting people' which represented a distinct new way of working (see figure 26), and so this aligned with C8's view of the Horniman as an organisation that provides social and popular good. C8 reflects this when providing their opinions of Curatorial Staff C3's presentation:

> 'I was very open and curious listening to, and I really liked some of his graphics, you know, like that one there with connecting people or facilitating relationships, etc, etc. All these settings and the principles of this way of working.'

Through this presentation, Engage volunteers could learn more about Frederick Horniman and his colonial connections, the principles underlying the Cha, Chai, Tea exhibition as well as its aims and desired outcomes. It also served as an opportunity for the organisation to engender greater volunteer support for decolonial practice.
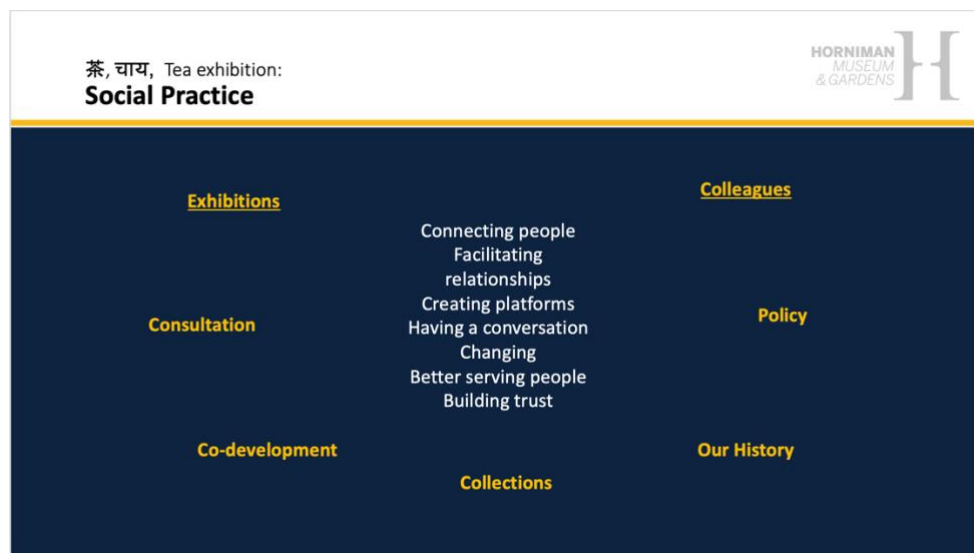
Figure 26- this is depicting the core principles underlying the practice of Curatorial Staff C3, as well as some of the themes present in Cha, Chai, Tea (Curatorial Staff C3, 2023).

Following on from the presentation, Engage volunteers had two subsequent training sessions. The first was a dedicated tour given by Curatorial Staff C3 around the exhibition space and the second was a combined tour and dialogic training session facilitated by both the current Volunteer Manager and Volunteering Staff C5. Engage volunteers were required to attend one of the three sessions offered, and the session was oriented around discussing some of the exhibition's content as well as their expected role within the space. The themes discussed included: the cultivation and consumption of Tea; the live interpretation that Engage volunteers would be providing; the objects that they will be using for their Object Based Learning; as well as touching upon some of the themes of colonialism present in the exhibition (Fieldnotes- 06/10/2023, 12/10/2023).

Tea bricks:

Formed of ground down black tea, these are commonly used in Eurasia, Russia and in parts of Tibet. The brick feels like it would crumble but it's quite robust and difficult to break up. It requires a tea-pick. A sharp object to break off tea and brew it.

The designs are branding that reflect the company and many are Russian. Easy to pack and move, originally many tea bricks were moved via horses.

You'll notice on the underside there are grooves, these allow the brick to be broken up and used as currency. In some nations where the currency might be unreliable, tea was always valuable. It also tripled up as tea for a drink or as food.

There was a myth that some of these bricks are congealed with blood but this is untrue. They are moulded and dried, blood would negatively impact the flavour.

This is made from 100% Chinese Green tea.

The tea brick corresponds to section 2 where this a display of tea bricks. We have a broken off portion. It is a Black tea ground down and compressed. It also correlates to a recipe in section 5, in the recipe flip book. Butter tea is often made with tea bricks also.

Spices for Chai:

Pepper, cinnamon, cloves, sometimes saffron, cardamom are the main spices used for chai. With warming properties, it is loved across South Asia but also enjoyed daily.

Smell the aromas.
It is important to note that all recipes are different and people make their spice mixes different across South Asia and across families.

This Chai tea comes from Assam, a state in northern India.

Can you guess what spices are in this Chai?

Figure 27- this is a copy of the document that was provided to Engage volunteers as part of the training conducted by Volunteering Staff C5 (Maidment-Blundell, 2023j).

Engage volunteers were asked about what they thought went well with the training and what could be improved. Volunteer C12 described how they appreciated the layered approach to training since it addressed both the practical concerns of Engage volunteers surrounding their object handling, the looming topic of colonialism and how it may implicate their practice. This is because it provided them with sufficient

knowledge regarding the object journeys of what they would be handling and enabled them to get guidance on how to structure learning encounters with various audiences (see figure 27).

> *'I think what worked well was, I liked the piece of paper that we were given, it sort of had, you know, a bit about the history of the object, the contexts of it, and we were also told, you know, these are sort of things you could say to the visitor, you can engage with them, smell, touch this.'*

Even though C12 appreciated the 'piece of paper', or training materials, that were provided to them, they also valued being encouraged by Volunteering Staff C5 to tour about the exhibition space on their own. This is because C12 felt that going around the exhibition space by themselves built on the content they learnt in the dialogic training session, and especially fleshed out their awareness of the 'colonialist' themes present as part of Cha, Chai, Tea. As a result, this gave them more 'questions' regarding their own level of knowledge, as well as a sufficient basis upon which to engage in forms of self-directed learning.

> *'I thought that was very useful, actually. Because like I said, I learned a lot. If I had gone in there with just information on the, you know, the paper sheet that we were we given, I would definitely have been lacking so much context.'*

And:

> *'But even like I said, going around the Tea exhibition, it gave me more questions. Okay, I should research this when I get home.'*

However, Volunteers C13 and C14 stated that the training could be improved since their experiences were more didactic than dialogic, with C13 commenting that it was like 'being in a lecture'. For C13, they explained that they felt reluctant to engage substantively with the topics being discussed because of their own confidence. This is because they did not know their fellow Engage volunteers in the session, and so they did not feel comfortable communicating their own opinions regarding historic colonialism and its legacies.

> *'…but if there was like five other people, I wouldn't have the confidence to bring my opinions up to them.'*

C14 reiterated this by talking about how they felt self-conscious during the training. This is because they felt that the amount of people on the tour conducted by C3 added further pressure to ask questions that would be regarded as valuable by fellow Engage volunteers. This then speaks to the perceived requirement of being validated by other people in the training session can act as an inhibiting factor to learning:

> *'…but I think sometimes when you're in a big group like that, you're spread out, it can feel a little bit like, "oh, is this a silly question?"*

This was further evidenced by Volunteer C14 stating that any sort of questioning they may have would also be implicated by potentially offending or upsetting someone. This

is because they characterise the topic of historic colonialism and its legacies as being 'very sensitive', and so they self-censor in front of people that they do not know or do not voice opinions that could harm their standing within the community of Engage volunteers.

> '…you don't also know who is in your group, so you don't know whether actually the way that you're going to ask the question could potentially offend or upset.'

This was also true for my own training session. There was a significant amount of lively discussion present when talking about everyone's different consumption of Tea, as well as how the plant is cultivated. People were evidently comfortable and more than willing to discuss the significance of a beverage and plant that connected all of us. This changed as soon as Volunteering Staff C5 and the current volunteer manager started to discuss the reception of Frederick Horniman. The atmosphere became heavy and solemn at hearing how it was important to acknowledge and recognise his connections to colonial and imperial violence, but that this does not necessarily tarnish the positives that he brought by founding the institution or undermine the affinity that volunteers may have with the historic founder (Fieldnotes- 12/10/2023). From here, there was a profound lack of discussion in comparison to before which hinted at a sense of collective apprehension and nervousness amongst the group.

In rectifying this, Volunteer C14 suggested that, based on their experience of the tour with C3, that the Horniman should structure any sort of future training related to decolonisation around dialogue and critical questioning.

> 'Like asking them [Engage volunteers] rhetorical questions, or asking them questions, asking for their so that then it encourages a conversation, a dialogue, again, in a smaller group would probably have worked better.'

This suggests a possible avenue through which volunteers could begin to discuss the relevance of colonialism without the fear of potential backlash from others within their own community of practice. Consequently, this may engender the feeling that these arenas operate as safe spaces which may be required for critical and in-depth discussions of historic colonialism and its afterlives.

The Horniman Museum: Discussion of Key Findings

RQ1:

Interviews confirmed that Engage volunteers strongly identify with the Horniman and its ethos. The evidence shows that this can be attributed to the personal benefits that volunteers derive from their *serious leisure*, i.e., being able to socialise with likeminded people or the sense of identity and purpose formed because of their activity as an ambassador for the organisation, as well as viewing the institution's practice as an innate public good. Consequently, the decision to either support or contest decolonial practice emerged not only based on the current consumption of the organisation as part of their voluntary experience, but also from the perceived responsibilities of the institution to wider society and quality of services rendered.

These combined phenomena can explain the explicit support shown by Engage volunteers for pursuing decolonisation. This is because there was a strong recognition that the Horniman needs to make amends for their colonial past, and so as part of their purview as an educational organisation and one that prides itself as being at the forefront of cultural issues, it is their responsibility to raise popular awareness concerning historic colonial dispossession, exploitation and violence and its contemporary significance. From this, volunteers discursively positioned their site of volunteering as a space of healing, or a place for and of connectiveness, committed to highlighting and dismantling notions of separation as part of reconfiguring relationships between the former coloniser and formerly colonised.

Significant examples of these were seen with the commentary of those that were pro-return of the Bronzes and those who spoke positively about the content and framing of the Cha, Chai, Tea exhibition. For the Bronzes, volunteers acknowledged how returning them represented a significant change in museological practice as it not only put the needs and wants of the source community ahead of the Horniman's but also presented an opportunity upon which to build a new working relationship that places consent, fairness and transparency at the heart of any interaction. For the Cha, Chai, Tea exhibition, volunteers similarly commented that critically engaging with Frederick Horniman's and Horniman's Tea complicity in fuelling the opium epidemic was reflective of institution's genuine and substantive commitment to facilitate forms of healing by practicing truth-telling and epistemic justice. Consequently, these two titular examples were met positively by volunteers who felt it was reflective of the Horniman's commitment to actualise change.

Whilst volunteers generally supported this overt anti-colonial stance, it did come into conflict with the personal consumption of the Horniman for some. This arose when discussing the need to problematise Frederick Horniman and his status as a benevolent and noble philanthropist, and how challenging people to reconfigure their understandings of imperial-era figures could constitute the Horniman overstepping its bounds. They felt this was because problematising Frederick Horniman could undermine the attachment that volunteers may have towards him and the organisation that he founded, which stands in contrast to how he is portrayed in the public realm,

i.e., on Topple the Racists. Furthermore, one volunteer expressed the view that as a knowledge producing institution, the museum should remain neutral and empower its visitors to make their own conclusions rather than being an overtly political agent which is challenging their own neutrality and promoting a specific view of Empire. A specific example of this was seen with expressed opposition to returning the Bronzes as it would not only implicate the World-Culture offer of the museum but also may directly contravene the educational responsibilities it has for all of its stakeholders. This is because volunteers stated that it is museum's responsibility to guarantee access to the Bronzes, and by extension initiate a more dynamic discussion concerning the nature of object ownership, the significance of their lived context, as well as a more global discussion of 19th century British Imperialism and the colonisation of West Africa. This then implies that in the eyes of this volunteer the educational responsibility of the organisation trumps the moralistic need to redress their colonial wounds.

RQ2:

Taking this forward to future experiences of Engage volunteering, volunteers reported that pursuing decolonisation as an iterative process would not only reaffirm and strengthen the place attachment that they have, but also the significance of their activity. Predominantly, these perceptions emerge as a result of the durable benefits that Engage volunteers may be able to derive from their Serious Leisure. For example, interlocutors alluded to the new narratives and histories that may emerge because of decolonial practice which will then update the content of their live interpretation which they view as being rather stale. This then speaks to how future volunteer retention can be tied to the specific benefits afforded by their activity. More importantly, Engage volunteers also commented on their own capacity to support the Horniman's decolonial practice, especially when thinking about their interaction with various audiences. This is because multiple interlocutors stated that their live interpretation may become more important over time, since they are a key conduit through which visitors can engage with the organisation's colonial histories and legacies and by extension engender transgressive and transformative outcomes. Consequently, this not only speaks to their perception that Engage volunteering may become more critically oriented in terms of fostering instances of historical empathy, but also reflects the evidence of how Engage volunteers see themselves as vital contributors in actualising the Horniman's decolonial practice. Therefore, their attachment to the Horniman would be enhanced over time, if they were able to undertake this course of action.

The increasing importance of their live interpretation was met with the prevailing attitude that Engage volunteers should also have greater say in the decision-making of the Horniman. This is because it was felt that the current relationship that Engage volunteers have with the organisation is hierarchical in nature, and so they possess limited influence in shaping the overall institutional culture and practice. Based on this, they called on the Horniman to facilitate the inclusion of volunteers in the organisation's decision-making process so that they are empowered to shape organisational practice. This need and want is what makes the inclusion and presence

of Engage volunteers at the recent workshop dedicated to generating new behaviours and values, as well as having a volunteer present on the interview board for the CEO even more significant. This is because these operate as a tacit acknowledgement and recognition of the labour of Engage volunteers and their vital role in supporting and shaping the visitor experience, and so having a dedicated presence and voice at these events points to how their experiences and insights may be drawn upon as part of the organisation's decision-making process in guiding future practice. Therefore, this then speaks to an elevation of the role of Engage volunteers from solely being viewed as supporting the daily running of the Museum and the visitor experience to a more influential role in shaping overall institutional practice.

Finally, the calls for diversifying Engage volunteering represent a distinctive change which is reflected in the institutional ambitions of the Horniman. As outlined in the Reset Agenda, the aspiration of the Horniman to have a more representative volunteer cohort that reflects the ethnic diversity of Lewisham and to remove barriers to Engage volunteering would introduce additional perspectives and voices, thereby, furthering their commitment to removing barriers to cultural education. Moreover, having additional perspectives and voices may enhance the capacity of Engage volunteers to be responsive and sensitive to the various experiences of museum visitors within the space. For example, according to C13, having a more diverse Engage volunteering body would mean that they could utilise their own lived experience as a means to addressing any potential visitor discomfort within the space, or it could be used to enhance the sense of connection engendered as part of their live interpretation. This then introduces not only a more pastoral dimension to Engage volunteering since they would become responsible for helping visitors navigate their own emotions within the space, but also introduces the prospect of greater emotional labour as part of their practice which will then require further safeguarding measures to guarantee that volunteers do not experience burn-out or are overwhelmed by their experience.

RQ3:

The Horniman's efforts to equip, empower and support volunteers to communicate decolonised histories revealed a central conflict with regard to safeguarding. This conflict emerged because of the institution's responsibility to prevent any potential conflictual encounters with visitors, to minimise the amount of emotional labour present in Engage volunteering, and to avoid any reputational harm caused by Engage volunteers. By instructing volunteers to not substantively engage with the topic, this institutional expectation afforded volunteers a greater degree of comfort with their role since they would have the means to deflect any conflictual encounters. This can also be viewed as preventing any further barriers to Engage volunteering. However, some volunteers feel this represents a lack of respect of their expertise and trust to engage with this topic sufficiently. Engage volunteers interviewees placed a strong emphasis on not shying away from this topic since they recognise the importance of validating any concerns that visitors may have, and that expecting them to deflect conversations creates the impression that they are unable to frame any encounter with decolonisation in a way that promotes critical reflection and generative outcomes. As a result,

volunteer views' endorse a fine balance between safeguarding and empowering them in a way to take ownership of their practice.

Interviews with institutional staff emphasised that there was an expectation that Engage volunteers should be sufficiently aware of why the Horniman had either decided to return the Bronzes, or why they have commissioned the Cha, Chai, Tea exhibition. They felt that volunteers need to be able to answer any visitor questions related to the Horniman's decolonial practice. Whilst the summer social provided an opportunity for volunteers to gain a basic understanding of what decolonisation is and how it was being actualised within the Horniman's setting, i.e., the Cha, Chai, Tea exhibition, the lack of clarification regarding the return of the Bronzes posed a particular problem for volunteers that I interviewed. This is because Engage volunteers reported that they only found out about the event after the fact and received no information of why they had been returned and how this was set out in the Reset Agenda. By not providing this information, volunteers stated that their ability to sufficiently respond to visitor questions about repatriating the Bronzes was undermined. This then highlights how public-facing volunteers require constant communication regarding current institutional practice and updates on change. Additionally, they require an awareness of the ideological and practical justifications for embracing decolonial practice.

Building on providing the 'why', Engage volunteers called for both dialogic training sessions as well as dense information related to the organisation's colonial connections. This is because they felt that any efforts to decolonise the institution necessitates volunteers to problematise their own assumptions and biases through discussing these histories in extensive detail within their own community of practice. This then speaks to the idea that it is the museum's responsibility to provide all the necessary information and opportunities for this to occur via structured learning opportunities. Whilst this may result in 'reinhabited' understandings of the organisation's colonial connections, volunteers suggested that this would require an extensive time commitment to learn all the necessary in-depth information; a significant amount of emotional labour to continually problematise one own's assumptions, biases and understandings of Empire; and skilled external facilitation to guarantee that such endeavours are generative and not conflictual. Consequently, one Engage volunteer expressed that it is likely that only those with a large amount of free time and a strong identification with the Horniman and its endeavours would be willing to undertake said training, meaning that this could act as a barrier to Engage volunteering. Moreover, calling on the organisation to provide this can be perceived as unfeasible since it may require extensive time and resources on the behalf of the institution, and so it is more likely that they will be given the necessary information packs to prepare them as part of their volunteering. Therefore, whilst there is a need and want for structured learning opportunities that equips and empowers volunteers to support the Horniman's decolonial practice, the actuality of the scenario aligns with only providing the bare minimum for volunteers to conduct their practice.

Finally, as part of the Cha, Chai Tea exhibition, Curatorial Staff C3 stated that volunteers were expected to support the central discourses of resonance and connectedness by drawing attention to the various socio-cultural contexts in which Tea

is consumed. Engage volunteers report that the dedicated training sessions provided for this exhibition were effective because volunteers explicitly welcomed: receiving the necessary information and provenance of objects for their Object Based Learning; undertaking tours to enable them to become familiar with the exhibition space and their role within it; and, having opportunities to discuss the colonial connections of Frederick Horniman and its contemporary relevance to the current iteration of the Horniman Museum. Whilst this training enabled volunteers to familiarise themselves with the content of the exhibition and provided a basis upon which to conduct further self-directed learning, they reported that the attempts to fashion it into a safe space which could enable critical reflection and reinhabited understandings to emerge somewhat failed. This is because volunteers did not feel entirely comfortable and confident enough to discuss the colonial legacy of Frederick Horniman with people that they were not familiar with, especially based on the potential reputational harm that could emerge from voicing opposing viewpoints. This then points to how the social and material environment of the training session can either enable, or inhibit in this case, in-depth and substantive engagement with the topic which yields transformative and transgressive outcomes. Therefore, evidence suggests that adequately equipping and empowering volunteers to grapple with colonial and decolonised histories requires a safe and trusted space in which people feel comfortable to navigate these topics.

Conclusion:

RQ1: How do volunteers respond to their institution's decolonisation efforts?

Any sort of response from volunteers to their organisation's decolonisation efforts are filtered through both their moral and political opinions concerning the display and representation of Empire, as well as through their attachment to and consumption of their site of volunteering as part of their *serious leisure*.

At Fulham Palace, volunteers were generally supportive of their institution's decolonisation efforts since it aligned with the moral imperative to interrogate the Church's complicity in the trans-Atlantic trade in enslaved Africans and to foreground the acts of resistance by enslaved and freed peoples, However, it must be noted that there was some opposition to the Palace's practice which emerged because of anxieties concerning the framing of the new interpretation and the implications this may have for their live interpretation as well as the potential backlash from the public apology given by the current Bishop of London. Consequently, opposition to decolonial practice emerges because of the changes to volunteers' consumption of the Palace as well as not wanting to see a place that they strongly identify with being criticised given the culture wars.

For the Horniman Museum, there was strong volunteer support for any kind of decolonial practice since they recognised the importance of redressing their colonial wounds, namely with the returning the ownership of the Benin Bronzes and problematising Frederick Horniman and his complicity in fuelling the Opium epidemic and Sinophobia as part the Cha, Chai, Tea exhibition. Volunteers who opposed some aspects of the Horniman's decolonial practice did so because of the implications that returning artefacts may have in undermining their ability to educate various audiences about World Cultures and how interrogating their historic founder may implicate their affection for him and corresponding appreciation of the Museum that he created.

Volunteer responses to any sort of decolonial practice at the British Museum were more mixed. Volunteers did recognise the moral imperative to acknowledge and communicate the colonial connections of the organisation, especially since the institution claims to be a Museum of the World. However, opposition did emerge regarding to what extent this should be foregrounded since solely focusing on European enslavement and colonisation not only overshadowed other instances of oppression but also distracted the conversation away from focusing on modern slavery. This complexity was also present concerning any sort of repatriation. Volunteers recognised the importance of redressing the museum's colonial wounds via repatriation but hinted that this would come at the expense of guaranteeing that any contested objects are accessible to various audiences.

RQ2: What implications may decolonisation efforts have for their volunteering experience?

At Fulham Palace, volunteers commented positively on the changes that pursuing decolonisation would have for their experience. Volunteers stated that their practice would become not only more dialogically informed but also have a greater critical edge since they may become increasingly responsible for engendering transformative and transgressive understandings for visitors. Based on this, live-interpreter volunteers would be able to derive greater pleasure and a sense of purpose from their activity as they take on the role of instigators of historical empathy. This led to the perception that adopting this role, as well as the pursuing of decolonisation more globally would enrich and rejuvenate the social environment of volunteering at the Palace since volunteers would be able to receive new durable benefits in the form of new learning and training, but also actively contribute to something they deem as important and worthwhile. However, it was noted that the critical edge to practice may introduce a greater likelihood of conflictual encounters with visitors, and so expecting volunteers to communicate these histories could introduce elements of discomfort with their practice. Finally, it was felt that the new exhibition and future decolonial practice would also help to diversify the volunteer cohort at the Palace, which then reaffirmed the commitment to make the organisation more accessible for all audiences.

At the Horniman, volunteers felt that pursuing decolonisation would enrich their volunteering experience since they would be able to make active contributions to actualising their institution's decolonial ambitions via their live interpretation, have greater say in the decision making of the organisation, and it would build on the intent of the Horniman to diversify their volunteering cohort. However, there was some anxiety at the prospect of being more forthright about the Horniman's colonial connections, especially if this was perceived as dictating to people how they should feel about Empire. Therefore, they stipulate that volunteer live interpretation should be more concerned with communicating lived experience, thereby, cementing efforts at epistemic reconstitution.

At the British Museum, volunteers suggested that their experience would change in terms of feeling more comfortable in their role due to changing external perceptions of the organisation; deriving a sense of purpose since they can actively support the museum's decolonisation process; gaining further learning opportunities; and having a more diverse volunteer cohort. Although these positives were communicated, negative changes were highlighted since there was a strong perception that producing new tours that embrace epistemic decolonisation, and reconstitution could result in more conflict with visitors without substantive efforts being made to return contested objects.

RQ3: In what specific ways does the institution seek to engage, equip, empower, and support their volunteers to communicate decolonised histories?

To sufficiently equip, empower and support volunteers to communicate decolonised histories as part of a critical pedagogy of place, there needs to be a blend of formal dialogic training provided by the institution, the encouragement of self-directed learning so that volunteers can undertake their own learning, appropriate safeguarding measures that protects the volunteer, and a certain level of trust that enables volunteers to take ownership of their practice to communicate these histories if they so wish.

At Fulham Palace, engaging and facilitating dialogic training sessions for volunteers in order to slowly introduce the content and themes of new the exhibition was successful. This is because it qualified volunteers as valid stakeholders in the Palace's decolonisation efforts; gave them an awareness of why the Palace was pursuing this course of action; provided space to encounter and debate the significance of the Bishop of London's ties to historic colonialism and Trans-Atlantic Enslavement within their own community of practice; and clearly communicated the expected boundaries of their practice. Whilst the Palace's preparation of volunteers can be viewed largely as a success, there is still a need to develop additional safeguarding mechanisms for volunteers from global majority backgrounds to prevent them from undertaking too much emotional labour and experiencing burnout from their practice.

The Horniman's attempts to sufficiently equip and empower their volunteers was more mixed. For the Cha, Chai, Tea, the training given was adequate in preparing Engage volunteers for the Object Based Learning that they would be providing to support the exhibition's main themes and messages. However, the dialogic training sessions were somewhat lacking regarding discussing the colonial connections of Frederick Horniman since it was constrained by the unfamiliarity that volunteers had with one another. This was compounded by a lack of communication of why the Horniman had decided to commission the Cha, Chai, Tea exhibition, which also surfaced around the time of returning of the Bronzes. As a consequence, several volunteers felt that they could not sufficiently explain why the organisation had undertaken such a move. Whilst it was appropriate to safeguard volunteers, the expectation to not engage in depth with visitors about the colonial connections of the Horniman was not warmly received by volunteers since they wanted to engage with visitors authentically and felt that any sort of institutional constraint represented a lack of trust on the behalf of the institution to engage with this topic.

Similarly, volunteers at the British Museum called upon their organisation to do more in equipping, empowering and supporting them to communicate decolonised histories. By encouraging volunteers to deflect conversations away from controversial topics, this safeguarding measure created a sense of discomfort and unease for some public facing volunteers who wanted to talk about the topic because of its perceived importance. This then led to some directly contravening the museum's expectations of

their practice. However, undertaking this required their own self-directed learning to develop the required knowledgebase for what they viewed as meaningful and substantive communication of the British Museum's colonial histories. Because of this, volunteers wanted the British Museum to provide further structured learning opportunities, mainly in the form of dialogic training sessions, that would provide them with a sufficient awareness, knowledge and understanding of the museum's colonial histories and its legacies. This would also not only serve as an opportunity to critically reflect upon these histories and legacies but also consider how this may implicate the ways in which volunteers dialogically interact with visitors.

What can we learn?

When applying and comparing the findings of this PhD, there are two groups of themes that are of particular use for organisations that are involving volunteers as part of their decolonisation efforts. First, institutional change and navigating politically charged climates and second, volunteer wellbeing and valuing volunteer agency and expertise.

Institutional change and navigating politically charged climates:

Regarding institutional change, Fulham Palace was the most transparent and forthright about their decolonisation process with volunteers in comparison to the British Museum and the Horniman Museum, where volunteers commented that they either felt siloed or unaware of why decolonial practice was happening at their organisation. This is because volunteers at Fulham Palace were continually updated throughout the exhibition development process, which occurred over a protracted period. This meant that Front of House and Tour Guide volunteers could encounter, debate and discuss the decolonising emphasis of the temporary exhibition, i.e., historically recontextualising individual Bishops of London like Bishop Porteus or foregrounding the acts of resistance by enslaved and freed peoples, on their own terms. By doing this, volunteers felt a strong sense of recognition and validation as important stakeholders in their organisation's decolonisation process, rather than being considered as an after-thought which was profoundly felt at the British Museum and somewhat at the Horniman. However, it should be noted that the Horniman took active steps to recognise the labour of Engage volunteers and their role in supporting the daily running of the organisation through having them represented at dedicated forums and on the interview panel for the new director. This then stresses the importance of having clear and transparent lines of communication to sufficiently make volunteers aware of any institutional change, as well as giving them a greater voice in the decision-making process behind each organisation's decolonisation process.

It is also important to think about the terms that frame volunteer responses to decolonisation. This is because the motivation to volunteer and carry on volunteering alongside the political beliefs of individuals as well as how they feel the organisation should operate in wider society will be the central frames through which the perceived positives and negatives of decolonisation are contextualised. Overcoming volunteer resistance will require organisations to frame institutional change in a way that directly

adds or enhances volunteer experience. Volunteers from all three organisations indicated an enthusiasm for this by: being able to actively derive a sense of purpose and pride from supporting museum decolonisation; appreciating a more diverse volunteer workforce; being able to learn more about the histories of a place or peoples that they have some affinity with; or, refreshing their live interpretation through updating their practice with new content. This reinforces how important it is to qualify the potential changes and impacts of museum decolonisation in with which volunteers are familiar.

It is important to acknowledge the varying intensities of conflict and scrutiny that public-facing volunteers may be subject to. Even-though volunteers at all three organisations provided examples of where they have been confronted with critical visitors, either because their organisation was not doing enough to redress their colonial wounds or due to them embracing decolonial action, the sharpest critique was felt by volunteers at the British Museum. In part, this can be explained because of the global reputation and standing of the organisation, as well as the widespread perception of it as a 'Bastion of Colonialism'. This then speaks to the importance of volunteer managers being cognizant of how their organisation is externally perceived, as well as the wider political context which frames any pursued decolonial practice. This also then reinforces the importance of transparency and clear lines of communication. Volunteers both at the British Museum and the Horniman demonstrated a hazy understanding of why their organisations had decided to pursue decolonisation, meaning that they may not be able to sufficiently answer questions from visitors as to why decolonisation was being pursued. This was not the case at Fulham Palace, where it was reported that volunteers had a clear understanding of what was happening and that they were kept continually in the know. Therefore, this suggests that to help volunteers navigate potentially contested political terrain, they require a sufficient understanding of what sort of decolonial practice is happening, as well as the rationale underpinning the why.

Volunteer wellbeing and valuing volunteer expertise and agency:

This then has implications for volunteer well-being and how they feel their agency and expertise is valued. First and foremost, each of the case studies reflects that volunteers very much care about their organisations they operate on the behalf of, especially in terms of how it is perceived by various audiences and perceived contribution it makes to wider society. Because of this, an institution's reputation as well as the perceived significance of their decolonisation efforts will be something that public-facing volunteers will actively be confronted with as they engage members of inquisitive publics, which then may lead to conflictual encounters. Therefore, all three case studies make a strong argument for adequate volunteer safeguarding by encouraging volunteers to shy away from conflict and to direct any sort of dissent to the relevant parties who are sufficiently equipped to engage with it.

Another factor to consider is the importance of safeguarding volunteers as part of any sort of training related to decolonisation. The findings from the British Museum and the Horniman indicated that the social environment of volunteering as well as the relative

standing of the individual within their own community of practice are inhibiting factors as part of equipping and empowering volunteers to engage with and communicate colonial and decolonial histories. For example, this was made manifest regarding the limits around the 'discord' that volunteer managers at the British Museum tried to engender, but this gave little consideration as to how vocalising either dissenting opinions regarding the organisation's practice or offensive opinions may impact individual volunteers, especially those that come from global majority backgrounds. This was also true for the commentary offered by Engage volunteers regarding their unwillingness to discuss the significance of colonial figures like Frederick Horniman with other volunteers with whom they are unfamiliar. However, this was not reported at Fulham Palace, with some even commenting on their appreciation to learn more about the colonial histories of the Bishops of London and to debate it amongst their community of practice. As a result, it is recommended that volunteers managers who try to broach topics related to decolonisation in training sessions do so in a safe and trusted environment predicated on mutually agreed expectations amongst volunteers.

Moreover, equipping and empowering volunteers to communicate the decolonial histories of the organisation necessitates a layered approach. In part, this can be attributed to not only sufficiently training volunteers in the content they are expected to communicate, but also the terms of these conversations in how they interact with various audiences. This means that it will be necessary to interrogate the biases of individual volunteers and how this shapes the potential visitor-volunteer encounter. This point was explicitly raised amongst volunteers from the British Museum and the Horniman. They acknowledge the importance of problematise their own biases in such a way that they are able to de-centre themselves and so they are able to structure conversations in ways that have generative and transformative outcomes, for example without inflecting the material they are presenting with instances of white guilt. Even though there was a dedicated Diversity, Equality and Inclusion session related to 'problematising one's biases', such a point was only briefly mentioned at Fulham Palace when considering future implications for their volunteering. However, it is important to consider how far volunteers are willing to problematise their biases. As pointed out by Engage volunteers at the Horniman, only those who express a strong sense of loyalty to their organisation and purpose from their activity would be willing to undertake such intensive training, meaning that it is not feasible to expect every public-facing volunteer to undergo this. Furthermore, undertaking training that may generate increased amounts of emotional labour may challenge volunteer motivation, especially since it may contravene their volunteering as a leisure experience. In rectifying this, I would suggest providing optional externally led sessions which can enable volunteers to problematise their own biases and critically reflect how they may shape their encounters with visitors. I would also recommend providing additional resources, e.g., Fulham Palace's folder, which clearly outlines and justifies why the organisation is pursuing decolonisation, as it may help to instigate the beginnings of critical reflection around how public-facing volunteers can integrate these new perspectives into their own practice.

An important part of valuing volunteer expertise is recognising the lived experience, knowledges and skills that people bring with them to their volunteering. One significant

thing I encountered as part of this PhD, those who volunteer at all three organisations and have expressed an interest in decolonising museums bring a wealth of knowledge and experience with them, whether it because of their prior academic studies or professional work experience. As a result, those who are designing training to sufficiently equip and empower volunteers should recognise that they may significant familiarity with arguments surrounding the representation of Empire and take this into account.

Finally, valuing volunteer agency and expertise also requires that they are trusted to successfully navigate conversations around decolonisation. Whilst Front of House and Tour Guide volunteers at Fulham Palace were explicitly able to talk about the colonial/enslaving connections of individual Bishops of London, live interpreter volunteers at the British Museum and the Horniman did not have such liberty. As extensively covered in both finding chapters regarding safeguarding provisions and the implications this has for live interpretation, some volunteers feel a particular imperative to be forthright about historic colonialism and its legacies. As reported, expecting them to shy away from 'controversial' topics, namely repatriation and their corresponding object journeys tied to historic colonialism or colonial exploitation related to the Tea Trade, serves as a disservice to what volunteers want to communicate, especially based on their moral commitments or willingness to support their organisation's decolonial efforts, their own capability in navigating such conversations and what visitors may expect from their experience. To adequately respect volunteer needs and wants, as well as what visitors may want from them as part of the visitor-volunteer interaction, volunteers should be given the ability and space to talk about 'controversial topics' predicated upon mutually agreed boundaries surrounding their practice. This would then result in valuing volunteer expertise in terms of how best to communicate these new narratives, in particular because of their day-to-day experiences of dealing with visitors.

Benefits of this research

The main contribution of this PhD is in foregrounding an agentic and dynamic conceptualisation of volunteering and how pursuing museum decolonisation impacts this. Prior research related to volunteer motivation, and more specifically within museums, has utilised cognitive psychological approaches, like the Volunteer Functions Inventory, which provide static interpretations of why people volunteer based on the analytic unit of the rational individual. In consequence, conceptualisations of volunteer motivation are static and do not account for how these changes over time. As a result, having a more dynamic view of volunteer motivation that can account for how it may change over time emerges from highlighting: how volunteers constitute the positives and navigate the negatives of their *serious leisure*; how they construct and draw upon a sense of identity and purpose from their activity; and position themselves according to the material environment in which their practice is situated. Therefore, a holistic rendering of volunteer motivation and practice according to their individual, collective, and place-based contexts provides more of a basis upon which to predicate any examination of volunteer responses and contributions to tackling colonial legacies within organisations.

It is also important to specifically qualify the context of the decolonial work being undertaken. This is because it is important to distinguish approaches to combatting colonial legacies according to their post-, de-, or anti-colonial roots. As mentioned previously, decolonial collaboration within museums can result either in the indigenising of spaces which analytically bifurcates the worlds of the coloniser and colonised which is not applicable in multi-ethnic Britain. Instead of this, adopting an anti-colonial approach, or more specifically a museology of hope as shown by this PhD, within Western contexts circumvents this by stressing the need to redress collective colonial wounds to promote a new way of operating and practicing between the former coloniser and formerly colonised. This is predicated upon pluralistic views of how we relate to and with one another between various social worlds. This PhD actively makes a call to for an expanded understandings of volunteering and volunteers as *agents of decolonisation*.

Finally, any further research being conducted related to bottom-up reactions to museum decolonisation would benefit from adopting a Multi-Sited Ethnographic approach. This would not only shine a light within the Black-Box of volunteering, but also adds further scope for developing curricula to guide preparation, training and support. This is underlined when exploring the consequences of pursuing decolonisation as people's reactions and stances will be informed by discourses and corresponding lived experience that operate at macro-, meso- and micro-levels beyond the physical and institutional setting of the Museum. Moreover, adopting an ethnographic approach and utilising active participant observation is important since the best way to understand how pursuing decolonisation impacts volunteers and volunteering is to be a volunteer. Not only would this provide a nuanced view of what people may do as part of their volunteer activity, it also enables subjects to be recognised as valid members of their community of practice. This then can confer a sense of trust that may not be replicated for those that are external to the organisation,

especially given a topic that could be perceived as conflictual and divisive. Therefore, I would recommend that any other researchers who want to undertake similar research with volunteers or other stakeholders, adopt an ethnographic approach which can confer insider status and can accommodate for how people bring their experiences with them to the museum as part of their volunteering.

Future avenues of research

Firstly, as this PhD mainly focused on organisations that possess large volunteering cohorts, in the range of 200-500 volunteers, there was limited focus on how pursuing decolonisation may implicate volunteers at smaller and rural institutions. As noted by Goskar (2020), smaller museums, and particularly rural ones, play an important role in displaying and preserving the nation's history and heritage, and so they are vital discursive arenas within which celebratory and triumphalist narratives of UK's past are either combatted or (re)produced. Based on this, volunteers must be engaged as part of their decolonisation process. However, this can become complicated since actualising decolonial practice within these spaces may be hamstrung because of operational priorities to keep the museum running and a potential lack of resources, time and potential expertise. Consequently, a future avenue of potential research emerges based on addressing this gap whereby researchers could conduct PAR with museum volunteers by encouraging them to research the colonial histories of their institutions. By doing this, it would be possible to address the lack of time and resources that the organisation may have in pursuing decolonisation; provide a knowledge bank which could be utilised to produce new exhibitions or to update current displays and interpretation; and examine what benefits volunteers received by engaging with this.

Secondly, there is a need to conduct further research regarding the support for decolonial practice amongst volunteers particularly within mono-cultural areas. This is because my research was based in London and within multi-cultural areas, meaning there is a likelihood that the volunteers have been exposed to more cultural and ethnic diversity. Therefore, this can speak to the more positive reception of decolonial practice and how the findings generated may have limited applicability outside of large urban centres. Moreover, conducting this kind of research has become more important given the 2024 general election which saw the Reform Party get four million votes, or 14% of the vote share (BBC, 2024b). With the rise of the far-right in the UK, cultural heritage institutions, historic homes and museums outside of London will increasingly become key centres where jingoism will either be defeated or heralded, and so it is important to understand how volunteers at these places approach and view the relevance of museum decolonisation.

Thirdly, since this PhD specifically focused on volunteers who had been at each organisation for at least a year, there was minimal exploration of volunteer motivation amongst people who had just joined, or who were engaging in forms of episodic volunteering. This then raises an interesting question of whether the specific decolonial practice of each organisation as well as its publicisation and wider reception influenced the initial selection to volunteer at that organisation, or strengthened their attachment to the organisation, thereby, leading them to volunteer more frequently. By exploring

this, it would be possible to generate a more holistic understanding of how people intend to support the organisation's decolonial practice, and to what extent they initially view their practice through the guise of activism. On top of this, it would be interesting to conduct a prolonged study that followed these volunteers to explore how their motivation has changed over time. From this, it would be possible to see whether the organisation's actions to make amends for their colonial past are still a determining factor for their continued volunteering.

Fourthly, whilst this PhD touched upon some of the learning preferences of volunteers, namely their opinions concerning the operations of a critical pedagogy of place, subsequent in-depth research could be conducted into how the volunteers' community of practice as a collective may shape their learning experiences and sense of purpose (Lave and Wenger, 1991, Wenger, 1998). This is because it would be important to understand how updating the content of their practice, i.e., their shared repertoire, may impact their joint enterprise and the ways in which they engage with one another. To do this, I would recommend adopting a mixed-methods approach since it would be necessary to consult a wider range of volunteers through questionnaires alongside more situated data generation techniques, like active participant observation.

Finally, this PhD specifically focused on volunteers who were both public-facing and provided live interpretation for visitors, meaning that people who support the running of the organisation in either backwards facing roles or as trustees were not consulted. For the former, it would be interesting to see how their role and specific practice would change as a result of embracing decolonisation, i.e., innovations within collections management, and how this may have implications for their place attachment. For the latter, it would be vital to conduct further research with trustees since being voluntary, they possess an enormous potential influence in shaping the organisation's current and future practice, whether that is through approving strategic plans or guaranteeing that the organisation is fulfilling its obligations. Consequently, they are a vital conduit through which decolonial practice gets approved. As a result, research specifically focusing on the institutional politics surrounding trustees and their ability to either contest or support the embrace of decolonisation would be particularly fruitful.

Final thoughts:

By conducting this research, one key thing that has been continually reinforced: just how much volunteers care about their institution. More often than not, people who undertake volunteering in such a way that it could be viewed as *serious leisure* view their practice as an expression of a key aspect of their current identity. Their site of volunteering is a place where they socialise with their friends, it is a place where they can derive a sense of pride and purpose in what they do, with some even orienting their entire lives around the organisation that they represent. As a result, any sort of response to decolonial practice is codified through the implications that it may have for how they consume, understand, and situate themselves within an organisation that they care so much about.

Based on this, it is not simply enough to merely consult volunteers vis-à-vis their organisation's decolonisation process. As pressure increases for cultural institutions to come to terms with their colonial roots, it is vitally important that any organisation that wants to redress their colonial wounds recognise and validate their volunteers as fundamental stakeholders within this process and maintains clear, transparent and sustained channels of communication to inform them of why the organisation has decided to undertake this process and what they should expect into the future, especially regarding how their practice may change. This is not only critically important for engendering volunteer support, but also consent since volunteers should have the choice to either embrace or distance themselves from more critically aligned practice. Therefore, at the heart of sufficiently equipping, empowering and supporting them to communicate colonial and decolonised histories is the ability to choose.

Finally, organisations should trust their volunteers. As demonstrated by this PhD, volunteers want to engage with this topic and contribute more substantively to actualise their organisation's decolonisation efforts. Mandating hard limits concerning the content and scope of their practice are important, especially from a safeguarding perspective and to prevent volunteers causing reputational harm, but this may directly come into conflict with how volunteers feel they should interact with various audiences and more widely with how their organisation should operate in wider society. Being more responsive to volunteer needs and wants and closely working with them to address these may address their specific qualms and actively build on the steps that some have already taken to embrace decolonial practice. Therefore, by placing more trust in them, organisations would not have to worry so much about retaining their volunteers since I am sure that they will be more than willing to stay.

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Appendices

Appendix One: Ethics Clearance

INSTITUTE OF ARCHAEOLOGY ETHICS COMMITTEE

NOTIFICATION OF ETHICS APPROVAL
Student Name: Laurence Maidment-Blundell

26 July 2022

Project Title: Volunteers as re-narrators of Colonial Histories: their contribution to the de-colonisation of British Cultural Institutions.

Ethics Approval Reference: 2022.091 Dear Laurence

Thank you for sending us your Human Participation Research Application form. Looking at what you propose to do, we can give you ethical clearance to go ahead and begin collecting your data. Your ethics approval reference number is: **2022.091.**

You should take note of the following points:

1. **RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE APPROVAL.** You will NOT need to seek additional approval from the UCL Research Ethics Committee, as your proposal falls into their list of exemptions. This is based on the fact that you will not be working with anyone under the age of 18, or who might be otherwise considered vulnerable, or collecting data covertly, and because the subject matter is unlikely to put participants at particular risk of harm or adverse consequences. Should any of this change, please contact us again for further advice.

2. **RISK ASSESSMENT.** You WILL need to carry out a Risk Assessment for your project to ensure that you are able to collect your data safely and in a covid-secure fashion.

Even if you feel that face-to-face data collection is the best method, recruits should be given the option of doing the interview remotely if they wish, so they can actively choose a method that they are most comfortable with. Full disclosure of how the interview will be conducted, and associated covid-risks, will need to be in the information sheet. You should be prepared to have a back up plan for remote data collection methods in the event that recruits do not consent to face to face interviews.

You will need to complete a RiskNet application. To do this, please follow the guidelines in the attached document. Further instructions can be found on: https://sway.office.com/rOmCRKKy3SjLDrml?ref=email&loc=play

Your RiskNet application should be approved by the Institute of Archaeology Safety officer, Sandra Bond. All questions about RiskNet should be addressed directly to Sandra Bond (sandra.bond@ucl.ac.uk) who should be listed as the Approver. Please note that we are unable to offer advice about RiskNet.

Please email us on IoA.Ethics@ucl.ac.uk to inform us that the process has been approved. Note that your risk assessment needs to be approved before data collection can begin.

3. **OTHER PERMISSIONS.** For your interviews with volunteers, and for any observational work, you **will** need to obtain permission from the organization managing the site or museum where you wish to collect your data. See additional advice under **Point 9 (Observation).**

4. **RECRUITMENT.** If you plan on using introductions from your supervisor or colleagues at the museum, including volunteer managers, to approach potential recruits, do be careful that those approached are clear about who you are, and the purposes of your research. It would be easy for volunteers to get the impression that it was being done as an internal museum project, for example. It also needs to be very clear that there will be no repercussions if people don't wish to take part (for example, if a senior member of museum staff made the request, an employee or volunteer could feel obliged to participate). So, while it's fine to be introduced by a third party, all actual invitations **should be made in your name**. Moreover, because you will be volunteering yourself, some of your recruits may be actual friends or colleagues, so you must be doubly careful not to take advantage of existing relationships. See also additional advice under **Point 9 (Observation).**

5. **ANONYMISATION.** Your position with regard to anonymization seems appropriate; normally it would be ok to name the museum and follow a system of semi-anonymisation for museum staff such as curators and volunteer managers, (ie generalising roles or job titles). But because volunteers must be fully anonymised (see below), following semi-anonymisation for museum professionals would effectively reveal the identity of the museums at which volunteers work also, so you will be required to follow **full anonymisation** for all participants.

You should fully anonymise all of your participants by using an alphanumerical code in association with a generalised role description, with no mention of the name of the museum itself. You should follow this system both in your notes and final dissertation.

It is likely to take 2 weeks **or more** to get your Risk Assessment approved. It is advisable to have a back-up plan for collection of all your data remotely, should approval *not* be granted. If you decide to collect your data remotely you would not need to complete a risk assessment.

Note that, while you can acknowledge people's help in your dissertation, if they have been anonymised in your text, then you must be careful not to indicate that they were your interview subjects in your acknowledgements.

6. SECONDARY DATASETS. You must ensure that all secondary datasets (e.g., volunteering training materials, volunteer induction materials, codes of conduct for volunteers, and further documentation from specific training sessions related to communicating contested/difficult histories) must be pre-anonymised before you are given access to them. If they are not pre-anonymised then you **do not** have ethical approval to use them for your study.

7. **DATA PROTECTION.** As you are following full anonymisation for all participants, with no mention of the museums at which they work or volunteer, then you will **not** need to follow data protection procedures. Bear in mind that you must collect and store your data anonymously, as well as anonymising how you report on it. So at no point should you be recording identifiable personal details alongside your interview notes, transcripts or audio; nor should you keep any kind of master list that links an interviewee's individual code to their identity.

8. **GAINING INFORMED CONSENT.** You will also need to follow ethical procedures for gaining informed consent from potential recruits, which will involve providing them with an information sheet to read, and consent form to sign. Sample versions of both forms may be downloaded from https://ethics.grad.ucl.ac.uk/procedures.php (see the 'Template consent form' and 'Template Participant Sheet' provided under 'step 8'). There is also a document here that provides further advice on how to adapt these forms to your specific needs. Editing will almost certainly be required (for example, removing any reference to the UCL Research Ethics Committee as the approving body, and replacing this with reference to the Institute of Archaeology Ethics Committee). Please take note of the information these forms should include (such as mentioning who you are, and that you are doing this research as part of your UCL degree, what will be required from the participant, your position with regard to anonymization, and their right to withdraw without penalty).

You can set a date, up until which people can withdraw; this should be when you plan to start collating and analysing your data. In order to allow people to do this, you will need to put some kind of individual code on each information sheet (which is given to recruits), that is also recorded on the interviews. Then if someone wants to withdraw after interview, they can contact you and say 'please destroy interview no. 6', and you know which one to delete from your research.

Where you plan to **interview people remotely**, via software such as Zoom, Skype or MS Teams, you will have to modify your methods for gaining informed consent slightly. In these cases, you can send the information sheet electronically, in advance of the interview.

For **interviews held remotely**, you would then need to repeat the essential information verbally at the start of the interview, then capture consent verbally (e.g.: ask whether

they are over 18, have understood the information given to them, and if they consent to take part in your research).

For **email interviews,** you can either ask for an electronic signature on the consent form, or add a tick box that they fill in to show they give consent. You also have to take extra measures to maintain their anonymity. Ask your subjects to send their interview answers as an email attachment, rather than in the body of the email. When the email arrives, save the attachment anonymously to your hard drive, and delete it from the original email. That way, you do not have any link between their identity (email address and name) and the data they have sent you.

Since you propose to engage in participant observation in a public place you will need to put up visible signage mentioning who you are, and that you are doing this research as part of your UCL degree, what will be required from the participant, your position with regard to anonymization, and their right to withdraw without penalty. As you plan to work inside a museum or a heritage site where visitors pay to enter, then you should contact whoever manages that site and get their permission to carry out your research on their property before doing so. They may have their own ethical procedures or forms to fill in. You should do this as soon as possible, as we don't know how long getting approval might take.

Once you have permission, you would decide where to carry out your observations/ approaching people for interview, and make sure that any security guards on duty know what you are up to. This is to avoid potential problems, which might occur if they haven't been informed, and decide you are acting suspiciously by loitering about (even if you are an actual volunteer at the museum).

I would recommend you get a short, simple letter from your supervisor stating that you are a student at UCL and undertaking this research as part of your assessed work. Get them to do it on UCL letterhead. You can use this to prove that you are a student here, and your research is legitimate, if anyone queries what you are doing.

10. **PROJECT FEEDBACK.** Your plans for **reporting back to participants** on the outcomes of the research seem appropriate. This might include offering to send them a copy of the thesis.

9. OBSERVATION. Because you plan to carry out observations during your own volunteering at the museum, you must ensure that any data you collect and report on cannot be deemed as 'covert'. You must take steps towards making it very clear to that you are collecting data as part of your PhD research at UCL, even if you have a formal volunteering position the museum in question.

10. It is probably also worth making a paper information sheet, summarising your research etc., for anyone who might so approach you, as you can give it to them – another way of making you look legitimate (again, on UCL letterhead). As with the verbal consent spiel, this should be kept in very simple English. The idea is to have a response planned if someone takes offence at you watching them too closely, or if they take a

deeper interest in your work as a result of the interviews. them an electronic copy of your dissertation (it's fine to collect emails for this purpose, providing you don't actually put these in association with the actual interview data), or a summarized report of the salient points.

11. You are advised to include a copy of this approval letter as an appendix to your dissertation.

12. Please inform us if you revise your research plans, as any changes to your research methods or target groups may require additional ethics approval.

13. Note that our decision to approve your research is based on the research proposal as submitted and as outlined in follow-up email correspondence; you will need to seek additional ethics approval if any of the parameters of your research change.

Please let us know if you have any further questions.

I've sent your supervisor a copy of this letter, so they can stay up to date with the advice that you have been given.

Yours sincerely,

Julia Shaw
Chair
Institute of Archaeology Ethics Committee ioa.ethics@ucl.ac.uk

Note that ethics permission is being granted for the methodology stated, pending a successful **risk assessment application** and **data protection registration (if you decide to follow semi-anonymisation for museum professional)**, as outlined above.

5
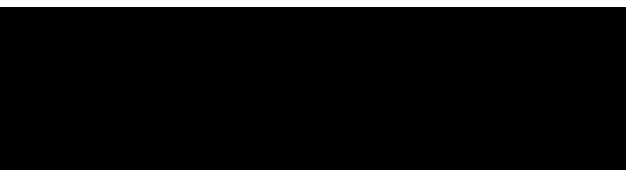
Appendix Two: Interviewee Selection Criteria

Round one of interviews

Nine Participants:
- three academics;
- three volunteer managers;
- one consultant who has experience recontextualising museums and working with volunteers;
- two volunteers.

Interviewees and selection criteria:
- prior contacts based on volunteering experience with Colonial Countryside, the Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology and my personal network;
- key actors with experience of communicating or researching historic colonialism/imperialism and their relationship to cultural heritage institutions;
- volunteer managers from organisations actively interrogating their colonial and imperial history and heritage, and have already consulted volunteers on the matter;
- public facing volunteers working at historical homes/historic home museums with links to colonialism and imperialism (participants volunteered at properties related to the East India Company or the Trans-Atlantic Trade in enslaved Africans).

Interviews at Fulham Palace

Nine Participants:
- one CEO;
- one researcher in charge of the Archive Research Group (ARG);
- one volunteer manager and one front of house manager;
- two volunteers from the Archive Research Group (who are also front of house or tour guides);
- two tour guide volunteers and one front of house volunteer.

Selection criteria:
- all public facing volunteers (whether ARG, front of house or tour guide) must have been volunteering for at least one year and are still actively volunteer at least twice a month;
- participants must have either attended or contributed via research to the training related to changing displays and interpretation surrounding the Bishops of London and their connections to Trans-Atlantic enslavement.

Interviews at the British Museum

Seventeen participants:
- two volunteering staff;
- fifteen volunteers (tour guides and object handlers).

Selection criteria:
- have been volunteering at the British Museum for at least one year and must still be actively volunteering at least once a month;
- must be giving a public facing tour or interacting with members of the public via an object handling desk. The volunteers should be located in any of the following galleries: Collecting the World, AOA (Africa, Oceania and the Americas), Islamic, Asia, and the Enlightenment;
- volunteers that are communicating colonial and imperial histories to members of the public or using objects of colonial or imperial provenance;

Interviews at the Horniman Museum

Eight participants:
- one member of curatorial staff responsible for curating the upcoming High Tea exhibition;
- one Volunteer Manager responsible for managing and training volunteers;
- one PhD researcher attached to the Museum who is exploring the early history of collecting by the Museum and the imperial figures attached to it;
- five Engage Volunteers who interact with the public.

Selection criteria:
- have been volunteering for a minimum of a year;
- be actively volunteering at least twice a month;
- expressed an interest regarding how their institution's colonial/imperial past is going to be communicated and narrated;
- non-volunteers must be either part of the decolonial working group at the Horniman, contributing towards the High Tea exhibition, or are responsible for managing and training volunteers.

All interviewees have agreed to a potential second interview and there are other interviewees that I am able to approach if needed.

Appendix Three: Participant Information Sheet

Participant Information Sheet

IoA Research Ethics Committee Approval ID Number: **2022.091**

Title of Study: Volunteers as re-narrators of Colonial Histories: their contribution to the de-colonisation of British Cultural Institutions.

Department: Institute of Archaeology

Name and Contact Details of the Researcher: Laurence Maidment-Blundell (ycrnlma@ucl.ac.uk)

Name and Contact Details of the Principal Researcher: Dr Gabriel Moshenska (g.moshenska@ucl.ac.uk)

1. Invitation Paragraph:

You are being invited to take part in a PhD research study. Before you decide to take part, please review the information below so that you can understand what the research and your participation involves. If you have any questions relating to the research or if anything is unclear, feel free to either ask me to clarify or contact me further via email.

2. What is the project's purpose?

This project wants to build on wider societal pressure for British Cultural Institutions to explore the colonial histories of their collections and the Institution itself by uncovering previously silenced histories. In doing this, these Institutions will need to include volunteers as they relate these histories to the public. Consequently, the main aims and objectives of this project are to: examine how volunteers respond to 'de-colonisation' or the re-narration of their institution's colonial/imperial past; explore how institutions should engage with volunteers whilst pursuing 'de-colonisation'; and how institutions equip and empower their volunteers to engage with contested/difficult histories in an appropriate, critical, and concise manner.

The entire PhD should last three to four years, and this data gathering phase will last at least a year.

3. Why have I been chosen?

You have been chosen because of your experience and insight relating to the de-colonisation of Cultural Institutions and the importance of using volunteers to narrate the colonial past.

The participants for this study include academics, curators, policymakers, volunteer managers and volunteers.

4. Do I have to take part?

Participation in the study is entirely voluntary. If you decide to take part, you can keep this information sheet and you shall be asked to sign a consent form. You can withdraw at any time without fear of penalty, and you can request for any data or transcripts relating to you to be destroyed.

5. What will happen to me if I take part?

If you decide to take part, you will be interviewed for approximately 45 mins. Prior to the interview, you will be sent this information sheet, the consent form, and asked whether you would prefer to conduct the interview face-to-face or online. If you would prefer in-person, we shall agree a time and place in advance of the interview, and if you prefer the interview being conducted online, I will send a MS Teams link (or Zoom link if you would prefer) prior to the interview. You will be required to send back the Consent Form via email, and further verbal consent will be asked for at the start of the interview. The interview may cover how volunteers respond to 'de-colonisation'; why cultural institutions want to pursue this course of action; to establish in what ways volunteers have been equipped and empowered to engage with contested/difficult histories; and to gain insight into how the role of volunteers may develop in the pursuit of 'de-colonisation'.

After the interview, your recording will be transcribed, anonymised, and redacted. You will be sent a copy via email for further comments where you can request changes.

6. What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

As the content of the PhD focuses on narrating the colonial past, participants may be uncomfortable with some of the subject content that may be discussed. If this is so, the participant can request for the interview to stop.

7. What are the possible benefits of taking part?

There are a range of benefits contributing to this study. Participants will have the opportunity to: voice their opinions concerning their institution's commitment to 'de-colonise' or to re-narrate their colonial/imperial past; provide insight into how volunteers can be equipped and empowered in narrating the colonial/imperial past; provide clarity regarding what works and does not work with current training offered

relating to narration of Empire and its legacies; and provide further insight how volunteers feel their role can develop over time as a result of such activity.

8. What if something goes wrong?

If you have any complaints regarding the data collection process, please do raise them with my supervisor whose email is stated above. If you feel your complaint has not been handled to your satisfaction by my supervisor, then you can contact the Chair of the IoA Research Ethics Committee at ioa.ethics@ucl.ac.uk.

9. Will my taking part in this project be kept confidential?

All information that we collect about you during the research will be kept strictly confidential. Any personally identifiable data will be fully anonymised, and generalised along a specific alphanumerical code, e.g., Volunteer A1. The researcher is the only individual who will have access to the data which will be stored securely on UCL servers.

10. Limits to confidentiality

Please note that assurances on confidentiality will be strictly adhered to unless evidence of wrongdoing or potential harm is uncovered. In such cases the University may be obliged to contact relevant statutory bodies/agencies.

11. What will happen to the results of the research project?

The anonymised transcripts from the interviews will be used as part of my PhD thesis and may be used in subsequent publications, i.e., academic journal articles. Participants will be sent with an electronic copy of the thesis via email at the end of the PhD. Data will be stored on UCL servers for the entire course of the PhD (around 3-4 years).

12. Local Data Protection Privacy Notice

Notice:
The controller for this project will be University College London (UCL). The UCL Data Protection Officer provides oversight of UCL activities involving the processing of personal data, and can be contacted at data-protection@ucl.ac.uk

This 'local' privacy notice sets out the information that applies to this study. Further information on how UCL uses participant information can be found in our 'general' privacy notice:

For participants in research studies, click here.

The information that is required to be provided to participants under data protection legislation (GDPR and DPA 2018) is provided across both the 'local' and 'general' privacy notices.

The categories of personal data used will be as follows: name and email address.

The lawful basis that will be used to process your personal data is: 'Public task' for personal data.

Your personal data will be processed so long as it is required for the research project. This means that your data will be held for the entirety of the PhD (around 3-4 years). If we can anonymise or pseudonymise the personal data you provide, we will undertake this and will endeavour to minimise the processing of personal data wherever possible.

If you are concerned about how your personal data is being processed, or if you would like to contact us about your rights, please contact UCL in the first instance at data-protection@ucl.ac.uk.

12. Contact for further information

If you wish to contact me further, you can email me at ycrnlma@ucl.ac.uk.

Thank you for reading this information sheet and for considering taking part in this research study.

Appendix Four: Consent Form

CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS IN RESEARCH STUDIES

Please complete this form after you have read the Information Sheet and/or listened to an explanation about the research.

Title of Study: Volunteers as re-narrators of Colonial Histories: their contribution to the de-colonisation of British Cultural Institutions.

Department: Institute of Archaeology
Name and Contact Details of the Researcher(s): Laurence Maidment-Blundell (ycrnlma@ucl.ac.uk)
Name and Contact Details of the Principal Researcher: Dr Gabriel Moshenska (g.moshenska@ucl.ac.uk)
Name and Contact Details of the IoA Data Protection Officer: David Bone (d.bone@ucl.ac.uk)
Name and Contact Details of the UCL Data Protection Officer: Alexandra Potts (data-protection@ucl.ac.uk)
This study has been approved by the Institute of Archaeology, UCL Research Ethics Committee: Project ID number: 2022.091

Thank you for considering taking part in this research. I will provide you with an explanation of the research as well as its key aims and potential outcomes prior to you agreeing to take part. If you have any questions arising from the Information Sheet or explanation already given to you, feel free to ask further about any details before you decide whether to join in. You will be given a copy of this Consent Form to keep and refer to at any time.

I confirm that I understand that by ticking/initialling each box below I am consenting to this element of the study. I understand that it will be assumed that unticked/initialled boxes means that I DO NOT consent to that part of the study. I understand that by not giving consent for any one element that I may be deemed ineligible for the study.

		Tick Box (x)
1.	*I confirm that I have read and understood the Information Sheet for the above study. I have had an opportunity to consider the information and what will be expected of me. I have also had the opportunity to ask questions which have been answered to my satisfaction" *I would like to take part in an individual interview.*	
2.	*I understand that I will be able to withdraw my data at any point after my interview has taken place.	

3.	*I consent to participate in the study. I understand that my personal information (e.g., name and contact info) will only be collected for the purposes will be used for the purposes explained to me. I understand that according to data protection legislation, 'public task' will be the lawful basis for processing.	
4.	I understand that assurances on confidentiality will be strictly adhered to unless evidence of wrongdoing or potential harm is uncovered. In such cases I may be obliged to contact relevant statutory bodies/agencies. I understand that my data gathered in this study will be stored anonymously and securely. It will not be possible to identify me in any publications. All individuals will be fully anonymised as part of the research using an alphanumerical code and a generalised role description, e.g., Volunteer A1. This coding system is applicable for the interview transcripts, my fieldnotes and for the final dissertation.	
5.	I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason. I understand that if I decide to withdraw, any personal data I have provided up to that point will be deleted unless I agree otherwise.	
6.	I understand the potential risks of participating and the support that will be available to me should I become distressed during the course of the research.	
7.	I understand the direct/indirect benefits of participating by being able to share my experience of volunteering relating to the re-narration of colonial/imperial histories.	
8.	I understand that the data will not be made available to any commercial organisations but is solely the responsibility of the researcher(s) undertaking this study.	
9.	I understand that I will not benefit financially from this study or from any possible outcome it may result in in the future.	
10.	I understand that the information I have submitted will be published as a report and I wish to receive a copy of it. Yes/No	
11.	I consent to my interview being audio/video recorded and understand that the recordings will be: - destroyed within six weeks or destroyed immediately following transcription.	
12.	I hereby confirm that I understand the inclusion criteria as detailed in the Information Sheet and explained to me by the researcher.	
13.	I have informed the researcher of any other research in which I am currently involved or have been involved in during the past 12 months.	
14.	I am aware of who I should contact if I wish to lodge a complaint.	
15.	I voluntarily agree to take part in this study.	
16.	I am aware and happy that fully anonymised personal information will be stored on secure UCL servers for the entirety of the PhD and will be used in the PhD thesis and potentially for subsequent publications.	

Name of participant: Date: Signature:

Appendix Five: Letter for Participant Observation

LONDON'S GLOBAL UNIVERSITY

🏛 UCL

August 2022

To whom it may concern:

I can confirm that Laurence Maidment-Blundell is currently a PhD student at the UCL Institute of Archaeology. His research is focusing on the potential contribution and response of volunteers to the 'de-colonisation' of British Cultural Institutions.

As part of his PhD research, he is observing how volunteers can communicate contested/difficult histories to various members of the public, as well as how volunteers are trained to facilitate such engagement. Consequently, he is producing fieldnotes based on such interactions for his data collection.

All participants present in his fieldnotes will be fully anonymised so that individuals are not identifiable in any way. All participants have the right to withdraw from the research, and any reference to them in the fieldnotes will be removed.

If you have any further queries related to his research, you can contact him via email ycrnlma@ucl.ac.uk. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me on g.moshenska@ucl.ac.uk.

Yours faithfully,
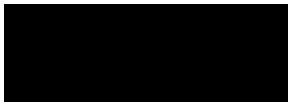
Dr Gabriel Moshenska

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Appendix Six: Sample Interview Questions

Questions for British Museum Volunteers:

Can you tell me about your volunteering experience at the British Museum?

What does the British Museum mean to you?

How important do you think it is for the British Museum to acknowledge and communicate its colonial/imperial history and heritage?

What sorts of training do you think volunteers need to communicate contested and difficult histories?

Could you tell me about a time where you have had to communicate an aspect of the BM's colonial/imperial history to a member of the public?

Do you think it is possible to dismantle the legacies of Empire present at the British Museum?

Is there anything else you would like to add?

Questions for Staff:

Could you tell me a bit more about your role at the British Museum?

In your experience, why do volunteers decide to volunteer at the British Museum?

What sort of reaction was there amongst the volunteers regarding the decision to acknowledge Sir Hans Sloane's involvement in Trans-Atlantic slavery and the wider Collecting and Empire trail?

In your opinion, how can volunteers be equipped and empowered to communicate the British Museum's colonial and imperial history/heritage?

With the upcoming Rosetta Project, how important do you think volunteers will be in communicating non-Eurocentric histories?

What would it take for the British Museum to 'de-colonise' itself and what role do you think volunteers would have within this?

Is there anything else you would like to add?

Fulham Palace

Could you tell me a bit more about your volunteering experience at Fulham Palace?

What does Fulham Palace mean to you?

How important do you think it is for Fulham Palace to acknowledge and communicate the Bishop of London's connections to the Trans-atlantic trade in enslaved Africansand historic colonialism?

What problems do you think Front of House volunteers may have with communicating these histories?

In what ways do you think Front of House volunteers can be equipped and empowered to communicate Fulham Palace's colonial past?

What would a 'decolonised' Fulham Palace look like to you and what implications would this have for your volunteering experience?

Is there anything else you would like to add?

Horniman Museum

Could you tell me a bit more about yourself and your volunteering experience at the Horniman Museum?

What does the Horniman Museum mean to you?

How important do you think it is for the Horniman Museum to acknowledge and communicate its colonial history and the legacies of these?

What role do you think Engage volunteers should have within this process?

What sorts of training do you think Engage volunteers need to communicate the Horniman's colonial history and heritage?

What do you think of the Cha, Chai, Tea exhibition?

What do you think worked well with the training provided for the Cha, Chai, Tea exhibition and what could be improved?

What would a 'de-colonised' Horniman Museum look like to you? What consequences would this have on your volunteering?

Is there anything else you would like to add?

Example Questions for Phase One of Data Generation

Can you tell me a bit more about your background and role as a volunteer officer at the Museum of the Home?

In what ways have volunteers reacted to the acknowledgement and re-narration of Robert Geffrye's participation in the Trans-Atlantic Slave trade and the subsequent relocation of his statue?

How does the Museum of the Home equip and empower its volunteers to engage with representations of Empire and its legacies?

What structural changes has the Museum of the Home undertaken to make itself more inclusive?

Can you provide me with an example where this is present within volunteer training?

Do you think volunteers and volunteering are important in pursuing the 'de-colonisation' of cultural institutions?

What recommendations do you have for an Institution who wants to include volunteers and volunteering in interrogating their colonial and imperial past?

Appendix Seven: Person Specification

Fulham Palace

Volunteer A1 is a Front of House volunteer and is a member of the Archive Research Group.

Researcher A2 is a free-lance researcher hired to lead the Archive Research Group and line-manage their volunteers. They also contributed to and curated Fulham Palace's temporary exhibition.

Volunteer A3 is a Front of House and Tour Guide volunteer and is a member of the Archive Research Group. They have been volunteering at Fulham Palace for around 20 years.

CEO A4 is the Chief Executive Officer of Fulham Palace Trust, and they played a key role in curating the temporary exhibition.

Volunteer Manager A5 was the Volunteer Development Officer at Fulham Palace from May 2022-2023.

Volunteer A6 is a history tour-guide volunteer and began their experience in 2014.

Volunteer A7 is both a Front of House and Tour Guide volunteer. They started their volunteering in 2008 after their retirement.

Front of House Supervisor A8 is responsible for line-managing Front of House volunteers and supporting the visitor experience as part of the day-to-day running of Fulham Palace.

Volunteer A9 is a Front of House volunteer who has been at the Palace since the mid-2010s.

Volunteer A10 is a Front of House volunteer who has been volunteering at the Palace since 2022.

Volunteer A11 is a History Tour Guide as well as a volunteer representative and they began volunteering in the early 2010s.

Front of House Manager A12 is responsible for line-managing all staff and volunteers who are responsible for supporting the visitor experience, and they led volunteer training in the lead up to the opening of the new exhibition.

Volunteer A13 is a Front of House volunteer who has been at the Palace since the mid-2010s.

Volunteer A14 is a Front of House volunteer who has been at the Palace since 2021.

Researcher A15 is an expert related to the financial legacies of Trans-Atlantic Enslavement and its commemoration in the public realm. They were brought in by the Palace to collaborate with PARC as part of developing the new exhibition and to conduct the first round of training with volunteers.

Volunteer A16 is a Front of House and Conservation volunteer, and they have been at the Palace since 2022.

Volunteer A17 is a Front of House volunteer, and they started in 2022.

British Museum

Volunteering Staff B1 is the current head of volunteering and interpretation at the BM.

Volunteering Staff B2 is a senior volunteer manager in charge of all object handling desks at the BM and whose focus was mainly on the Enlightenment Gallery.

Volunteer B3 is a Highlights Tour Guide who began volunteering at the BM in 1992.

Volunteer B4 is a volunteer who started volunteering for the BM about ten years ago or so. They operate as both a Highlights Tour Guide and Enlightenment Eye Opener Tour Guide.

Volunteer B5 is an object handling volunteer for Collecting the World and the Asia Gallery.

Volunteer B6 is a tour guide volunteer who does the Enlightenment Gallery Eye Opener Tours.

Volunteer B7 is a tour guide volunteer who started in 1992 and works in the Enlightenment Gallery.

Volunteer B8 is a tour guide volunteer based in the Africa Gallery.

Volunteer B9 is a tour guide volunteer based in the Africa Gallery.

Volunteer B10 is a tour guide volunteer who conducts both the Highlights and Mexico Tour.

Volunteer B11 is a tour guide volunteer who started in 1994 and works in the Enlightenment Gallery.

Volunteer B12 is a tour guide volunteer who works in the Enlightenment Gallery.

Volunteer B13 is a tour guide volunteer who works the Ancient Egypt, Islam and Money galleries.

Volunteer B14 is an object handling volunteer who works in the Enlightenment Gallery.

Volunteer B15 is an object handling volunteer who works in the AOA gallery.

Volunteer B16 is an object handling volunteer who works in the Enlightenment Gallery.

Volunteer B17 is a tour guide volunteer who works in the Enlightenment Gallery.

Volunteer B18 is an object handling volunteer who works in the Roman Gallery and attended the Africa Tour consultation.

Volunteer B19 is an object handling volunteer for the special exhibitions, a tour guide for the LGBTQ+ tour and they attended the Africa Tour consultation.

Horniman Museum

Volunteer C1 is an Engage volunteer and has been volunteering since 2021.

Volunteer C2 is an Engage volunteer and has been at the Museum since 2015.

Curatorial Staff C3 is the Senior Curator of Social Practice at the Horniman and was primarily responsible for curating the Cha, Chai, Tea exhibition.

Volunteer C4 is an Engage volunteer and has been volunteering since 2021.

Volunteering Staff C5 is responsible for managing Engage volunteers as part of supporting the visitor experience and they were responsible for training volunteers in preparation for the Cha, Chai, Tea exhibition.

Volunteer C6 is an Engage volunteer and has been volunteering since 2022.

Researcher C7 is a PhD researcher specifically exploring the colonial legacies of the Horniman Museum's founding collections.

Volunteer C8 is an Engage volunteer who has been at the Horniman since 2012. They were also part of the interview panel responsible for selecting the Horniman's new director.

Volunteer C9 is an Engage volunteer who has been at the Horniman since 2022.

Volunteer C10 is an Engage volunteer and has been at the Horniman since their retirement in the late 2010s.

Volunteer C11 is an Engage volunteer and has been at the Horniman since 2022. They are also part of the POC network at the Horniman.

Volunteer C12 is an Engage volunteer who has been at the Horniman since 2023.

Volunteer C13 is an Engage volunteer that has been at the Horniman since 2023.

Volunteer C14 is an Engage volunteer who has been at the Horniman since 2023.

Appendix Eight: Codebook

Codes\\British Museum

Name	Description	Files	References
Background or Employment History		6	12
Job Description and Role		1	1
Colonialism, Imperialism and Empire		6	23
Akan Drum		1	1
Benin Bronzes		7	23
Geopolitical context		1	1
Ideological justifications		1	2
China's Hidden Century		2	8
Colonial Collecting		9	12
Communicating Enslavement and Colonialism		12	89
Abolition		1	1
Acts of Resistance by Enslaved Peoples		1	1
Cook and Bark Shield		4	9
Banks		1	1
Grand Narratives		1	1
Olaudah Equiano		1	2
Decolonisation		5	7
Audiences and voices		4	6
Border Thinking		3	3
Recognising Agency		2	2
European Planetary Consciousness		5	6
Geopolitical Context		1	1
Hoa		4	11
European degradation of land		1	1
Lived Context and Significance		2	3

Name	Description	Files	References
Provenance		1	1
Irish Colonisation		1	2
Non-Eurocentrism		1	1
Notable Historical Figures		3	7
Parthenon Marbles		4	9
Public Perceptions of the Organisation		10	18
Bastion of Colonialism		14	30
Public Protest		2	2
Public Reaction		5	11
Racialised Hierarchies		6	7
Epistemological hierarchies		1	1
Reinterpreting Permanent Collections		13	41
Abolition		1	7
Collecting and Empire		5	11
Colonial and Imperial Legacies		3	3
Colonisation and Australia		2	4
Entanglement		1	2
Experimentation		1	1
Future Activity		3	4
Hans Sloane		13	40
Appropriating and Exploitation		1	2
Epistemic Violence		2	2
Protecting the bust		1	1
Volunteer Interest		3	3
Nuance		5	9
Object Biographies		9	13
Rosetta Stone		4	6
Volunteer Opinions		6	29
Acknowledging Colonial and Imperial Past		17	125

Name	Description	Files	References
Activism vs being performative		1	1
Balancing the narrative		11	41
Entanglement		3	3
Epistemic and Temporal distance		1	6
Equating colonial contexts		1	1
Risk of totalising		2	2
Navel Gazing		0	0
Victimisation and denying agency		1	1
White Guilt		2	4
BM as an academic institution		2	7
Curatorial silences		6	12
Epistemic Violence		4	5
Identity politics		2	6
Power Differentials		0	0
Lived Context		2	2
Modern Slavery		1	1
Object Biographies		8	13
Agentic properties		1	2
Reasons for Change		2	2
Recognising history and heritage		4	6
Reparations		1	1
Reproducing coloniality		3	3
Britishness		1	1
Combatting colonial legacies		8	12
Addressing trauma		6	8
De-centring knowledge production		1	1
Epistemic Decolonisation		10	15
Border Thinking		5	10

Name	Description	Files	References
Achieving epistemic reconstitution		3	5
Operations of the CMP		2	7
Historic Racism		1	2
Rewriting History		2	3
Conceptualising decolonisation		13	49
Contribution of volunteers		2	2
Impacts on Future Volunteering		9	19
Critical Reflection		2	2
Institutional capability		2	3
Iterative process		2	3
Dissenting against the Museum		2	3
Engaging the Public		4	8
Logics of Settler Colonialism		1	1
Maintaining neutrality		5	6
Museum Governance		6	6
Museum Practice		9	15
BM as socially responsive		5	10
Museum and Ethical Practice		3	3
BP		2	3
Proactivity		5	7
Proposed Africa Tour		2	17
Plurality of narratives		6	10
Re-Imagining the British Museum		7	16
Contested Objects		2	2
Restitution		17	54
Benin Bronzes		3	6
Capacity Building		1	1
Hoa		6	9

Name	Description	Files	References
Justification		2	2
Accessibility		9	13
Logistics		1	1
Magdala		1	1
Ownership of the Past		7	9
Parthenon Marbles		3	8
Protecting Objects		4	5
Replacing permanent collection		2	2
Source communities		2	3
Sloane		10	24
Protecting Sloane		1	2
Tensions surrounding interpretation		8	14
World Culture Museum		15	43
Emphasising collaboration		4	5
Historic Purpose		1	1
Wealth and Empire		4	8
Institutional Activity		9	19
Activism vs being performative		1	1
Censoring difficult topics		0	0
Collaborating with source communities		2	2
Contemporary Practice		7	11
Collecting		2	3
Protecting Cultural Heritage		2	2
Contemporary responsibility		10	20
Capacity Building		2	2
Curators		2	4
Donating to the Museum		1	2
Enlightenment Gallery		2	4
Historic Practice		7	11
Museum of the Mankind		2	2

Name	Description	Files	References
Institutional Anxiety		3	8
Institutional configuration		1	1
Institutional Philosophy		8	11
Museum Governance		4	4
Neo-colonial and Neo-imperial activity		1	1
Permanent Collections		9	28
ColonialityWhite Supremacy		6	11
Curatorial influences		3	4
Repatriation		2	5
Physical Architecture of the Museum		1	1
Physical Redevelopment of the Site		1	1
Power Struggles		1	2
Temporary Exhibitions		2	4
Transparency and Visibility		1	3
Other examples and case studies		10	23
Iconoclasm		1	1
National Curriculum		1	1
Other volunteering experience		1	3
Political and Economic Decolonisation		2	2
Public Desire for Repatriation		2	3
Racism in Society		2	2
Commemoration of Colonial Figures		1	2
Diversity vs Anti-Racism		1	1
Socio-political configuration of colonies		1	2
Visitor Experience		8	16
Audience Reactions		5	7
Symbols of Empire		1	2

Name	Description	Files	References
Motivations		8	14
Museum Audiences		11	21
Benefits of Object Handling		4	5
Visitor and Volunteer Interaction		18	67
Conflict		8	25
Interest		1	2
Provenance and accessioning objects		5	11
Visitor Learning		3	3
Volunteering		0	0
Outcomes of Volunteering		12	26
Volunteer Expertise		6	9
Volunteer Equipping and Empowerment		6	10
'Doing of Volunteering'		13	32
Expectations of Volunteers		15	39
Message Management		5	7
Regulating Volunteers		10	22
Conflict surrounding BM Line		8	40
Engaging with Colonial and Imperial past		6	13
Volunteer Anxiety		11	37
Lack of support		8	19
Volunteer Discomfort		6	16
Volunteer Inclusion		6	25
Lack of Engagement		3	9
Volunteer Awareness		16	42
Collecting and Empire		2	3
Curatorial practice		5	5
Institutional Change		9	21
Volunteer's Week		3	5

Name	Description	Files	References
Volunteers Conference		3	10
Volunteer Communication		9	24
Volunteer Learning		7	12
Formal learning		14	25
Informal		5	8
Self-directed		15	29
Volunteer Materials		8	30
Changes to script		3	5
Modulating content		8	26
Omitting colonialism and enslavement		3	7
Opinions		1	1
Volunteer Safeguarding		10	24
Institutional line		8	18
Scaling up conversations		1	1
Volunteer Training		17	97
Assessing volunteers		1	3
Contemporary Landscape		2	2
Museum Policy		1	1
Curator-led		11	32
Didactic vs Dialogic		7	11
Emotional Labour		1	1
Improvements		7	17
On Going		1	2
Language Use		5	8
Problematising positionality		4	6
White Guilt		2	3
Volunteer Motivation		13	29
Prior Interest		2	2
Serious leisure		10	16
Power Struggles		1	2

Name	Description	Files	References
Volunteer Attachment and Devotion		19	61
Consumption of the BM		1	1
Significance in volunteer lives		6	10
View of the organisation		1	1
Volunteer Practice		7	15
Live Interpretation		11	46
(Re)producing epistemic violence		4	6
Addressing silences and gaps		2	3
Object Biographies and Journies		3	3
Standardisation		0	0
Lack of		1	1
Object Handling Desks		5	32
Limitations		1	1
Object Based Learning		4	9
Power Dynamics		1	2
Position of Volunteers		16	69
Live interpreters		16	45
Agency of Volunteers		14	82
Active Listening		2	8
Authenticity		1	2
Critical Pedagogues		2	2
Limits or Boundaries of Expertise		2	5
Mediators of the Learning Process		4	4
Tours		17	122
Audiences		9	22
Reactions		4	12
Visitor Learning		7	10
Limiting Factors		6	20
Prior visitor knowledge		2	2

Name	Description	Files	References
Volunteer Reactions to Institutional Practice		2	2
Negative		2	5
Positive		3	8
Volunteering Scheme		8	26
Being proactive		1	1
Collaboration with non-institutional stakeholders		5	11
Mind		1	2
Diversifying		7	9
Recruitment		3	4
Future activity		3	10
Historical Context		6	20
Institutional Power Struggles		1	1
Tensions and Dislikes		1	1
Volunteer Discontent		2	3
Lack of retention		1	3
Recruitment		5	6
Value of Volunteers		8	15
Volunteer Anger		5	5
Discontent		3	5
Volunteer Background		17	82
Connections to Empire		3	5
Lived Experience and Empire		5	17
Volunteer Demographics		10	15
Volunteer Community of Practice		7	18
Social media usage		1	1
Volunteering Inequalities		2	4

Codes\\Codes for Fulham Palace

Name	Description	Files	References
Fulham Palace as an Institution		7	20
Academic collaboration		4	10
Cassie's research		1	6
PARC		1	12
Addressing SIlences		1	3
Buy-in		1	3
Collections		2	6
Current Institutional Focus		2	2
Exhibition Development		0	0
Collaboration		2	4
Community Partners		1	3
Quality of outcome		1	1
Tensions within Exhibition Development		1	4
Financial Constraints		3	4
Focus of Research		2	6
Future activity		2	4
Historic Institutional Practice		2	2
History of Fulham Palace		8	28
Abolition of the Trade		1	2
Absentee Planters		1	1
Bishop of London		8	24
Bishop of the Colonies		4	6
Blomfield		1	2
Compton		7	14
Bannister		5	7
East India Company		1	1
Familial Connections		1	2
Hewley		1	2
Proselyting enslaved peoples		1	2
Juxon		0	0
Porteus		8	17

Name	Description	Files	References
Proselyting peoples		1	1
Robinson		3	4
Sarah Mullaly		2	2
Apologising for her forebears		1	2
Fulham Palace Garden		4	5
Pre-Renovation		4	13
Institutional Change		4	9
Long-term		1	3
Organisational change		5	20
Short-term		1	1
Inter-Organisation collaboration		1	1
Interviewee Opinion		3	11
Message Management		2	3
Multi-use site		3	5
Museum Redevelopment		1	2
New Exhibition		10	70
Adinkra symbols		4	4
Affective connection		2	7
Temporal Distance		1	2
Anti-Racism		1	3
Changes in the permanent display		1	1
Co-creation		4	5
Limiting Factors		1	1
Multi-sensory learning		7	13
Outcomes		5	8
Popular awareness		5	6
Potential Improvements		7	20
Information Overload		3	8
Updating the introductory video		1	2
Visitor Feedback		4	8
Negative comments from visitors		5	16

Name	Description	Files	References
Positive support		6	14
Visitor Learning		8	18
Organisational limitations		4	8
Outcomes for Fulham Palace		3	4
Physical Architecture of the Site		1	1
Physical Infrastructure of Fulham Palace		1	1
Public Perceptions of Fulham Palace		7	22
Reasons for change		4	7
Role and Contemporary Responsibility of the Institution		12	59
Balance in communicating Empire		3	3
Place for and of connectiveness		8	29
Staff anxiety		1	1
Importance of language		1	1
Staff Diversity		1	1
Interviewee Background		7	8
Background or Employment History		9	18
Current role and responsibilities		6	8
Research Focus		1	3
Local History		2	19
Bicentenary of Abolition		1	1
Connections to the Trans-Atlantic Trade in Enslaved Africans		2	3
Local Geography		3	3
Material Culture and colonial and imperial history		1	10
Object Biographies		1	1
Sugar		1	3
Other case studies or examples		11	23

Name	Description	Files	References
Church of England and Reparations		1	3
Lack of transparency		1	1
Queen Anne's bounty		1	1
Culture Wars		3	4
Entity responsible		1	1
Restorative Justice		1	2
Visitor Experience		7	19
Critical reflection		4	5
Leisure		4	6
Motivation		7	19
Museum Audiences		7	17
Tours		4	25
Information Overload		2	2
Limiting Factors		1	1
Resistance		1	1
Visitor and Volunteer Interaction		7	26
Histories of Colonialism		1	1
Visitor Anxiety		1	2
Visitor Interest		4	9
Afterlives of enslavement		1	1
Porteus Library		2	4
Willingness to support the Palace		2	3
Volunteering		1	1
Developing Volunteer Expertise		3	8
Volunteer Historical Research		3	9
Engaging volunteers		16	79
Lack of Communication		3	3
Lack of engagement with volunteers		2	2
Volunteer Communication		6	7

Name	Description	Files	References
Reporting feedback		1	1
Volunteer Inclusion		14	67
Avoiding conflict		2	2
Developing Exhibition Content		1	2
Limits		1	1
Supporting volunteers		1	4
Volunteers and Colonial Past		2	2
Outcome for Volunteers		4	5
Self-fulfilment		4	5
Responses from volunteers		9	16
Accepting of change	This is meant to represent instances where volunteers have been supportive of efforts to 'de-colonise', or to interrogate their institution's colonial/imperial past	6	8
Overcoming resistance		3	3
Reasons for resistance		9	35
Unfamiliarity with colonial history		1	1
Repatriation		1	3
Resistance to change		10	17
Decolonisation		0	0
Serious leisure		6	11
Disappointments, Dislikes and Tensions		2	7
Learning Opportunities and Durable Benefits		12	50
Volunteer Attachment to the Organisation		14	57
Devotion		4	6
Volunteer Awareness		10	28
Coloniality		8	12
Histories of Enslavement		1	1
Heritage Industry and Decolonial practice		7	9
New exhibition		2	9

Name	Description	Files	References
Operations of CofE and BoC		3	3
Repatriation		1	1
Volunteer Background		12	45
Length of volunteering		2	2
Volunteer Demographics		8	19
Volunteer Desire		4	12
Greater recognition of FP		2	2
Volunteer discomfort		8	17
Volunteer Equipping and Empowerment		7	26
Difficulties encounter as part of the role		2	4
Empowerment vs Training		2	6
Language		5	10
Limitations of training		3	4
Potential development of the volunteer role		3	4
Volunteer Safeguarding		6	16
Volunteer Training		10	32
Formal Training and structured learning		14	121
Assessing Volunteers		1	2
Dialogic		6	21
EDI Training		1	4
Frames of communication		2	5
Historical context surrounding enslavement		1	1
Improvements		2	6
Positionality of trainer		1	4
Lack of discussion concerning colonialism		2	2
Potential problems		1	1

Name	Description	Files	References
Problematising positionality		1	2
Reluctance to take part		1	2
Volunteer Training Materials		9	23
Informal Learning		10	19
Shadowing volunteers		1	1
Self directed learning		13	50
New Exhibition		2	3
Volunteer Critical Reflection		8	19
Transformative Learning		1	1
Volunteer Learning		15	67
Community of Practice		3	3
Lack of Skills		1	1
Volunteer Skillset		1	3
Volunteer Interest		6	8
Bishop of London		3	4
Interest in histories of enslavement and colonialism		9	28
Volunteer Motivation		10	14
Volunteer Opinion		6	19
Acknowledging and Communicating Historic Colonialism and Enslavement		11	105
Abolition and Compensation		1	3
Afterlives of Proselytisation		2	5
Bishop of the Colonies		7	9
Codrington Plantation		1	1
Mullaly's apology		2	10
Bottom-up perspectives		4	4
Comparing enslavement		1	2

Name	Description	Files	References
Complexity of topic		1	1
Debt Bondage		1	1
Dehumanisation of enslaved peoples		2	5
Epistemic Violence		1	2
Financial Legacies		5	14
Foregrounding agency and resistance		6	14
Importance of Oral Histories		1	1
Institution of Chattel Slavery		3	4
Modern Slavery		2	3
Neutrality		4	6
Problematising Porteus		7	18
Status as an abolitionist		1	1
Redressing shared wounds		12	43
Appropriation of knowledge		1	2
Epistemic Decolonisation and Reconstitution		5	11
Holistic Histories		9	31
Reparations		1	2
Sensitivity of topic		5	11
Terms of communication		1	2
Terra Nulius		1	3
Varying levels of complicity		1	2
Ideological defences		1	1
Decolonisation		16	35
Challenging conceptualisations of Empire		2	4
Re-interpretation of collections		5	15

Name	Description	Files	References
Complexity of Process		3	5
Depictions of Colonial History		3	5
Engaging with Colonial History		2	7
Agency and Resistance		1	2
Retain and Explain		1	4
Lack of Engagement		1	2
Racialised Imagery		1	1
Engaging audiences		5	10
External and Internal pressure		1	1
Gradual and iterative process		10	19
Necessity to Act		2	6
Normalising Practice		1	1
Popular Awareness		1	1
Potential Outcomes		1	1
Tokenism		3	8
Decolonising Research Methodologies		1	1
Future decolonial initatives		5	15
Nostalgia and Empire		1	1
Volunteer practice		1	6
'Doing of Volunteering'		1	2
Regulating volunteers		3	4
Time constraints		1	1
Changes to practice (New Exhibition)		6	18
Involvement with ARG		3	15
Volunteer and Visitor Interaction		6	16
Audience demographics		2	2
Position of Volunteers		8	11
Live Interpreters		14	109

Name	Description	Files	References
Active listening		4	9
Dangers of Misinformation		1	2
Depth of information		2	4
Dialogic communication		5	27
Initiating Transformative Learning or Critical Pedagogues		8	29
Lack of knowledge		2	2
Mediators of the learning experience		8	24
Confidence of volunteer		2	2
Navigating conflict		1	2
Tour Script		3	20
Modulating Content		6	21
Visitor Learning		4	13
Stewards		2	2
Potential Conflict		9	26
Visitor Feedback		4	9
Volunteer Recruitment		8	17
Barriers		1	1
Diversifying volunteering		6	15
Volunteer Retention		5	7
Volunteer Role		6	17
Front of House		9	41
Supporting visitor experience		6	18
Future Changes		12	18
Tour Guides		4	17
Amount of material		1	1
Desired changes		1	1
Structure		2	4

Name	Description	Files	References
Time Constraints		1	2
Volunteering Environment		3	8

Codes\\Horniman Museum

Name	Description	Files	References
Background or Employment History		2	3
Job Description		2	5
Colonialism, Imperialism and Empire		3	5
Decolonisation		12	36
Addressing silences		3	3
Transparency		2	7
Audiences and Voices		3	14
Volunteers		1	2
Importance		1	1
Balance		2	2
Benin Bronzes		1	4
Cha, Chai, Tea		6	19
Visitor Critical Reflection		3	3
Visitor resistance		1	1
Combating coloniality		1	1
Denial of Coevalness		2	5
Dynamic representation		2	3
Complexity		2	4
Consent		1	1
Institutional Introspection		1	2
Interviewee Opinion		3	11
Iterative process		8	16
Pluriversality		3	4
Diverse cultural practice		1	1
Popular awareness of Tea and Colonial Exploitation		3	3
Possibility		0	0

Name	Description	Files	References
Praxis		3	4
Public Pressure		1	2
Reinterpreting Permanent Collections		4	7
Responsibility of the Organisation		3	5
Non-complicit		1	1
Presenting the Facts		1	1
Horniman Family		3	7
Early Days of the Horniman		2	6
Institutional Activity		3	7
Cha, Chai, Tea Exhibition Development		3	18
Collaboration with non-institutional stakeholders		1	12
Long-term collaboration		1	3
Specific expertise		1	1
Ways of working		1	2
Museum as Social Activists		1	3
Contemporary Connections		1	1
Outcomes		1	1
Timeline for exhibition development		1	1
Volunteer Involvement		1	3
Decolonial Working Group		1	1
Message Management		4	13
Reset Agenda		2	3
Restitution		1	2
Accessibility		1	2
Object Centric		2	2
Subjects		1	2
Interpretation		1	1
Silence as colonial violence		2	2
Volunteer Opinion		5	47

Name	Description	Files	References
Acknowledging and Communicating Colonialism		7	33
Decolonisation of the mind		1	1
Grounding of topics		2	5
Lived Experience versus Objects		1	1
Object Provenance		4	8
Overshadowing Oppression		1	1
Anachronistic Nature		3	10
Being overly triumphalistic		2	7
Cha, Chai, Tea		6	21
Accessibility of the Exhibition		1	4
Framing of exhibition		2	4
Information Overload		1	2
Colonial and Imperial legacies		4	4
Contributing towards decolonisation		8	20
Culture Wars		3	9
Triumphalistic narratives of Empire		1	1
Frederick Horniman		3	3
Future Decolonial Activity		1	1
Museum Practice		4	23
Access		3	4
Impact of Reset Agenda		1	3
Nature and Love		3	7
Necessity to Act		2	7
Non-Apologetic		2	3
Non-Performative		3	7
Transparency and Honesty		6	18
De-toxifying narratives		1	1
Notions of Progress		1	2

Name	Description	Files	References
Redistributing and de-centring the museum		9	21
Engaging various stakeholders		3	9
Responsibility of the Horniman		5	16
Educational responsibility		6	16
Redressing colonial wounds		8	27
Breaking down barriers and binaries		4	10
Challenging authority and neutrality		6	11
Difficulty of process		1	5
Place for and of connectiveness		4	4
Pluralistic space		3	8
Shutting down conversation		1	1
Restitution		7	21
Outcomes of restitution		4	6
Restituting Benin Bronzes		7	19
Uniqueness of Horniman's decolonial practice		2	2
Organisational Context		2	3
Barriers to inclusion		1	2
Comparison to other Museums and Institutions		8	11
Ethos of the Horniman		1	2
Future Institutional Activity		1	2
Historic Museum practice		1	1
Institutional History		1	1
Museum Audiences		10	26
Natural History Gallery		3	4
Object Provenance		3	10
Physical Infrastructure of the organisation		1	3

Name	Description	Files	References
Public Perceptions of the Organisation		4	6
World Gallery		5	11
Challenging visitors		1	1
Volunteering		0	0
Consequences on Future Volunteering		5	9
Outcomes of Volunteering		5	9
Durable Benefits		8	24
Self-expression		1	1
Volunteer Anxiety		8	26
Cultural Hierarchies		1	1
Discomfort		3	3
Influence of social environment		1	1
Urge to apologise		1	1
Volunteer Attachment to Organisation		11	66
Devotion		2	3
Disposition of volunteers		1	1
Experience of volunteering		1	1
Identification with Horniman		1	2
Perceived attack		1	1
Pride		0	0
Self-Fulfilment		3	5
Social Environment of Volunteering		6	13
Social infrastructure		2	7
Volunteer Background		8	23
Connections to Empire		2	2
Governance of Museums		2	2
Volunteer Desire		1	1
Improvements to permanent exhibitions		1	4
Volunteer Inclusion		10	33

Name	Description	Files	References
Insiders		1	2
POC Network		1	4
Replacing jobs		1	1
Staff-Volunteer Meeting		1	1
Volunteer Awareness		6	27
Coloniality		8	18
Tea, Wealth and Colonial Exploitation		4	10
Discussion surrounding decolonisation		1	1
Institutional Change		2	3
Lack of Historical Knowledge		1	2
Reasons for Horniman's decolonial practice		3	7
Reset Agenda		1	1
Volunteer Communication		4	10
Lack of Engagement		4	5
Need for dialogue		1	1
Normalising practice		1	1
Volunteer Misconceptions		2	2
Volunteer Consent		2	3
Volunteer-led practice		1	2
Volunteer Interest		3	4
Museums		1	2
Volunteer Motivation		12	27
Volunteer Practice		2	4
'Doing of Volunteering'		6	20
Regulating Volunteers		9	23
Decolonial ambitions		1	1
Future Changes		14	26
Object Based Learning		11	36
Volunteer Opinion		1	1
Visitor Experience		5	8
Information Overload		1	1

Name	Description	Files	References
Position of Volunteers		7	23
Ambassadors of the Organisation		7	10
Limits of Participation		2	2
Live interpreters		11	35
Agency		3	8
Modulating Content		5	9
Communicating Colonialism		9	59
Authority of Live Interpreters		1	1
Differing levels of knowledge		3	3
Problem of standardisation		1	1
Racism and Kids		4	4
Visitor Interest		1	1
Critical pedagogues		7	14
Unveilling colonial wound and structures of domination		1	1
Cultural Capital		1	3
Engendering connection		2	8
Power Imbalances		1	3
Reproducing coloniality		1	1
Responsibility of Engage Volunteers		9	39
Unconscious bias		1	2
Volunteer confidence		5	6
Visitor and Volunteer interaction		7	22
Potential Conflict		5	11
Navigating Conflict		8	23
Active Listening		4	4

Name	Description	Files	References
Reasons for not engaging with colonial past		1	1
Visitor Expertise		1	1
Visitor Feedback		2	8
Volunteer Reaction		2	2
Avoiding stereotypes		1	1
Volunteer Recruitment		7	16
Diversifying		4	5
Volunteer Induction		4	10
Volunteer Retention		2	2
Volunteer Role		3	3
Description of role		1	1
Volunteer Safeguarding		7	16
Scaling up conversations		1	3
Volunteer Training		11	33
Future Training		1	1
Importance of training		1	2
Improvements		3	16
Institutional Support		0	0
Guidance on communicating colonial and imperial past		2	2
Lack of Training		4	8
Object Provenance		1	1
Limitations		2	5
Opportunity for dialogue		2	4
Preparation for Cha, Chai, Tea		5	30
Barriers to Participation		2	2
Lack of discussion		1	3
Depth of information		1	1
Layered Approach		1	1
Iterative basis		2	2
Nav's Presentation		3	12
Prep for OBL		1	1

| Name	Description	Files	References
Training Improvements		3	11
Dialogic		5	8
Language Use		1	1
Opportunities to provide feedback		1	1
Socialising with volunteers		2	3
Producing Materials		1	2
Volunteer Learning		10	16
Community of Practice		2	2
Critical Reflection		7	19
Formal		8	30
Curator-led		2	2
Dialogic		3	6
Iterative training and feeding back		1	1
Skilled Facilitator		1	1
Informal		7	9
Field-trips		1	2
Lived Experience		1	1
Self-directed		8	16
Museum Resources		1	2
Volunteer Expertise		1	2
Volunteer Training Materials		6	10
Volunteering Scheme		2	4
Lack of Contribution		1	3
Length of Volunteering		7	8
Volunteer Demographics		3	5

Code hierarchies: Horniman Museum
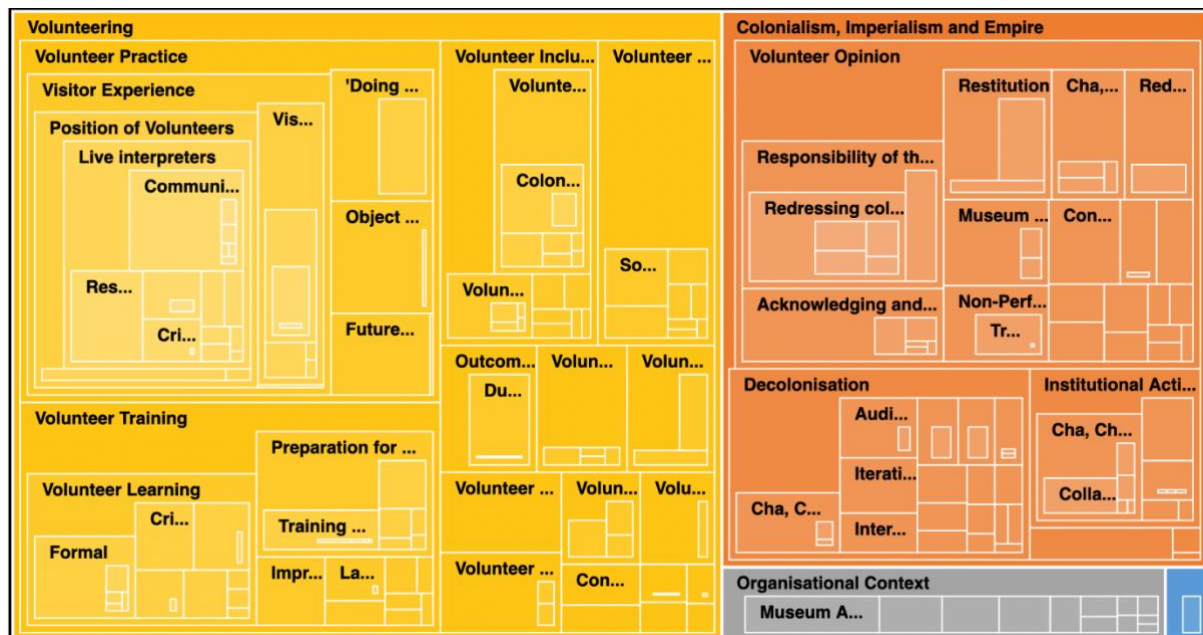
Code hierarchies: British Museum
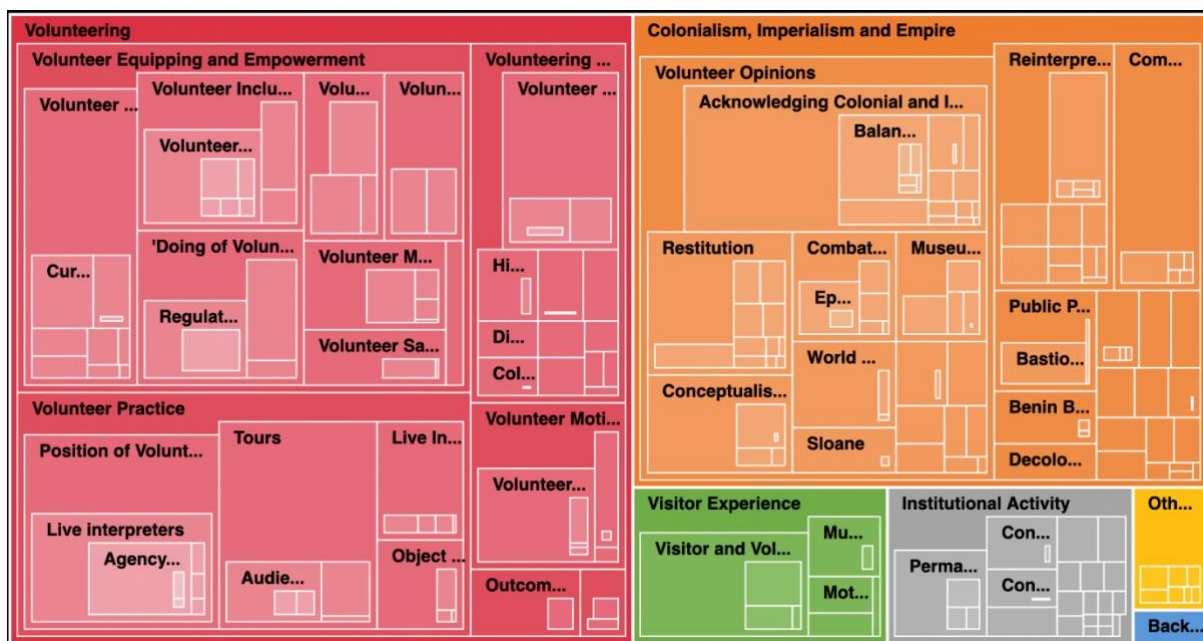
Code hierarchies: Fulham Palace
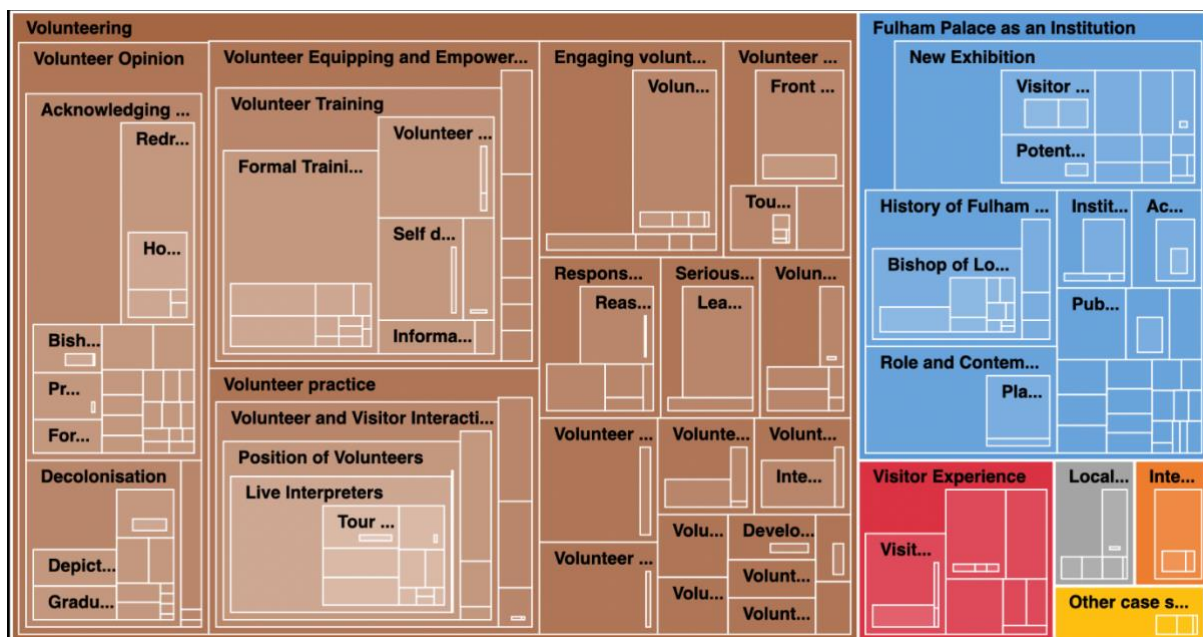
Appendix Nine: Things of Note

Fulham Palace

Bishop of London is third most senior position within the Church of England, and they also possess one of 26 seats allocated to senior clergy in the House of Lords. Historically, they resided at Fulham Palace and there has been continuous presence at the site from 8th Century AD until 1971 where they were Lord of the Manor.

Henry Compton was the Bishop of London from 1675-1686 and 1688-1713. He was established as the first Bishop of the Colonies and was the first person to appoint commissionaires to act as his representatives in North America and the Caribbean. These emissaries were responsible for keeping Compton informed on the state of the church, the behaviour of the local clergy as well as the wider geopolitical situation in which they were occupied. He was also responsible for reconstituting the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG) in 1701 where each Archbishop of Canterbury served as its president. The society financed the work of ministers and missionaries abroad and they submitted yearly reports to Compton on their progress. The SPG were also bequeathed plantations in Barbados from Christopher Codrington, which became known as the Codrington Estate, because of their remit to teach the Christian message in the colonies by proselyting settlers, enslaved and indigenous peoples. Compton is also recognised as being an avid botanist and had many plant species identified and trafficked over from the colonies in North America which were subsequently planted in the garden at Fulham Palace. Such identification and

movement of plant species occurred via clergymen who often utilised the knowledge and labour of enslaved and indigenous peoples, meaning that Compton used his position as Bishop of the Colonies to engage in plant hunting.

Reverend James Banister was an Anglican minister located in Virginia. He was a trained botanist, and he helped enable Bishop Compton's plant hunting. He directly utilised the enslaved labour of four to five individuals, who had been trafficked by the Royal Africa Company, to help him make a 'pretty livelihood'. He later trafficked enslaved peoples to work on his plantation in Bristol Parish, Charles City County, Virginia, and he also became well-respected amongst settlers in Virginian society and was a co-founder of William and Mary College. He was accidentally shot by a fellow plant hunter whilst out collecting in 1692.

Bishop Beilby Porteus was the Bishop of London from 1787-1809. The Porteus family were enslavers and had their plantations located in Virginia, North America, where they owned 500 acres of land. His grandfather, Edward Porteus, had purchased 400 enslaved peoples directly from the Royal Africa Company and when the Robert Porteus, Beilby's father, and his family moved back to England, they still retained ownership of their plantations, thereby, becoming absentee planters. Beilby Porteus directly had a share of ownership in the Virginian plantation and was an absentee planter up until his death. He was also originally known as being proponent for abolition and became a lead supporter in the House of Lords for the 1807 Slave Trade Act. However, subsequent research conducted by researchers at Fulham Palace has uncovered that he wanted to maintain the institution of enslavement as a means to proselyte enslaved peoples. He subsequently founded the Society for the Conversion and Religious Instruction and Education of the Negro Slaves in the West Indies, served as its first president and had a fundamental role in producing what became known as the Slave Bible, or the *Select Parts of the Holy Bible for the use of the Negro Slaves in the British West India Islands*. This redacted version of the bible was meant to reify the circumstances of oppression surrounding enslaved peoples by encouraging their subservience to their enslavers.

Bishop William Howley was the Bishop of London from 1813-1828. His tenure was overshadowed by the competing interests of British Abolitionists and West India sugar interests and enslavers. He directly oversaw the expansion of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts which set up two bishoprics in the Caribbean in 1824 which were geared towards enacting the government's amelioration plans rather than serving the welfare of the enslaved population.

Bishop John Robinson was the Bishop of London from 1713-1723. He was formerly a diplomat for 30 years, and was predominantly based in Stockholm, Sweden. In 1713, as part of his role as the Bishop of Bristol and the Lord Privy Seal, he negotiated the Treaty of Utrecht which ended the War of Spanish Succession. This treaty also granted a 30-year monopoly, called the *Asiento de Negros,* which enabled British ships via the South Sea Company to trade and traffick enslaved Africans to Spanish 'colonies' in the Americas where people worked in mines and on tobacco and sugar farms. Between 1711-1720, the South Sea Company was responsible for trafficking over 15,900

enslaved men, women and children from various parts of West Africa and their enslaving activities continued all throughout the 1740s post the Sea-South Bubble (Bank of England, 2023).

Bishop Charles Blomfield was Bishop of London from 1828-1856. Blomfield viewed himself as being an abolitionist and directly acknowledged the horrors and the oppressive nature of the trans-Atlantic trade in enslaved Africans as part of a sermon given in 1852. However, he also peddled white saviour narratives regarding the status of Britain as the saviour of the enslaved population, especially in terms of the role of Britain in enacting the civilising mission.

Obeah is a generalised term that refers to the use of African spiritual traditions by the enslaved in British slave societies. Obeah, as a cultural practice, was used alongside other African spiritual traditions to settle disputes, poison enemies, heal the sick and in personal divination. Obeah practitioners, also known as Obeahmen, were respected amongst the enslaved and carried authority which was perceived as a threat by enslavers. Obeah and Obeahmen played a central role in the planning and execution of the slave uprising in Jamaica known as Tacky's revolt in 1760. This led to the practice being outlawed by enslavers in Jamaica and then the British Caribbean (Adeyemi, 2023).

Bishop Dame Sarah Mullaly DBE is the current Bishop of London and was installed as the 113rd Bishop of London at St Paul's Cathedral in 12th May 2017.

Queen Anne's Bounty founded in 1704 and served as a mechanism to tackle poverty amongst clergymen within the Church of England. The fund invested in the South Sea Company and such activity was strongly encouraged by Queen Anne who wanted to 'gain for England a larger share in the international slave trade 'and 'fought to gain the Assiento from France during negotiations over the Treaty of Utrecht in 1712' (Fulham Palace, 2022).

British Museum

Sir Hans Sloane (1660-1753) was the founder of the British Museum. He initially trained as a physician and served as a Doctor to the Governor of Jamaica, the Duke of Ablemarle from 1687 to 1688. During this time, he served as a physician to both planters and enslaved peoples and through this he assembled a collection of 800 plant specimens, animals and 'curiosities'. He also became an enslaver through marriage to the heiress Elizabeth Langley Rose whose family owned sugar plantations in Jamaica which enabled him to accumulate a vast amount of wealth to enable his collecting.

Reimagining the British Museum initiative refers to the BM's efforts to reinterpret and recontextualise their permanent exhibitions with an explicit emphasis on focusing on objects tied to Empire, the Trans-atlantic trade in enslaved Africansand Abolition.

The World Culture ideology or Museum of the World refers to the belief that Museums, predominantly located in the Global North and who were the beneficiaries of colonial dispossession, exploitation and violence, serve all of humanity rather than just the citizenry of one nation. Consequently, this reinforces their self-proclaimed mission that as educational institution, they need to provide accessible socio-cultural education for all peoples which then acts as an argument against restitution and repatriation efforts.

The Benin Bronzes refers to a group of several thousand metal plaques and sculptures that were present in the Royal Palace of the Kingdom of Benin which served as a material socio-historical record for the Kingdom. In 1897, the British invaded the Kingdom of Benin as part of a punitive expedition to open up trade in West Africa and they looted Benin City which result in various plaques and sculptures being bequeathed to or being purchased by Western museums via auctions. The Bronzes have been subject to various repatriation claims and the British Museum is currently working with the Oba and the Nigerian Government as part of the Benin Dialogue Group to not only potentially return the Bronzes but also build a new national museum. The Group has come under increasing criticism for not actualising the return of the Bronzes due to the proposition of facilitating long-term loans rather than restoring ownership of the Bronzes to the Oba and the Nigerian government.

Hoa Hakananai'a is a moai from Rapa Nui which was taken by the British Navy from the Island in 1868 and was originally presented to Queen Victoria who disliked the Moai and donated it to the British Museum. It is distinctive in comparison to other Moai due to the carving that it has on their back which are emblematic of the birdman cult present on the Island. The moai is currently subject to repatriation claims by Rapa Nui and in 2019, a delegation from the island visited the British Museum to not only discuss potential return, but also to guarantee that the moai's lived context was being adhered to and respected which then resulted in the placing of votive offerings in front of the sculpture.

The Gweagel/Bark Shield is a shield made out of bark and red mangrove wood and is from New South Wales, Australia and dates to the late 18th century or early 19th century. It was believed that the shield was dropped by a Gweagel warrior upon contact with a European landing party led by Captain Cook and Joseph Banks, who is believed to have 'collected' the shield and brought it back to the UK. However, subsequent research has been undertaken by Nicholas Thomas, director of the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, which has debunked this notion and so it is believed to be accessioned into the Museum between about 1790 to 1815 after it was sent by colonial governors and other officials at Port Jackson. The shield is currently subject to ongoing repatriation claims by the Gweagal clan and it has gradually become a vivid symbol of the impacts of British colonisation of Australia and its ongoing legacy that impacts Aboriginal and Torres-Strait Islander peoples.

Bastion of Colonialism is a concept as described by Frost (2019) that refers to the popular conceptions of the British Museum being emblematic of colonial loot.

Asante Pipe refers to a clay pipe present on the Object Handling desk in the Enlightenment gallery. It originally comes from Ghana and is estimated to have been

made from the 1670s-19th century, and it is believed that the pipe was made to emulate similar ones made of gold which would have belonged to the socio-economic elite within the Asante Kingdom. The object guidance notes given by the British Museum state how the practice of Tobacco smoking amongst the Asante was introduced by the Portuguese and Dutch in return for trading 'gold and other items', meaning that reference to potential trade and trafficking of enslaved peoples is omitted.

Shona Headrest is another object present on the Object Handling desk in the enlightenment gallery. It is a headrest made from a single piece of Mustago wood and would have been used as a wooden pillow for adult males of the Shona People. It comes from Zimbabwe and is dated to the early/mid 20th century. These headrests were and are used as part of ancestor worship and it is believed that these headrests act as a medium through which people can receive dreams from their ancestors which enables them to accumulate and acquire knowledge and resolve problems.

Akan Drum is the earliest African American object in the BM and as the first enslaved individuals arrived in North America in 1619, it is assumed that the drum was used on-board a slave ship. According to the Collecting and Empire trail, it may have been used to get individuals to exercise, but such drums were removed from plantations as part of suppressing Africans and their culture. The drum was acquired by Reverend Clerk at around 1730 who then passed it onto Sir Hans Sloane where it became part of his collection. Sloane originally misattributed the origins of the drum by ascribing it to indigenous peoples present in North America, but scientific analysis has uncovered that it came from West Africa.

The Battle of Maqdala fought in April 1868 refers to the conclusion of the British Punitive Expedition into Abyssinia where British forces led by Robert Napier overcame the Abyssinian forces led by Tewodros II. After the battle, Tewodros II committed suicide and British forces looted the fortress and city of Maqdala.

Horniman Museum

Frederick Horniman (1835-1906) was a Liberal MP, the owner of Horniman Tea, and the founder of the Horniman Museum. He is mostly remembered as being a social reformer and philanthropist who campaigned for the creation of the British Welfare state and aimed to raise living standards for all in British society during the early 20th century. However, the wealth he derived through Horniman Tea which enabled his collecting was directly tied to Opium Wars and whilst he did not directly own Tea plantations, Horniman Tea did purchase Tea from East India Company brokers which then fuelled the opium epidemic present in China. Moreover, Horniman Tea also promoted the use of racist caricatures to assert the purity of their tea meaning they were responsible for promoting racialised stereotypes of the Other.

The Surrey House Museum was the earliest iteration of the Horniman Museum and opened in 1890 in the Horniman family residence.

Opium Wars were a series of conflicts fought between China and Great Britain and then France. The first Opium war occurred from 1839 to 1842 which resulted in a British victory and the seceding of Hong Kong island to Britain and the Second Opium war was fought from 1856 to 1860. Both of these conflicts contributed to the century of humiliation and provided the social unrest which eventually led to the Taiping Rebellion and the eventual destabilisation of the Qing dynasty because of European imperialism.

Appendix Ten: Exemplar Redacted Transcript of Interview with Volunteer B4

Speaker 1
Perfect. So just first and foremost, (...), do I have your consent for this interview to take place?

Speaker 2
Absolutely, yes.

Speaker 1
Perfect. So, I guess to kind of kick things off, can you tell me a bit more about your volunteering experience at the (Thing of Note One)?

Speaker 2
Right. Well, I started probably over 10 years ago now, and at first, I did the Greek tour, which starts with the Minoans. And then we talk about various aspects of art in ancient Greece and how it developed, then I started to do the Enlightenment tour, which I continue to do. I did the Friday evening specials for a while, which were very short talks. And I did that on the Enlightenment and Egypt, but I've stopped that now. And more recently, last couple of years, I've done the highlight tours, which people have to pay for, and we take them right around the museum in about 90 minutes.

Speaker 1
So obviously, just as you alluded to just before we started recording, can you tell me a little bit more about your recent experience in the highlights tour then?

Speaker 2
Well, one of the interesting things about highlights tour is that people you know, they're not just wandering around the museum, they actually want to see certain objects, and what I find is that they are often quite well-informed people who know the objects before they come along and are frequent denizens of museums all over the world. We have a wide variety of people; actually, British people are in the minority on the tour. We have, we've been having a lot of Americans, well-educated Americans on the tours. And I had a very interesting discussion yesterday with some Americans and some Chinese visitors, about the objects and where they came from, how they were, how they were

obtained by the museum, and the issue of whether or not they should, whether they were obtained under circumstances, you know, which were unfair at least, if not just simple theft, and about whether or not they should be returned to their original societies.

Speaker 1
So, what's your own personal opinion considering repatriation?

Speaker 2
Well, I've got, I've got mixed views on this. There are certainly objects, such as the (Thing of Note Two), which were obtained by force, there's no doubt that these objects are important to that culture, and I can see very little reason for them not to be returned if they're asked for and that's applies to a lot of the objects in the museum. Even those that were bought, you know, they were bought under circumstances of some financial inequality because these were immensely wealthy Europeans buying things from poorer people in colonies, or dominions, and places, places like that. My defence, because I have to be very loyal to the museum, is that we have 5 million visitors every year, if all the objects were dispersed, fewer people would see them and their overall experience of the history of the world would be diminished.

Speaker 1
Okay, but then what about the argument let's say obviously with kind of 3D printing, for example, the fact you can always have very accurate recreations of the objects, albeit the fact that they're not the same, then you can actually return the objects back to these countries as well, and retain the copies instead.

Speaker 2
Yes, there's a good argument for that. Yes, many of the objects are too valuable for that. So, we couldn't do a reproduction of the (Thing of Note Three), because it would cost several million, million pounds, but for lots of things that could be done. One of the things that matters is whether these individual objects are important to a particular culture. So, we have hundreds of flints, for example. So they come from all over the world, but they're not really important to those particular cultures. There are certain things like the (Thing of Note Two), and perhaps another good example would be the (Thing of Note Four) in the Indian gallery because that certainly was obtained by unfair means, and perhaps that should go back and that could be copied. I think the museum and other places like this, what they're worried about is a slippery slope. So that once we start on that everybody will want to add what they perceive as their original object back. Whether that's a good thing or bad thing, I'm not sure really.

Speaker 1
Yeah, well, I guess it's one thing they very much have to figure out, especially concerning the recent changes in the charities law, which may actually facilitate all that returning I guess, in some ways.

Speaker 2

There is, of course, a sort of colonialist attitude towards objects in that it was often said that these objects would not have been taken care of, as they have been in the museum. I mean, I'm not sure that's entirely true anyway, because some objects were damaged here, such as the Victorians scrubbing the sculptures with wire brushes.

Speaker 1
Wait, they seriously did that?

Speaker 2
They did that, because they have this idea that the sculptures should be sort of pristine as they were. We now know, thanks to research here actually, that a lot of the sculptures were brightly coloured with pigment. So, we've changed our attitude in that sort of way.

Speaker 1
I mean, it's interesting you mentioned obviously about that colonialist mentality through the retention of objects, do you think that kind of comes across in some ways that the museum displays or provides interpretation for objects as well?

Speaker 2
I'm not sure about that, and then once that comes up, when we talk about the (Thing of Note Five), it's often mentioned that the ones that were left behind have been damaged, since then, by weathering and lack of upkeep and that sort of thing, and the ones here are in better condition. But that's an argument for the whole issue of whether (Thing of Note Six) was justified in taking them, is another matter. At the time, the objects were of no interest to the Ottomans, because anything before the Muslim period is irrelevant to them. But now, of course, the Greeks have got a fantastic museum, they've done wonderful work in restoring the (Thing of Note Five), and there's a good argument for them to be given back, and they could be reproduced quite easily in bulk then.

Speaker 1
And that's what's kind of happened over at the (…). They've got recreations so why don't we have the recreations, and they have the original stuff back?

Speaker 2
Yes, that's right. Yes. They certainly are Greek.

Speaker 1
Yeah, definitely. I mean, it's an interesting point that you kind of alluded to there as well about talking about voice and obviously representation, because I can half imagine the fact that obviously, very much the old attitude of stewardship and obviously "us needing to preserve it for the good of humanity," I don't think really holds up much. Because obviously, you have various peoples being able to pretty much look after these objects in various different ways, and in some ways, keeping them in that sense of stewardship really divorces them from their lived context, which I think in some ways is actually even worse, really.

Speaker 2
Yes. We're still getting started on....

Speaker 1
Well, you can if you want to, go ahead.

Speaker 2
Well, I mean, I'm quite left wing. And I understand, you know, about the dreadful colonialism that took place all over the world. And, you know, our Museum, the Louvre, you know, they're all products of that of that period, it was just a small period in history, where Europeans were very wealthy, and powerful, and they were able to obtain these objects. Before that, then it was just the antiquarians that were that were interested in the objects.

Speaker 1
So, I guess in some ways, well maybe I'm assuming your opinion here. But maybe buildings like the (Thing of Note One), or the Louvre or other world culture museums, obviously, were built symbols of Empire, and I think that thing that has to come front and centre is then publicly acknowledging that and actually referencing how that kind of standpoint has influenced the practice, not only in the past, but also the present as well.

Speaker 2
Yes. I mean, the very design of the museum here, you know, it's designed to be impressive and alluding to the civilisation, the culture of the Greeks.

Speaker 1
Yeah. Or even in some ways, when you mentioned the Enlightenment gallery as well, it's built in a way to very much classify the world and obviously, say, the fact that, hey, we're the ones that can designate, I guess, what's being classified, what's being interpreted as well, and in that sense, it kind of reflects well the previous so called moral superiority of Europeans.

Speaker 2
Yes, yes.

Speaker 1
Which is intensely problematic in and of itself.

Speaker 2
Yes, and an example is (Thing of Note Seven) himself, you know, I mean, when I started to do the enlightenment gallery, the tour there, the emphasis was on (Thing of Note Seven), being a very successful physician, about his collection of medicines from the West Indies, and his enormous collection of 80,000 objects from all over the world. But now, we talk about the fact that he was able to accrue all of these objects, because his wife own plantations in the West Indies, and that's how we got them.

Speaker 1
I mean, what's your personal reaction, I guess, to that shift of narrative about (Thing of Note Seven)?

Speaker 2
Well, it's absolutely right. Yes, I mean, another thing that I might mention (Thing of Note Eight). Do you know about her?

Speaker 1
No, not at all.

Speaker 2
Well, I mean, she was (...). She's described as the world's first entomologist because she was fascinated by insects of all kinds, and she produced an enormous book with fantastic illustrations of insects of all sorts. But of course, it was Suriname, it was a Dutch colony, and she was able to be there because her family-owned tracts of land, which were being exploited in that way.

Speaker 1
So I guess that illustrates the need to once again emphasise the colonial and imperial connections that the institution actually has in these various places, but then it also further interrogate or provide context about the imbalance in power relations there at the end of the day.

Speaker 2
Absolutely, yes. I mean, India is an example of this. This was a country before we got there which was one of the most powerful and rich countries in the world and over the period of colonisation, I think it actually became relatively poorer, in comparison to other parts of the world, and was stripped of a lot of its precious possessions by the British, who felt that they were in some way doing them a favour.

Speaker 1
Yeah, and then you kind of hear those classic arguments saying, "oh, yeah, we built the infrastructure or built the railways."

Speaker 2
Built the railways, yes.

Speaker 1
But it doesn't really justify what kind of there as well.

Speaker 2
No no. I mean, we weren't building the railways as a sort of charitable effort, we were doing that so we could move goods around more easily.

Speaker 1

Exactly. If anything, it was for the UK's own benefit really because obviously it is enhancing the colonial resource extraction that came hand in hand with expanding the market as well.

Speaker 2
That's right. Yes.

Speaker 1
Yeah, so I was going to say, I guess it kind of brings me into my second question then, because it gets covered a lot, I guess, within that short track (?), but what does the (Thing of Note One) mean to you?

Speaker 2
Well, the museum is a product of the Enlightenment, and that's my thing. It's a tribute to the people who set it up and run it ever since in preserving and gradually enhancing our understanding of the world. It's an evolution that's going on all the time, it was quite a liberal, enlightened idea to have a museum open to the general public in the first place. It was the first... I mean, I love it. I've spent countless hours wandering around various areas, and I come back to certain things as well. One of the objects that I think is really interesting is probably the most insignificant object in a way is the (Thing of Note Nine), and this is a, it's a calcite sculpture quite small, only perhaps 10 centimetres high. But it's interesting in two ways. One it's the first representation that we have of a couple embracing, shall we say passionately.

Speaker 1
Oh, interesting. Okay.

Speaker 2
The other is that comes from a particular period in human history, and it was called the Natufian period, and it's the change from, I'm sure you know this, it's between us being hunter gatherers. So, in that period, they domesticated sheep and goats, and they're collecting grain, but they're not actually planting it. So, after this period, we then get into the huge agrarian empires, in Egypt and in the Middle East, in the Indus Valley, and things like that. So, I think, you know, one of the things is that it's an educational process going on, all the time, where we're telling people about our past, our human past. On the Enlightenment tour, one of the things I talk about is about how before the enlightenment, our view of the world and ourselves was pretty limited in terms of time and space. So in space, you know, they thought the stars and planets were these invisible silver, not silver, quartz, crystal dome, of course they had no idea about the distance, they didn't realise that stars are quite a long way away from us compared to the planets, and in terms of time the Chinese were more advanced than us because they could trace the dynasties about two and a half thousand BC. The Indians had a view, a sort of cyclical view of time about 50,000 years. But in Europe, we were immensely backwards, we thought the world was pretty much as it had been left by the flood just a few thousand years ago, and the best guess was Bishop Ussher's guess, working out from the Bible and working his way back through all the descendants in 4004 BC, October the 23rd, between nine and 10 in the morning.

Speaker 1
Yeah.

Speaker 2
But we are obviously, you know, we talk to people about this and make them aware of how views of ourselves and our place in the world have changed, and about the reaction to it, because there was a lot of resistance to some of these ideas, wasn't there in terms of geology, I think one of the, one of his...

Speaker 1
Charles Lyell, I'm guessing you're alluding towards.

Speaker 2
Well, I'm talking about William Hutton. Because there was one particular occasion when he went over to see me George Courbet (?) in France, and one of his fellow professors said, "well, I hope that's the last we hear of geology."

Speaker 1
But hey, it's still round nowadays.

Speaker 2
Well quite, and with archaeology as well. You know, in the Enlightenment gallery, we have this piece of flint, and we talk about how our view of ourselves has changed enormously, because before the enlightenment, we thought that human history was literally as the Bible said it, you know, starting with Adam and Eve, and the Bible was thought to be a historical document with all the events, actual events that are in it. And when we start to realise that about eras before the, the Bronze Age, we start to realise that 99% of our history has been as hunter gatherers. I show them a particular flint which is called the (Thing of Note Ten), that's where it was found. And when it was unearthed, there was a tooth underneath it, they couldn't understand why this had got there, and they thought perhaps it was from the Great Flood, which had washed everything around, or it was the Romans. But in fact, it turns out to be 400,000 years old. So it's maybe human, it may be made by Homo heidelbergensis. But it comes from a period when Europe had a climate like that of the savannah, so they were just wandering around Oxford Street and were in Piccadilly Circus and things like that, and of course, there was huge resistance to this.

Speaker 1
Yeah, of course, and so I guess in some ways, the Enlightenment gallery does a good job by, I guess, kind of debunking certain grand narratives as well, as you're talking about in terms of the biblical conception time as well. And obviously, it is increasingly, as evidenced by the, I don't know, the plaque obviously talking about (Thing of Note Seven)'s connections to transatlantic slavery, it goes a way of actually saying, "okay, there's multiple ways to also tell history as well, but here's the European conceptualisation of it."

Speaker 2

Yes, I probably go farther than most of my colleagues on the tour, because I say, "what was the enlightenment?" And say, well, it was a revolution in the mind as the way we looked at ourselves, why was there a need for revolution? So, I talked a little bit about the Roman Empire, because that was very cosmopolitan. But then with, after Constantine, and particularly Theodoseus, the church which was put into this enormous position of authority, and it dismissed all of the knowledge, except for the Bible. The schools of philosophy in Athens were closed down because they were thought to be redundant, and the temples were turned into churches or were knocked down, and all the other religions were outlawed. So, we have this build up for this worldview, which dominated Europe for well over a thousand years, and then the enlightenment, of course, all these attitudes start to change, but the narratives, what we say, is that it was certainly wasn't a simple sort of progression, a nice smooth progression, there was lots of resistance to certain of the ideas. And of course, particularly with Darwin, when Origin of Species comes out in 1859, there's a reaction to it. I mean, he never, I don't think in origin, he actually talks about humans. That's in the Descent of Man. But the implication, obviously, is that life is, if you filter down and you see his picture there of the tree of life, the implication is that we are part of this tree of life, and I do mention that we share 50% of our DNA with bananas.

Speaker 1

Yeah. Well, I think it's a good thing to mention as well. And that's an interesting point that you also kind of hit on at least when talking about Darwin as well, because even when thinking about institutions, like (Thing of Note One), or other Anthropology collections, is that obviously, that evolvement in thinking coincided with the moral justification that obviously, well Great Britain tried to use at that point in terms of colonising peoples as well, based on ideas of phrenology, or eugenics and such by emphasising the fact that it's almost like a form of developmentalism.

Speaker 2

Yes.

Speaker 1

And hierarchy and obviously come and try and say that White Europeans were generally at the top of that hierarchy in comparison to other peoples, which obviously, is something that (Thing of Note One) or other institutions very much need to grapple with as well in the contemporary moment.

Speaker 2

Yes, yes, that's right. One of the things I talk about, we can't do the whole of the Enlightenment gallery, because there's seven sections in there. But I finish off, I usually finish up with the voyage of discovery. So I emphasise, you know, in the Middle Ages, we were tremendously arrogant in Europe, we thought that nothing important had gone on, except in the Middle East and Europe and that these Pagans and Heathens had nothing to teach us. And that in the enlightenment, because the voyages of discovery and (Thing

of Note Eleven) and people like that, we were finding out much more about the rest of the world and about them, and actually there's this, I don't go into this very much. There is the myth of the noble savage, having had terrible wars in Europe, like the 30 Years War, we realised that we were not really as civilised as we would like to think we are, and lots of these other civilisations seemed to be in a much more peaceful and sort of easy-going. It turns out in later research that we weren't and there was continual inter-lifetime warfare going on, and this sort of thing. But actually, I mention (Thing of Note Twelve), there is this big campaign at the moment, because there is a famous portrait of his him, which some people want to export. (Thing of Note Twelve) was a Polynesian who volunteered to come back to Europe with (Thing of Note Eleven), and he became a celebrity. So almost singlehandedly, he broke the view that people had and what these savages could be like, because he was dressed up in European clothes, taught table manners. He went to various clubs, he learned to play chess very well, which was annoying to people because he wasn't supposed to be able do that, and so, you know, he changed people's attitudes to some extent, with the view of these things.

Speaker 1
And I guess in some ways, as you're kind of saying, it really debunks I guess, the orientalist view, I guess, in some ways and the uncritical stereotypes that are applied to certain people.

Speaker 2
That's right, yes. Because, of course, they had all sorts of stereotypes and different people being different, lazy Arabs, you know, the Chinese, the Indians, and all this sort of thing which is laughable now.

Speaker 1
Yeah, completely. Because ultimately, at the end of the day, it's just nonsense completely, but yeah. So, I guess it kind of brings me on to my third question then. How important do you think is for the (Thing of Note One) to acknowledge and communicate its colonial/imperial history and heritage?

Speaker 2
Well, I think it's vital. It should be part of what we do, part of our raison d'etre. In a way, I mean, partly just set the record straight and undo some of the damage that's been done over the past, just to enlighten people as to what the two situations are with the other cultures now and in the past is. For example, with China, you know, I take people into the (Thing of Note Thirteen), which is, you know, fantastic collection of China. They talk about how the Chinese civilisation is the longest continue civilization and for hundreds of years, they were way ahead of the Europeans in many aspects of life and science, in administration and in mathematics, and things like that chemistry with the manufacturing, of course, and I mentioned a book called, I think it is 1521. I don't know if you know this.

Speaker 1
Not at all.

Speaker 2
Well, the book, it talks about an expedition by a General Wu who was sent out by the Chinese emperor in this huge fleet of boats to explore the western part or west of China. So they go to India, and this say it is great to be there (?), they go to Arabia, they go right down the whole eastern coast of Africa, and then they come back and so the emperor is regaled with stories about all these things. Interestingly, they just sort of build some sort of back within themselves as a culture, they don't see the need to go outside. The book argues that had they wanted to, had they a different mindset, that China was so powerful in terms of, you know, the population, in terms of its armies, its technology, had it wanted to, it could have colonised the West, and the rest of the world, and that's abrupt and breaks down the idea of Europeans had that it was a sort of natural event that Europeans came to the top, and that it was inevitable that they that they colonise the world.

Speaker 1
So I guess in some ways, it's very much breaking down that binary between home and away and actually finding further nuance about the wider situation that time as well.

Speaker 2
Absolutely, yes, yes. I had an interesting discussion with some Americans, I've got American relatives in (...), and I have been over there and talked to them about how their ancestors got there. And of course, underlying this is the fact that for 10-12,000 years the continent was inhabited by natives. And I think with Americans, there's still a view that there was some sort of God given right for Americans to settle there. They don't call themselves invaders or imperialists or colonists, they call themselves settlers. I think ideas are changing about that.

Speaker 1
I mean, that's the whole logic behind the idea of Terra Nullius. Are you familiar with it at all?

Speaker 2
No.

Speaker 1
It's basically the idea of the fact that, let's say when people went to North America, or the settlers literally did as well, but there may have been some contact, but the way that they ended up denigrating people or categorising them was the idea, the fact that these people didn't really have any history, didn't have any sort of connection to the land.

Speaker 2
Ah yes.

Speaker 1
And so in that sense, Europeans were justified to actually, you know, I guess, one steal the land and settle it, but also then to, I guess, engage in some bits of, I don't want to

say genocide, because I think that happened, obviously, through diseases and such, but it's more the appropriation of land and all that, as well. So it's kind of once again, talking about that ideological argument of so called European superiority I guess.

Speaker 2
Yes, yes, and I mean, when I talk about Sutton Hoo and we talk about how our ideas of civilisation are changing it because we used to associate it only with, you know, complex, urban areas with large populations and a stratification and divergent society, and people doing all sorts of different jobs. But, you know, we're changing our minds about we know that lots of civilizations are quite complex. I mean, in in the Americas, you know, that the Mayans had this script...

Speaker 1
They had plumbing.

Speaker 2
They had plumbing, you know, their calendar was more accurate than the Spaniards who invaded, you know, four or 500 years after the Mayan's had disappeared. So, you know, you can't judge, we now know that you can't judge a civilisation simply on its technology. It was convenient to us in the colonial period, because that's what we were superior in.

Speaker 1
I guess in that sense, it's actually more focusing upon the individuals as well and how they lived as well, which I think is more important focus I guess at the end of the day. So I guess kind of going back to the question that I mentioned before, talking about the importance of acknowledging the (Thing of Note One)'s colonial/imperial past, how important do you think volunteers are within that process?

Speaker 2
Well, I mean, I think they're very important, because, you know, we do 15 separate tours of different galleries every day. So, we're the most important sort of point of direct contact with the public. So, you know, over the course of a year, there must be, you know, hundreds of thousands of people that we have direct interaction with. I mean, the only other thing that the public can interact with is the labels of all things which are, by their very nature, limited in what they can say. So, I think it's absolutely vital, and in my experience, volunteers are open to changing attitudes towards things in various ways, I've had discussions with them about the lack of, for example, in the lack of publication of the importance of women in science. So, I mean, for example, with Mary Anning you know, I mean, she was a very important person in extracting these fossils. She was the world expert in doing these things, and that's shown by the wonderful fossils that we put in the Natural History Museum and here. She wasn't given enough credit because first she was a woman, and second, she was on the trained sort of class in that way.

Speaker 1

So I guess in that way, if you're going to provide well a re-reading, I guess, of the history as well, the critical thing to be aware of are, I guess, one class nuances as well, at least in terms of who they particularly want to represent, but also then the gender implications as well. And I guess maybe that's something that increasingly needs to happen with this place, particularly when talking about shifting the gaze beyond Europeans as well.

Speaker 2
Yes, that's right. I mean, something that we don't do is we don't talk very much, at least in the information that we put on the on the labels of things, about the different pieces of men and women in society, because obviously that varies enormously in different civilisations.

Speaker 1
So, do you think that's a change that needs to occur?

Speaker 2
I think yeah, absolutely. Absolutely yes. I mean, wherever you were, most civilizations exhibit a huge amount of misogyny. But it needs to be said, it needs to be described. Because there are lots of variations.

Speaker 1
Yeah, definitely. I mean, it's interesting, what you mentioned before about the difference between having a volunteer there and just basically having the labels there. In what ways do you think having a volunteer giving a tour, or doing a touch table helps to really enhance the visitor experience?

Speaker 2
Well, a volunteer when people are doing gallery tours, they're giving a background to this. So, if you're doing something on Egypt say, you know, you're giving a background as to what that civilization was like in its entirety. You're not just talking about say the process of mummification, you're talking about the beliefs of the Egyptians and how they stayed pretty much the same for millennia, they change to some extent, particularly within the Ptolemaic period, we get a mixture of cultures there. So, it's important that the volunteers can set the scene for the objects, and they're not just seen in isolation, they're part of a sort of continuum of thickness. Because often is what we don't have as well, we don't have information about important aspects of civilisation. Simply because of a matter of luck, often. So, we have enormous amounts of information about the Romans, we had an exhibition a few years ago about, I've forgotten their names now. It was a society that existed in Central Asia, about which we know almost nothing, because they were sort of pastoralists, and they made no permanent buildings. So very little was known about them, more is being done now, because of Russian archaeologists, and we had an exchange where we sent over some of those, some of our, our (Thing of Note Five) sculptures, and they sent some of the sculptures from that. I'm annoyed now that I can't remember them.

Speaker 1

Well, don't worry, I'll make sure to send you an email asking later.

Speaker 2
Yes.

Speaker 1
But that's an interesting point. You mentioned obviously, about the whole continuum of objects as well, and how it facilitates forms of discussion, would you probably say, actually, having a volunteer there enables the visitors to engage in dialogue as well?

Speaker 2
Yes, it does. Actually, when I first started, I don't know if it still says this, but volunteers were instructed to say, "if you've got any questions, can you wait till the end?"

Speaker 1
Oh, really?

Speaker 2
Now, I've never done that. Because you want to have an interaction all the time, you know, between you and the group, and within the group, often we get good discussions going.

Speaker 1
As an example, well talking about provenance, I guess, at the end of the day.

Speaker 2
Yes. That's right. Yes, and in the Enlightenment gallery, you know, I've had scientists come along and make comments about the change that took place in the Enlightenment, and you know, how radical they were, for instance, in medicine, you know, so Galen was the go-to person for over a 1000 years. The idea of the four humours and how actually, that idea of medicine, where you're really not enough or too much of something, actually goes a long way past what we talk about the Enlightenment period, right into the late 19th century. I mean, in the 20th century, they were cupping people, when you heat a cup up, put it on the skin on it draws out things. So, I mean, right into the 20th century that was being used.

Speaker 1
And even then, that has also some relationships when talking about (Thing of Note Seven) as well, because obviously for him, he was a physician, he kind of accumulated knowledge, I guess, based on his time in the, I think it was Jamaica, or was it Trinidad, I can't remember, but in the Caribbean, and obviously, he ended up learning a lot, I guess from either enslaved individuals who were there, or even then local indigenous populations.

Speaker 2

That's right, and yes, and no credit is given for that. It's sort of, there's an assumption that he just found all these things and collected them and that sort of thing, but he must have been drawn to them by discussions with local people.

Speaker 1
Exactly, and I think that's one thing that maybe museums can do increasingly further, is really interrogate the knowledge hierarchies about that as well and giving credit where it's due.

Speaker 2
Yes. Yes. That's right.

Speaker 1
So yeah, so I guess it kind of brings me on to my next question. What sorts of training do you think volunteers need to communicate contested and difficult histories?

Speaker 2
I don't actually know what background a lot of people have got, to do with the volunteers. I know, very few of them are actual historians. I mean, I was a (...), head of (...). The volunteers, they are usually pretty educated and well-read people. But I think some, perhaps some research needs to be done on what the volunteers know, and what they ought to know about these sorts of things. I know people do lots of research on their own. There's no systematic structure, where things are discussed, and talked about, and referenced and things like that.

Speaker 1
I mean, it's interesting from your (...) background. So do you think in some ways, there should almost be like a standardised curriculum of which to help upskill people, I guess, so they can actually have that background knowledge to facilitate those sorts of conversations.

Speaker 2
I wouldn't go as far as a curriculum; I think that's too tight. But perhaps enabling people, you know, giving people lots of resources that they can, they can access so that they can understand these things. In the Africa gallery, for example, with the (Thing of Note Two), you know, there's a background of the colonisation of Africa, that needs to be understood. There was this sort of scramble for Africa among the European nations, with no thought to whether it was justified or not. And in fact, in some respects, they thought they were justified, because they thought that they'd never been any advanced civilisations in Africa at all. I mean, I think they didn't realise, I think we wouldn't accept that the (Thing of Note Two) were actually made by people in that area, simply because they were very cleverly made [and of a] very, very high standard.

Speaker 1
And even then, there's a lack of understanding about what the cosmological significance as well, because obviously, it's the entire, well, material record of a people at least in terms of recording the history and such.

Speaker 2

Yes, that's right. Yes, we need, I mean, there was no systematic effort on the part of those people who took those (Thing of Note Two) to find out what importance they were to the people who made them and the people who kept them afterwards.

Speaker 1

So I guess then going back to then talking about relative volunteer understanding, then do you think the fact that one, obviously, there needs to be increased awareness of kind of things like the Berlin Conference and the scramble for Africa, but then also how those arguments or what actually happened is actually continued to play out in the present?

Speaker 2

Yes, yes, absolutely. Yes. I still think that there's an attitude in the West, about African nations being incapable of having advanced liberal democracies, and that needs to be addressed. There's absolutely no reason why these countries can't develop in the same way like we did. There's still an economic imperialism going on now, in Nigeria, for example, where the (Thing of Note Two) came from, and it should be an immensely wealthy countries, it has got fantastic resources. But it's convenient to the west to have the country controlled by a small minority, because they're easier to deal with than a democratic regime.

Speaker 1

Yeah. I mean, maybe this is slating the museum a little bit, but at least in terms of that sentiment, has that kind of come across, I guess, in your experience with other volunteers or within the wider museum itself, or?

Speaker 2

In what way?

Speaker 1

I guess the whole idea of the fact that that sense of superiority, I guess, that some Europeans may necessarily feel.

Speaker 2

Yes, I don't think I've ever discussed that, and well, I don't remember anyway because in that particular thing. I know there's an issue about the museum's involvement with (...), which is one of those oil companies which is extracting the wealth from places like Nigeria, and I agree with it, I think we should extract ourselves from that relationship.

Speaker 1

Yeah completely, and I agree as well, because not even then they are engaging in forms of greenwashing. But anyway, that's detracting from....

Speaker 2

Don't get me started on that.

Speaker 1
But then going back to, I guess, making volunteers aware of contemporary significance of objects within certain debates. Do you think more efforts can be made by the volunteering team to make volunteers aware of that, or perhaps facilitate discussions with curators where that information can be imparted?

Speaker 2
Yes. Well, you know, I thought for some time, I mean the volunteer managers are great and wonderful people. But there's a disjoint between the volunteers and the curators. I've never met a curator at all. Never, never. Well, sometimes we have lectures by the curators, when we have our open days for volunteers and that sort of thing. But on none of the tours that I've done, have I talked to curator before I've started, and I think that will be useful if they've got time, if they've got time to do it.

Speaker 1
I mean, this is one of the things that came across when chatting to some of the volunteer managers as well, is that it's important, I guess, to really have that opportunity for you to pose questions to curators and such. But on the flip side, having to organise that I guess for something like 500/600 people can be quite different.

Speaker 2
Yes.

Speaker 1
But I think it doesn't necessarily diminish the opportunity of having some sort of line of contact that if you have a particular question, or you want to voice something, you should be able to get in contact with curators to actually understand, okay, looking into the object, how do I really approach it in the right way to make sure that one, I don't cause offence by describing stuff, but also two, the information that I'm providing is one) sensitive but also two) accurate.

Speaker 2
Yes, that's right. Yes. Maybe it's to do with the fact that the role of volunteers is not thought to be as important as it actually is or as important as I think it is. Anyway.

Speaker 1
So, do you think that preconception needs to change?

Speaker 2
Well, I don't know whether there's a preconception or not because I've never discussed it with curators as far as they're concerned, so I don't know what their attitude towards this are. I've never spoken to any of the curators about it.

Speaker 1
I mean, it's interesting, you say that, because both for me, I'm very biased towards volunteering, because I've done a lot of research on it, and I've been a volunteer for

years, and the way that I particularly feel about it for individuals such as yourself, if you've been an organisation for a long time, sure, the fact you're not salaried, but you're very knowledgeable and capable in your own right when it comes round to discussing these objects and that in itself is a form of expertise.

Speaker 2
Well, on the Enlightenment, I got really into this, and I think I can probably say that I've read every book on the enlightenment, sort of post war, and quite a few articles. I haven't done the PhDs because they are a bit too narrow.

Speaker 1
Yeah, I feel you.

Speaker 2
Yeah. I think I'm quite knowledgeable, certainly, in certain aspects of the Enlightenment anyway. It's a huge subject.

Speaker 1
Yeah, and I think that in some ways, that's almost like a knowledge bank amongst the general volunteers that could actually be used to great effect. Because I think obviously, it's great to have the authoritative curatorial voice saying, this is a significance about X, Y, Zed, but also, when you are giving tours or when you're kind of talking about things like the colonial past, or even then wider decolonisation, the central element of it is connection and feeling.

Speaker 2
Yes.

Speaker 1
And I think you having the option to tell your own personal narratives, your opinions about related things is obviously critically important. And as part of that, members of the public or even the volunteers themselves should have the capacity to kind of say, "okay, here's how I particularly feel about it, even though it may go against the official museum line."

Speaker 2
We can refer on what sort of feedback that we get from the visitors, because we have direct contact with them, and the curators don't. So, I found that quite a lot of our visitors are very knowledgeable about things, very well educated and well-read people. So, I think that's the sort of resource that we're not using in a way that we should be able to transfer what we find from people. I mean, I had a scientist who put me right.

Speaker 1
Oh really? Can you tell me about that?

Speaker 2
He was a nuclear scientist. I was talking about how we, you know, in geology, when it first started, they had no idea about how long it took for the strata to be laid down, and then we started to find out about different sorts of rocks, because as the chemistry improves, I said, you know, it was quite a late point, which we understood really how old these rocks were, and it wasn't until, I think it was in Cambridge, that we used a primitive form of isotope, I think it was lead isotope. So, he put me right on that, although I didn't understand what he was saying.

Speaker 1
But I guess once again, that kind of shows the importance of the (Thing of Note One) being a reflexive institution, because you're on the front line, you are exuding the values or the aims or the mission statement of the organisation as well, and really, you're the front face of it, and that's going to speak to the general importance of volunteers.

Speaker 2
I mean, there's a parallel with Australians, because I talk about (Thing of Note Eleven), and about the first voyage where he takes along (Thing of Note Fourteen) and he comes back with these 1000s of specimens and increases by 20% the number of species that we know. And because Australians, they know all about (Thing of Note Eleven) because they're taught it in history and (Thing of Note Fourteen, and there is Banks Island, Banks Street and all these sorts of things, but it was part of a, you know, a colonial effort and they were looking for new commodities, for new lands, you know, this idea of this last southern continent and all that sort of thing. So, although (Thing of Note Eleven) was, in some ways, quite an enlightened figure, I mean, he did at least want to know about the people that he met and what their beliefs and ideas and things like that, it was a colonial enterprise.

Speaker 1
And even then, there's something to be said about the commemoration about afterwards, because you mentioned kind of Bank Street, Bank Island. etc, of how there's active efforts of certain people to really propagate that idea further and memorialise it as well.

Speaker 2
Well, yes. Yes, of course, to Australians, these early explorers were, were some heroes, they're opening up the land in that way. Of course, one could say as with the American natives, you know. The Australian Natives had been there for 50/60,000 years, they didn't suddenly say, "oh, thank God, we've been discovered."

Speaker 1
Exactly. And so, at the end of the day, I guess it kind of speaks to the apparent arrogance, I guess, that you ended up having like venerating these figures and just saying, "hey, they did great stuff without fully acknowledging the potential harm that they also did as well."

Speaker 2

That's right. Well, but Aboriginal culture was sort of deconstructed. I mean, they were actually wiped out on Tasmania, weren't they?

Speaker 1
Yeah, and even then, kind of reading about the actions of what European settlers also did, I guess, associated with that even digging up remains, well, going back to the mention of eugenics or phrenology once again, it was absolutely horrible.

Speaker 2
Yes, that they actually did believe that these people were sort of subhuman, and the imposition of European farming dismantled the Australian method of survival. When you start taking all the best land, because they're still in general living in the outback, a lot of them lived along that East Coast, which is very fertile. But I don't think there are many Australian natives farming there now in the way that they would have been.

Speaker 1
Yeah, I guess, in that sense, kind of speaks to the ongoing legacy of displacement, I guess that ends up happening in that part of Australia. So, I guess it kind of, well I was going to kind of mention another question, but I feel it is a bit redundant about considering how much we have talked about examples the colonial past. So, I guess it kind of brings me back to penultimate question. Obviously, we talked a little bit about what decolonisation is before. But what would a decolonised (Thing of Note One) look like to you? And what potential roles do volunteers have within this?

Speaker 2
Well, as we said, one of the things that needs to change is that we need much more information about the provenance of these objects, how they came into our possession, in the context of the civilization that they came from, and not just say "no, this comes from a certain part of India." India is an enormous place with lots of different cultures, which varies with each other. Can you say the question again?

Speaker 1
What would a decolonize (Thing of Note One) look like to you? And what potential roles do volunteers have within this?

Speaker 2
I've not thought about that. Can I not give an answer now? This is something that I would like to think about.

Speaker 1
Yeah, sure, of course, it's more than fine. Because that's the thing, just because what I've tried to pose this question towards other people, it's always going to cropped up two questions. One, is decolonisation possible? Because obviously, the (Thing of Note One) is inherently a colonial museum so you are not really able to dismantle its legacies, or even then, as an acknowledgment of that, but then saying, okay, sure, there's certain trauma that's caused by the retention of objects here as well, or portraying certain peoples and cultures in a certain way, and how you can very much

end I guess, the stereotyping that can occur from it, or enabling, I guess, the repatriation of objects and such.

Speaker 2
Yes. I think I'm going to think about that one in terms of what we'd like to do and what's possible.

Speaker 1
And also, what it means to you as well, because that's the thing. Everybody has their own personal conceptualizations of Empire, people engage with it in different ways, as well. So if you're dismantling or disentangling, I guess, the legacies associated with that, it will mean different things to different people, depending upon what your positionality is, i.e. what's your ethnic identity, what's your sexual identity, what's your class background, etc.

Speaker 2
Yes, I mean there is a tendency or there was a tendency to lump all civilisations together like the Middle East, you know, which is a huge, you know, period of human history from the Sumerians onwards. But certainly in the past, they were treated as bunches of savages who were fighting each other all the time and trying to conquer each other whereas, you know, for example, we show the visitors the lion sculpture.

Speaker 1
The one from Nimrud? Or?

Speaker 2
It's Nebuchadnezzar the second.

Speaker 1
That's it, yeah. Carry on sorry.

Speaker 2
There's no doubt that Nebuchadnezzar the second by the standards of the day was a very effective tyrant. You know, he pushed the Empire to Afghanistan in the east and to the Mediterranean, the West. He's the Nebuchadnezzar that gets the bad press in the Bible, of course. He takes the Hebrews into slavery. Look, at the same time, there was a mushrooming of culture within Babylon. So, in certain aspects, but in mathematics, we're finding out that they were very advanced, much more so than in the West. So, for example, what we call Pythagoras theorem, we know that the Babylonians were using that 300 years before Pythagoras was alive, we know that they could do simple algebra. They had a very accurate calendar, the star charts that talked about constellations was developed by the Babylonians, there's evidence of all sorts of advances in certain ways. So, you can't dismiss Empires in the past and civilisations simply as barbaric entities, and there's a mixture of all these things.

Speaker 1

And also you can't even then, I guess, forget about the connections that also has it guess towards the British Empire as well in the way that we approach this material culture....

Speaker 2
Don't get me started on the Sykes-Pico treaty?

Speaker 1
Oh, no, I kind of want to now.

Speaker 2
Oh, right. Well, in the First World War, you know, we were fighting the Ottomans. Not just in Gallipoli, which is always mentioned, but also in what's now in Lebanon, Syria, Israel, Palestine and we promised the Arabs that they would be given their freedom if they helped us against the Turks. Unfortunately, during the First World War, it was realised that oil was going to be very important. So after the war, there was a commission, and a treaty between the British and French, Mr Sykes and Monsieur Pico, where they carved up the Middle East, with the French having the sort of northern areas, whole nations were constructed, which had no historical background, unless you went back 1000s of years, Assyria, Syria and Iraq and Iran and places like this, and the legacy of that is still unfolding today.

Speaker 1
Yeah, as you can kind of see with the conflict between Israel and Palestine and such, but even then, I guess that's also, would you probably say of central importance of actually incorporating, I don't know, the impact of Sykes-Pico upon the ways that the (Thing of Note One) was actually able to get access to these objects as well?

Speaker 2
Yes, it was like the (Thing of Note Nine) objects and things like that.

Speaker 1
So, I guess it speaks once again, to the idea of provenance and actually providing the wider context of empire in which this collecting occurred at the end of the day.

Speaker 2
At the time of Sykes Pico and afterwards, they weren't even subtle enough to realise that within these countries that they were creating, they were quite different cultures. So, you know, in Iran, for example, there are lots of different sort of cultures as you go, go south to north, you can get people in the Delta in the South, and then changes as you go to the north. As far as they were concerned at the time, that wasn't important.

Speaker 1
And so, I guess, in that sense, is increasingly important to actually recognise how the historic actions inform contemporary society and how even institutions that like the (Thing of Note One) may also be somewhat complicit in that as well.

Speaker 2
Yes, if we were not talking about that sort of thing, then we're complicit, aren't we? We are complicit in the ongoing narrative about how these things came about.

Speaker 1
Exactly, and you're saying you're kind of contributing towards that obfuscation, I guess, in some ways, and writing out the certain individuals from history as well.

Speaker 2
Yes. Absolutely. Yeah.

Speaker 1
So I guess just the final thing, I mean, is there anything else that you'd like to add or you feel as if it's relevant?

Speaker 2
Well, probably will be in about half an hour when I will think about these things, but not at the moment. What has been your experience? Am I one of the first volunteers that you've talked to?

Speaker 2
The second, actually.

Speaker 2
The second, right.

Speaker 1
So um, basically, there's actually been quite an outpouring of actually interest. I think I've had about 17/18 people about reach out.

Speaker 2
Good.

Speaker 1
So that's been really good, and people obviously are very much up for talking about it. Just because I think at the end of the day, volunteers are an interesting stakeholder when talking about the decolonisation of museums, because they're insiders, because they belong to the institution to certain extent, but they're not salaried.

Speaker 2
Yeah.

Speaker 1
And so obviously, people have their own sort of attachment towards it, and if you're talking about decolonising it in terms of radically changing how the institution, I don't know, operates, either for acknowledging its colonial/imperial connections, or even then sending back objects, all that other stuff. It's going to impact the way that people

identify or even practice within the museum as well. So, in that sense, it's very important to chat to volunteers.

Speaker 2
Yes, yes. Well, well thank you for your work. It's really good. I'm looking forward to reading what you're saying.

Speaker 1
Well trust me, well thank you once again for your contribution and can't wait to send it over to you. Well, I'll just stop recording here.

Things of Note:
1) This refers to a national Museum which the volunteer works at.
2) This refers to a specific set of objects which were looted by the British in the late 19th century.
3) This refers to an object of religious significance that was created in the late 14th century.
4) This refers to an object of religious significance that dates to the 7/8th century.
5) This refers to a series of objects from Greece which are subject to ongoing repatriation efforts.
6) This refers to the historical figure that was responsible for sourcing a series of reliefs that are subject to ongoing repatriation efforts in the early 19th century.
7) This refers to the historical founder of the Museum whose wealth was partially derived from the Trans-Atlantic Trade in Enslaved Africans.
8) This refers to a German naturalist and scientific illustrator who lived during the 17/18th century.
9) This refers to a calcite statue depicting two lovers.
10) This refers to a handaxe that was dated to 350,000 years ago.
11) This refers to a historical nautical figure who voyaged around Australia and Polynesia.
12) This refers to a historical Polynesian figure who came to Britain during the 18th century.
13) This is the gallery within the Museum that is dedicated to Chinese Objects and History.
14) This refers to a historical figure who was an early European explorer who voyaged around Australia and Polynesia.