

## **York Museums Trust's Black Lives Matter Statements 2020-21**

### **June 2021 Statement**

More than a year has passed since the death of George Floyd. We joined many other organisations in making a statement of intent to: challenge and change the way we think as an organisation; to rigorously examine the stories we tell and to give a voice to those which have been dismissed or hidden. This statement was the first step at the beginning of the significant culture change we hope to make.

#### **Challenge and Change the way we think as an Organisation:**

Our second step was to look and to listen.

Trustees met virtually with managers to assess the priorities for internal cultural change. All staff were asked to share their thoughts and experiences in an anonymous Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Survey. The wider management team participated in EDI Training, with follow up sessions looking at how the training affected them and how new ways of working could begin to reshape old ways of thinking. We joined with local group Speak Up Diversity to support their ambition to make York an anti-racist city.

The knowledge learnt and experiences shared set the agenda for our EDI Roadmap which will be our guide as we begin to implement change. An EDI Change Group will put in place new initiatives, such as Safe Space conversations for anyone with protected characteristics to share their views with senior managers. All staff will be given EDI training, with further Active Bystander and Cultural Awareness training planned in the coming months.

#### **To rigorously examine the stories we tell**

We are changing how we work with communities and audiences to help us share new perspectives and lived experiences through the objects, buildings and gardens in our care and the exhibitions and events we create.

An example of this is a research project initiated by YMT to address the representation of race and Empire in York and North Yorkshire, in partnership with York Civic Trust and Ryedale Folk Museum. This, and future research projects like it, will help us reassess and reinterpret our collections to offer fresh insight and context.

#### **To give a voice to those which have been dismissed or hidden**

We are committed to challenging previous ways of thinking and provoking debate about the issues that affect so many people every day. To do this, we need to give a platform to those hidden histories and create new narratives by listening to those which have previously been ignored. To ensure this becomes embedded in everything we do, we have included diversity and inclusion in our governance process. The Takeovers of our Twitter accounts by a diverse range of organisations has already helped raise awareness of issues affecting different communities in York today.

This is just the beginning of our journey as we challenge ourselves to actively seek out ways to make sure we continue to stand in defiance against systemic racism and prejudice of any kind.

### **June 2020 Statement**

Following the death of George Floyd, York Museums Trust made a statement of solidarity and defiance against systemic racism and the part museums and galleries have to play in fighting this through questioning and provoking debate. For us this was a statement of intent, to challenge and change the way we think as an organisation, to rigorously examine the stories we tell and give a voice to those which have been dismissed or hidden.

As a Trust we had already started to do this through our programming of exhibitions and events in recent years, but we acknowledge we are just at the beginning of the significant culture change we hope to make.

Since making this statement we have set up a diversity group which will conduct a thorough audit led by our trustees. The findings of this will be used as a starting point to begin discussions and conversations with everyone who works at the Trust. It is only by involving everyone that we can create a shared vision that is then implemented in every single aspect of how we run the charity and share our collections.

The progress so far has been hampered by the fact that only a handful of the Trust's staff have been working for the last four months, with more than 80% furloughed as the Trust tries to survive financially during this incredibly challenging time. As more return, we will continue on this journey to make meaningful change within our organisation.

#blacklivesmatter