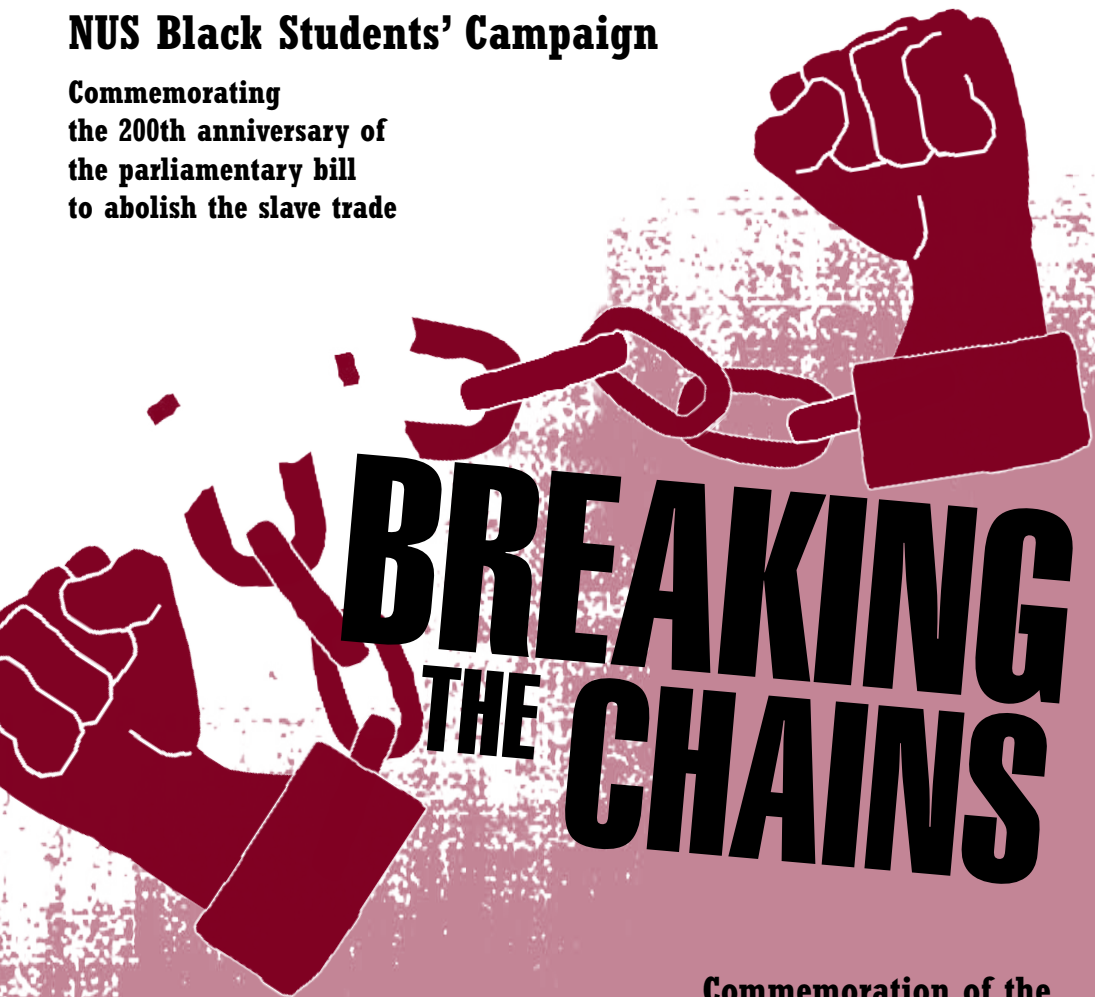


# NUS Black Students' Campaign

Commemorating  
the 200th anniversary of  
the parliamentary bill  
to abolish the slave trade



# BREAKING THE CHAINS

Commemoration of the  
200th Anniversary of the  
Abolition of the Slave Trade Act

## Campus Tool-kit

Respect  
Trust

celebrating  
multiculturalism  
for equality  
in our lifetime



black students' campaign

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# Introduction



2007 provides us with a unique opportunity to reflect on the brutality and horrors of the trans-Atlantic slave trade. It also gives us a renewed incentive to explore how ordinary people worked to abolish one of the most heinous crimes against humanity ever recorded in history. We have the chance to explore the links between the trans-Atlantic slave trade in the past and calamitous global injustices today, in order to build pressure for an end to its destructive legacy of racism and inequality.

It is right that up and down Britain, local authorities, theatres, museums and galleries have sought to actively engage with this history and its meaning. Unfortunately, much reflection on the bicentenary has been dominated by the role of British parliamentarians and philanthropists in abolition, whilst almost entirely failing to recognise Britain's leading role in establishing and perpetuating the actual trade itself, in addition to belittling the pivotal role of resistance played by enslaved Africans themselves in driving forward the momentum towards abolition.

This tool-kit is designed to help present a more accurate record of our proud history, putting the actions of those Africans and Caribbeans who fought for the end of this inhumane oppression of human beings centre-stage. It is designed to provide you with information about the trans-Atlantic slave trade that you can use in your students' unions and with fellow students. It also contains ideas for educating all students about the criminal role of Britain in the slave trade, which is frequently omitted in our history classes at school.

Without understanding Britain's fundamental role in this enormous crime and the brutal excesses of colonialism that followed and accompanied it, it is impossible to find the solutions to today's legacies of colonialism: the racism and injustice that still persist.

The British government has in principle agreed to introduce an annual day of commemoration for slavery. This must become part of the school curriculum and be used to remember the victims of the slave trade and all those who resisted slavery from its inception through to its abolition, while also marking the achievements of Africans and the African Diaspora.

So far, the Prime Minister has expressed his personal deep sorrow and regret, but has fallen short of apologising on behalf of the British state for its instrumental role in keeping this trade going. Incredibly, previous governments even refused to accept that the slave trade was a crime against humanity. The British government would do well to follow the examples set by other governments, the Church of England and the Mayor of London in formally apologising for their state's, institution's and city's role in enslavement. It is time for an apology of substance from the Prime Minister.

Students have been at the forefront of global changes in the past, and the struggle to abolish the slave trade teaches us lessons from one of the greatest global campaigns in history. Unity is strength — people from all sections of society worked together to

take a stand against the injustices they saw and to end the trans-Atlantic slave trade. This tradition of struggle is a positive legacy of the slave trade — one which we need to carry forward in 2007 and beyond.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ruqayyah Collector". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first name on the top line and the last name on the bottom line.

**Ruqayyah Collector**  
**NUS Black Students Officer**

[www.officeronline.co.uk/black](http://www.officeronline.co.uk/black)

# 1. resistance and remembrance — a brief overview of the trans-Atlantic slave trade

## The trade

The trans-Atlantic slave trade was a crime against humanity on an enormous scale. It consisted of the sale and exploitation of brutally enslaved Africans by Europeans which occurred in and around the Atlantic Ocean from the 15th to the 19th centuries. The trade was 'triangular' with enslaved Africans being bought or stolen from mainly West and Central Africa and transported across the Atlantic Ocean to the Americas to produce crops which were then sent back to Europe as profits for the slave ship owners, traders and government tax collectors.

## Industrial scale murder

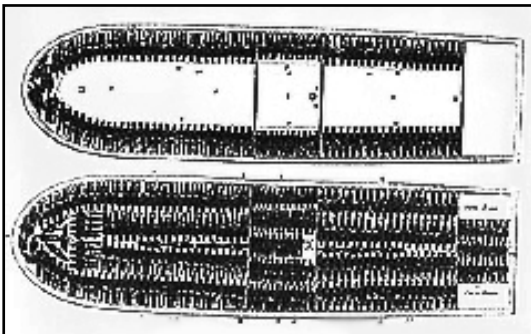
Estimates of the numbers transported range between 10 and 30 million. As many as five per cent died in prisons before transportation and more than ten per cent during the voyage — the direct murder of at least some two million people.

By 1820, more than ten million Africans had been forcibly transported across the Atlantic and two million Europeans had also moved. However, as a result of the industrial scale barbaric torture and murder, the Black slave population had shrunk to six million while the European population had grown to twelve million.

## Britain's leading role

For more than two hundred years, the slave trade was the central feature of Britain's foreign commerce. It was endorsed by, and profited, the royal family and aristocracy, financiers, City banks, landowners and merchants, the Church of England and Oxbridge colleges. It also made the industrial revolution possible, enabling Britain to become one of the richest and most powerful countries in the world.

## A barbaric trade



*Slaves were transported across the Atlantic in horrific, cramped conditions*

Enslaved Africans were forcibly transported in ships to the Americas in journeys that could take from anywhere between six weeks to three months. The African captives were considered 'cargo', packed together below deck of a ship for most of the journey, without adequate food or water, disease was rife. Severe beatings and torture were also commonplace in order to repress resistance.

Enslaved Africans frequently revolted on slave ships with at least 493 documented uprisings. On one occasion captives succeeded in seizing the London ship 'Industry' on its passage to South Carolina, turning it around, and running it aground in Sierra Leone.

Those who survived the ships were sold to plantation owners to be put to work producing sugar cane, tobacco and other products, or sold into domestic labour. Plantations were big business offering huge profits for their British and other European investors and enslaved Africans were systematically brutalized with unimaginable cruelty — regular flogging, brandings and rape. Rebellion was put down by making an example of ringleaders — execution by burning or hanging, nailing people to the ground or hanging people in cages to die of thirst. Enslaved Africans were literally worked to death.

## **Abolition**

The Abolition of the Slave Trade Act was passed in the British Parliament on 25th March 1807. It banned the British capturing, transporting, buying and selling of slaves from 1st May 1807, but slave trafficking in British dominions, colonies and territories was not abolished until 1838.

The focus of commemoration often falls exclusively on a small group of British 'abolitionists', particularly Hull MP William Wilberforce. While no one should ignore his contribution, the fundamental part that enslaved Africans played in resisting the barbaric trade over centuries and eventually winning their own freedom often goes untold.

## **Resistance**

The abolitionist movement owed its beginning, its thrust, and its ending to the activity of enslaved Africans themselves. These men and women waged near constant struggle in rebellion, during the American War of Independence (1776), and the Haitian revolution against slavery (1791–1803) which meant that chattel slavery became unsustainable.

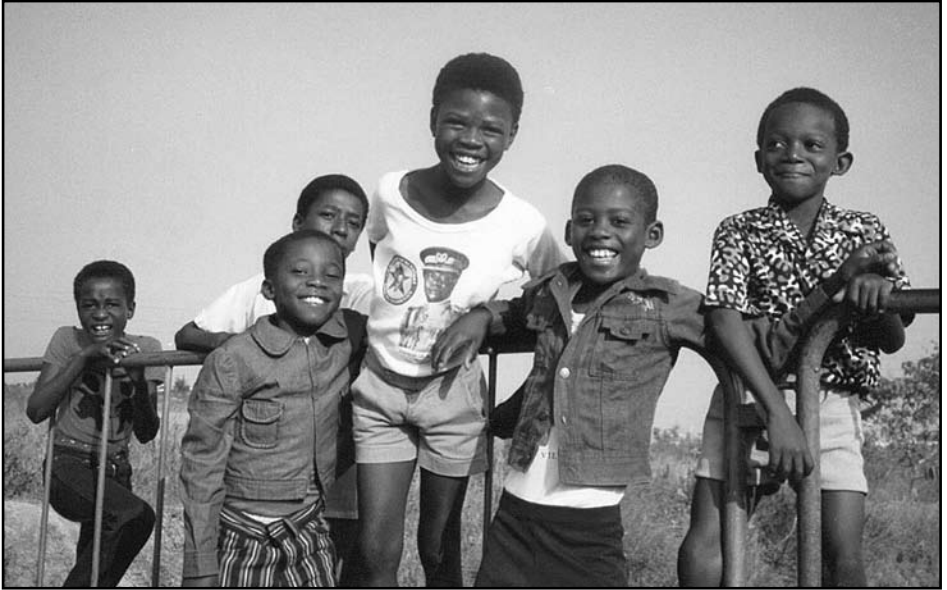
You can read in the next chapter of this tool-kit about the lives of some of the many slaves and former slaves who led this struggle.

A formidable alliance was also formed with other organised white working class people of the world such as the steel workers of Sheffield who opposed the slave trade in the 1790s, the United Irishmen and other organised labour who rose up in protest against the slave trade.

## **Legacy**

The trans-Atlantic slave trade has left many deep scars on the continent of Africa and across the world today.

Recent analysis by the Centre for Economic Policy Research shows that countries that lost the largest numbers of people suffered the worst political and economic disintegration. African countries whose mountainous terrain protected them from the ravages of the slave trade are still better off today than neighbouring countries which are flatter. Africa has been stripped of much of its history, human resources, natural mineral wealth and its culture. It continues to be plundered by the more powerful western countries that grew rich on the profits of slavery and that dominate the global



*Today Africa is a continent mired in poverty but with great hope for the future*

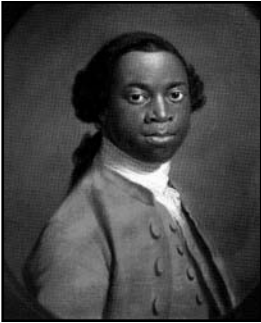
economic system. Unfair trade rules, unjustifiable debt levels to western banks and the insidious policies of the World Bank and the IMF continue to subjugate the poorest in Africa. Africa is also the only world continent that is getting poorer, and where life expectancy is falling.

The mass exploitation of African people including torture and brutality beyond civilized norms, and the limits of the existing laws, required a powerful ideological justification. It was necessary to classify slaves as different from their oppressors — as subhuman. The ideologies that were developed during the 1700s imbued many of the major institutions of Britain which were developed at that time. Slavery was pivotal in the formation of modern racist ideas which were then modified and revised during the last 200 years to be used against all Black people to justify colonialism and imperialist domination across the southern hemisphere. The ideology has also dominated western countries, allowing systematic discrimination against Black people living there.

There are still too many Black men and women in prison and not enough in the Commons; there are still too many Bangladeshis and Pakistanis in poor housing and badly paid jobs and not enough in the boardrooms; there are still too many bright African-Caribbean and Asian heritage boys being excluded from schools and not enough editing the newspapers.

As we continue to struggle against this debilitating legacy of the trans-Atlantic slave trade we must employ the lessons of abolition — that ending injustice requires the actions of brave women and men to actively organise and fight for what is right.

## 2. documenting great black abolitionist figures in british history



**Olaudah Equiano** (c.1745–1797) was born in what is now Nigeria. Kidnapped and sold into slavery in childhood, he was taken as a slave to the New World as a slave to a captain in the Royal Navy, and later to a Quaker merchant. As a seaman, he travelled the world, including the Mediterranean, the Caribbean, the Atlantic and the Arctic, the latter an abortive attempt to reach the North Pole.

Coming to London, he became involved in the movement to abolish the slave trade, an involvement which led to him writing and publishing *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa the African* (1789),

a strongly abolitionist autobiography. The book became a bestseller and massively advanced the anti-slavery cause.

**Quobna Ottobah Cugoano** (c.1757–c.1801) was an African abolitionist who was active in England in the latter half of the 18th century. Born in what is now Ghana, Cugoano was kidnapped and sold into slavery in 1770. He was shipped first to the West Indies, but in 1772 arrived in England. Cugoano was one of the most outspoken members of the 'Sons of Africa', an abolitionist group that wrote frequently to the newspapers of the day, condemning the practice of slavery. In his writings, he described the history of the slave trade, and concluded that a major source of the problem was European colonialism in the Americas, where slaves were needed to work the massive plantations that emerged. Cugoano called on slaves to rebel.

**Mary Prince** (1788–c.1833) recalls that in the slave market in Bermuda, where she was put up for sale, the buyers' talk 'fell like cayenne on the fresh wounds of our hearts'. During her life as a slave, she was taken from Bermuda to Turks Island and Antigua, eventually arriving in London where, in 1828, she reported the cruelty of her master and mistress to the Anti-Slavery Society.

*The History of Mary Prince* (1831) was the first life story of a Black woman to be published in Britain. This extraordinary testament of ill-treatment and survival was a protest and rallying-cry for emancipation that provoked two libel actions and ran into three editions in the year of its publication.

**Ignatius Sancho** (1729–1780) is thought to have been born a slave on a ship crossing the Atlantic from Africa to the West Indies. His earliest memories were of Greenwich in London, where he worked as a child slave. He composed music, appeared on the stage, and entertained many famous figures of literary and artistic London. The first African to vote in a British election, he wrote a large number of letters which were collected and published in 1782, two years after his death. *The Letters of the Late Ignatius Sancho, An African* is one of the earliest accounts of African slavery in English that was written by a former slave.

### 3. timeline of the slave trade and some abolitionist landmarks

**1444** Portugal begins the official European trade in enslaved Africans.

**1562** First English slaving expedition by Captain (later knighted to become Sir) John Hawkins.

**1640** Three enslaved African women protest against slavery by burning the granaries of their enslaver in present-day Ghana.

**1655** British capture of Jamaica as part of Cromwell's 'Grand Design'.

**1672** Royal African Company (RAC) grants charter to carry enslaved Africans to the Americas.

**1730–1740** The First Maroon War in Jamaica. Britain becomes the biggest slave-trading nation: from 1690–1807 it is estimated that British ships transported at least 2.8 million enslaved Africans.

**1736** An anti-slavery revolt takes place in Antigua — a sabotage of plans by enslaved Africans to settle scores with their so-called 'slave-masters'. Many enslaved Africans, mostly highly skilled working people, including millwrights, coppersmiths, sugar boilers, masons, butchers, carpenters, etc are executed, with 5 broken on the wheel, 6 gibbeted and 77 burned alive.

**1747** Liverpool overtakes Bristol and London as Britain's number one slaving port, with about 49 voyages of trading in enslaved Africans this year as against Bristol's average of 20.

**1750** The Company of Merchants Trading to Africa takes over the slave-trading role of the Royal African Company (RAC), with a membership including 237 Bristol merchants, 157 London merchants and 89 Liverpool merchants.

**1750** A major anti-slavery revolt by enslaved Africans takes place on the Bristol ship, The King David.

**1770** Anti-slavery protest by 12 enslaved Africans result in the death of John Kabes, one of the principal slave trading henchmen in present-day Ghana. Eight ringleaders are sentenced to 'death for their unparalleled audacity and villainous behaviour'.

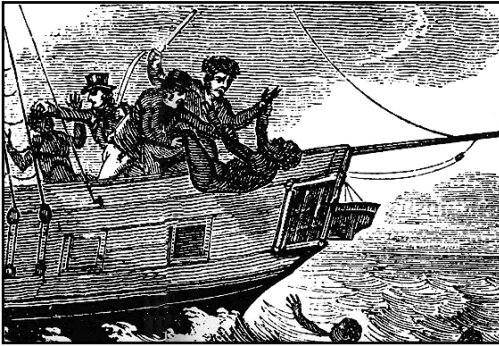
**1772** The judgment of the James Somerset case declares that no enslaved person could be forcibly removed from Britain. This ruling helped in declaring slavery illegal in England, Wales and Ireland.

**1776** Adam Smith published his *Wealth of Nations* in which he argues: 'It appears from the experience of all ages and nations that the work done by freemen comes cheaper in the end than that performed by slaves'.

**1778** Slavery declared illegal in Scotland as a result of the Joseph Knight case, similar to that of James Somerset in England.

**1780** The execution by hanging on Tower Hill in London of the African abolitionist Charlotte Gardener, for taking advantage of the Gordon Riots to forcefully vent her sentiments of anti-slavery resistance against the role of the churches in African enslavement.

**1781** The slave ship Zong throws overboard 133 enslaved Africans.



*In 1781, 133 Africans were thrown overboard in order to save supplies*

*of the Human Species.* Enu was the first published African author in English not only to denounce the trans-Atlantic trade but to proclaim the African human right to resistance against enslavement, as well as to advocate in writing the demand for reparations.

**1791** On August 23rd Chief High Priest Boukman launches the anti-slavery uprising of enslaved African people in St. Domingue (Haiti). Defeating armies from France and Britain, it led to one of the greatest successful revolutions in world history.

**1794** Resolution unanimously adopted by a big mass meeting organised by Sheffield working-class radicals and attended by thousands of artisan cutlers, calling for the emancipation of enslaved African people and the abolition of the slave trade. The resolution declared: 'Its abolition... will avenge... ages of wrong done to our Negro brethren'.

**1805** Bill for abolition passed in House of Commons but rejected in the House of Lords.

**1807** Slave Trade Abolition Bill passed in the British Parliament to become operative from 1st January 1808.

**1829** The first anti-slavery petition by a woman to the British parliament is made in London as a private petition, with the support of Thomas Pringle, the secretary of the Anti-Slavery Society, and the formerly enslaved African abolitionist campaigner, Mary Prince.

**1833** Abolition of Slavery in the British Empire Bill passed, with effect from 1834 and providing for an 'Apprenticeship' transition of up to six years for each enslaved African. £20 million was voted as compensation for British enslavers of African people. Nothing for the enslaved.

**1838** August 1st sees abolition of chattel enslavement for all in the British Empire.

**1784** The Bill for the reform of British rule in India was presented to parliament, using the profits from the slave plantations to build the economic, military and political might of the British Empire into a superpower — infringing the sovereignty of India, China and other Asian nations.

**1787** Publication by the formerly enslaved African abolitionist Attobah Kwodjo Enu (aka John Stuart) of a book entitled *Thoughts and Sentiments on the Evil and Wicked Traffic of the Slavery and Commerce*

## 4. why an apology?

The NUS Black Students' Campaign is calling for an apology from the British government for the British state's leading role in the transatlantic slave trade. Not an apology about individual guilt or personal regret, but a political apology acknowledging the collective responsibility of the British state and parliament for their leading role in this gigantic crime against humanity.

The impact of the trans-Atlantic slave trade is not an historical phenomenon. The legacy shapes every aspect of modern Britain — architecturally, culturally, economically, industrially, politically and socially. Slavery did not end with the Abolition of the Slave Trade Act in 1807 nor did the exploitation of Black people by Europeans end there either. In the years that followed, hundreds of thousands of Indians were transported as indentured labourers (those driven by famine and poverty to sell themselves into a virtual slavery) and the colonisation of Africa and Asia continued apace.

An acknowledgement by the government of the British state's responsibility for the trans-Atlantic slave trade and its legacy of racism and inequality is a pre-requisite for it taking responsibility to lead Britain in challenging that legacy.

We are calling for an apology of substance from the Prime Minister and for the annual day of commemoration to remember the victims of the slave trade and mark the achievements of Africans and the African Diaspora and all those who resisted slavery from its inception through to its abolition.

## 5. student action — what you can do on your campus

### **Raise awareness**

- Invite academics from your local history department or library to look at how the town or city you are studying in benefited economically from the slave trade.
- Set up a working group of students to research what role your college/university or your town/city might have played during the slave trade and how they benefited from it. Present or publish your findings at a reception with local dignitaries.
- Write articles about the abolition and legacy of slavery with follow up stories for your local student paper/magazine throughout the year.
- Host a debate on the bicentenary and its contemporary resonance, invite guest speakers.
- Organise a film showing, followed by a discussion about how slavery and Black abolitionists are portrayed.

- Make a video — do a vox-pop (asking random people a few questions in the street which you record) to find out how much people know about the contribution of Black people in Britain.
- Organise a trip to Liverpool's Maritime museum to see the slavery exhibition, along with a local tour to see the story on the buildings of Liverpool that show how the city benefited from slavery. Bristol, Hull and London also have excellent exhibitions.
- Have a stall in your students' union with facts and figures about the slave trade and information of events that may be taking place in your local area. Make sure you order bicentenary materials from the NUS Black Students' Campaign.

## **Commemorate**

- Submit a motion to your student union executive, union council or general meeting, asking the union to mark the bicentenary with different events.
- At the start of a meeting which you have organized, hold a two-minute silence for all the enslaved people that died.
- Organise a vigil outside the students' union and make placards to generate interest and attendance on the day you are holding a speaker meeting or debate.
- Organise a mural with information about how abolitionists campaigned to eradicate slavery — then pose a question asking people what slavery means to them. Then ask them to make a pledge of what they will do to help make the world a better place. Encourage students to write or draw their thoughts with paint, post-it notes etc and add to the mural.
- Organise a cultural event with poetry, food and music to celebrate the contributions Black communities make in all aspects of British life.
- Have a 'Hall of Fame' display, with leading Black politicians, inventors, musicians, artists, sporting heroes, etc. Have this displayed at your events, and more permanently in an exhibition space.

## **Lobby**

- Run a letter writing campaign to lobby the government to make a full and frank apology for Britain's role in the slave trade. Encourage students to complete the NUS Black Students' Campaign postcards.
- Become a critic — watch a film or read a book about the abolition of slavery and write a review for your student paper or website.
- Print out facts from the timeline or download facts to make an exhibition to put around your union.
- Run a campaign for students to lobby their MP to support the NUS Black Students' Campaign's Early Day Motion 1221 in parliament which calls for a national 'Slavery Memorial Day' where people throughout the country will remember and learn from the horrors of enslavement.
- Organise a group visit to your MP's fortnightly surgery, and press release it to the local media.

- Support campaigns affecting Black people in those countries most affected by slavery e.g. West Africa, the Caribbean and the United States. See the contacts section for information on current campaigns.
- The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry recommended diversifying the curriculum as a powerful weapon to counter and eradicate racism amongst young people. Lobby your academic departments calling on them to incorporate the history of slavery and emancipation into the relevant courses. These could be History, English, Art, Economics, Sociology and many others — the profits of slavery played a role in building modern Britain — so there will be many subjects into which a perspective on slavery can be included.

### **Through the lens: Films about slavery**

Below is a list of films related to slavery. The NUS Black Students' Campaign does not endorse any of these films for accuracy of portrayal, so please watch the films before any showing to judge their appropriateness. All films are available from Amazon or CD Universe.

Adanggaman

Africans in America

Amazing Grace — Story of William Wilberforce

Amistad

Queen

Race to Freedom — the Story of the Underground Railroad

Roots

Slave Ship

The Massachusetts 54th Coloured Infantry

The Middle Passage

Unchained Memories — Readings from the Slave Narratives

Underground Railroad

There are lots of events happening throughout the year to mark the Bicentenary too.

Please visit the NUS Black Students' Campaign website regularly to see a list of upcoming events, or, email Ruqayyah Collector if you would like to be added to our mailing list.

[www.officeronline.co.uk/black](http://www.officeronline.co.uk/black)

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# 6. remembering the realities and legacies of slavery — a model article

The trans-Atlantic slave trade, led by Britain for three centuries, remains one of the most evil crimes in the history of humanity. Its unique, systematic barbarity singles it out as responsible for some of the worst on-going global tragedies.

Today, there is a dire need to educate and inform about the slave trade and the legacy it has left. Luckily, there are similar precedents — initiatives such as Black History Month have been born out of the struggle by Britain’s Black communities to gain the recognition we deserve and ensure history acknowledges the huge sacrifices we have made.

We have a similar task ahead of us now. I believe that the need for Black students to be at the forefront of efforts today to raise awareness of the slave trade is more important than ever. We have a role to play not only as the newest generation of Black British citizens but to clarify to the whole student movement the significance of the most shameful episodes of British history.

The triangular Atlantic slave trade had by 1730 made Britain the largest slaving country in the world. It is estimated that during the course of the trade, from the 16th to the 19th centuries, Britain shipped well over 2.8 million enslaved Africans to the Americas, most often the Caribbean, where they were compelled to routinely work 96-hours per week in sub-human conditions.

Negro Men.			
1 Adam	Driver	69 Madam Lucy	Field
2 Robin	Field	70 Tabbah	d°
3 Ando	d°	71 Cabbah	d°
4 Laminer	d°	72 Tombah	d°
5 Peter	d°	73 Sebel	d°
6 Bob	d°	74 Pullida	d°
7 Tom	d°	75 Blossam	House-negroes
8 Pongoy	d°	76 Margaret	
9 Nick	d°	77 Bridget	Stock-keepers
10 Moß	d°	78 Beß	
11 Uhay	d°	79 Abigail	Cooks for the Negroes
12 Prince	d°	80 Nancy	
13 Jeffry	d°	81 Hannah	Drivers
14 Anthony	d°	82 Roxanna	
15 Charles	d°	83 Sebel	Pait labor
16 George	Boatwain	84 Madam Lucy	
17 John	Classifier	85 Barbarn	
18 Paul	Watchman	86 Cabbah	
19 Meaburn	Groom		
20 Yorkshire	Boyley		
21 Tallah	Carter		
22 Polypus			
		Negro Boys.	
		87 Cefar	Field
		88 Adam	d°
		89 Quan	Shepherd

However, many didn’t live to see the Americas, perishing because of the unhealthy conditions of the transportation across the Atlantic, the ‘Middle Passage’. This brutality is best summarised by the infamous 1781 case of the slaver ship, Zong, on which 131 Africans were thrown overboard in order to save supplies.

If a slave survived to see a plantation, they were compelled to work a routine week long hours with unmerited, barbaric punishments such as lashings, amputations, castration (in the case of rebellion), progressive mutilation, slow burnings, breaking on the wheel, and starvation in cages.

Many hundreds of thousands were worked to death. In Barbados between 1764–1771 more than

A plantation-owner’s slave inventory, listing them alongside his livestock

35,000 people were brought in, but the population grew by only 5,000.

The full facts of this shameful episode, of which these are just a part, help explain the real legacy of the slave trade and its importance for us today. Accompanying the slave trade, and slavery, was the systematic development of a virulent and persistent racism, used to justify oppression and economic exploitation, which was responsible for the deaths of millions.

The racism that emerged out of the 17th and 18th century — an effort to scientifically and rationally defend the indefensible — persists to the current day, and is responsible for much of the current tragic circumstances in which Africa finds itself, still in economic bondage to the powers that previously plundered it of its people and resources. How many times must we hear that Africans have only themselves to blame for the situation they find themselves in, due to corruption, or laziness, or stupidity? The arguments are the same that have been used for centuries.

It is important to be clear of the facts of the slave trade especially because they are so hard to find. Much of modern Britain owes its existence to the slave trade — without it, large parts of Bristol, Liverpool, and London simply would not exist — yet so little is known or taught in our schools and universities, nor is there much debate nationally about this murky episode.

It has been attempted to portray the abolition of the slave trade completely divorced from the historical context in which it happened — almost as if the slave trade was invented so that it could be abolished. What is often ignored is that after the 1807 parliamentary decision, it wasn't until 1838 that slavery itself was phased out of the British Empire. And for the following century, Britain embarked on a massive project of colonisation, carving up Africa and India, and forcing open the markets of China for its own benefit.

Black students will be working within the wider student movement to raise awareness of 1807, an historic year, but also to ensure that in 2007, our society can move towards a genuine process of acknowledgement and justice. Central to this progress, is the call for an apology of substance for slavery from the British government and a meaningful programme of investment in the Black community to challenge the legacies of enslavement.

● *For a copy of this article to distribute, contact Ruqayyah Collector.*

# 7. commemorating the abolition of the slave trade act — a model motion

## **Motion: Resistance and Remembrance — Commemorating the Abolition of the Slave Trade Act**

This union notes:

1. 2007 marks the 200th anniversary of the parliamentary vote to abolish the slave trade in the British Empire.
2. From 1562–1807 British ships transported over 3 million enslaved Africans.
3. It is estimated that over half the total of captured slaves died at the hands of the British, before or during transportation to the Americas.
4. By 1730 Britain was the largest slave-trading nation. The plundering of Africa, for its people, and its gold and ivory, began a pattern of exploitation that continues to the current day.
5. In 1781, the highly publicised case of the slaver ship Zong in which 131 African people were thrown overboard in order to save supplies highlighted the reality of the slave trade.
6. Slave plantations were maintained, largely in the Caribbean, by brutal force. In the West Indies, one in three slaves died within the first three years of arrival.
7. Attempted mutinies were mercilessly put down by indiscriminate executions.
8. Slavery was not abolished until an Act of Parliament of 1833 — even then it took another six years to be phased out of the British Empire entirely and former slaveholders were generously compensated.
9. In the century following the abolition of the slave trade, Britain embarked on a series of colonial conquests unprecedented in history. By 1900 it occupied one-sixth of the world's land mass and ruled millions of people.

## **This union believes:**

1. Contrary to the way in which some have presented it, the abolition of the slave trade after three centuries of brutality was brought about not because of principles or morality of British parliamentarians, but in order to achieve an economic advantage over its main rivals: France, Portugal and the United States.
2. The trans-Atlantic slave trade was a crime against humanity, in the view of the Durban Agreement of 1998.

## **This union resolves:**

1. To join the calls demanding a full and formal apology from the British government for the slave trade and Britain's role in it.

2. To lobby the government to sign up to the Durban Agreement to recognise slavery as a crime against humanity.

3. To write to the government making clear our position.

4. To publish our wish to see further and higher education take greater account in its academic programmes of Black history, specifically the history of the slave trade and Britain's role in it.

5. To raise awareness about the significance of the slave trade to students.

6. To organise and provide financial assistance to hold an event or a series of events in collaboration with relevant societies to commemorate the bicentenary.



*Slaves were punished by use of torture devices such as this*

## 8. parliamentary action – NUS' early day motion and model letter

Dear Student,

I am urging you to get your MP to support the EDM (Early Day Motion) 1221 below which was drafted in co-operation with the NUS Black Students' Campaign, UNISON and the Pan-African Students Movement, around the bicentenary of the Abolition of the Slave Trade Act 1807. The EDM calls for a re-writing of our history through a national day of remembrance which commemorates the brave resistance of millions of Black people against their brutal enslavement.

For information on how to get your MP to sign the EDM 1221 contact me, or find your MP at: [www.faxyourmp.com](http://www.faxyourmp.com) and ask them to sign it. We currently have 72 signatories but need to have at least 100 MPs signing it to make an impact.

Yours in unity,

**Ruqayyah Collector**

NUS Black Students' Officer

### **EDM 1221**

BICENTENARY OF THE ABOLITION OF THE SLAVE TRADE ACT 1807 (No. 2)

That this House notes with regret that many thousands of Africans suffered horrific, degrading and immoral treatment as a result of the slave trade; commemorates the dignified and brave manner in which enslaved Africans rose up against their oppressors; further commemorates 25th March as the bicentenary of the passing of the Abolition of the Slave Trade Act 1807 by Parliament; notes that the barbaric slave trade saw millions of enslaved persons transported through British ports; acknowledges that many of its past victims are the ancestors of present-day British citizens; recognises that the UK's economy directly benefited from the trade; calls on the Government to establish an annual National Slavery Memorial Day on 23rd August to memorialise both the outlawing of the slave trade and the resistance to it by enslaved people; further cautions that in 2007 hundreds of thousands of adults and children are still being trafficked and sold into forms of slavery such as forced labour and prostitution in a global criminal trade, causing devastating human suffering both abroad and in the UK; congratulates the Government for signing the Council of Europe Convention on Action Against Trafficking in Human Beings on Friday 23rd March 2007; and further urges the Government to take any other steps that may be necessary both to combat modern day slavery and to raise awareness about modern and past slavery, in co-operation with partners in the UK and abroad.

## 9. useful links and contact details of organisation

### **Ancestry.co.uk**

An online archive providing details of nearly 100,000 slaves owned by British colonists in Barbados during the early 19th century: [www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk)

### **Apology of Substance Campaign**

[www.naar.org.uk](http://www.naar.org.uk)

### **Heritage Lottery Fund**

[www.hlf.org.uk/English](http://www.hlf.org.uk/English)

### **Ignored No More**

2007 Mayor of London Bicentenary Programme: [www.london.gov.uk](http://www.london.gov.uk)

### **Rendezvous of Victory**

[www.rendezvousofvictory.org](http://www.rendezvousofvictory.org)

### **World Development Movement**

[www.wdm.org.uk](http://www.wdm.org.uk)

### **BBC Abolition Season**

[www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/abolition](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/abolition)

### **Set all free**

[www.setallfree.net](http://www.setallfree.net)

### **Anti-Slavery International 1807-2007 Campaign**

[www.antislavery.org/2007/about.html](http://www.antislavery.org/2007/about.html)

### **Government's abolition of the slave trade page**

[www.direct.gov.uk/en/slavery/DG\\_065970](http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/slavery/DG_065970)

### **Itzcarribbean.com**

[www.itzcaribbean.com/bicentenary\\_abolition\\_slavery.php](http://www.itzcaribbean.com/bicentenary_abolition_slavery.php)

### **Visit London — Bicentenary of the Abolition of the Slave Trade**

[http://uk.visitlondon.com/whats\\_on/special\\_events/abolition\\_slave\\_trade.html](http://uk.visitlondon.com/whats_on/special_events/abolition_slave_trade.html)

### **The March of the Abolitionists**

[www.lifelineexpedition.co.uk/mota/index.htm](http://www.lifelineexpedition.co.uk/mota/index.htm)

### **National Maritime Museum — Bicentenary of the Act to Abolish the Slave Trade**

[www.nmm.ac.uk/server/show/ConWebDoc.21415](http://www.nmm.ac.uk/server/show/ConWebDoc.21415)

### **Liverpool Maritime Museum**

[www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk](http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk)

### **Abolitionist Continuity Task Forces**

Tel: 020 7582 7968. E-mail: [Actforce003@yahoo.com](mailto:Actforce003@yahoo.com)

### **Global Justice Forum**

c/o 2007 Cross-Community Forum, Tel: 07949 730 836.

E-mail: [Globaljusticeforum@yahoo.com](mailto:Globaljusticeforum@yahoo.com)

### **Pan-African Youth and Students Internationalist Link**

Tel: 07960 958 456. E-mail: [Paysildrums@yahoo.com](mailto:Paysildrums@yahoo.com)

