

## Impact case study (REF3)

<b>Institution:</b> University of Glasgow (UofG)		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 28 History		
<b>Title of case study:</b> Transforming public understanding of the significance and legacy of slavery in Britain		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> 2007–present		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b>	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b>	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b>
Simon Newman Stephen Mullen	Professor of History Postdoctoral Researcher	2007–present 2015–present
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> 2013–31 <sup>st</sup> December 2020		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014?</b> N		
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b></p> <p>UofG research has transformed public and institutional understanding of the impact of slavery and its legacy in British society. Through diverse activities including consultancy for cultural productions (radio and live plays, a film, musical compositions and radio documentaries), a graphic novel and other materials for all 367 Scottish state secondary schools, new insights have reached diverse communities. UofG became the first public UK institution to acknowledge its financial benefit from slavery, commissioning a historical research report that has shaped a programme of reparative justice. This sparked immense public interest and led the way, with support from Newman and Mullen, for five further UK HEIs to undertake similar actions.</p>		
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b></p> <p><b>2.1 Glasgow, Scotland and the profits from slavery</b> (Newman, PI; Mullen; contributing research by PGR students Mundell, Leverhulme Trust funded 2015–2018, and Marenka Thompson-Odlum, AHRC-funded 2015–2018)</p> <p>This research investigated how Glasgow and Scotland benefitted from historical racial slavery. It involved extensive research into the profits generated by the trade in tobacco, sugar and cotton produced by enslaved people, the activities of Scottish planters, merchants, doctors and others in the plantation colonies, and the ways in which the wealth generated affected Scottish society. The research demonstrated that those profits encouraged the explosive growth of Glasgow's economy, helped fund new manufacturing and industry, and led to the development of new or refurbished estates from Ayrshire to the Highlands, many filled with expensive furniture and art works from all over Europe. The research showed that these profits from racial slavery also played a major role in the development of Glasgow as the 'Second City of the British Empire' – the legacy of which remains visible today in Glasgow's built environment. This research also included collaborative research with Glasgow Museums to explore how items in their collections reflect this history, and how best to tell that story.</p> <p><b>2.2 Runaway Slaves in Britain</b> (Leverhulme Trust funded 2015–2018: Newman, PI; Mullen; Nelson Mundell, Leverhulme Trust funded 2015–2018)</p> <p>This Leverhulme-funded research project created a database (launched April 2018) and seven research publications. Research involved painstaking digital and physical searching through tens of thousands of pages of 18<sup>th</sup>-century newspapers to locate advertisements offering enslaved people for sale or seeking the capture and return of enslaved people who had escaped. The research has demonstrated the significant presence of enslaved people (mostly of African origin, but some South Asian and indigenous American) who escaped from owners in England and Scotland during the first three-quarters of the 18th century. Many of these enslaved people</p>		

worked as domestic servants in elite households, while others were sailors and a few were skilled craftsmen. The research demonstrated that despite appearing on the surface to live and work in conditions of equality with white people in Britain, and in far superior conditions to enslaved people in the colonies, the enslaved people brought to Britain were nonetheless being bought and sold and threatened with or actually returned to colonial plantation slavery, meaning that their chains and collars—both real and metaphorical—did not unlock in Britain.

### 2.3. Slavery, Abolition and the University of Glasgow (Newman, PI; Mullen)

Commissioned by UofG's Senior Management Group (SMG), this work took the form of a historical report and recommendations. This involved extensive research in university, local and national records to evaluate the extent to which the university had benefitted from the profits of historical racial slavery, and then to recommend a programme of reparative justice. The research established that the profits of slavery helped fund (in part or sometimes in full) various benefactions, endowments and other gifts which continue to provide funds to the university, and that similarly slavery profits contributed to the massive capital campaign to support the University of Glasgow's relocation to its present campus in the 1870s. Both the report (the first of its kind in the UK) and recommendations were accepted by SMG, the report was published September 2018, and the recommendations are being put into effect.

### 3. References to the research

- 3.1 Simon P. Newman, [A New World of Labor: The Development of Plantation Slavery in the British Atlantic](#). Monograph: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013. ISBN 9780812245196. Awarded the British Association for American Studies Book Prize, April 2014. [available on request from HEI]
- 3.2 Simon P. Newman, '[Freedom-seeking slaves in England and Scotland, 1700–1780](#).' Journal article: *English Historical Review*, (2019), 134(570), pp.1136–1168 ([doi:10.1093/ehr/cez292](#))
- 3.3 Simon P. Newman, '[Hidden in Plain Sight: escaped slaves in late-18th and early-19th century Jamaica](#).' Journal article, *William and Mary Quarterly* (OI Digital Reader), June 2018. Article is the subject of a scholarly forum in *William and Mary Quarterly*. [PDF available on request from HEI]
- 3.4 Simon P. Newman, Stephen Mullen and Nelson Mundell. '[Black Runaways in Eighteenth-Century Britain](#).' Book chapter in *Britain's Black Past*, ed. Gretchen Gerzina (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2020). ISBN 9781789621600.
- 3.5 Simon P. Newman, '[Rethinking Runaways in the British Atlantic World: Britain, the Caribbean, West Africa and North America](#).' *Slavery & Abolition*, 38, 1 (2017), 49–75. (DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/0144039X.2016.1220582>)

**Quality:** this work is largely Leverhulme-funded and published in peer-reviewed journals and therefore expected to meet or exceed the 2\* threshold.

### 4. Details of the impact

#### 4.1 Increasing public understanding and countering misconceptions in Britain

In 2015 Prof. Sir Tom Devine observed that for generations Scots had engaged 'in a form of collective amnesia' by believing that 'their country has few or no connections to slavery'. UofG research has contributed significantly to countering this narrative. Public understanding in the UK and beyond has been transformed through media stories, interviews, consultancy, cultural productions and the public database, '[Runaway Slaves](#)'. During the 2014 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow, the UofG research inspired and supported *Emancipation Acts*, a series of live street performances about Glasgow's slave trade legacy.

'Runaway Slaves' provoked extensive interest [5.1] by demonstrating the historical presence of enslaved individuals in the UK, through advertisements of the time attempting to reclaim human 'property'. BBC Radio featured it on [10<sup>th</sup> October](#) and [16<sup>th</sup> November](#) 2016, [28<sup>th</sup> May](#) 2017, and [1<sup>st</sup> June](#) 2018 and it was covered widely, for example in the [Sun](#), the [National](#), the [New York Times](#), the [Scotsman](#), [Quartz](#) and [STV](#). The [Daily Mail](#) called it 'shocking'; the Scottish Daily Express 'harrowing', the [Herald](#) 'one of the darkest episodes of Scotland's past ... airbrushed from history'. The [Washington Post](#) described the 'cruelty of the genteel'. Tweets by UofG and the Leverhulme Trust launching the website and database received 170,000 impressions during the first month alone, including a retweet by US civil rights leader Rev. Jesse Jackson. In that same period, Runaway Slaves received 6,450,000 hits, including 134,687 unique visitors and a total of 273,646 visits – showing extensive use by repeat visitors.

#### 4.2 Inspiring and supporting cultural and educational creations

The Runaway Slaves database inspired artistic outputs which further deepened the shift in public understanding. For example, May Sumbwanyambe created *An Educated Man* for the National Theatre of Scotland, and radio play *The Trial of Joseph Knight*, broadcast [12<sup>th</sup> July](#) 2018, with Newman and Mullen as historical consultants. Sumbwanyambe commented [5.2]:

*I cannot overstate the value of the contributions that Professor Simon Newman, Dr Stephen Mullen and their runaway slave project ... have made in the successful creation of these works ... their expertise has given [these] projects significant historical authority.*



Figure 1: Poster for 1745, written by Morayo Akandé and directed by Gordon Napier.

A highly successful short film, *1745* (Figure 1), was created by Moyo and Morayo Akandé, inspired by the Runaway Slaves project. Morayo Akandé stated [5.3]:

*After watching '1745' students and audiences re-think their pre-conceptions about black history in Scotland... The database ... is a vital resource. It has given a voice to hundreds of forgotten runaway slaves in Britain.*

[1745](#) gained national and international recognition. Morayo Akandé won Best Screenwriting Award, UnderWire Festival (2017), and Best Short Film Award at the Africa International Film Festival (2017) [5.4]. The film was a finalist at a further seven film festivals in Britain, the USA and the Netherlands. The Folger Library and National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC), Washington, DC, hosted a screening which was, according to the Folger's director [5.5], 'particularly important for Americans who tend to think of the history of enslaved peoples using a North American or Caribbean lens'.

The Director of the NMAAHC Director [5.6] added that Runaway Slaves ‘... *has been a central component to enhancing our own understanding of the history and presence of enslaved people in the British Isles at the NMAAHC. This work and the research that underpins it will be crucial for us as we work ... on the history of slavery and the making of the modern world.*

With slavery usually taught as something that happened elsewhere while Britons enacted abolition, the UofG researchers, with artist Warren Pleece, developed *Freedom Bound*, a graphic novel telling the story of runaway slaves in Scotland. Each of Scotland’s 367 state secondary schools was issued with 35 copies of the novel for use in classrooms and libraries. Education Scotland’s [e-bulletin](#) links to *Freedom Bound* and associated teaching resources. Education Scotland’s Senior Education Officer [5.7] stated: ‘*Freedom Bound provides an innovative and accessible way to include The Slave Trade in their curriculum.*’ The President of the Scottish Association of History Teachers [5.8], commented that ‘*Freedom Bound is an excellent resource for teaching areas of the National 5 and Higher course, The Atlantic Slave Trade*’, adding it will ‘*have a huge impact*’ by engaging 13,000 pupils a year.



Figure 2: Panels from *Freedom Bound*

#### 4.3 Inspiring UK HEIs to address the legacies of slavery

The 2018 report [Slavery, Abolition and the University of Glasgow](#), and UofG’s full adoption of its recommendations for reparative justice, received extensive coverage in the [Guardian](#), [Herald](#), [Times](#), and the [Daily Mail](#). News media from the USA to [Brazil](#) to [Spain](#) commented on its significance. The topic was covered by podcast [PRI’s The World](#), attracting 2,500,000 listeners via iTunes, and in The Guardian ([18 Sept 2018](#) and [22 Sept](#)) and [Times Higher Education Supplement](#) (27 Sept). This placed pressure on other HEIs to follow UofG’s lead. As noted by the [Economist](#), 8<sup>th</sup> Feb 2020, ‘*it was Glasgow... that kicked things off, setting a high bar*’.

Newman and Mullen directly advised colleagues at Edinburgh, Bristol, Cambridge and Nottingham Universities exploring their own slavery-related histories. As Cambridge University’s Director of the Centre of African Studies [5.9] stated, the Report:

*... played a significant role in our thinking and deliberations over how our research should proceed, providing a pathbreaking model for initiatives at other UK universities. Dr Mullen’s presence as the keynote speaker ... in February 2019 was a pivotal moment for the progress of our own inquiry.*

Prof Sir Hilary Beckles (VC of the University of the West Indies, and a leading historian of slavery) wrote to the Principal of UofG that the University ‘*has risen up to provide the 21<sup>st</sup> century with the kind of visionary leadership that will make the world a much better place*’ [5.10]. This contribution was recognised by the [Times Higher Education University of the Year 2020](#).

The City of Glasgow is now also reflecting on its own historic connections to slavery, including statues and street names, and has funded Dr Mullen in a one-year research project entitled ‘The City of Glasgow and Transatlantic Slavery’, a direct lead-on from the UofG research.

**5. Sources to corroborate the impact**

- 5.1 Collated examples of media (newspaper) reactions to the research, the Slavery Report, and the signing of an MoU with UWI, corroborating impact on public awareness and discourse especially regarding Higher Education. Many more available on request [PDF]
- a. *Graphic novel examines history of slavery in Scotland*. STV, 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2018.
  - b. *Charting Edinburgh's slave trade history*. BBC Scotland, 31<sup>st</sup> October 2018
  - c. *My journey into Scotland's dark heart...Slavery*. The National, 4<sup>th</sup> November 2018
  - d. *Universities must follow Glasgow and own up to their role in the slave trade*. The Guardian, 18<sup>th</sup> September 2018
  - e. *Universities urged to follow Glasgow's lead on slave trade past*. Times Higher Education, 24 September 2018
  - f. *Why it's right to pay slavery reparations: Glasgow University should be applauded for signing an agreement with the University of the West Indies (editorial)*. The Scotsman, 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2019
  - g. *Glasgow University funds £20m programme of 'reparative justice' over historical links to slave trade*. The Independent, 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2019
  - h. *Glasgow University pledges millions for 'reparative justice' for slavery ties*. New York Times, 24 August 2019
  - i. *British Universities are examining how they benefited from slavery: Ties that bind*. The Economist, 8<sup>th</sup> February 2020.
- 5.2 Testimonial letter, playwright May Sumbwanyambe, corroborating the importance of the research and researchers in supporting her creative work. [PDF]
- 5.3 Testimonial letter, screenplay writer Morayo Akande, corroborating the importance of the research and researchers in supporting her creative work. [PDF]
- 5.4 1745 film, print from 1745 website corroborating that the film has been shown all over the world and was nominated for and received numerous awards. [PDF]
- 5.5 Testimonial letter, Director of Folger Shakespeare Library, corroborating the impact of the research and engagement of Prof Newman and his creative partners in changing the organisation's thinking [PDF]
- 5.6 Testimonial letter, Curator at the National Museum of African American History and Culture, Smithsonian, Washington DC, detailing how the Runaway Slaves research and cultural outputs has changed the NMAAHC's understanding [PDF]
- 5.7 Testimonial email, Senior Education Officer, Education Scotland, on the value of *Freedom Bound* as a resource for schools-level teaching [PDF]
- 5.8 Testimonial letter, Chair of Scottish Association of the Teachers of History, commenting on the value of *Freedom Bound* as a school teaching resource [PDF]
- 5.9 Testimonial letter, Director of the Centre of African Studies, University of Cambridge, on the value of the research and engagement with the researchers, including a keynote by Stephen Mullen, for his University's thinking on addressing their own legacies of slavery [PDF]
- 5.10 Email from Prof Sir Hilary Beckles, VC of University of West Indies, with attached testimonial letter, stating his view of the significance of UofG's research to changing discourse within Higher Education [PDF]