

Zara Buckle

“Remembering Slavery”

My contribution to this creative session is a photo I took of a well-known statue which is immediately associated with Bremen. I consciously decided not to take the bronze figures of the donkey, dog, cat and hen, but of their shadows. For me this symbolises that every town or city has a dark, shadowy past and Bremen is no exception.

Remembering Slavery



We all know that Bremen has been very well-known for its trading traditions, which spans over centuries. Bremen has been involved in transatlantic trading in cotton, sugar, coffee, coco and tea, in which it was even proud of the international role the then modern sugar factories played. However, nobody seems to commemorate the fact that without the labour of the enslaved black people on the plantations, neither sugar, nor cotton, tobacco, rice or rum could ever have been produced. In fact nobody even seems to realise where these products came from until the connection between Bremen and its involved trading in so-called colonial goods is made apparent.

This is however, not just an isolated incident of ignorance found in Bremen. Schools in England are no different to schools in Bremen, where the topics of slavery, transatlantic trading of slaves and the plantation economies in the Americas are if at all, only a marginal part of the school curriculum. I can remember being taught about the trade triangle and the abolition of slavery, however the emphasis was always on America and the role that Britain played was either played down in comparison to the evil Americans or simply brushed under the carpet. The role that Britain actually played was first brought to my attention at the University of Bremen.

Therefore, we cannot and should not simply erase slavery which is indicated in the gaps and displacements which become socially accepted in cultural memory. Instead we have to stand up and accept responsibility without shifting the blame onto others and remember slavery. Gail Low concludes her article by stating “it must mean that Britain cannot simply displace slavery – its history and legacy – on to some other space and some other time” and whilst I fully agree with her and support her argument, it also applies to all other countries that were directly involved in the transatlantic trading of slaves, as well as those, such as Bremen who were supporting this by trading colonial goods.