museums

Doing justice to the past and present: addressing the legacies of slavery and empire in Glasgow Museums

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Cover images, clockwise from top left:
Driver Abdul Ghani, 1941, by Henry Lamb;
John Glassford and his Family, c. 1767-8, by Archibald McLauchlan;
Old Glasgow Bridge, about 1817, by John Knox;
Earthenware Wedgewood teapot from around 1750;
Afro-Portugese dagger from Sherbro Island, Sierra Leone, 1972.

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Note on language

Throughout the report I will generally refer to ‘legacies of empire and slavery’ for short. While this may be interpreted in different ways, I have chosen to define ‘legacies’ as the present-day realities of empire and slavery; ‘empire’ as the British Empire and ‘slavery’ as the enslavement of African people that was carried out by the British between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries. No, Britain was not the only Empire at the time. Yes, other countries enslaved people. But that’s not what I’m addressing here.

Introduction

In September 2020, Glasgow Museums appointed a Curator of Legacies of Slavery & Empire (myself) on a two-year contract, funded by Museums Galleries Scotland. Before working towards any tangible outputs, Glasgow Museums was eager to find out how its audiences and communities wanted it to address the topics of the British Empire and Transatlantic Slavery. Gathering and analysing that information has been the focus of my first nine months in post.

This report is a culmination of that work. It will hopefully provide Glasgow Museums with the guidance it needs to address these topics during the duration of my post, but also beyond that, because the legacies of slavery and empire have seeped into the fabric of Glasgow, and its museums, over centuries. It will take more than two years to satisfactorily unpick these complexities. But these topics are just that – complex – and we could carry out research for a decade and we'd still have to take something of a plunge into the unknown to *really* learn.

The two main pieces of research that informed this report were an online survey (see Appendix B for the questionnaire), designed, distributed and analysed internally; and telephone interviews which Jump Research Consortium were commissioned to carry out (see Appendix C for Executive Summary). Alongside these, a range of secondary sources have been consulted to add depth to the analysis, and I would recommend consulting some of those as they have been invaluable in helping me write this report.

What this report aims to do is outline the key themes that the different strands of audience research have identified (see Appendix A for an overview of research methodology). It will also uncover considerations and questions for Glasgow Museums in response to the feedback.

After some thought and false starts, I have decided to, at times, offer my own personal perspective within this report. There are a couple of reasons for this. First and foremost, it is almost as painful writing a long research report impersonally as it is reading one. Secondly, 'we (as black people) are part of the world we write about; the world we

write about lives inside us.'[1] I feel some of the experiences research respondents raised, and I think my lived experience is of value to the analysis of the findings.

I've chosen to pose the chapters as questions, mostly because the feedback from the research suggested that it might be more effective to pose questions for audiences to think about, rather than load them with information that tells them what to think (see pp. 20–21). But it's also a way of navigating the possibility that people might find different answers to the same questions in different times, places or contexts. This report is made up of the information we have that can help us explore the questions of what slavery and empire means to us as a society in the present, whose stories these are to tell, and how we can do justice to these histories.

Perceptions and awareness of slavery and empire

The first section of this report examines research respondents' perceptions, understandings and awareness of slavery and empire. Levels of awareness varied from those who had almost no knowledge of these histories, to those who were able to articulate their views in detail. It is evident that there is a widespread recognition that slavery and empire were, to varying degrees, forces of violence, exploitation and oppression, as well as broad support for museums carrying out work to address the resulting legacies.

Connecting the past with the present

For many people, empire and slavery are not things of the past. Their legacies and consequences are felt by people in Glasgow and around the world in very real ways. The most insidious of those legacies is racism. For this work to be relevant, connections between the past and the present need to be made. The movement of people from across the British Empire to Glasgow is another important topic that shapes the city today and this could be better reflected in Glasgow Museums.

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[1] Kinouani, 2021: p.14.

Honesty, transparency and uncomfortable truths

While many people see museums as comfortable spaces for education and enjoyment, many others do not. Research participants expressed distrust of museums, with some seeing them as buildings full of loot that organizations are reluctant to relinquish, and complicit in hiding the truth of the British Empire's history. To build trust, Glasgow Museums has to be forthcoming with information about its collections, its own history and practices, even when that information is incomplete. And to do justice to these histories of violence and exploitation, Glasgow Museums needs to address them in a way that provides clear evidence – even where it might be uncomfortable – and encourages visitors to reflect on the topics in a critical way.

Telling everyone's story

Many respondents feel that it's important to present histories of slavery and empire as a key part of Glasgow's history, showing how Glasgow was connected with these systems, who was involved and how the city benefitted. However, this is often done by primarily focusing on the lives of white men – merchants, bankers, soldiers, and so on. Research respondents expressed the desire to connect with the lives and stories of enslaved and colonized people, to understand their perspectives and experiences. But these won't always be Glasgow Museums' stories to tell, and it will have to consider ways of providing space for a range of people to share their perspectives.

A dedicated space or embed throughout?

There was widespread support among the research participants for a dedicated space of some description that addresses slavery, empire and migration. Some of these participants cited the International Slavery Museum in Liverpool as an example of how this could effectively be implemented. However, others felt that these histories should be embedded throughout existing museum spaces. Having a separate space might mean that only people who are already engaged in the topics would visit, whereas everyone needs to confront these histories. And then there were some research participants who felt that both approaches were needed, because it was important that these histories are 'inescapable'.

Context: what do slavery and empire mean to us?

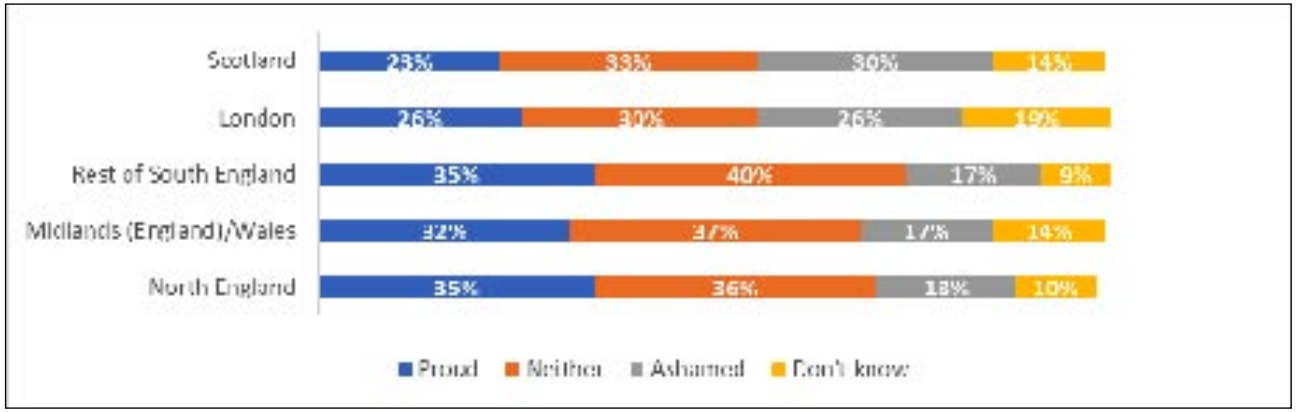
Reading the news, it would be easy to imagine that the UK is in the midst of a divisive 'culture war', where people who want to 'preserve and protect' our heritage as is are locked in a existential battle with people who want to challenge the status quo, with their anti-colonial perspectives and addictions to dragging statues from their plinths. Beyond an interest in the fate of statues and street names, there wasn't much evidence of interest in this 'culture war'. Indeed, many of the people who partook in the telephone interviews simply didn't know much about transatlantic slavery or the British Empire, while the majority of the people who responded to the online survey clearly saw these systems as oppressive, violent and exploitative.

It's hard to know for certain why the research participants held, for the most part, anti-colonial views. It could be because over half of them were people of colour who are likely to have been adversely impacted by the legacies of empire – such as inequality, racism, displacement – in their lifetimes or their ancestors', and so hold negative views towards the system that inflicts/inflicted that. It could be because the murder of George Floyd in 2020 forced people to confront anti-colonial and anti-racist perspectives in a way they perhaps hadn't done before.

'Violence, exploitation, murder, the need for reparations, and honest and active facilitated conversations and actions of how this atrocity can be understood and its impacts can be overcome.'

'My feelings about all empire building and taking possession of other countries or peoples are negative. My grandfather, who died aged 55 before I was born, was in the Sudan Defence Force and I was horrified to read a book by him published in the 1920s which displayed strongly racist attitudes.'

Table 1. Attitudes towards the British Empire (source: YouGov, 2019)



Research carried out in June 2019 by YouGov suggests that Scottish people are less likely than people living in other parts of the UK to feel 'proud' of the British Empire and are more likely to feel 'ashamed' of it.[2] The data doesn't go down to the level of individual cities. It is possible that people living in Glasgow hold more anti-colonial opinions than the rest of Scotland on average. However, I haven't found any evidence to support that hypothesis beyond this survey.

While the research did pick up on a small amount of resistance to museums addressing the legacies of slavery and empire – usually amongst white research participants – and Glasgow Museums should be prepared for some push back as it moves forwards, it is also clear that there is widespread appetite for Glasgow Museums to grapple with these topics, and a recognition of the importance of doing so. Therefore, Glasgow Museums has to ensure that any content that is produced around the topics of slavery and empire going forward at least meets the expectations of its audiences.

Understandings of slavery and empire

Most research participants saw the British Empire and transatlantic slavery as being interrelated systems and histories, with some people drawing the connections through the exploitative nature of capitalism. There were more specific examples when it came to identifying features of transatlantic slavery (e.g. merchants, abolitionists, places), and it also elicited more emotive responses. This is perhaps because transatlantic slavery is more likely to be explicitly taught in schools, and be more prominent in popular media, such as films.

While many research participants seemed to have some understanding of slavery and empire, their significance and their contemporary relevance, many others confessed

'When I spoke to people [for the Homework Exercise][3] they weren't 100% sure of how to answer all of the questions, which makes me think having a museum to teach you all the information would be really relevant.'

'This deserves to be alongside the ship building and science museums in importance.'

'The two terms are very closely connected. Without the slave trade, the Empire would not have been as successful. It was through slaves that they made their money.'

'Brutal, long and entrenched. I think about the families and communities left behind without their young men, children, women. Darkness and closeness and illness on-board the ships. The forced proximity and contact, the violence and terror.'

[2] YouGov, 2019.
[3] As part of the commissioned research, telephone interviewees were asked to speak to family and friends about their views on museums and how they should address the topics of slavery and empire, as 'homework' (see Appendix B).

to not knowing much at all. Lack of knowledge, and the perceived vastness and complexity of these topics, could be a barrier to engaging for some. For many, the omission of these histories that are so integral to Glasgow's past produced strong feeling of injustice.

Some consideration will have to go into how Glasgow Museums meets the needs of people with little to no knowledge about slavery and empire, and those with more awareness who are looking to challenge themselves further. There will be a need to introduce people to the systems of slavery and empire, the reasons they were able to exist, and the ideologies that underpinned them.

There was some evidence of people distancing Scottish people from these histories, but there were no widespread 'it wisnae us'[4] sentiments being expressed. Many people seemed very aware of Scotland's role in transatlantic slavery in particular, probably due to the tireless efforts of historians and activists in highlighting this history.

Where evidence of distancing was found, it was often in more subtle ways, such as highlighting the role of 'elites' and 'royals', rather than acknowledging it was an integral part of Glaswegian society, even if not everyone was actively going abroad to colonize.

Some research participants mentioned being personally connected to these histories. Citing personal experiences and connections was more likely amongst people of colour. However, this wasn't exclusively the case, with some people of colour mentioning no personal connection, and some white people – especially those of Irish heritage – being open about their personal and/or familial connections. Glasgow Museums will have to be aware that for many people, these histories aren't made up of distant events of interest but are deeply personal.

'Talking about it [in the Homework Exercise] – it made people angry. It's very emotive. When asking the questions, people were realizing how much they don't know.'

'You can only really learn about these things when there's an awareness developed around it. Unless you actively go out and search for new things you can't learn about this. You don't get taught this sort of stuff in school – not even the basics.'

'I love Scottish people and I consider them different than British people. Two different nations.'

'Glasgow played an integral role in the transatlantic slave trade, indeed, the existence of Glasgow as the second city in the Empire depended on it. The institutions and buildings we celebrate in Glasgow are its legacy. This should be acknowledged.'

[4] A phrase coined by historian Dr Stephen Mullen in his book It Wisnae Us: The Truth about Glasgow and Slavery (The Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland, 2009) to describe the 'organized forgetting' of Scotland's involvement in transatlantic slavery.

Glasgow Excursion Steamers and American Ship on the Clyde, 1832, by Robert Salmon.

'My grandmother was a strong Maroon woman with a mother who was Scottish.'

'I'm an Irish Catholic living in Glasgow. This is my home now – I've lived here longer than I ever lived in Ireland – but people will still say "go back to your own country". The British Empire has caused a lot of disharmony amongst Irish people – it's a big part of my nationality.'

Over where?

> 'Since we met your people five hundred years ago, look at us. We have given everything ... But you just think that this is over now? Over where? Is it over?'
>
> Ama Ata Aidoo, 1987

Racism, neo-colonialism, the conflict in Palestine, imposed borders around the world, the urban environment of Glasgow and the collections in its museums: the British Empire might be a thing of the past in its formal sense, but its legacy is very much alive. This is something that many people are very aware of and identify as a crucial thing to recognize when it comes to museums addressing the legacies of slavery and empire.

This goes beyond meeting the expectations of people who are already very aware of the histories of empire and slavery and their legacies; it's also a 'way in' for people with limited awareness by making what can be challenging discussions about our history feel relevant to present-day realities.

The invention of whiteness

Racism, as it manifests itself in our present realities, is a legacy of empire and slavery. Indeed, Sathnam Sanghera argues that it is the most controversial and contentious of all its legacies.[5] It's something that many research participants – particularly people of colour and younger participants – cited when asked what the legacies of empire and slavery meant to them.

It can't be understated how central this is to the work of addressing the legacies of slavery and empire, because the invention of the 'white race', and thus the beginnings of modern racism, was motivated by a need to justify the enslavement of Africans.[6] It's a long and complicated development but the simplified version goes ...

'I am also reminded of the legacies of the empire; how this is still affecting day-to-day lives of those in countries that were part of it.'

'Its legacy carries on and that we have not overcome it, but instead put it away in a corner, we need to learn specifically what happened and why and then look how we can overcome it and ratify it. This needs to be led by anti-racism experts, this needs to be led by racialized people and people who experience multiple marginalities. This work needs to be funded properly.'

'The lack of knowledge that people – including me – have means that it's difficult to see what the impacts on modern life are. People don't know the impacts on people, places, things and cultures.'

'I think linking it to the modern day is interesting. People don't know how they directly or indirectly have benefitted from it.'

[5] Sanghera, 2021: p.146.
[6] Baird, 2021.

In the early phases of transatlantic slavery, Africans were enslaved by Europeans because they were non-Christian 'heathens', but when they began to be converted to Christianity, it became harder to justify their exploitation.[7] What is more, indentured servants from different parts of the British Isles, who faced the harsh realities of working on the plantations of the Americas alongside enslaved Africans, began to mount armed resistance alongside them. This was an untenable position for the colonial authorities and so they began to give certain privileges, freedoms and powers to people they deemed to be 'white' above those who were 'black'. This is the foundation of 'white supremacy', and it became a crucial ideology underpinning the whole British Empire. As Sanghera says, 'As the British Empire grew and peaked in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, it morphed into nothing less than a wilful, unapologetic exercise in white racial supremacy.'[8]

We need to understand that context to get to grips with present-day racism. As Emma Dabiri explains (and I would strongly recommend reading her excellent and accessible book to fully understand the history of the idea of 'whiteness' and what it means today):[9]

'The concept of a "white race" and a "black race" is not something that exists in nature, on the contrary, it is a socially engineered concept invented with a very specific intention in mind. That intention was racism. Until we understand this beginning, there will be no happy ending. Until we come up with a convincing counter-narrative we are unlikely to achieve the anti-racist world we claim to desire.' I believe museums should be in the business of providing those counter-narratives. And even though race is a social construct, it shapes our societies, institutions, and interpersonal relations in very real ways. Therefore, as a museums service, in order to be anti-racist, Glasgow Museums must understand and talk about race, because

'The racism we still face that is a product of colonialism.'

'Race science that impacts Black and Brown lives today ... White supremacy.'

[7] Dabiri, 2021: p. 45 ff.
[8] Sanghera, 2021: p. 157.
[9] Dabiri, 2021: p. 27.

'without a clear understanding of race and racism, even the most well-meaning efforts are likely to fail.'[10] At present, Glasgow Museums does not mention race and its role in history to the extent that it should. For example, in 'Glasgow Stories' – a gallery in Kelvingrove and one of the key spaces where transatlantic slavery is covered – the role race had in the enslavement of Africans and that legacy is not mentioned at all.

But in order to provide those narratives, we have to understand this history ourselves, and understand the role museums played in developing, reinforcing and perpetuating these racist ideologies (see pp. 23–24).

Keeping the past and the present alive

It should go without saying, but racism and other legacies of slavery and empire are still shaping our worlds and impacting our lives, in often tragic and fatal ways. White supremacy is entrenched in British cultural, social and political life as an ideological legacy of British imperialism. Institutional racism is a present-day outcome of Britain's past deliberate adoption of white supremacy.[11] Moreover, an Act of Parliament to abolish slavery wasn't going to change the perception overnight of enslaved Africans 'from quasi-animal to human'.[12] Racism remains a significant problem in Scotland today in too often tragic and fatal ways, such as the racist killing of Surjit Singh Chhokar in November 1998, and the death of 31-year-old Sheku Bayoh while being restrained by 15 police officers in Kirkcaldy in May 2015.[13]

The very act of including the legacies of slavery and empire in museums comes with a risk. The old buildings, the glass cases, the text labels, all can create an impression of freezing these events in the past, which is dangerous when we know how these histories still impact us. Therefore, we need to think carefully when discussing these

'Show and explain how the racist ideas and hypocrisy that justified the empire still strongly exist in modern Britain and Scotland.'

'Explain the relationship between colonialism and racism and what that means today.'

[10] Young, 2018: p. 180.10
[11] Young, 2018: p.185.
[12] Eddo-Lodge, 2017: p.6.
[13] Davidson and Virdee, 2018: p.10.

topics and make it clear in the way we speak about them, what objects we include, and who gets to tell the story, that:

> 'History is not the past. It is the present. We carry our history with us. We are our history. If we pretend otherwise, we are literally criminals.'[14]

And people clearly believe that museums are capable of engaging in contemporary discussions without freezing the past in a display case – and many museums already do this very well – and it's felt that this can be a valuable way to engage with, and better understand, the significance of our past.

Engaging with children on the subject of racism

A small number of research participants expressed concern about discussing racism in museums, seeing them as places for a 'day out' for recreation where children can enjoy and educate themselves without having to confront racism and other challenging and traumatic realities. And while not everyone will see museums as spaces devoid of racial violence, undoubtedly many parents and educators will share these sentiments.

I have to stress that I'm not even a parent, let alone a parenting expert who knows how to raise children to be anti-racist. Fortunately, there are people who have considerable expertise on this subject, such as Pragya Agarwal and Guilaine Kinouani, whose books I would recommend.

They make it clear that it is important to acknowledge, and talk about, the existence of race and racism with children from their early years onwards, for them to understand the world around them as they grow, and to equip them with the tools to fight against racism.[15] 'Naming and facing our discomfort' is vital, particularly for

'I would love to see museums stress the connection of modern-day movements/ problems/discussions back to our history. There is the stereotype of museums just being about the past, where they only hold dusty old artefacts. I think they could use the materials they have to tell stories rather than just showcase them. I can imagine an event where they choose a modern-day problem or success, and take a walk back through history to trace its origins. It would be a wonderful form of education for all ages.'

'It's very topical, with George Floyd and everything that has happened. It would be good for Glasgow to address this and create a unity between this and what had happened, allowing people to understand and make a choice.'

[14] Baldwin, 2016.

black children, because staying silent can lead to them being left to manage the anxiety and distress that anti-black racism creates without support, and what they cannot bear tends to be passed on to the next generation, resulting in what is called 'intergenerational trauma'.[16]

Realistically, not all parents will want to, or feel confident to, talk with their children about race and racism, so I would argue that museums have a role in supporting children to understand racism and that they are capable of fighting it, rather than shying away from doing so. This is particularly since history is a good vehicle for teaching children about racism, so long as we make it clear that it isn't a thing of the past.[17] To parents who are concerned that talking about these subjects could make children fearful and aware of their difference, Agarwal suggests that:[18]

> 'When you talk about history with your children, it is important to talk about activism within these communities who faced such oppression, and the resilience and strength people showed. Doing so helps children understand that people can always stand up and speak up.'

And that includes talking about white people who have stood with people of colour.[19]

It is worth emphasizing though, that many more research participants felt it was absolutely crucial that children are involved in understanding these histories, even if there needs to be different ways of engaging with them.

'Linking up with schools is very important. Young people can teach adults, and they tend to have less entrenched bigotry. They wouldn't get their back up the same way adults do.'

'Have workshops for children and have regular talks for adults.'

[15] Agarwal, 2020: p.316
[16] Kinouani, 2021: pp. 94, 106.
[17] Agarwal, 2020: p. 3.
[18] Agarwal, 2020: p. 94.
[19] Agarwal, 2020: p. 108.

‘We are here because you were there’

Some research participants were interested in how the British Empire has shaped the demographic makeup of British society. Many people see this as a ‘positive’ legacy of slavery and empire (see pp.19–20 for analysis of the desire for ‘neutrality’), while others recognized it as an important legacy nuanced with the challenging reality of trying to make a home in Scotland.

It’s important that people do understand that the UK and Glasgow are multicultural, racially diverse societies because of the legacy of a multicultural, racially diverse empire. As Sanghera says:

> ‘Many (people) also came because centuries of imperialism tied them to Britain and ultimately made them citizens. The ties were deep, and if we acknowledge this simple fact as a nation it would transform all conversations about multiculturalism.’[20]

But I think we should be cautious about presenting this wholeheartedly as an uplifting story. Of course, there are many elements to celebrate, but there were also great challenges and sacrifices made by the people who moved here (we only need to look at the treatment of the ‘Windrush Generation’ at the hands of the Home Office in recent years); many live with the traumas of having done so and that needs to be acknowledged.[21]

With that being said, I believe audiences have the potential to form deep and emotional connections with these histories when engaging with them in museums. This approach could open up the possibility of focusing on ‘real’ people, many still living, and hearing personal testimonies, which many people will connect to much more readily than to complex historical discussions. It’s also a way of linking the past with the present (see p. 12).

‘Immigration history of Glasgow that made the city multicultural. Why and how immigrants have had a positive impact on British society.’

‘Migration of my parents’ generation to the “motherland” under false promises and the racism they had to face when they arrived.’

‘Want to hear from real people about their experiences and the impact of the said history on their lives.’

‘I think it would be good to tell specific stories of individual people of colour.’

[20] Sanghera, 2021: p. 76.
[21] Kinouani, 2021: pp. 99–100.

For Glasgow Museums, there are the questions as to where and how we present these stories of migration and people from around the British Empire making Glasgow their home. Riverside Museum touches on it, and I think the People's Palace would be an ideal location to incorporate this as a key theme throughout its displays as part of any potential redevelopment. However, it should be part of other museums as well.

'We are part of society in Scotland. We are part of the culture, and you are part of our culture.'

Cast-iron plaque from the Queen's Dock area of Stobhouse Quay, Glasgow, with the inscription 'Lascars Only' in English and Bengali. The plaque would have been above toilet facilities created to segregate Asian and African seamen from their white equivalents..

What's hidden and what's revealed?

We don't all see museums or the stories they tell in the same way. While many see museums as safe, trustworthy institutions that enhance health and wellbeing for the public good, creating opportunities for creativity and learning; many others do not. Museums can be seen as violent spaces, that 'other' the histories of people of colour (if they include them at all), while excluding them from telling their own story on an equal basis.

What is more, many research participants felt that museums, as well as formal education, have been complicit in hiding, obscuring or failing to include the 'whole picture' of our history, choosing instead to focus on the more comfortable versions of our past, at the expense of grappling with its reality. This has created feelings of unease and injustice amongst people, and also contributed towards a lack of trust in museums as sources of learning.

This section will focus more on how people think museums should address the legacies of empire and slavery, but it links closely with the next which looks more at what needs to be told (to some extent), who gets to tell it, and why.

Museums are not neutral

The fact that 'museums are not neutral' is often repeated amongst museum professionals and some people outside the profession, but some research participants still expressed the desire for these topics to be addressed in a 'neutral', 'objective' way, which looks at the 'good and the bad' of empire and slavery. Some people also cautioned against adopting an overly 'political' or 'reprimanding' tone to our approach, preferring an 'educational' experience, rather than the feeling of being 'campaigned at'. I don't intend to dismiss people who have that expectation of museums, but to understand where those sentiments come from as far as the evidence allows.

'Our societies still suppress the information whilst they're happy to explore in detail the misdemeanours of the Nazis. ... We have museums proudly celebrating other aspects of the period – engineering, architecture, art etc. – but very little is presented with respect to the evil exploitation behind it. The only ones who are presented positively around this are "the White Saviours" ... Nothing about the people who lived through and survived to pay for the great British cities. As a result, the descendants of those who suffered the most are still prejudiced against and often have negative views about their own identities.'

'By displaying a more accurate account of the British empire and not the romanticized version we have imposed upon us.'

There wasn't really the opportunity to delve into why some people felt 'neutrality' was the best approach for museums to take when addressing these topics. Perhaps it's because that is what is expected of museums by some, and there's resistance to seeing them steer away from the 'norm'. Perhaps it's also symptomatic of wider societal and media approaches which allow climate change deniers to be given platforms in discussions about the climate emergency. The analysis undertaken by Jump Research Consortium suggested that this could be the result of a lack of knowledge about the realities of empire and slavery, and that people don't want to feel 'lectured at', or that there's a 'political agenda'. But they also want to see and hear different perspectives, so that they can make their own mind up.

In my opinion, neutrality and objectivity, if it were even possible, won't do justice when it comes to addressing the legacies of empire and slavery. For the oppressed, for those marginalized and excluded from mainstream narratives, 'objectivity is always directed against them'.[22] Any attempt at providing a 'neutral' narrative comes with a risk of rendering the message, and the messenger, irrelevant, as Alice Procter explains:

> 'Everything in a museum is political, because it is shaped by the politics of the world that made it. If you can't see the views and agendas coming through, that doesn't mean they aren't there ... Right now, however, it feels as if museums are increasingly at risk of losing their relevance to contemporary society and politics in pursuit of "neutrality".'[23]

What is more, other research participants explicitly expressed a desire for anti-colonial and anti-racist narratives, not neutrality.

This is not to dismiss the views of people who are uncomfortable with museums taking clear political stances, but to try and understand it so that we can produce something that people feel is engaging, relevant and hopefully transformative.

'You can't be too much on one side – you have to let the person make up their own mind...if it's biased, it might not seem credible. Some people might not believe all the information if it looks like there's an agenda. That's why you have to show the good and the bad. It's morally wrong for a museum to have a one-sided argument.'

'Not one sided – you should showcase the positives and the negatives.'

'Talk honestly. Explain the impact of the Empire on enslaved and colonized people. This isn't an objective subject, so it needs an anti-colonial and anti-racist approach. Don't sideline the perspectives and experiences of enslaved and colonized people.'

'The truth is the most important thing, in all its glory and grimness. I personally dislike the typical museum's attempt at being neutral and then completely missing the true impact of the histories you're talking about. Neutrality works against the oppressed and that's what you're dealing with.'

[22] Fanon, 1961: p. 52.
[23] Procter, 2020: p. 16.

Perhaps the answer is not providing mountains of information or telling audiences what to think, but challenging them (and ourselves) to think critically about our past and its legacy by presenting evidence, incorporating anti-colonial perspectives and posing critical questions. After all, questioning our past and present is how we really learn, as Angela Davis says:

> 'It's so important to not confuse information with knowledge. In this day and age, we all walk around with these cell phones that give us access to a vast amount of information. But that does not mean as a result that we are educated. Education relies precisely on learning the capacity to formulate questions – what we call critical thinking. Learning how to raise questions not only about the most complicated issues, but about the seemingly simplest issues, is so important.'[24]

That isn't to say that we should encourage people to remain within their comfort zones. When encouraging people to question and reflect, this should be challenging, and even at times, discomforting. Because sitting through our discomfort can allow real change to take place.[25] Foregrounding anti-colonial, anti-racist narratives and the perspectives of people who have experiences of being colonized and/or their descendants, will challenge many people and it will make them uncomfortable, but that has the potential to really change people's perspectives and make many people, who for so long have been ignored, feel heard.

Glasgow Museums would not be navigating unchartered waters here. The value of creating spaces where we can feel discomfort and ask necessary questions is something successfully carried out by artist Fred Wilson's 1992 exhibition *Mining the Museum* (amongst others), where he rearranged the museum for a few months to represent stories of enslavement, racism and discrimination.[26] Wilson made room

'Ensure diverse representations throughout galleries. End the dominance of art of white people, by white people. Black people need to see themselves represented in the spaces.'

'Nobody really thinks about it (legacies of empire and slavery) anymore – it's just something that happened in the past – but because the question was in front of them people were like "actually, that was quite harsh and emotional" so I think (being confronted with it) did open some eyes. It brings up thoughts.'

[24] Davis and Shahidi, 2020.
[25] Agarwal, 2020: p.15.
[26] See Procter (2020) Chpt 15, pp. 163–68.

for seeing and experiencing racist, colonialist histories, and for recognizing their contemporary importance.

There is also the example of the *Things That Matter* permanent exhibition in the Tropenmuseum, Amsterdam, Netherlands. This exhibition groups objects into nine thematic spaces that pose questions about living and being human in a contemporary world, such as 'Is it appropriate to adopt elements of a culture that isn't yours?'. And while this exhibition could have been more critical in its interpretation,[27] Glasgow Museums can still learn from its approach when it comes to addressing the legacies of slavery and empire.

Prisons of loot

As mentioned on p. 19, not everyone sees museums as forces for good, and indeed, many people don't even trust them: seeing them as being complicit in hiding the truth of our histories. Something that significantly impacts people's trust in, and relationship with, museums is the perception that they are full of looted material culture that doesn't belong to them, and are hiding the truth behind that history to avoid engaging in the process of returning these items. This is something that came up time and time again in the research, with some people saying it makes them feel 'uncomfortable' visiting museums. Sanghera argues that the refusal of museums to engage honestly and sincerely with the questions of how they obtained their imperial artefacts is more important than the hotly contested debates about statues.[28]

The reality is that many museums don't know exactly how objects came into their collection, and not as many as is often assumed are 'loot' or come through acts of overt violent (though many objects came through less overtly violent means, and through unequal colonial power dynamics, e.g. missionary collecting, and I personally think these should also be part of any conversations around restitution).

'I find part of what makes me uncomfortable when visiting museums is not showing the means of how they acquired those items. Sometimes most of it (depending on the topic) is theft. If returning items is not possible then at the very least being honest about how they find themselves in our possession would feel less like the rose-tinted view I think museums portray sometimes.'

'Don't hide away exhibits, tell the truth otherwise people don't learn.'

[27] Vulkers, (date unkown).
[28] Sanghera, 2021: p. 208.

However, the perception that museums are 'full of loot' persists and, in my opinion, the responsibility lies solely with the museum to rectify that by being proactive with engaging in processes of restitution, being transparent about the provenance of its collections and the challenges around researching them, and just being honest when something isn't known and explaining the steps and processes that it's undergoing to improve. Doing these things might slowly begin to build trust and change the perception of museums, but it's not about being seen to be doing the right thing – it's about just doing it.

However, engaging proactively and authentically in the process of restitution also involves understanding and grappling with Glasgow Museums' own history.[29]

This is us

Many of the histories of slavery and empire are stories of trauma and loss, and anyone approaching such narratives should proceed with a willingness to grapple with their own place in the legacy,[30] and that includes museums.

It would be disingenuous to criticize empire and slavery from a distance, as if these histories aren't inextricable from the histories of museums. Anthropology and 'world culture' museums were complicit in colonial violence through their involvement in violent looting and the promotion of colonial ideologies of race, and they continue to be complicit to this day.[31] There's also the question of where the money came from to establish these museums in the first place. These spaces may never be free from that violence; it is at their core.[32] But ultimately, you have to know, understand and own this history in order to challenge its legacy.[33]

'Give back artefacts taken from other cultures throughout colonization. Don't make a big deal of it or do it with fanfare. It's a small reparation.'

'At all times though, it seems important to include where/how the item was acquired; not just the standard bequeathed by or gifted by, but the actual historical/ cultural and geographical lineage of the item.'

[29] Procter, 2020: pp. 132–33.
[30] Procter, 2020: p.186.
[31] Hicks, 2020: p.23.
[32] Procter, 2020: p. 261.
[33] Procter, 2020: p. 26.

This will involve Glasgow Museums dedicating time and resource to researching, understanding and sharing its connections to empire and slavery. For example, Kelvingrove's origins as the house of a man complicit in the system of transatlantic slavery and how it perpetuated colonial ideologies about race through its displays.[34] But it also involves interrogating how colonial ideologies might still be present in Glasgow Museums' structures, processes and policies, as some research participants highlighted.

Language that can carry the weight of these histories

As mentioned on p. 22, research participants feel that museums obscure the true versions of the past. Many research participants called for museums to include unvarnished truths, and 'be honest' about histories of slavery and empire. The language that is used to interpret collections and speak about events and people is crucial to making people feel we are doing justice to stories of oppression, violence and trauma.

But cognitive dissonance,[35] compartmentalization and a refusal to accept brutality are psychological patterns common in British approaches to talking about transatlantic slavery, which transcends into the language we use when describing this.[36] For example, describing people complicit in the enslavement of African people as 'merchants' or 'plantation owners'. There have been some welcome collective changes to the language used in recent years, such as saying 'enslaved people' rather than 'slaves'. This change makes it clear that being enslaved isn't an innate state of being, but something that is imposed on a human being by another; emphasizing the humanity of the people involved in being enslaved, that is so often denied.[37] But for many people, describing histories of slavery and empire requires language that makes 'hard truths' clear.

'Actively interrogate what you are doing as museum staff, who are your staff, what is your understanding of these issues, how are you going to engage learning and radically achieve change that is needed, what are you going to change about yourself? Who are you going to give access to? Who can lead decisions in your organization?'

'Acknowledge that the ideology of this time is fully present in attitudes, structures and systems in the present day.'

'Tell the truth, no euphemisms. Torture, murder, trafficking. with proper responsibility placed on white people and an interrogation of the mental, systemic and physical processes white people went through in perpetrating this crime.'

'We shouldn't shy away from the difficult. It may be an uncomfortable truth that we were part of a murderous past. So, talk about a massacre of indigenous people rather than a battle win.'

[34] See Glasgow Museums Legacies of Slavery in Glasgow Museums and Collections blog 'Patrick Colquhoun of Kelvingrove' for history of Kelvingrove House and Lord Provost Patrick Colquhoun: https://glasgowmuseumsslavery.co.uk/2021/03/10/patrick-colquhoun-of-kelvingrove/

[35] A theory in social psychology that refers to the mental conflict that happens when a person's attitudes and behaviours do not align and/or contradict one another, leading to discomfort and the rejection of new information that conflicts with their existing beliefs.

[36] Sanghera, 2021: p. 205.

[37] University of Glasgow, 2020

The use of 'stronger' language might be uncomfortable, or even painful. However, when people engage with the legacies of slavery and empire, it may need to be painful, because the reality of the history is painful. There is no way to engage with these stories 'without addressing the profound pain, loss and intergenerational trauma still carried by many'.[38] But that doesn't mean we shouldn't be conscious of the very real traumas that people can feel when it comes to engaging with these histories.

Glasgow Museums has to be conscious of trauma when it comes to addressing the legacies of slavery and empire. How can we prepare people to confront trauma? How can we create space for people to reflect, process and mourn? Can there be spaces for joy? Will there be space for narratives of resistance and self-determination that make people feel empowered (see pp. 28–30)?

[38] Procter, 2020: p. 180.

'In an educational way but one that does not shy away from the harsh realities and legacy of slavery.'

'Be more explicit about the harms caused.'

'Exhibitions around these themes will definitely require quiet spaces close by, so exhibition-goers can sit with their thoughts. Or if they are those directly affected by these issues, a place to mourn, weep, connect to ancestors and process what they have seen and read … For many it may be the first time that they are discovering the truth (good and bad) about what happened in the land of their heritage, or to their ancestral lines. This is likely to bring up heavy/difficult emotions and will require having the right facilities in place to help cope with that. Perhaps even having a space close by, with some kind of (easy) creative tasks to try, to help people cope with any difficult emotions they may be experiencing after attending an event.'

'Not (being) obsessed about the pain and humiliation of black people as I have seen in many places. A separate soothing space which profiles black joy, love, family and rest for staff of colour and visitors, for black psychological safety.'

Relinquishing power of the narrative

Many research participants felt that it was important for people of colour, with them being most adversely impacted by the legacies of slavery and empire, to have significant involvement in, and lead on, elements of telling these stories.

Working with people who might have lived, or have intergenerational experiences of, these histories, and with that, different perspectives, will only improve all our understanding and experience of engaging with these histories. This is not to discredit museum workers, or dismiss their expertise, 'but it is a reminder that there is more than one kind of expert'.[39]

However, working with communities who have been excluded or marginalized from telling their stories previously, involves sharing power and authority with them.[40] Furthermore, it also involves reflecting on the museum's own policies and power dynamics, as Carol Young explains:

> 'Engagement with minority ethnic communities must have visible results, be inclusive of all communities, and be undertaken from a position of mutual trust and respect. True involvement, however, requires a degree of power sharing. To achieve this, in our experience institutions will generally need to address issues with their own policy-making hierarchy and power dynamics. This requires a degree of honesty and humility which policy makers may find challenging, but ultimately rewarding.'[41]

Working collaboratively when it comes to addressing the legacies of slavery and empire is essential, because ultimately, these aren't always the museum's stories to tell.

'Handing over the space (physically and literally) to black people based in Scotland to do as they like.'

'To work in collaboration with BAME and anti-racist organizations to develop an appropriate programme of events. Also, to work with BAME, anti-racist and other appropriate organizations intentionally, e.g. in the West Indies, West Africa, USA, India, Ireland etc. to ensure that ideas and opinions from outside Britain are at the centre of such events.'

[39] Procter, 2020: p. 12.
[40] Young, 2018: p.198.
[41] Young, 2018: p.190.

What's the story, whose is it, and who tells it?

Transatlantic slavery and the British Empire were integral to the development of Glasgow as a city. They can be seen in its buildings, its street names and statues, the paintings hanging in its museums. For many people in Glasgow, understanding and seeing these connections is crucial. What is more, for people with limited knowledge about these histories, presenting these histories as part of 'the story of Glasgow' could be an effective way of introducing people to the topic.

Some research participants felt that the City of Glasgow should go beyond simply acknowledging its connections, and actually take steps to make reparations for its involvement in transatlantic slavery, citing the example of the University of Glasgow's decision to award £20million in 'reparations'. Which raises the question, what would reparations look like for the City's museums?

One of the key local legacies of slavery and empire that research participants were interested in were statues and street names. Perhaps this interest was enhanced by the toppling of the statue of Edward Colston in Bristol in June 2020, as well as the ongoing discussions in Edinburgh about the statue of Henry Dundas and the decision to add a permanent plaque with more history about his role in delaying the abolition of the transatlantic trade in enslaved African people.

Not many of the people who expressed an opinion about statues and street names felt that nothing should be done. Generally, most either felt that they should be taken down or that more information about the people being represented should be provided. There were some people who expressed more nuanced views, such as initially providing more information and then considering removal if it was desired by the public.

Glasgow Museums can play a role in encouraging and facilitating these discussions. A street sign erected as part of a campaign by activists to present alternative street names, named after prominent black activists and black people who died at the hands of the police, rather than merchants complicit in transatlantic slavery,

'It's part of Glasgow's history. We shouldn't hide it. We need to learn from the mistakes of our past.'

'Honestly, with clear timelines, especially of how money made from colonialism travelled and moved through the economy and society (naming names and specific locations as appropriate) and how so much of Glasgow today is founded on, and still benefits from, those ill-gotten gains — how the Empire still benefits Glaswegians, especially white Glaswegians, today.'

'Teach a true and transparent history in schools and museums. Make reparations just like Glasgow Uni. Give back stolen exhibits.'

'Swathes of streets shouldn't be renamed just because of what a lot of people were connected to. Have plaques similar to that on Argyle Street detailing the fire on Argyle/Miller Street in 1921 that tell these stories.'

was acquired by Glasgow Museums recently. Such objects can help spark these conversations, and feed into the Council's decision-making process.

However, it also needs to be recognized that at least two of Glasgow's museums – Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum and the Gallery of Modern Art – could be considered public monuments to transatlantic slavery and empire. Any discussions around this topic should also include honest reflection.

Out of the margins[42]

> 'All of our (Black people's) history begins when a white man comes along and says, "Poof! I have discovered you, come alive, Black man".'
>
> Kwame Ture, 1967

The history taught in British schools is essentially 'a sugar-coated, whitewashed version which focusses on the "good bits"'.[43] For black people growing up in the UK, for many of us, all we're told about our history at school is that we were 'slaves' who were treated terribly, and were then freed by a great guy called William Wilberforce. Fast-forward over 100 years and Martin Luther King Jr. came along, talking about non-violence and peace. It sounds simplistic, but that's essentially the sum of what we're taught about ourselves at school (if we're lucky). Nothing of revolutions, cultural preservation and adaptation, of 'militant' civil rights activists such as Malcolm X, or civil rights movements in the UK, highlighting that racism is something that black people have had to confront here.

This silencing of the voices of black people, rendering them props in their own history, is what Kehinde Andrews describes as 'a psychosis of whiteness' – a distorted

'A four-stage process of acknowledgement, awareness-raising, atonement and reparative justice. Acknowledgement means Scotland and Glasgow as its commercial slavery-beneficiary centre owning up to that legacy. Yes, apologizing but more to the point atoning by making good on things that will make a real difference to Black Scottish people now and help build more equal relations with those affected back in Africa and the Caribbean. For example, I know that Glasgow University has set up a slavery studies centre but I would like to see Glasgow through the expertise of its museums assist curators in Caribbean nations and in places like Sierra Leone which has a very specific history with Scottish slavery involvement to get some of these expert human resources and finances to save their archives and artefacts.'

'There is no reason in this day and age to continue to name streets and landmarks after them. We know better. And when we know better we should do better.'

[42] This section is focused specifically on enslavement rather than colonization, although much could still be applied to the experience of being colonized. The reason for this is because I'm more conscious of the historic and systemic erasure of African histories and cultures amongst enslaved people by enslavers, and reconnecting with that history is part of our struggle.
[43] Agarwal, 2020: p. 92.

reality where everything is centred on whiteness being something good, and an inability to confront the opposite.[44] And museums are complicit in reinforcing this narrative, being spaces that are extremely racialized and gendered, and still centring white men as the makers, explorers, collectors and authors, the creators of knowledge that they celebrate.[45] The colonizer remains the central actor, with a personal history and a human dimension, while the colonized victim is the passive recipient of the anger and violence of colonialism, and 'even if there is guilt and anger for the violence, there is little opportunity for empathy and understanding of the oppressed'.46 Typically, enslaved people are rendered at best footnotes, as Achille Mbembe explains:

> 'Most attempts to stage the history of transatlantic slavery in museums have stood out through their vacuity. In them, the slave appears, at best, as the appendix to another history, a citation at the bottom of a page devoted to someone else, to other places, to other things.'[47]

This exclusion of black people's histories, and the dehumanization of them as actors within these histories, can leave black children with low self-esteem, and it can leave all children with a limited view of the world and their place in it, as Agarwal explains:

> 'Thus white children see a very white-centric view of British history, where the minority ethnic communities are completely invisible. And brown and black children continue to see themselves as outsiders.'[48]

Do museums want to reinforce that narrative and that feeling of alienation, or do they want to debunk these myths, told for the comfort of white people, ensure people of colour are given their rightful place in our historical narratives, and help children critically engage with the world they are to inherit? Many research

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[44] Andrews, 2018.
[45] Procter, 2020: p.75.
[46] Insaf, 2020.
[47] Mbembe, 2019: p. 171.
[48] Agarwal, 2020: p. 93.

participants, particularly people of colour, are clear in wanting to see, hear and feel the perspectives and experiences of enslaved and colonized people.

How do museums do this? Walter Rodney argues that for black people to know ourselves we must learn about African history and culture.[49] What is more, we must take African history seriously and understand Africans as historical actors who were engaging with a world they did not control, if we are to even begin to properly understand transatlantic slavery.[50] Understanding the significance and the impact of slavery involves having some understanding of what existed before – African societies and cultures before slavery. Museums can be spaces to enable this, with their African collections (at least those that aren't looted), that can connect people with African cultures, both ancient and modern.[51]

Another thing that we should understand is that there is not a single part of black history where we simply passively accepted what was passed down to us. Research participants, particularly those of Caribbean heritage, were keen to emphasize the importance of stories of resistance. This could be tied to traditions of Caribbean and Pan-African 'Saturday Schools', which have taught black British children black history from the perspective of black people for decades. Each school will have a different focus, but many will cover ancient African civilizations and resistance to enslavement and oppression, the intention being to counteract the limited, or white-centred, education about black history in schools and to boost the self-esteem and sense of identity amongst black children.[52] I think an awful lot could be learnt by museums (and mainstream schools) from this tradition.

'We need to educate people about Scotland's role in systems of Empire and slavery, but also what those impacts meant to people who suffered most, and still suffer, so that it's not all endless biographies of slavers, their houses, their families, "oh and they owned enslaved people, by the way". That does little to connect Black and Asian people with their heritage and it also doesn't create an emotional connection for white people.'

'(Display) items that offer a range of views and understandings of the topic. Not just paintings of White merchants, or products of enslavement, but things that speak to the experiences of the enslaved and colonized ... Items that speak to experiences before colonialism and slavery to understand the impact and boost esteem amongst descendants.'

[49] Rodney, 1969: p. 33.
[50] University of Glasgow, 2020.
[51] Andrews, 2019: p. 87.
[52] Andrews, 2010: p.3.

Osain, 2001, created by Cuban artist Filiberto Mora as part of a collection of orisha figures. The orisha are spirits that play a key role in the Yoruba religion of West Africa and several religions of the African diaspora that derive from it, such as Cuban and Puerto Rican Santería and Brazilian Candomblé. They provide testament to the resilience of enslaved people in preserving their African religions and cultural practices despite systematic attempts to erase them.

'Black people have a history beyond slavery. While slavery is important, many people think that that's all there is to Black history and that does damage to Black people and white people's understanding of the world. It also means you can't really understand the place of slavery and its impact within the wider context of Black history.'

'There are Black Glaswegian children who feel lost, suffering racism, and they are told their history is slavery. Imagine how that makes them view themselves in the world, and what path it leads them down with such low self-esteem. Tell them about the great things their ancestors did. Imagine they go to a museum and they learn about the wealthy Empires of West Africa, the great armies that resisted colonialism and slavery, the ancient centre of learning that was Mali.'

Museums could embed themes of resistance to enslavement and colonization as part of narratives about the legacies of slavery and empire. This could include drawing attention to African cultural practices that have survived transatlantic enslavement, been adapted and passed down the generations (e.g. religious practices, language, customs of food production). It could focus on narratives about armed resistance, such as Maroon wars and the Haitian Revolution; which the much-lauded abolitionist Frederick Douglass saw as the most significant event in the abolition of chattel slavery, saying, 'Until Haiti spoke the slave ship, followed by hungry sharks, greedy to devour the dead and dying slaves flung overboard to feed them, ploughed in peace the South Atlantic, painting the sea with the Negro's blood.'

What is more, these narratives have the potential to instil a sense of pride in their own history amongst black people; they also have the potential to resonate more universally. While many won't be able to entirely understand the experiences of these acts of resistance, others who face injustices and inequalities on account of their ethnicity, religion, gender, and/or disabilities will understand the desire to resist in whatever way they can. Foregrounding the lives of enslaved people and their experiences enables a better understanding of the brutality of their oppression, their ways of resisting, their resilience in surviving, and ultimately, the humanity and dignity of black people.[53]

This can be difficult for museums who are reliant on collections to tell their stories when collecting has historically been done with a focus on white history, meaning it can be challenging to centre narratives on enslaved people. However, there are also successful precedents: the International Slavery Museum in Liverpool and the National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington are perhaps pre-eminent in this regard. The Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam also recently held an exhibition on slavery, centred on ten personal stories, many of which were of enslaved people and some of stories of resistance. This was done by adopting a range of methods of interpretation, such as using maps, oral histories and 'runaway slave' adverts to recreate experiences of escape.

'There should be stories of the Maroons in Jamaica. Nanny and her brother Quao – the heroes from the side of the slaves.'

'Acknowledge that people fighting the British were doing so for freedom. People fighting for freedom is not mutiny. Acknowledge the resistance to the British takeover of peoples, lands and resources is freedom fighting. Acknowledge the activism against these crimes both in Britain and abroad.'

[53] Moody and Small, 2019: p.48.

Furthermore, collecting policies should recognize this historic imbalance in the narrative and prioritize the acquiring of objects and contemporary artworks that centre the experiences of enslaved and colonized peoples, and their acts of resistance.

The Irish Experience of British Imperialism

A small number of research respondents highlighted the need for Glasgow Museums to address the Irish experience of British Imperialism. Given the ties Glasgow has to this history, and the size of the population that is of Irish heritage, it is likely that many more people will share this expectation. But one respondent also raised concerns about addressing this experience with the situation still being 'volatile'.

There is an argument that many of the behaviours, symbols and songs that can be seen and heard in Glasgow, which are deemed 'sectarian', need to be placed in a 'historical context which highlights the struggle against British Imperialism, or the negative treatment of Irish immigrants in nineteenth-century Scotland and their descendants thereafter', to avoid apolitical and ahistorical 'moral judgements'.[54] There are museums that have thoughtfully and meaningfully grappled with these histories, such as the Ulster Museum in Belfast and the Museum of Free Derry.

However, I would also stress that I do not feel equipped to address these histories myself, with limited knowledge of the topic or experience of confronting these histories and their legacies. There's also a consideration that this potential area of work is so big that it could eclipse everything else. Therefore, I would recommend Glasgow Museums scoping ways that resources can be created (e.g. a new post) to carry out this work.

'The truth. all of it, even when it goes against official Council policy like your sectarianism education work that is appalling and teaches children of Irish heritage their culture is bad while obscuring the truth about how and why their ancestors came here.'

'People don't know the backstory to Ireland (as it was part of the Empire and how it led to the modern-day political situation) ... they need to be educated.'

[54] McBride, 2018: p. 86.

The power to set the narrative

Everything that is in Glasgow Museums' galleries is a result of a series of decisions, but who has the power to make those? When there are galleries dedicated to "Glasgow Stories" and "Scottish Identity in Art", who gets to choose what to include – and exclude – as part of Glasgow's story? Who gets to decide what Scottish identity is?

Even when it comes to addressing the legacies of slavery and empire, there is a risk of excluding people whose stories are important to tell. For example, there's a risk of focusing exclusively on the experiences of enslaved men, male merchants and abolitionists, while excluding the experiences of colonization on women. Or excluding LGBTQI+ communities, when many of those communities around the world still experience persecution as a result of the imposition of the empire's homophobic laws. Then there's also the fact that the British Empire colonized millions of people around the world. It will be impossible for them all to be represented equally as part of this work. How is it decided who is included and who is left out?

And we also have to question who gets to tell these stories? Are we in museums always the best people to speak to these experiences and narratives, or can we create space for others to do so, while recognizing that their story might only reflect one of many?

Making space

The topics of slavery and empire are so vast, and so tied up with Glasgow Museums' collections, it would be impossible to cover everything and please everyone. How does Glasgow Museums actually present these topics in a way that does them justice? How do people want to connect with these histories and legacies in a meaningful way?

As part of this research, we asked participants about their views on there being a 'space' dedicated to the topics of slavery, empire and/or migration. Most people interpreted 'space' as a dedicated museum or a gallery. We found that people

'It needs to acknowledge the historical context and also the "forgotten" or "hidden" aspects of the story. We should stop celebrating the people who so selfishly benefitted from their exploitation and move towards sharing the story of women and the poor.'

'Using men and women for work on farms/businesses that British families had abroad in USA.'

generally had three different views: that there should be a dedicated space to engage with these topics; that there shouldn't be a dedicated space and it should be interwoven throughout existing spaces; and lastly, that these histories deserve a dedicated space and they should be embedded in existing spaces. I don't know how much value there is in quantifying largely qualitative studies, but it does seem that most people were in favour of there being a dedicated space.

Of those who wanted a dedicated space, some mentioned the International Slavery Museum in Liverpool as something that could be replicated, with some saying that there could be such a space within one of Glasgow's existing museums. Others expressed support for the Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights campaign for a Museum of Empire, Slavery and Migration. One person mentioned that it would be easier for school groups to visit a dedicated space rather than piecing these histories together across multiple locations.

Among those who felt there shouldn't be a dedicated space, a range of reasons was offered to justify this. Some people felt that if there was a dedicated space, only people who were motivated and already aware about the topics would visit, whereas this is something everyone needs to grapple with. Others felt that it's an integral part of Glasgow's history and should be reflected as such by being interwoven throughout its museums.

The last group, who were perhaps the smallest, but might bridge the gap between the other two, are those who feel that it should be 'inescapable', that slavery and empire should be addressed in a dedicated space *and* they should be embedded across existing museum spaces. Of these, many felt that any dedicated space should be led by people of colour and/or they should have a feeling of ownership over that space.

'I strongly support and welcome this, having been to the Slavery museum in Liverpool this has helped me to realize that having a dedicated space to address these issues and histories is essential to understanding these histories.'

'A dedicated space in Kelvingrove museum.'

'There should not be a dedicated space. It should be embedded in every aspect of history, in much the way it was embedded into economic life of Glasgow. If you put it in its own room, the pros will go and visit it. Others will not.'

'Just because the subject matter is right doesn't mean it will be a success. The museum as a concept is still colonial. It will likely still be for and by white people. Whereas there's plenty of colonial museums that don't even touch on Empire. Need to embed Empire, its impacts, legacies and the complicity of museums, throughout existing spaces.'

A national consultation is being led by Museums Galleries Scotland, and there are also some local campaigns for museums dedicated to these topics, but what does this mean for Glasgow Museums? It seems clear that many people would appreciate a 'focal' point to connect with the histories of slavery and empire in a prominent location. However, these histories are relevant across Glasgow Museums' estate, galleries and collections, so how can they be reflected across those spaces? These are vast topics that are difficult to address in their entirety, so how can they be embedded with the scope to change, adapt and grow? Perhaps the most appropriate approach would be to have a central 'space' of some sort, introducing people to the histories and key themes, with linked new and existing displays, interpretation and collections throughout existing spaces.

'It should be everywhere, inescapable, have one place that is led by Black people and the communities perhaps, but ensure that this topic is addressed in all spaces and institutions.'

'I think it's a great idea, it has to be sensitive though and ideally created by and with people of colour. The location is also important. I think there should be a space in every museum as I think you'll find something that's come from slavery/ colonization in each one.'

What do we want to be?

It is clear that there is a real appetite amongst Glasgow Museums' audiences to see the legacies of slavery and empire meaningfully addressed. The research explored a range of views and opinions on these topics; and as such has uncovered plenty of valuable information and questions for the museums service to consider.

It seems as though it is a must that Glasgow Museums addresses the legacies of slavery and empire in a way that draws connections to contemporary realities; that embraces the range of views and experiences of these histories, while communicating their significance in a way that does justice to the people who have been oppressed and exploited through slavery and empire; and that interrogates Glasgow's connection to these histories, while also exploring the stories of enslaved and colonized people.

Throughout the report, research participants and I have suggested some ways that Glasgow Museums could do this. However, there will be many things that haven't been considered and further consideration will have to be given to developing a service-wide approach to addressing the legacies of slavery and empire.
Some of this work is already underway. Glasgow City Council recently reintroduced a subcommittee focusing on restitution claims, which will examine how Glasgow Museums' and the Council's procedures can be revised to better engage in the process of restitution, both reactively and proactively. Glasgow Museums has also established a strategic group that is exploring how it can embed anti-racist practice across key areas of the museums service, such as its collecting policy, and historic language used in its collections database, community engagement, the visitor experience, interpretation. A project in Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum will explore how the museum can better address the legacies of slavery and empire; this will include a range of activities, such as anti-racist and anti-colonial interpretation interventions, events and tours.

Therefore, it is not my intention to conclude with concrete suggestions for what Glasgow Museums should do, but to offer some 'concluding questions' for different

areas of the museums service that need to be explored, discussed and acted upon. Hopefully, this research and the following questions will help Glasgow Museums develop more projects, displays, galleries, policies and strategies to better address the legacies of slavery and empire in the short-, medium- and long-term. Because while people will be impatient to see tangible outputs as a result of this work, it also needs to be recognized internally and communicated externally that doing this work properly will take time, and requires a collective, institutional understanding of these topics so that Glasgow Museums can set off on a shared direction to confronting these histories.

General questions

- How can we adopt and embed anti-racist approaches to collecting, interpretation, working with communities and operating our buildings?
- How will these histories be represented in Glasgow Museums?
- What will Glasgow Museums do to understand and address its own connections to slavery and empire?
- How do we share our spaces, share control, and include people in our processes on an equitable basis?

Collections

- How can Glasgow Museums develop transparent collection practices to build trust with people who don't trust museums because of their complicity in colonial violence?
- How will Glasgow Museums proactively engage in restitution – not just returning objects when requested but also sharing an understanding of collections with the communities they belong to around the world?
- How can Glasgow Museums share power with people when it comes to understanding the significance of our collections in a way that acknowledges that museum professionals are not the only experts?
- How can collecting policies address the legacies of historic collecting which has focused on preserving the histories of white people or people of colour through

the ‘white gaze’, to allow for people to better connect with and understand the experiences of enslaved people in particular, but also colonized people more broadly?

Interpretation

- How are we going to present and talk about histories of violence, exploitation, trauma and loss in a way that does justice to those who experienced them?
- How are we going to reflect the range of views, perspectives and interpretations of these histories?
- How can Glasgow Museums address the power dynamics of museum staff having most of the power to control narratives about slavery and empire, while audiences, communities and people adversely affected by the legacies of slavery and empire have little say?
- How can Glasgow Museums tell the stories of enslaved and colonized people?
- How can Glasgow Museums be honest about its own failings and limitations, for example admitting that it might just not know the provenance of some collections, but being open in communicating what we’re doing about that?

Working with communities[55]

- How can Glasgow Museums work with communities in a way that is fair and meaningful?
- How willing is Glasgow Museums to share power and control over spaces, projects and collections with communities?
- What structures and processes are in place, or need to change, to allow staff to collaborate with communities on projects relevant to these topics in a way that is fair and equitable?
- Who are the core partners, stakeholders and communities that Glasgow Museums should be working with to address the legacies of slavery and empire, and how can equitable relationships be built with them?

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[55] This could mean anyone outside the museum. For the purposes of legacies of slavery and empire, I mean communities who have been most adversely impacted by these legacies and are often excluded, for various reasons, from having a say over how they are represented in museums; so therefore, primarily, communities of colour.

In the museums

- How can we create spaces for people to reflect, grieve, rest with their discomfort when confronting what can be quite challenging topics?
- How can we prepare people to confront what can be triggering topics?
- How can knowledge about these legacies of slavery and empire, and how we address them, be shared with staff across the entire museums service?
- What spaces are there where new displays, galleries, events dedicated to slavery and empire can be introduced, and which ones need to be improved?
- How do we ensure our spaces are equipped to host a diverse range of communities who should be included in developing and engaging with this work?

Timespan, 1987, by Tam Joseph. *Timespan* is a positive work about a hopeful leap forward in terms of racial equality and human rights.

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Appendix A: Research Overview

Since February 2021, Glasgow Museums and its external partners have been carrying out a range of research and consultation exercises to find out how our audiences and communities want us to address the legacies of Transatlantic Slavery and the British Empire.

The two main pieces of research that informed this report were an online survey, designed, distributed and analysed internally; and telephone interviews which Jump Research Consortium was commissioned to carry out. Alongside these, a range of secondary sources have been consulted to add depth to the analysis.

Online survey

The first piece of formal research that was carried out between February 2021 and March 2021 was an online survey, distributed by Glasgow Museums and Glasgow Life to community groups, charities, equalities networks and individuals involved in grassroots activism.

We distributed the survey directly rather than having it open because we were particularly, although not exclusively, interested in hearing the perspectives of people of colour, with them being most adversely impacted by the legacies of colonialism. If the survey had been open to anyone to respond to, those perspectives might have been lost, or at worst, hijacked by people with a 'Save our Statues' agenda who would have had no interest in engaging with the work we produced on these topics. Furthermore, by distributing it to people rooted in community groups, working in charities and/or involved in activism, it would give us a sample of people who have a good understanding of the issues that impact communities in Glasgow and how these connect with the topic of imperialism.

The survey was primarily qualitative to avoid restricting respondents to what we felt was possible. This helped to elicit detailed and thoughtful responses with some respondents spending well over an hour filling out the survey, even though it was unincentivized.

The survey achieved a sample of 90 responses: 47 of the respondents were people of colour, with a range of different global majority communities represented within the sample.

The ages of respondents were also diverse, with 30 out of the 90 under the age of 35. There were 43 respondents from Glasgow and a further 18 from Greater Glasgow. Respondents were asked about their perceptions of the British Empire and Transatlantic Slavery, and how Glasgow as a city, and separately how its museums, should address these topics.

Overall, the sample generally saw British Imperialism as something that has impacted people adversely. While there wasn't a significant difference in opinion by ethnicity or age, generally, people of colour and younger respondents were more critical of imperialism. People of colour also gave more personal testimonies to these legacies. Respondents generally saw Transatlantic Slavery and the British Empire as two related systems of oppression, with the former being the worst example of the latter. To some extent, Transatlantic Slavery produced more specific examples from respondents – for example, named abolitionists, merchants and events – as well as more emotive responses. This is perhaps because of a greater awareness of specific elements of Transatlantic Slavery, as it is more explicitly prominent in formal education, cultural institutions and the media. Even though the legacies of the British Empire are arguably a more pervasive part of our society, they are less understood for various reasons.

JRS Telephone Interviews

Glasgow Museums commissioned JRS Research Consortium in March 2021 to carry out telephone interviews to supplement the findings of the online survey.
A key reason for this was to gain more in-depth feedback, in a way that wasn't digitally exclusive. The sample was selected to ensure a range of ethnicities and levels of interest in the topic.

JRS recruited 14 'core respondents', who were asked to interview two to three of their friends or family as a 'homework exercise' to supplement the research. The 14 core respondents were then interviewed by the researchers.

The questions asked of the respondents were generally similar to the online survey, but the discussions went into more detail. Even though the respondents were less personally motivated by the topics, in comparison with the online survey respondents, the findings still picked up on similar themes.

Awareness and understanding of the British Empire and Transatlantic Slavery were generally lower than in the respondents in the online survey. However, when prompted, respondents found the topics challenging but also interesting and it made them want to understand these topics further, and particularly how they impact our lives today.

Appendix B: Print version of questionnaire

1. Glasgow Museums Legacies of Slavery & Empire Questionnaire

Glasgow Museums operates ten venues across the city, including Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum, Riverside Museum, and the Gallery of Modern Art.

We are currently in the process of exploring how we should address the legacies of slavery and colonialism across our service. We recognize that these histories are still relevant to people's lives today in many different ways. Therefore, by taking the time to complete this questionnaire, you will be helping us understand what slavery and colonialism mean to you and how you think we should be telling those histories. Your views will help us develop programming, research, displays and more.

You can find out about our work to date at https://glasgowmuseumsslavery.co.uk/

We appreciate that questionnaires aren't for everyone. If you would like to give feedback in any other format, please email miles.greenwood@glasgowlife.org.uk

To ensure we are compliant with all current legislation around GDPR we need to make you aware of the following. This survey will ask some questions that are personal to you. Please note data is always anonymized and so your responses will not be identifiable to you.

2. About you

The following questions will ask personal details about you. This is so we can understand a little bit about the profile of our respondents and their geographic spread. None of the information you provide will be used to identify you.

You do not have to answer any of these questions if you would prefer not to. Each question has either a 'prefer not to say' option or can be left blank.

You can find out more about Glasgow Life's Privacy Statement here: https://www.glasgowlife.org.uk/the-small-print/general-privacy-notice

1. Your age: *

- [ ] 16–24 years
- [ ] 25–34 years
- [ ] 35–44 years
- [ ] 45–54 years
- [ ] 55–64 years
- [ ] 65–74 years
- [ ] 75+
- [ ] Prefer not to say

2. How would you describe your ethnicity? We appreciate that ethnic identities are often complex and don't always fit into a questionnaire box, so just try to answer as closely as you can. Alternatively, there is an option to self-describe your ethnicity. *

White

- [ ] Scottish
- [ ] Other British
- [ ] Irish
- [ ] Gypsy/Traveller
- [ ] Polish
- [ ] Other white ethnic group–- you will have the opportunity to self-describe if you select this option.

Mixed/multiple ethnic groups

- [ ] White and Black Caribbean
- [ ] White and Black African
- [ ] White and Asian
- [ ] Any other mixed background – you will have the opportunity to self-describe if you select this option.

Asian or Asian British/Scottish

- [ ] Pakistani, Pakistani Scottish or Pakistani British
- [ ] Indian, Indian Scottish or Indian British

- [ ] Bangladeshi, Bangladeshi Scottish or Bangladeshi British
- [ ] Chinese, Chinese Scottish or Chinese British
- [ ] Any other Asian ethnic group – you will have the opportunity to self-describe if you select this option.

Black/African/Caribbean/Black British or Scottish

- [ ] African, African Scottish or African British
- [ ] Caribbean, Caribbean Scottish or Caribbean British
- [ ] Black, Black Scottish or Black British
- [ ] Any other Black ethnic group – you will have the opportunity to self-describe if you select this option.

Other Ethnic Group

- [ ] Arab, Arab Scottish or Arab British
- [ ] Any other ethnic group – you will have the opportunity to self-describe if you select this option.
- [ ] Prefer to self-describe
- [ ] Prefer not to say

[Page break]

3. How would you describe your ethnicity?

4. Where do you live?

- [ ] Glasgow City – Select this if you pay Glasgow City Council Tax
- [ ] Greater Glasgow – Select this if you are a resident of North Lanarkshire, South Lanarkshire, Renfrewshire, East or West Dunbartonshire, East Renfrewshire areas
- [ ] Rest of Scotland
- [ ] Northern Ireland
- [ ] England
- [ ] Wales
- [ ] Republic of Ireland
- [ ] Prefer not to say
- [ ] Rest of world (please specify):

5. Prior to the Covid-19 restrictions, how often would you say you visited museums? *

- [ ] At least once a month
- [ ] Every few months
- [ ] Once a year
- [ ] Less than once a year
- [ ] Never
- [ ] Prefer not to say

5. Legacies of Slavery & Empire questions

As guidance, the character limit is 500 for the following questions. Feel free to write as much or as little as you want to within that limit. Likewise, don't feel as though you have to answer any questions if you don't feel as though you can.

[Page break]

6. Slavery and colonialism questions 1/5

What comes to mind when you think of:

6. The British Empire

7. The Transatlantic Slave Trade

7. Slavery and colonialism questions 2/5

How would you like to see the City of Glasgow address its connection to:

8. The British Empire

9. The Transatlantic Slave Trade

8. Slavery and colonialism questions 3/5

How do you think Glasgow Museums should address the histories of slavery and colonialism in:

10. Events in our museums

11. The items we display in our museums

12. What we talk about in our displays

13. Any other ways

9. Slavery and colonialism questions 4/5

14. What do you think are the most important things people need to know about the legacies of slavery and colonialism?

10. Slavery and colonialism questions 5/5

15. Do you have any thoughts on there being a dedicated space to addressing the histories of slavery, colonialism and/or migration in Glasgow?

Appendix C: JRS Research Executive Summary

Introduction

The JRS Research Consortium (JRS) was commissioned by Glasgow Museums to undertake audience research to determine how they could best present and address the topics of Empire and slavery in a way that is meaningful, relevant, interesting, and engaging for audiences.

The outcomes of this research are intended to complement ongoing internal work by Glasgow Museums around slavery and Empire and their response to these legacies.

Sample and Methodology

This work was carried out using a qualitative research approach, involving two elements: 14 depth interviews with a sample of 'core respondents', who then carried out a 'homework exercise' that involved interviewing a further 2 or 3 people.
The 14 core respondents comprised:

- 50% respondents from ethnic minorities (including Asian, African, Caribbean and South East Asian) and 50% white Scottish, Irish or European respondents
- Individuals that are digitally detached from Glasgow Museum – that is, people who would not be willing to typically engage with a museum via a digital platform and/or have low digital confidence
- A mix of demographic profiles – including gender, age and Socio-Economic Group (SEG)
- Primarily residents of Glasgow City

Core respondents were asked to complete a homework task with up to 3 others to boost the sample size. There were no demographic profile targets for homework respondents. Instead, core respondents were simply asked to engage with:

• ‘Any adult who they would be likely to visit a museum or gallery with’ OR
• ‘Any adult they believe would be interested in Empire and slavery as an exhibition theme’

Some 26 individuals, representing a mix of demographics, took part in the homework exercise, bringing the overall research sample to 40.

Findings

As findings from the depth interviews and homework exercise complement each other they are not considered separately but addressed together.

Knowledge and Understanding

There is a limited understanding of the topics of Empire and slavery amongst the population. The perceived vastness of the subjects was both a positive and a negative – whilst some felt their range makes them relevant to all people, others felt this makes them difficult to engage with. Many found it difficult to think of any specific associations beyond broad themes, and most struggled to identify what either topic meant to them. Lack of knowledge about the topics, perceived lack of reason to think about either topic, and a perception that the topics are too broad and diverse to be accessible are all drivers of disengagement.

Research is showing that audiences generally see the topics as linked, with Empire being understood to encompass much more than just the Transatlantic Slave Trade, but this being an important sub-topic. However, participants found it difficult to be distinct in their thoughts about the separate topics, and the low levels of knowledge meant that many conflated them. This was true for participants across ethnicities.

Level of Interest

Despite low levels of knowledge, a great deal of interest in both topics was uncovered. Current levels of interest are impacted by lack of awareness and perceived

lack of reason to think about the topics. However, once awareness has been raised, interest is sparked. This points to a need for Glasgow Museums to engage in significant awareness-raising activity before showing exhibitions or displays to initiate interest and engagement amongst their audiences. One way to spark interest with those who have not previously engaged with the subjects is by forming connections with present-day realities and their historic roots in Empire and slavery (e.g. racism).

Connection and Relevance

Levels of personal connection to the topics varied. Although it was not felt by every ethnic minority respondent, there was a greater sense of emotional attachment to these topics than for white respondents – particularly where the ethnic minority respondents were first-generation immigrants to Scotland. However, many ethnic minority respondents did not feel any more personal connection. A subset of white respondents who did feel a greater emotional connection were white Irish participants. Overall, there is no homogeneity amongst communities, and the topics are extremely individual in what they mean to people.

Participants are able to see the relevance of the topics to everyone – not just the most affected – due to continued impacts on modern life (e.g. racism). However, this was not necessarily a connection that participants made themselves – the process of engaging in discussions during the research supported them to make this link. This does, however, underline that once the topics are on the radar for audiences, they are able to understand relevance to everyone in present-day life.

Themes and Topics of Interest

There is an interest in seeing a broad range of themes in programming – this is particularly important to those who visit museums with children and want to see topics that appeal to all ages. Overall, there is an interest in learning about all different aspects of slavery, which itself is seen to be one of the biggest and most important themes of Empire, but participants are also eager to learn about a wide variety of aspects of Empire beyond slavery.

The following topics were highlighted as being the most important to be addressed and presented by Glasgow Museums:

- The basics of the British Empire, including what it was, how and why it started, and who was involved
- Information about Glasgow's part in Empire and slavery
- Stories of the people involved from both sides
- The impacts of Empire and slavery on modern life
- Ireland's involvement in the British Empire and slavery

Approach to Addressing the Legacies

Due to low levels of knowledge and awareness around the topics, many need a relevant 'entry point' to displays and exhibitions to capture interest and make the topics approachable. Discussions highlighted a number of potential access points to the topics for these audiences, including:

- Focusing on Glasgow's part in the British Empire and Transatlantic Slave Trade by framing this as the story of Glasgow's identity
- Relating the British Empire and the Transatlantic Slave Trade to modern life and present-day realities
- Having a clear human angle and telling the histories through the lens of people
- Providing an unbiased and all-inclusive perspective – showing all aspects, including those that could be perceived as positives and negatives

Participants called for a factual, educational, and neutral tone to be taken. That is, audiences do not want programming to present themes and topics through a modern-day ethical or moral lens – presenting historical events, that would not have universally been perceived as negatives at the time with critical or reprimanding tone. Audiences want an authentic educational experience that allows them to gain a true comprehension of life during the times of Empire and slavery, which they feel can only be achieved by presenting the whole story from all perspectives. Participants want to be presented with evidence to make up their own minds.

Additionally, audiences do not want to feel there is an overtly political tone being taken, making them feel campaigned to. Whilst there is a very important desire to see links being made between history and the present day to engage audiences, which many see as being done through events such as Black Lives Matter which themselves are inherently political, there is no desire to see these modern parallels extended to mean all aspects of programming are presented under this lens. Participants saw there as being a place to highlight that issues raised by the British Empire and slave trade are still important today, but they are looking for reports of facts or events in as neutral a way as possible, without seeming to be pushing a certain angle or agenda.

There is also a desire to see more 'positive' or uplifting stories presented – such as stories of heroism and cultural diversity – to ensure that programming is educational but also enjoyable. Participants talked about wanting to see both the 'good' and the 'bad' presented, and by this they were asking for things that make them feel both positively (uplifting and inspiring stories) and negatively (important 'harsh truths' that should not be shied away from). The desire to see what participants described as 'good' aspects represented had several reasons:

- There is such a limited awareness and understanding of the topics, many simply have a general appetite to learn more about 'all' aspects of Empire and slavery and feel showing 'good and bad' provides a comprehensive overview.
- Participants do not want to be lectured to, and want to feel they are being presented with evidence from all sides to make up their own minds.
- Museum visits are recreational for many, and there is a need to ensure that whilst presentations are truthful and interesting, they are not felt to be harsh or depressing.

Presenting some 'good' stories that make people feel good will balance out the – very important – harsh truths. Without things that make them feel more positively, many felt they would be unlikely to choose to visit a museums/display as it would not be enjoyable.

Whilst there may be some links to discomfort in only hearing about the harsh truths of Empire, this was not strongly communicated in the research, and a desire to ensure that visiting a museum or display is enjoyable is a stronger motivator behind the request for 'good' aspects to be represented.

Perceived Importance

For the majority, Empire and slavery are very important topics to be addressed. Many feel that insufficient treatment of these has contributed to people's limited knowledge, which directly links to racism and prejudice experienced today.
A minority of participants did express concern about the potential negative impacts of having a significant focus on these topics due to Glasgow's history with prejudice and violence. However, as this is a minority, it is not suggested that Glasgow Museums avoids these subjects in programming, but this does highlight a role for programming to include addressing fears around having conversations about Empire and slavery in Glasgow – as these conversations, although potentially uncomfortable, could lead to greater understanding.

Potential Impacts

Most participants see a potential for displays and exhibitions to contribute to the tackling of racism and prejudice in the present day. However, some suggest there are limits to what can be achieved through programming by Glasgow Museums if Glasgow City Council (who owns and run the museums)[56] does not reflect this elsewhere through other remedying actions – e.g. the removal of statues and renaming of streets.

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[56] My own correction: Glasgow City Council owns the buildings and Glasgow Life run them on their behalf.

Audience Engagement

Audiences want an engaging and immersive experience – utilizing all different types of media and displays. There is a strong call for displays to go beyond 'reading and listening' and involve participation. Co-production with individuals from ethnic minorities, to ensure displays and exhibitions fully and accurately reflect their histories, cannot be underestimated in terms of helping audiences understand both Empire and the Transatlantic Slave Trade and the impacts on those from the adversely affected communities.

There is also a strong appetite for Glasgow Museums to go beyond showing displays and exhibitions in a museum, and to promote a city-wide learning experience that uses the full city of Glasgow. This is felt to be the best way to show that Glasgow is truly embracing its history with Empire and slavery and to reach audiences who do not usually engage with museums.

There is also a desire amongst many to see Glasgow Museums utilizing its links with schools to embed these topics into the city's education.

Whilst a great deal of support was shown for a dedicated museum or gallery to present these topics, there was also a strong support for having a dedicated space within an existing museum. Whilst many felt that a dedicated museum or gallery is the only way to give significant weight to the topics, some expressed concerns about the ease with which this could attract an audience given the limited levels of knowledge and awareness. Instead, a dedicated space within an existing museum (such as Kelvingrove or the People's Palace) was felt to capitalize on an already engaged audience.