

THE INTERNATIONAL SLAVERY MUSEUM: 07 AND BEYOND

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Biography

Richard gained a degree in Community and Race Relations at Edge Hill College and then went on to complete an MA and PhD in Archaeology at the University of Liverpool. He was a visiting research scholar at the WEB DuBois Institute of African and African American Research, Harvard University in 2002 and was appointed as Head of the International Slavery Museum in 2006.

Abstract

The International Slavery Museum opened on 23 August 2007 to international, national and local acclaim. The day commemorates an uprising of the enslaved Africans on the island of St Domingo (modern Haiti and the Dominican Republic) in 1791. Designated by UNESCO, the date was chosen as a reminder that enslaved Africans were the main agents of their own liberation.

International Slavery Museum was chosen as the name for the new museum during the concept development phase because we wished to reflect the fact that the transatlantic slave trade and its many consequences is a huge and complex international story which spans (at least) four continents.

Also, we envisioned that the scope of the new museum would eventually extend beyond transatlantic slavery and encompass other human rights issues, the study of which would provide context for and comparison with transatlantic slavery and its legacies. We now need to confirm this scope.

We aim to position ISM within a number of areas. Locally and regionally through community partnerships and renewal agendas – such as the European Capital of Culture, within national learning strategies and as a responsible internationally focused museum, a significant institution in terms of the UK Government's cultural agenda.

This paper focuses on how the International Slavery Museum aims to be global participant in the field of active political, and indeed environmental, campaigning which will be governed by the synergy between human rights, freedom and equality issues, the current museum display galleries as well as the work, and agendas, of our international core partners, which includes both Guyana and St. Kitts & Nevis. Core partners are countries with which the museum wants to develop closer links - especially regards museum collections and displays relating to slavery.

The recent suggestion by the Guyanese government that Britain become involved in the conservation of the Guyanese rainforest highlights the fact that the International Slavery Museum could be a conduit for such groundbreaking relationships.