



UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

The Working Group on Oxford University and Colonialism  
Created in May 2016

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## 1. Membership

Members of the group are broadly representative of the University body (departments, Colleges, administration) and have been recruited by word of mouth to reflect a multiplicity of voices and perspectives, including from: History, Politics & IR, QEH, Geography, African Studies, Modern Indian Studies, European Studies, Middle East Studies, TORCH, Oriental Studies, Education, OUSU, Equality and Diversity Unit, Public Affairs, in addition to students representing different societies including Rhodes Must Fall. The group also hopes to generate involvement from colleagues in the University's museum system. Membership is open to anyone who so requests or is suggested by a member of the group.

Nota: Current members are invited to help increase the reach of our group to the Mathematical, Physical & Life Sciences Division and Medical Sciences Division. We also need more students to replace those that have graduated.

### Steering Committee

Priya Atwal – LMH (website and social media)  
Andrea Brazzoduro – History  
Bright Gyamfi – Northwestern University (contact students)  
Kira Huju (student representative)  
Edward Mortimer – All Souls - (contact w outside collaborators)  
Kalypso Nicolaidis – DPIR/CIS (co-chair)  
Jonathan Ray – VC Office (contact with VC office)  
Dorian Singh - ESC  
Laura Van Broekhoven– Pitt Rivers Museum and GLAM (co-chair)  
Machilu Zimba – OU Equality and Diversity (contact w University initiatives)

### Other members

Abigail Adams - Economics  
Wale Adebani - African Studies  
Timothy Garton Ash – European Studies Centre/History  
Arthur Asseraf – History  
Eden Bailey – Access and Academic Affairs at OUSU  
William Beinart - African Studies Centre  
Teresa Bejan - Politics  
James Belich - History  
James Benson, Wolfson  
Paul Betts – History  
Elleke Boehmer - TORCH  
Dan Butt – Politics  
Simukai Chigudu – QEH – (contact w RMF)  
Charles Conn – Rhodes House  
Martin Conway - History  
John Darwin – History  
Caroline Davis - St Antony's  
Anne Deighton - DPIR

Faisal Devji - Asian Studies Centre  
 Danny Dorling – Geography  
 Cecile Fabre – Philosophy  
 Louise Fawcett - DPIR  
 Nadiya Figueroa - Rhodes House  
 Valpy Fitzgerald– Development  
 Ian Forrest – Oriel  
 Elizabeth Frazer – DPIR  
 Anthony Gardner - Ruskin School  
 Robert Gildea - History  
 Nandini Gooptu – International Development  
 Thomas Hale - Blavatnik School of Government  
 Max Harris – All Souls  
 Sudhir Hazareesingh – Politics  
 Dan Hicks – Archaeology/Pitt Rivers  
 Nadia Hilliard - Balliol  
 Dan Hodgkinson - QEH  
 Laura Hodson – Equality and Diversity Unit  
 Jane Humphries - Economic History  
 Andrew Hurrell – IR  
 George Kunnath - Modern Indian Studies  
 Judy Jameson  
 David Johnson – Education  
 Mallica Kumbera Landrus – Ashmolean Museum  
 Shreya Lakhani  
 Miles Larmer – African Studies  
 Stanley Malindi – St Antony’s  
 Sebatso Manoeli – History/African Studies  
 Victoria McGuinness - Humanities  
 Vanessa Meier - St Antony’s  
 Maria Misra - History  
 Rana Mitter – China Centre/History  
 Sizwe Mpofu-Walsh – IR  
 Madhulika Murali - St Anne’s  
 Karma Nabulsi – Politics  
 Philippa O’Connor – Education  
 Margie Orford, TORCH  
 Nicholas Owen – Politics  
 Robtel Pailey - QEH  
 Jeremias Prassl - Law  
 Rasangi Prematilaka - DPIR  
 David Priestland – History  
 Tariq Ramadan – Oriental Studies  
 Alexandra Reza - Modern and Medieval Languages  
 Adam Roberts – IR  
 Cristina Sio-Lopez – Santander Fellow, St Antony’s College  
 Zahraa Salloo– History  
 Sophie Smith – DPIR  
 Jonny Steinberg – African Studies  
 Achim Steiner – Oxford Martin School

Kate Sullivan de Estrada – Contemporary South Asian Studies Programme, Area Studies  
Rebecca Surender, Social Policy/Pro-Vice Chancellor for Diversity  
Stephen Tuck – History  
Katherine Tyson  
Giovanna Vitelli – Ashmolean Museum  
Blue Weiss - St Hilda's/Common Ground  
Stuart White – DPIR  
Michael Willis – Middle East Studies  
Martina Zago - DPIR

External members:

Casely-Hayford, Gus - SOAS  
Lazzoni, Gabriella – Institute for Historical Justice and Reconciliation  
Rao, Raul – SOAS  
Ross, Catherine - National Caribbean Heritage Museum  
Burrell, Lynda - National Caribbean Heritage Museum  
Ryback, Timothy - Institute for Historical Justice and Reconciliation  
Unger, Corinna - EUI  
Bhambra, Gurinder - Warwick  
Scarlett, Roland  
Ryan Hanley – History, local communities, UCL  
Pat Green – National Caribbean Heritage Museum

## 2. The Working Group on Oxford and Colonialism - Presentation

### Background and Objective

The working group was created in the Spring of 2016 in an effort to reflect on the University's historic ties with Great Britain's colonial past and the ways in which the University's colonial legacies reflect on the present, and our vision of the University's future. The group brings together students, academics and staff to discuss practical ways for the University to move forward on addressing issues that have been sparked again most recently by the Rhodes Must Fall campaign.

Other universities, particularly in the United States, have recently addressed issues of legacy and memory especially regarding slavery, and the benefits and profits they received from the slave trade. Brown University and Georgetown are prominent examples.<sup>1</sup> One of our first initiatives has been to ask what can we learn from other such experiences.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, we realise that while colonial pasts and pasts involving slavery greatly overlap, they are also distinct. Moreover, Oxford University is in a 'privileged position' (ironically of course) to deal with British and even other European colonial pasts given its own central role in training political and administrative elites.

At Oxford, the student-led Rhodes Must Fall movement brought issues of colonial legacies to national prominence last year and led to numerous debates in Colleges, departments, and across the city- sometimes acrimonious, other times constructive. It is fair to say that while the University has a policy on race and diversity issues, it has taken a back seat in debates over colonial legacies until now.

This working group does not seek to duplicate other efforts already taking place around the University to redress this lacuna. Rather, its aim is to look for common ground, link projects, initiatives and events across the University and suggest University-wide initiatives that are practical, sustainable and relevant both internally and with the wider public. Existing relevant initiatives include: TORCH's Race and Resistance programme which brings together researchers and students working on the history, literature, and culture of anti-racist movements in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Europe, Latin America, the United States, and beyond; the History Faculty's teach-in on colonialism in the Spring of 2016; Oriel College's initiative on rethinking how to curate, present and contextualise contentious artefacts and colonial relics kept in the College.

If we succeed, the University will dramatically increase its attractiveness as an inclusive global hub for students from around the world, including the global south. Moreover, it would also increase our attractiveness for British students from minority groups contemplating an application to Oxford.

Substantively, this means dealing with historical legacies in an open, scholarly and creative way - while also acknowledging and honouring past initiatives undertaken at the University and activist groups herein. Institutionally, it means respecting subsidiarity – that is, the existing division of responsibility prevalent in this University -whereby colleges and departments deal with i) maintaining their walls and artefacts (things); ii) the recruitment of students and staff (people); and iii) issues of curriculum and diversity (ideas). The grounds for dealing with these issues can

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example: [http://www.brown.edu/Research/Slavery\\_Justice/](http://www.brown.edu/Research/Slavery_Justice/) and <http://slavery.georgetown.edu/>

<sup>2</sup> See case study Working Paper by the Institute for Historical Justice and Reconciliation.

vary from issues of recognition to diversity, integration or reparation. The Equality and Diversity Unit at the University, for example, already works with Colleges on issues related to fairer recruitment, diversification of College-held portraits, inter alia.

The working group is working in cooperation with the University's Vice Chancellor's office but is run independently from it. We share a sense that the University needs to signal that it is listening and recognizing the importance of colonial legacy, but at the same time, we do not want to make this project, which is contestatory in nature, too formal and official, losing the radical contestatory nature of the issue. We hope that the University can empower without constraining agents for change, thus combining a bottom-up and top-down approach.

### A decentralised approach

In this configuration, we believe that the University as a whole has three complementary roles to play:

- **BE A FOCAL POINT:** To serve as an inter-disciplinary and inter-collegiate hub to debate and address the issues related to colonialism.
- **MAINTAIN AND IMPROVE REPUTATION:** To represent and project the University's stance on these issues for the outside world.
- **PROVIDE INCENTIVES:** To provide incentives and inspiration as well as possible outlets for actions otherwise taken at College or department level, including above all issues related to curriculum diversity and faculty hiring.

In short, achieving our goals will require a broader process across the University than this or any single group can achieve. We therefore ask: how we can, as a group, make a positive contribution to a larger public discussion that no one "controls" and which is larger than any given set of activities (e.g. website, exhibition, space, lectures, or any combination thereof)?

Such a project relates to (at least) two massive sets of issues: Oxford's colonial legacy and how Oxford today engages with the pluralistic community around the University. These are of course deeply intertwined, and while our starting point is the first, there is a Venn diagram where these overlap. In other words, this project cannot address all the larger issues related to the University as a multicultural environment but we hope that our focus on Oxford's colonial legacies will contribute to the broader conversation.

Most generally, some have expressed the concern that whatever our group can achieve, it risks justifying inaction in addressing the structural issues faced by the University mentioned above (diversity in the curriculum, hiring, etc). Against this risk of tokenism, we stress that our initiative is part of a broader whole and should be understood in the context of subsidiarity in the University. Moreover, we hope that our proposals will be more than pure symbolism and stress that to the extent that they are also symbolic, symbols do matter in debates around post-colonialism. All the partners involved, including the students' Common Ground will thrive to maintain a critical relationship with the University's actions towards decolonisation and will hopefully find that the space created here empowers them to do so.

To sum up: we hope that a great deal of the action at Oxford University related to colonial legacies will happen at the departmental and College level, from initiatives both formal and

informal, emerging from staff and students alike. Here we ask what the University – and a pan University network like ours - can do:

- 1) Autonomously;
- 2) To showcase or encourage actions at all levels.

Below are some of the ideas that have been discussed or proposed by individual members and that we would like to investigate further. They are options for discussion, not firm plans. They are complementary rather than competing – indeed part of the challenge is to create synergies between them.

### Proposed initiatives and activities

The list is of course not exhaustive but indicative:

- 1) Creating a permanent exhibit as a focal point to address the University's colonial legacies

At its first meeting (June 20, 2016) the group agreed that a promising idea would be for the University as a whole to establish a permanent exhibit (or more broadly provide a space), open to the general public while also serving as a focal point for engagement for members of the University. This space would be dedicated to documenting, presenting and debating Oxford's colonial past, its present day manifestations and the competitive visions that we may hold of a “post-colonial” University. It would provide a physical space that reflects the way our institution has (or has not) been self-critical in examining its role in colonialism and how it benefitted from it. There could be internet consoles, artefacts of different kinds and works of contemporary art (including variants on statues and the like). The creation of such a space would not, of course, prejudice the ways in which Oxford Colleges deal with their own spaces' colonial artifact.

At our second meeting (September 29, 2016) we discussed these issues further and potential pitfalls. We stressed that the dedicated space should not serve as “portmanteau” (Nandini) to hang everything else done elsewhere in the University. But we discussed how it could nevertheless serve to “sign post”, “advertise”, “make visible” (Nadiya) virtually, through multi-media consoles at the exhibit itself, and more broadly as an on-going forum to generate ideas and strategies for the recognition of colonial legacies in other contexts in the University.

Equally, any exhibition would also need to acknowledge past initiatives, campaigns and efforts undertaken at the University to redress our colonial past, starting with the decolonisation era. This would be an educational process for faculty, staff and students at the University which would enrich the greater Oxford community and contribute to the conversation on Europe's colonial past in the UK and beyond. Obviously, determining the exact nature and precise content of the exhibit will call for a wide ranging debate and diverse participation.

We also feel that it will be important to involve local communities in Oxford and in the UK at large (Ryan Hanley). We have been approached, inter-alia, by the National

Caribbean Heritage Museum, which was started in Nottingham by Catherine Ross, and which sets up exhibits along the theme of SKN (Skills, Knowledge and Networks), as a museum without walls. They share our concern with linking the UK's colonial past and current societal challenges of integration and offer to promote our initiatives beyond Oxford. One suggestion is to dedicate some funding toward sending members of the group to other universities and museums to see their exhibitions, installations, commemorations related to colonialism.

Some of the issues to be discussed are:

- What is the title of the exhibit? Should it even be called an exhibit or should it be a “space” of some kind?
- What does “colonial past” or “colonial legacies” include - period, topics? How do we retrieve this history, critique and show case it?
- Whose narrative is presented? One idea would be to crowd-source multi-media consoles adjacent to University artefacts. What can a wiki-history of Oxford's colonial legacies look like?
- What is the nature of the exhibit? Should it be more like a traditional exhibit with artefacts from the various archives? Or should it be more like an art installation? Or a combination?
- What content are we thinking about? How do we convey stories that ought to be more widely known both within the University and outside (e.g. Gandhi's visit), and the differences in interpretation about what these stories mean?
- Could someone (paid?) start collecting these, e.g. both the stories and the debates over meanings (Oxford's colonial wiki-history) since they will be the primary material for the website/exhibit?
- How do we make sure that what we do relates to the core mission in academic excellence (Jonathan)?
- How about special collections curated to complement courses being taught at the university linked to the colonial question – e.g. at Yale (Abi)?
- How about engaging artists to create installations and provide their own take on the issue? Whether in the same space or rotating space, there could be a different artist every year.
- How about artist performances?
- Should the exhibit serve to showcase naming and shaming schemes (e.g. Athena SWAN, race equality charter award scheme)?
- How do we integrate events, lecture series etc in the process? How about a special prize lecture linked to the space?
- Could the exhibit contain a model of the University and sign-post places and object of interest from a colonial lens? How do we showcase/point to artifacts around the University without making this the centre of the exhibit (Faisal)? Could the exhibit be the meeting point for ‘colonial Oxford’ walking tours?
- How do we convey that this project is about “the future” not simply “dwelling” on the past?
- 

#### Note on Buildings:

- Our group has discussed extensively the issue of the most appropriate venue or space which could host a permanent exhibit (points relevant to temporary exhibits too, see below):
  - One of our University museums (Ashmolean, Pitts Rivers...);

- the Weston building given its current track record on great exhibits;
- the Old Indian Institute which trained colonial administrators throughout the imperial era and has the history and look-and-feel for the job;
- the ground floor of Wellington Square;
- the Blackwell book repository on Rewley Road;
- Questions arising:
  - Logistical: availability, practicality;
  - Symbolic value;
  - Inward vs outward looking functions (location matters);
  - Outdoors vs indoors potential;
  - Creating new outdoor statues outside the said building.

#### 1) Temporary exhibits

- While the idea of a permanent exhibit has broad support in the group, alternatively there is also support for a series of temporary exhibits which would be less onerous and could pave the way for “rotating venues.” This would be a more incremental, approach.
- For instance, there are quite powerful community projects set up in the Oxford University Museums already that can serve as inspiration. See for instance the Power and Protection exhibition currently on at the Ashmolean, which invites local communities to layer their own memories and responses onto the exhibition narratives. And the display in response: 'Beautiful Things: objects of importance, talismans and charms'. It was created by women accessing an ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) class at Marston Children’s Centre in Northway, Oxford, working with textile and community artist Anne Marie Ratcliffe. The women brought in objects that empowered and gave them confidence, and used a variety of methods to highlight those objects and their beauty.

The group comprised many nationalities; Iraqi, Bangladeshi, Indian, Pakistani, Afghan and Polish but became a supportive network. The display embodies its collective empowerment through working together on the themes of power and protection.

- Questions:
  - Cost and benefit of the two approaches?
  - Same questions as proposal for permanent exhibit.
  - Who would take the lead?

#### 2) The Virtual Focal Point: A Website

At our second meeting we discussed the virtual dimension including the creation of a website, which in a way would be the virtual mirror and expansion of the exhibit and other “physical initiatives.” The website would:

- contain a crowd-sourced history of the colonial at Oxford as well as the memory thereof, bringing together the currently scattered documenting of the University’s relationship with colonialism and decolonization.
- connect to all relevant projects and developments across the University. Most importantly this would include changes in the curriculum in different

departments around the University. With regards to the curriculum in various departments different schemes can be envisaged to highlight progress or lack thereof on the website.

- serve as a focal point to list and list events, seminars, projects, meetings, etc., happening across the University (but also in the local community – like the Oxford African History Celebration in Cowley, amongst many others)

Possible inspirations at the University of Oxford include:

- The WWI project, a crowdsourced web-based repository for a wide variety of materials and the wider European project: <http://www.oucs.ox.ac.uk/ww1lit/gwa> It is a really rich collection and has many facets and makes it a good type of resource for something as diverse as the contributions we are envisaging for the virtual space.
- Chris Lintott's 'citizen science' website, zooniverse: <https://www.zooniverse.org/>

Questions:

- Should it be a dedicated web-page on the University site? This option would be predicated on freedom of expression rules. It would also contain links to other website.
- We had seen a webpage as complementary to the exhibit. Should it be thought of now as a stand-alone project, irrespective of what happens to the exhibit project? Is a webpage enough to address the challenge, if our aim is to encourage real conversations?
- Who would design, construct and maintain it?
- How do we think of the relationship between a virtual and spatial hub? If there is a demand for “a space of recognition” (Eden) should this space be virtual, physical or both?

### 3) The Virtual Connector: a Hashtag (Tom Hale)

Moreover, our member Thomas Hale suggests an “open source” model or organization. We could create a short phrase or name that captures what we are aiming to achieve. Something that could be a hashtag. This ‘brand’ can then be adopted by a website, an exhibition, a lecture, etc. that speaks to these issues. No single group or entity, inside or outside the university, can control the brand. Those who wish to engage in this conversation can choose to adopt it or not. This model is similar to the Occupy movement and other forms of bottom-up organization.

While no one can control this kind of open source model, there is a critical role for leadership and orchestration. So the focal interventions (e.g. temporary exhibit, website publications, lectures, etc.) would shape the conversation through the hashtag.

We hope for the University itself to play a strong role in initiating and supporting such interventions, and do so in a very transparent and open way. Such processes are by definition open-ended, but that is exactly the source of their legitimacy and, thus, effectiveness. While this would no doubt worry some that they are inviting controversy, done properly, such a process could be a very effective way to proactively manage a key risk to the University's mission.

### 4) Named lecture or lecture series (Nick Owen and Faisal Devji)

There are various possibilities here. One would be to emulate/continue the Race and the Curriculum in Oxford Lecture Series (last of which MT 2016 by Ruth Simons) on the theme of Oxford and Colonialism.

Another option would be a one-off lecture on colonial legacies given by a high-profile speaker from outside the university who might be a campaigner or an academic (or both). She or he would not only lecture but also run a participatory workshop on colonial legacies. The lecture could be named for Shyamji Krishnavarma who was a Victorian academic and an anti-imperialist campaigner who gave money to Oxford which has been absorbed into the university and has now become invisible

### 3. Minutes of Meetings

Minutes- Oxford and Colonialism WG, June 2016, ESC

An informal meeting of what is tentatively being called the Oxford and Colonialism Working Group took place on June 20 at the European Studies Centre. The group of about 20 consisted of students and academics from a variety of disciplines. It must be stressed that this was only a first conversation to gauge support for the initiative in the first place, and to air ideas freely- the form, composition and content of the working group is still very much in the developmental phase.

The initiative's broad aim is to contribute to a University action plan to address the myriad issues surrounding Oxford's past connections with colonialism and its present engagement with the legacies of colonialism— topics of debate which have been sparked most recently by the Rhodes Must Fall Campaign. We have all been discussing these issues, but often atomized from each other and in parallel. The working group seeks to bring the conversation together. Therefore it is important to have a plurality of voices contributing to this conversation. The group seeks to identify possible and practical ways for the University to tackle the issues. One goal in the near future will be to provide a provisional sketch of what form(s) these action(s) might take. The Vice Chancellor has expressed support for this initiative and has indicated that the University is receptive to our input.

In the course of the conversation in the June meeting, a number of important suggestions, considerations, caveats and questions were raised by the group:

**Permanent exhibit:** Many attendees voiced support for the creation of some sort of permanent exhibit at the University dedicated to addressing “Oxford and the colonial question.” Importantly, there was wide agreement amongst many participants that we must be careful to not relegate colonialism as a relic of Oxford's past and that efforts should be made to ensure that colonialism is not strictly presented as ‘in the past’ and ‘safely behind glass.’ Rather, some suggested, it could be an iterative, dynamic exhibit which contains historical elements confronting the past, but have other elements which shift alongside contemporaneous events and developments, and it should be a place to encourage continued conversation and debate. Indeed, some envision this space as much as a place to hold related events and seminars as an exhibit per se. Perhaps in this context, the exhibit should not be located in a museum.

Many also agreed that caution needs to be exercised to avoid Eurocentricism in the presentation of any exhibit, and efforts must be made to ensure that subaltern and indigenous perspectives are privileged. Equally, it was deemed vital that in telling the story of colonialism (past and present) people of colour are not presented as ‘objects of study or enquiry’. This concern was raised particularly vis-à-vis the Pitt Rivers Museum and some of its antiquated and, what many in the group felt was, offensive presentation of other cultures.

It was also suggested that caution should be exercised against presenting any exhibit as if Oxford does not already have a history of anti-colonial activism. Prominent individuals and anti-colonial movements from Oxford's past also have place in an exhibit of this nature and should not be overlooked.

An alternative to a permanent exhibit was envisaged by some other participants which would seek to sidestep what they see as ‘agenda-driven’ museum exhibits. Rather, it might be possible to organize, inter alia, walking tours through Oxford and highlighting important places in Oxford’s story with colonialism. These options were also considered as complementary to the exhibit space which could serve as a focal point to advertise them.

**Statues:** Following on from the heated debates surrounding Rhodes Must Fall, some participants felt that since Rhodes ‘has not fallen’ at Oxford, erecting statues of anti-colonial personages such as Gandhi or Martin Luther King at the University –possibly signposting the exhibit- could be a symbolic counterweight. There was also the idea that for some of the existing statues and artefacts (or copies) could find a place in the exhibit thus countering the oft heard argument that simply taking down statues is a way of erasing history.

**Webpage:** It was suggested that a University webpage – perhaps linking directly off of the University’s main site – could be established. This could be done in connection with, for example, the establishment of a permanent exhibit, and/or as a reference page for events, blogs, groups, etc., at the University engaged in issues surrounding colonialism, diversity, etc. It could be produced along the ‘wiki’ model and crowd-sourced by students and staff. It was also suggested that some sort recognition for Colleges who have ‘done well’ to address diversity could be devised. This recognition could, for example, be showcased on the website. This idea is loosely based on the Green Awards which is awarded to Colleges who make significant strides in ‘greening’. In this way, the University can centralise recognition for diversity initiatives.

**Decolonizing curricula and diversity:** There was a broad consensus that present-day issues, often stemming from a legacy of colonialism, such as relatively poor student and faculty diversity, also need to be redressed. Curricula has to be carefully scrutinized and updated to reflect scholastic plurality and embrace a wider spectrum of material and perspectives, moving beyond the ‘traditional cannon.’ There was also discussion about supporting greater emphasis on area studies, which many felt had unduly ‘fallen out of fashion’ of late. (It should be noted that some felt that the University and certain Faculties are already working on this issue and are aware that it is problematic.) In addition, there was support for engendering greater contact and linking up of students and faculty to discuss issues related to diversity, colonialism, curricula, inter alia, which could take the form of reading groups or discussion groups. This suggestion was in response to concerns raised by some student participants that students and faculty are ‘talking across’ each other, but not together about these issues. There was also a sense however that these issues are better dealt at department level rather than University wide. A permanent exhibit could support and enable curriculum diversity as well as be fed by it.

In principle there was support for all of this, but in terms of practicality many felt that it would be not feasible for the group to act on all of these macro issues and we need to consider what can reasonably be accomplished by such a working group.

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In short, there was strong agreement that a working group of this nature has a place at the University, that this conversation should continue, and that the group should try to move forward on practical plans. While it may be that because of limited time, resources, influence and commitment the working group may have to settle on advancing one main plan – specifically a permanent exhibit - it is important to work as synergistically as possible with other initiatives and not view the aforementioned suggestions as mutually exclusive per se.

1. General agreement on the objectives laid out in the proposal under discussion distributed to the group; but differences of views on how they should be implemented.
2. Website vs exhibit? Agreement includes the need to create a University website (or rather a dedicated web-page on the University site) which will serve as a virtual focal point for activities around the University related to the Colonial. Questions:
  - We had seen a webpage as complementary to the exhibit. Should it be thought of now as a stand-alone project, irrespective of what happens to the exhibit project? Is a webpage enough to address the challenge, If our aim is to encourage real conversations?
  - Who would design, construct and maintain it?
  - How do we think of the relationship between a virtual and spatial hub? If there is a demand for “a space of recognition” (Eden) should this space be virtual, physical or both?
3. Permanent vs Temporary exhibit? While the idea of a permanent exhibit has broad support in the group, alternatively there is also support for a temporary exhibit which would be less onerous and could pave the way for “rotating venues.” The VC expressed support for the latter, more incremental, approach. Questions:
  - Cost and benefit of the two approaches?
  - Temporary exhibit approach: same questions as proposal for permanent exhibit -- and who would take the lead?
4. Structural vs Symbolic. Many expressed the concern that whatever we do (website; temporary/permanent exhibit) will not only fail to address the structural issues faced by the University (diversity in the curriculum, in hiring etc) but even also justify inaction. Against this risk of tokenism, we need to stress that our initiative is part of a broader whole and should be understood in the context of subsidiarity in the University (see proposal). Moreover an exhibit or a space is more than pure symbol and to the extent that it is symbolic, symbols do matter in debates around post-colonialism. Questions:
  - What are the safeguards against tokenism?
  - What can we learn (positive and negative) from what has been done elsewhere?
5. Focus but also Synergies. Our initiative should not serve as “porte manteaux” (Nandini) to hang everything else done elsewhere in the University. At the same time, it could serve to “sign post”, “advertise”, “make visible” (Nadiya) these things both virtually, through multi-media consoles at the exhibit itself, and as a focal point for recognition of other initiatives – and more broadly as an on-going forum to generate ideas and strategies for the recognition of colonial legacies in other contexts in the University. Questions:
  - Should the exhibit serve to showcase naming and shaming schemes (eg Athena SWAN, race equality charter award scheme)?
  - How to integrate events, lecture series etc in the process? How about a special prize lecture linked to the space?
  - Could the exhibit contain a model of the University and sign-post places and object of interest from a colonial lens? How do we showcase/point to artifacts around the University without making this the centre of the exhibit (Faisal)? Could the exhibit be the meeting point for ‘colonial Oxford’ walking tours?

6. Content - History, Stories, Art. What content are we thinking about? In this meeting as in previous ones, colleagues shared examples, stories that ought to be more widely known both within the University and outside (eg Adam on Gandhi's visit), although there are fascinating differences in interpretation about what these stories mean.
- Questions:
- How to make sure that what we do relates to the core mission in academic excellence (Jonathan)?
  - Could someone (paid?) start collecting these, eg both the stories and the debates over meanings (Oxford's colonial wiki-history) since they will be the primary material for the website/exhibit?
  - How do we retrieve this history, critique and show case it?
  - How do we convey that this project is about "the future" not simply "dwelling" on the past?
  - How about special collections curated to complement courses being taught at the university linked to the colonial question - eg Yale (Abi)?
  - How about engaging artists to create installations and provide their own take on the issue? Whether in the same space or rotating space, there could be a different artist every year.
  - How about artist performances?
7. Institutional recognition vs non-cooptation. How do we deal with the tension between the need to convey the fact that the University is listening and recognizing the importance of colonial legacy, and the risk to make this project too formal and official, loosing the radical contestatory nature of the issue. Question:
- What of Valpy's measure of success – making the university upset? Can the University upset itself!
  - How does the University empower agents for change and let go of full control?
  - How do we combine bottom-up and top-down here?
8. Buildings. There was some discussion about buildings and possible host whether for a temporary or permanent exhibit: the Weston building and its current track record on great exhibits; the Old Indian institute which trained colonial administrators throughout the imperial era and has the history and look-and-feel for the job; the Blackwell book repository on Rewley road; ground floor of Wellington square... Questions:
- Logistical: availability, practicality
  - Symbolic value
  - Inward vs outward looking functions (location matters)
  - Outdoors vs indoors potential
  - Creating new outdoor statues outside the said building
9. Membership of the group. Should be expanded to Mathematical, Physical & Life Sciences Division and Medical Sciences Division. We also need more students to replace those that have graduated. We need to reach out to our University museum curators.
10. Funding. The VC encouraged the group to fundraise. One suggestion (Karma) : The Sigrid Rausing Trust. Other ideas welcome. Including on who could be in charge of this. Do we need University funds?

### List of attendees– 29 Sept

1. Adams, Abi - Economics
2. Bailey, Eden– Access and Academic Affairs at OUSU
3. Butt, Dan– Politics Devji, Faisal - Asian Studies Centre
4. Dorling, Danny– Geography
5. Fawcett, Louise - DPIR
6. Figueroa, Nadiya– Rhodes House
7. Fitzgerald, Valpy – Development
8. Gooptu, Nandini– International Development
9. Hodgkinson, Dan – International Development
10. Hodson, Laura– Equality and Diversity Unit
  
11. Johnson, David– Education
12. Kunnath, George - Modern Indian Studies
13. Nabulsi, Karma– Politics
14. Nicolaidis, Kalypso – DPIR/CIS (Chair)
15. Owen, Nicholas– Politics
16. Priestland, David– History-
17. Ray, Jonathan– Public Affairs Directorate, VC Office
18. Richardson, Louise – University VC
19. Roberts, Adam– IR
20. Salloo, Zahraa– History
21. Sullivan de Estrada, Kate - Area Studies
22. Zimba, Machilu – OU Equality and Diversity

### Observers

- Lazzoni, Gabriella – Institute for Historical Justice and Reconciliation
- Ryback, Timothy - Institute for Historical Justice and Reconciliation

### Minutes – Oxford and Colonialism WG, November 28, 2016

#### Teddy Hall

#### Participants:

Kalypso Nicolaidis  
Dorian Singh  
Laura Van Broekhoven  
Machilu Zimba  
Seguro – Trinity  
Edward Mortimer  
William Beinart  
Bright Gyamfi  
Simukai Chigudu

Ian Forest  
Ali – RMF- Palestine  
Ryan Hanley  
Karma Nabulsi

Pat Green

Julie

### Minutes

- Ryan –reports on Lynda and Katherine Ross
- Machilu – TORCH link
- Edward – All Souls and Codrington
- Simukai –memorialise the past –challenge narrative victimhood-calls for radical empathy, right to be heard. Start to institutionalise these questions. Protest vs reform. Structures that the university has created. The university is an amorphous entity.
- Ryan –race and equality working group – use teach ins
- Machilu – contact college heads of house – equality and diversity forum.
- Kalypso- Colleges and University
- Ian Forest - Historical contextualisation of Rhodes, English heritage and art history
- Julie and Pat – break down barriers between community and university – jan 15<sup>th</sup> M Luther King
- Karma – seminar on counter-terror and prevent – race, colonialism and the academy seminar
- Nadiya - Rhodes trust portraits are changing –tribute to the miners in SA-sharing an learning together bottom up –power mapping – change campaign –also application cycles –US, Australia, Canada –minorities –pipeline issue
- Dorian – connection with Free speech
- Laura – permanent exhibit, process of redress, not welcoming space, histories of violence from colonial time
  - o Visitor’s demographics
  - o Around oxford
  - o Historical review and historical consciousness
  - o Projections
  - o #L decolonising museum –work with curators- decolonising thinking
  - o Being vulnerable –radical empathy and radical hope
- Ian –museums led the way thinking about objects vs living institutions – where particular institution still exists –where people live and work
- Nadiya – being vulnerable –
- Bernard – museum – black intellectuals
- Eria Bomer—afrcan studies website on proposal.
- Laura –why I feel comfortable in this space –
- Pat – connect w cty –pitts rivers
- Julie–Oxford African history celebration- Black history week –Leila
-

Present

- Richard Ovenden
  - Kira Huju
  - Machilu Zimba
  - Priya Atwal
  - Laura van Broeckhoeven
  - Edward Mortimer
  - Kalypso Nicolaidis
  - Dorian Singh
- 
- Bodleian Library has various resources which the Working Group can draw upon for the colonialism project. The Commonwealth and African Studies started in 1930s. It contains all the Commonwealth colonialism records, including:
    - End of Empire programme collected the archives from sub-Saharan Africa, and the archives of Cecil Rhodes.
    - British Colonial Records programme funded by the Ford Foundation were originally kept at Rhodes House, which then invited the Bodleian to house them.
    - Additional -- Colonial experience, anti-apartheid movement; anti-slavery connected to Britain in sub-Saharan Africa
    - Worth investigating Regent's Park Missionary Library (Dorian)
    - Mission Studies archives on Woodstock Road.
    - Bodleian has a visiting scholar centre which could be used to office a researcher or affiliate of the colonialism project.
    - Martin Poulter is the Bodleian Wikimedian in residence. He could help curate website and drive traffic.
  - Richard Ovenden:
    - Encouraging re-interpretation in library, in museums.
    - 1km of shelving – digitized materials
    - Fellowship programme, involving the Colleges to encourage scholars in African universities to access the historical record and contribute to the intellectual debate
    - Explore options for the Rhodes House to use their endowment towards this project.
  - Edward Mortimer
    - Establish post in African history
  - Machilu Zimba
    - Colleges: Heads of House initiative. Rebecca Surender, Pro-Vice Chancellor for Diversity is working to coordinate.
    - Departments have visiting Fellowships from the global south

## Participants

Philippa O'Connor  
Karma Nabulsi  
Laura van Broekhoven  
Malika Kumbera Landrus  
Faisal Devji  
Priya Atwal  
Katherine Tyson

Kira Huju  
Max Harris  
Bright Gyamfi  
Miles Larmer  
Ryan Henley  
Robert Gildea  
Kalypso Nicolaidis  
Timothy Garton Ash  
Vanessa Meier

A Working Group meeting took place on 9 June, at the European Studies Centre, with around 20 members of the group present. The focus of this meeting was for members to update each other about the latest developments as well as to facilitate a group discussion regarding the proposed web portal. The annexed handout with a provisional site map for the web portal was circulated to all attendees – we welcome any further thoughts and feedback from members of the group about these proposals via email, particularly any suggestions of content that members would like to contribute (i.e. blog posts, images, links to relevant sites or multimedia content).

### Preliminary discussions

The meeting began with a welcome to new members, and updates from the group. Kalypso reported on the smaller group meeting held at the Bodleian in February where ideas emerged for the establishment of research fellowships for scholars from the Global South, to promote access to and study of the extensive colonial archives held by the Bodleian. Other members of the group shared additional items of news, as well as opportunities that the group should consider for enhancing synergies with work going on across the University:

Priya Atwal (new member of the Steering Committee – for digital projects) fed back on conversations with TORCH: TORCH are promoting their Mellon Fellowships and are launching a new virtual tour app (co-designed with Pitt Rivers Museum) to make access to Oxford's heritage digitally accessible and interactive. Max Harris mentioned that there may be potential

overlap with this app and the colonial/hidden history tools being developed by Rhodes Must Fall and others. This suggests that the Working Group does not need to “re-invent the wheel” when it comes to designing interactive tools for public to engage with Oxford heritage. Researchers and students can self-curate stories and content to add to these existing platforms, which we can promote and integrate into our proposed website, together with a printable map for those who are less tech-savvy!

Faisal Devji suggested there may be potential interest from Oliver Cox and National Trust in understanding issues around Oxford’s architecture. He also notified the group that he and Mallica Kumbera-Landrus are working on a 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary project on Indian/Pakistani independence with the Ashmolean and the Courtauld Institute in London.

Miles Larmer informed us of the work that he and other colleagues in the History Faculty are doing to develop educational resources to support the teaching of a new GCSE on migration and empire. We could easily promote such resources on our proposed web portal, and Priya also highlighted the potential linkages of the group’s aims with the University’s ongoing outreach work to attract BAME applicants, which may be an avenue for future exploration.

Max Harris brought the ‘Common Ground’ events/movement to the group’s attention (a student-run programme to discuss and debate issues of structural inequality at Oxford), as well as updating the group about ongoing discussions at All Souls relating to the Codrington legacy. He additionally warned against any tendency towards comfortable complacency at the University, and that although interesting work was undoubtedly being carried out by TORCH, the Pitt Rivers Museum, and the History Faculty, etc, our Group should have greater clarity on what our own goals are and ensure that momentum of action is maintained. Bright Gyamfi suggested the creation of a sub-committee to mitigate against any slide to complacency – perhaps to meet once a month and keep track of core goals, and push on with key points of action.

### Group discussion on website proposal

The group then moved on to discuss ideas for the proposed website. The idea for the creation of a dedicated web portal stems from earlier group discussions about the merits/demerits of setting up a (permanent/temporary) physical exhibition or museum space in Oxford, to explore the University’s colonial legacy in a critical and engaging fashion. As it appears to be rather more straightforward to begin with a digital portal, it has been proposed that we apply to add a set of new webpages to the University’s main website, as a digital alternative to occupying a physical space within the University. An assessment of public and internal engagement with this new web portal can then be utilised as a means to build a case for the development of a physical space in the longer-term.

The annexed handout (about suggested categories to be included within the website) was circulated to the group, and a brief discussion was had about the arrangement and style of content to be included. It was suggested that information about the colonial legacy projects and resources supported by the University’s museums and libraries could be incorporated into one sub-section of the site; with another, perhaps connected page promoting heritage apps and a printable map (as mentioned above) which visitors to Oxford can use to learn about hidden or

contested histories while exploring the city and University in person. An additional page could be included listing public events that interested people can attend at Oxford or elsewhere – including for example the Indian/Pakistani anniversary events being organised by Faisal or Mallica. A further suggestion, leading on from Miles’ points about the new GCSE, was that a page could be added with prospective applicants and teachers in mind, who may be interested in learning more about the University’s past from an educational standpoint as well as to judge whether “Oxford is for them”. Finally, there was also significant discussion about the nature of the blog-style content to be added – which Kalypso envisaged as giving voice to different perspectives on colonialism and Oxford, both historically and in its present-day dimensions.

This initial discussion highlighted the wide-ranging audience that we may seek to connect with and have to bear mind in when developing this website, which may in turn make for an interesting challenge when it comes to establishing the tone and content for it. Max suggested that it would be worthwhile to agree on a set of principles for the website and how it would be produced, particularly raising the question of the resources that would be used to produce the content – adding that already overburdened staff and students may struggle to give time to write and produce material for the site, especially if they were expected to do so unpaid. There was also a brief conversation about the extent to which content should go “signed or unsigned”: i.e. whether blog-posts/articles should have named authors, so that their content is reflective of their own views and simply hosted by our site to reflect different sides to the debate on what is understandably a controversial and multi-faceted debate.

We also debated whether or not our web portal should be hosted on the main University website, or form a standalone site. Those in favour of having our portal based on [www.ox.ac.uk](http://www.ox.ac.uk) (produced in a similar format to the Undergraduate Admissions site, with a blog section included) argued that it would mark a significant acknowledgement by the University as a whole of these contested and forgotten histories, and the need to critically and sensitively engage with such issues, whilst making the discussion more accessible to a broader audience. It was suggested too that this was the closest possible alternative to the University providing a physical space for engaging with its colonial legacy.

Others had concerns that our freedom to air views and engage in potentially controversial debate might be curtailed by positioning on the University’s website, which is maintained by the Public Affairs Directorate: a department which may seek to moderate our tone and keep us line with their vision of the University’s brand/reputation. Timothy Garton Ash suggested that the Free Speech Debate website might be a useful model for consideration: a semi-autonomous site that incorporates the University logo and branding in its design, but which is effectively standalone – running with its own moderators and interestingly, two URLs (including an ox.ac.uk one).

Actions to consider therefore included getting in touch with the Public Affairs Directorate to better understand the issues involved in hosting our portal on the main University site, so as to gauge whether this would be a beneficial approach – and to compare this against the alternative idea raised by Timothy of seeking funds from the University to set up and maintain a standalone site. It is also clear that the highest University approval would be needed in order to use University branding and/or a space on the website for such a project, and indeed, the group seemed to agree that this would be desirable as a means of demonstrating that Oxford is committed to embracing critical self-reflection and cultural change. Under this scenario, the main website could of course link to independent websites/blogs/facebook page.

**Proposed actions:**

- Continuing dialogue with VC's office
- Possible need to engage with Public Affairs Directorate
- Agree on principles for website categories, content and tone
- Call for working group to submit any ideas for content to add to our 'portfolio'
- Enlarge membership to more students and staff from the Sciences Division

#### 4. Draft of a possible “Oxford and Colonialism” website – preliminary ideas

##### Draft Website categories

Post-discussion on 9 June 2017, ESC

##### ❖ **About**

- Explains why we have this page
- The Working Group on Oxford and Colonialism
- Our Aims
- Contact

##### ❖ **Oxford and its Colonial Legacies: Stories and Controversies**

- **The history of anti-colonial struggle at Oxford:** Rhodes Must Fall and past movements; the controversies and changes associated with such movements.
- **Crowd-sourced contributions:** Blog section with interesting stories written by University staff, students and external specialists about Oxford and aspects of its colonial legacy (e.g. the history of Cecil Rhodes’ legacy and its modern implications) - with the option to share multimedia content as well as text articles. → **Suggestions of content ideas very welcome for this!**
- **Bibliography**

##### ❖ **Around the University**

- **On-going projects across the University, colleges, museums, libraries etc:** an overview of research/curriculum reform/decolonization work being done across Oxford, with links to relevant pages for people to find out more and potentially highlighting opportunities to get involved.
- **Events:** featuring public events (e.g. the Common Ground Symposium run by students, exhibitions by the museums, or public lectures/seminars).
- **Research/job opportunities, e.g.:** signposting opportunities that people can apply to, to support work in the area of diversifying Oxford's community, as well as research clusters that they might like to get involved with.

For example: the Bodleian section could feature details of the proposed Global South fellowship funding campaign, as well as information linking to the Bodleian’s catalogues of archives on colonial history – making it easier for researchers to find out more about opportunities to study this history at Oxford.

## ❖ The 'Colonial Oxford' Virtual Tour

- **Links to new apps being developed by University groups to interact with Oxford's 'living heritage':** e.g. the TORCH/Pitt Rivers 'hidden histories' app and any others.
- **Paper-based map:** basic option for people to download and print to explore aspects of Oxford's colonial legacy. **Does such a map already exist?**

## ❖ Educational resources for teachers and future applicants

- **The tone of this page may need to differ slightly from the rest of the site in order to come across well to younger audiences.**
- Access to relevant educational resources and outreach events designed by University members for young people and teachers
- Possible opportunity to design an accessible reading list for young people? Can also link to relevant themed questions on **Explore:** the digital learning portal for 11-18 year olds designed by the Widening Access team.
- Links to information on how to find out more about applying to Oxford University.