

Research Question: The absence/presence of Durham's black history: A Literature Review of Durham's Colonial legacy and its present-day manifestations

This research project would examine how Britain's 'aphasic' relationship with its imperial past (Gapud, 2020, p. 331) has manifested itself within Durham University, through an analysis of existing literature and the historical archive to determine Durham's past ties to colonialism. It would involve the analysis of how Durham as an institution and city helped propagate slavery and colonial education, and the critical analysis of how this translates into present-day institutions which re-create hierarchies, resisting meaningful response to grievances by BAME staff (Mookherjee, 2022), through obfuscation and bystanderism. The format of this research would be presented as a 4000-word literature review, accompanied by an audio-visual summary. Overall, the objectives of this research would be to uncover the gaps in Durham's colonial history so that there can be accountability and justice through responsibility. The corrosive subjectivity engendered by injustice and its lack of acknowledgment manifests in present day institutional inequality, demonstrating the necessity for further research to ensure vigilance against impunity (Mookherjee, 2022).

Having studied colonialism both in my French and Politics module, as well as completing an EPQ examining how colonialism helped lay the foundations for genocide in Rwanda, this project would highlight my interest in how present structures have been affected by this operation. A lack of knowledge on injustice fundamentally translates to a lack of responsibility. While the unaddressed legacies of this operation constitute the material foundations of many British institutions, this knowledge is consigned to oblivion. How we address past injustices can thus represent how we see ourselves and our history, therefore the current lack of reckoning with this history can be viewed as constituting part of the setting for contemporary racism *. Furthermore, the recent BLM protests, with the symbolic pulling down of statues such as Edward Colston have also influenced my decision to explore the more hidden, yet still present, justifications for colonialism, demonstrated for example in the 'retain and explain' policy, which could be viewed as another example of judicial impunity which allows the Western hegemony to remain in place. Confronting the controversial decisions which have prevented meaningful redressal through socioeconomic justice, material change and engagement with the intersectional injustices within institutions would be highly important for the community to acknowledge (Mookherjee, 2022).

The power of education in shaping perception and resultant action should not be negated. From a colonial perspective, Durham encouraged the perpetuation of an Anglican, white education through ties to the colonial colleges of Fourah Bay College in Sierra Leone and Codrington College in Barbados, ensuring ongoing influence and power despite the de jure decolonisation. The material manifestations of colonialism were thus justified and legitimised through an education system that promulgated cultural superiority, contributing to contemporary racism and the gaps in accountability today. Indeed, the study of historical gaps in the British education system (Wemyss, 2016) is not deemed to be a matter of disciplinary focus. This process of 'remembering to forget' (Rowlands, 1999) is something this project would explore, tying together past injustices with the ongoing ones experienced today.

Durham's own ties to colonialism have been somewhat researched but are yet to be entirely acknowledged. The Bishops of Durham were involved in the SPG (The Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts), with the church also owning sugar plantations and receiving compensation to slave owners following the emancipation of slaves. Durham University then became affiliated to Codrington and Fourah Bay College to grant degrees. Investigating Durham's role in propagating

slavery, training missionaries and then spreading colonial education thus holds great merit. Moreover, researching specific black histories of individuals is important in preventing erasure.

Essentially, the outcomes of this project would build on previous research into Durham's colonialist ties and contribute to the push for institutional redressal and acknowledgment that present memorialisation indeed reverses the enslavers while obliterating Britain's own violent history, preventing accountability. This in turn could encourage the manifestations of contemporary institutional racism to be addressed, increasing BAME staff and student inclusion and contributing to the decolonisation of the curriculum. My research will thus be interdisciplinary, spanning the humanities and social sciences, reflecting the transnational rhetorics perpetuated by colonialism.

I will split the 6 weeks of research by focusing on one sub-topic per week:

1. Durham's history
2. The University of Durham's history
3. Codrington Bay and Fourah College
4. Individual black histories of graduates
5. BAME staff and student experiences in Durham
6. How institutional problems can be redressed

Bibliography:

Gapud, A., 2020. Displacing empire: aphasia, 'trade', and histories of empire in an English city.. *History and Anthropology*, Volume 31, pp. 331-53.

Mookherjee, N., 2022. Irreconcilable times. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 28(1), pp. 153-178.

Rowlands, M., 1999. Remembering to forget: sublimation as sacrifice in war memorials. . In: A. Forty & S. Kuchler, eds. *The art of forgetting* . Oxford: Berg, pp. 129-46.

Wemyss, G., 2016. *The invisible empire: white discourse, tolerance and belonging*.. London: Routledge.