



# Exploring Narratives

VIEWS ON THE MEANING AND FUTURE OF  
THE STATUES OF SIR ROBERT CLAYTON AND  
THOMAS GUY

# INTRODUCTION

"...the concept of the monument is not neutral but has the power 'to stir emotions'".

Madge Dresser, [Set in Stone? Statues and Slavery in London](#)<sup>1</sup>

Statues linked to the colonial and imperial period of Britain's history have been controversial for decades, however recent events have reignited this debate. The 2020 protests in support of the Black Lives Matter movement in the aftermath of the murder of George Floyd – both in the UK and globally – were a catalyst for change. Statues became a strong focal point in the wider debate about the need to acknowledge and address the history of colonialism.

Many UK institutions, including independent health foundation Guy's & St Thomas' Foundation, chose to reflect again on the impact of racism and injustice on the people they serve, support and employ and, in turn, to review their policy and practice around owned statues of historical figures associated with the trade of enslaved people. The toppling of the Colston statue in Bristol demonstrates the strength of feeling on this issue and the resulting debate played out in the media highlighted the entrenched views held.

On 11 June 2020, Guy's & St Thomas' Foundation, King's College London and Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust published the following statement regarding statues of Sir Robert Clayton and Thomas Guy, which became part of the debate:

*Like many organisations in Britain, we know that we have a duty to address the legacy of colonialism, racism and slavery in our work. We absolutely recognise the public hurt and anger that is generated by the symbolism of public statues of historical figures associated with the slave trade in some way.*

*We have therefore decided to remove statues of Sir Robert Clayton and Thomas Guy from public view, and we look forward to engaging with and receiving guidance from the Mayor of London's Commission on each.*

*We see the pervasive and harmful effects of structural racism every day through our work. Black people have worse health outcomes, and this inequality is one of many ways racism permeates our society. We are fully committed to tackling racism, discrimination and inequality, and we stand in solidarity with our patients, students, colleagues and communities.*

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<sup>1</sup> Madge Dresser, Set in Stone? Statues and Slavery in London, *History Workshop Journal*, Volume 64, Issue 1, Autumn 2007, Pages 162-199, <https://doi.org/10.1093/hwj/dbm032>

Xtend UK Ltd was commissioned by Guy's & St Thomas' Foundation (Guy's & St Thomas' Charity at the time of this commission) as owners of the two statues, to undertake an independent consultation to help support deliberations on their future.

David Bryan MBA FRSA led the consultation. David has 25 years' experience in senior management within the voluntary and public sectors. His varied career includes work in academia, lecturing at Goldsmiths, London South Bank University and Birkbeck among others. His consultancy work covers a wide range of projects across the public sector, including change management, community engagement, and equality and diversity.

Dr Samina Zahir led on the data gathering. Dr Zahir has over 20 years of experience in research and consultancy, working with communities, arts organisations, creative industries, artists and development agencies. She draws together her academic training with her experience as a creative facilitator and has worked with clients including Arts Council England and British Council.

The consultation took the form of a conversation with many voices about what the statues represent to people within the communities the Foundation serves. It deliberately sought to engage as wide a constituency as possible to reflect the diversity of communities in Lambeth and Southwark, where the two statues are located.

The two listed statues are part of a large arts and heritage collection owned by the Foundation. They became part of the growing national debate on structural racism and the legacies of the enslavement of people through the transatlantic slave trade.

The statues debate includes questions about how history is written; personal and national responsibilities; the validity of the 'of the time' reasoning and how individuals who were connected with the enslavement of people are commemorated. The consultation explored each of these points, seeking views from a wide range of local stakeholders, to inform this report's recommendations.

## ABOUT THOMAS GUY AND SIR ROBERT CLAYTON

In parallel with the commissioning of this consultation, Guy's & St Thomas' Foundation also commissioned a comprehensive research project from King's College London, to understand and contextualise the histories of Thomas Guy and Sir Robert Clayton.

Reproduced below is the executive summary of the piece. The full research is available as a separate publication entitled *Thomas Guy, Sir Robert Clayton and Our Shared Colonial Past: Sources, Context, Connections*. The findings from this in-depth research informed the lines of questioning in this consultation, and we recommend it is read alongside this report.

Summary of the historical research:

- The report reflects a research project carried out in August and September 2020 and commissioned by Guy's & St Thomas' Foundation to better understand the connections of notable benefactors to the transatlantic trade in enslaved people.
- Research explored the inventory of archival resources and existing historiography. While the global Covid-19 pandemic made it impossible to conduct in-person archival research, the researchers made use of digitized primary sources and secondary literature. The work has been peer reviewed by representatives from Black Cultural Archives and the Legacies of British Slave-Ownership project at University College London.
- Sir Robert Clayton served as president of St Thomas' Hospital from 1692 till his death in 1707. During this time, he was involved in the rebuilding efforts and donated money to this cause.
- Thomas Guy served as a governor of St Thomas' from 1704, and was a regular member of the Grand Committee of the hospital until his death. He donated to the rebuilding of St Thomas' and generally to the institution as well. Guy began the process to establish his own hospital in 1721, purchasing property and erecting buildings. He laid out the means for the hospital to run in detail in his will.
- For men of their position and wealth in London, it was normal for Guy and Clayton to be involved in charitable endeavours. For the eighteenth century, both Clayton and Guy fit this profile of charitable gentlemen, fulfilling the expectations of their class. Whilst Clayton was not unusual in his charitable work and donations, he put in great effort to his work at St Thomas', as did Guy.
- Sir Robert Clayton had direct connections to the transatlantic slave trade, the plantations business, and English colonialism. Beginning in 1658 he owned land in Bermuda, and maintained control over his plantation there until at least the 1690s. He was a principal member of the slave trading corporation the Royal African Company (RAC) from 1672 to 1681. The RAC transported approximately 44,000 African women, men, and children across the Atlantic between the dates Clayton was a member.
- Over the course of two decades between 1672 and 1692 Clayton was accumulating interest on loans made to clients of his banking firm using capital reinvested from his RAC dividends. These interest payments would have had a multiplier effect on the capital he had initially generated through his RAC investments, further building his fortune. In this way, it is highly probable that wealth from the slave and

plantations trades found its way indirectly into the rebuilding of St Thomas' Hospital.

- Guy maintained a large financial stake in the South Sea Company, a corporation that transported 15,901 enslaved Africans across the Atlantic (with 12,864 disembarked) between the years that he was an investor. His £45,500 of invested capital in South Sea stock (a fortune in 1720, and worth approximately £96.6 million in 2020 values) helped to finance the SSC's slave trade and its colonial aspirations from 1711 to 1720. It was this initial investment, which appreciated over time to be worth around £200,000 during the financial bubble of 1720 (approximately £424.7 million in 2020 values) that formed the endowment for Guy's Hospital.
- There is a need to challenge the common perception that those involved with slave trading, such as Guy and Clayton, were just 'men of their times'. While it is true that Guy and Clayton were not exceptional in their investments in slave trading companies such as the RAC and SSC (wealthy men, and some women, from across the social spectrum invested in such companies), there were also contemporaries of Guy and Clayton who critiqued the slave trade and slavery on moral grounds. As MPs Guy and Clayton had a platform which they could have used to speak out as others did, but they did not.
- Like many British institutions with a history that stretches back to the early modern period (c.1500-1800), St Thomas' Hospital is an organisation with a deep-seated relationship to England's colonial expansion and the transatlantic slave trade. From 1561 to 1881 there were 31 presidents of St Thomas' Hospital. 22 of these men (roughly two-thirds) were involved in English overseas expansion at some point in their careers. 11 (roughly one-third) had direct links to the transatlantic slave trade and the commerce in slave-grown commodities (e.g. sugar, tobacco, and cotton).

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This independent consultation set out to explore views on the statues of Sir Robert Clayton and Thomas Guy, particularly engaging those stakeholders who are most directly impacted by them – from local residents and community groups to staff at Guy’s and St Thomas’ NHS Foundation Trust and staff and students at King’s College London.

We were committed to engaging a range of voices, to avoid the dominance of only some groupings or communities but instead encourage less-represented voices to be heard. While the pandemic undermined our efforts to undertake even socially distanced conversations, those we managed to engage with were very interested and had strong opinions.

The findings are drawn from scoping interviews with experts, group discussions with over 100 people and in-depth one-to-ones with 30 people. The group discussions and in-depth interviews in particular provided us with varied, rich and nuanced responses, and have formed the core of our analysis and basis for our recommendations. In addition, over 3,000 people responded to an online survey.

It is clear that the statues debate is highly emotive and throughout the consultation views were expressed at all points along a spectrum from destruction of the statues to maintaining the status quo.

Both the in-depth interviews and discussions and the online survey show that there is no ‘one’ view on the statues. As such, the consultation serves to highlight the importance of identifying a balanced path forward on an issue that has divided people.

We have, however, been able to draw important conclusions from the huge range of responses we received and a number of key themes have emerged.

For almost all the respondents, the statues represent more than just the figurative portrayal of an individual; for many people they are about identity and whose stories are being told. There is a growing belief that history has to be ‘decolonised’, not told purely from the view of the victor, and challenging incomplete tales of history that statues like these have come to embody.

When given time for in-depth discussion, many respondents expressed not wanting the statues to represent a ‘celebration’ of the two figures, or be placed in a prominent position. Conversely, they did not feel they should be removed or hidden either. In

addition, a clear commonality across comments was a desire for the full facts of each man's life to be more widely known.

In relation to the central question about whether to move the statues, based on what we heard, we recommend that:

1. The statue of Thomas Guy should be relocated to a less prominent location on the campus at London Bridge. Information about how he made his wealth, in particular his investments in a company whose profits relied on the trade of enslaved people, must be made public knowledge both at the relocation site and in all related media.
2. The statue of Sir Robert Clayton does not need to be moved as it is already in a less prominent location. But the full story of how he made his wealth and his involvement in the trade in enslaved people through his work with the Royal African Company needs to be told in new interpretation and in all related media.

Drawing on the wealth of engagement and feedback we received, we have also made a series of further recommendations for consideration.

These actions are not about undoing historic wrongs but an important opportunity to revisit, reframe and to change the narrative.

# RESEARCH APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

## CONTEXT

The consultation commissioned by Guy's & St Thomas' Foundation took place from August 2020 through to December 2020.

Guy's & St Thomas' Foundation owns the statues. The Foundation is working with King's College London and Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust, as Clayton's statue is located at St Thomas' Hospital and Guy's is on the university's campus. The statues sit within the boroughs of Lambeth and Southwark and the respective local authorities are therefore responsible for planning decisions.

## APPROACH

Initially, the objective was to consult on a range of options around the future of the two statues, such as whether they should be moved, kept in place or have text or artwork added.

However, as the work began it became apparent that we had a politically, socially and culturally sensitive set of issues to navigate. We therefore sought to design processes that opened up conversations and embraced wider considerations and themes that are intrinsically linked to the statues.

We also drew upon the independent historical research on Sir Robert Clayton, Thomas Guy and the social and political context during their lifetimes. This provided a factual basis to underpin the engagement processes.

There were four elements to the consultation:

1. Initial scoping interviews with experts in the field
2. One-to-one interviews with a range of partners/ stakeholders
3. Group discussions, including roundtables
4. Online questionnaire (with two options, shorter or longer)

We chose these methods to ensure we had the opportunity for both breadth and depth of consultation. Face-to-face workshops and one-to-one interviews are typically considered a prerequisite when dealing with challenging and contentious issues as they enable individuals to work through their thoughts and biases safely in a facilitated space. Participants can be given more detailed information and context to inform their responses



and they often find it useful to have their views enriched and safely challenged by others. Our aim was to work with all core stakeholders, particularly focussing on engaging individuals who are less likely to complete an online survey or take part in consultation.

In addition, an online survey allows a wide spread of people, particularly those with limited time available, to engage with the consultation, and can provide useful quantitative data to complement the more in-depth qualitative feedback.

The consultation approach, access and format were, of course, greatly impacted and restricted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **1. INITIAL SCOPING INTERVIEWS WITH EXPERTS IN THE FIELD**

We held conversations with academics, museum directors, senior officers from local government, archivists and charity workers – to ask their advice on framing the questions, their approach and the themes that should be considered.

These conversations helped to identify commonality and highlighted the most suitable questions to ask and the most appropriate terms and phraseology.

## **2. ONE-TO-ONE INTERVIEWS WITH A RANGE OF PARTNERS / STAKEHOLDERS**

One-to-one interviews using a structured topic guide were held with a cross-section of individuals from:

- King's College London
- Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust
- Local authorities:
  - Lambeth
  - Southwark
- Community groups and organisations

We had 30 one-to-one conversations, fewer than our original target of 50 interviews. This was partly because we had planned to ring-fence interviews for Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust staff. However, given the extreme pressures of the COVID-19 pandemic, we struggled to carry out as many interviews and discussion groups as planned within the time available for this piece.

### 3. GROUP DISCUSSIONS, INCLUDING ROUNDTABLES

Knowing that the lockdown was limiting access to public places, we sought to contact groups, either to join with their existing meetings or events or have a discrete session on the issue of the future of the statues. We aimed to carry out ten group discussions and completed this. In total, 107 people from community groups, King's College London and Guy's & St Thomas' Foundation attended the ten sessions and shared their views.

### 4. ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE

We produced an online questionnaire using SurveyMonkey, an independent and accessible platform that is commonly used for surveys, consultations and research. We aimed to reach a broad range of communities with links to the statues – for example those living near the two sites and key stakeholders such as staff at the Trust and King's College London staff and students.

Respondents had the option of completing either a shorter or longer version of the questionnaire and were offered a follow-on conversation if desired. We also created and distributed a paper flyer with five questions and a QR code link to the online questionnaire.

The survey was circulated to Guy's & St Thomas' Foundation staff and to King's College London staff and students.

Given the extreme pressures caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the survey was not circulated within Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust in the way originally intended. While short of our target, we received over 80 responses to the questionnaire from within the Trust.

Our aim was to gather approximately 350 responses to the shorter survey with an additional 250 responses to the longer survey. However, the survey was picked up on Twitter, received national coverage and was shared extensively by an organisation called Save Our Statues with its supporters. As a result, the number of responses was far higher than anticipated. In total, we received just under 3,200 responses (3,197), with 958 completing the longer survey.

# RESULTS AND FINDINGS

The statues debate is highly emotive and voices sit across the spectrum. Throughout the consultation views were expressed at all points along a spectrum – from destruction of the statues to maintaining the status quo – and many respondents felt very passionate about the issue.

There were a number of clear themes that we have been able to pull out from the feedback we received and broad agreement about many topics that were discussed. Where there are stark differences of opinion and areas of contention, we have highlighted that.

## GROUP DISCUSSIONS AND 1:1 INTERVIEWS

In total we held in-depth discussions with nearly 150 people from a wide range of stakeholder groups – through 30 one-to-one interviews and ten group sessions and roundtables. These group discussions and interviews provided a rich opportunity to gather insight; participants were able to work through a range of topics in a safe space, considering important contextual information and discussing their views in a facilitated way.

**In general, this rich, qualitative data is essential for consultations on such complex topics as people’s instinctive answers to surveys can differ quite considerably to their views when they are given more information and the opportunity to reflect. It also enabled us to engage with traditionally less-represented groups who may be less likely to complete a survey.**

These discussions provided us with varied, rich and nuanced responses, and have formed the core of our analysis and basis for our recommendations.

We have gathered a reflective sample of the verbatim comments we were given under relevant themes:

## LOCATION OF THE STATUES

“...it's kind of hard sometimes when you think about it, um, cuz in history, those kind of things were acceptable then. So, if you're growing up as a child and that's all that's around you, you can understand why he adopted those ideas but those ideas don't have any place in today's society. So, um, **I don't feel like it should be placed in a place of importance such as a hospital.** Maybe can keep as like history but I don't think if it's a statue to be like looked up to and praised, I don't feel like that's the best thing to have. But um, yeah that's just my opinion.”

“It'd be good if they can leave it, and **maybe put history beside it to make people understand because St Thomas' Hospital is a hospital that I really love**, that's where I had my second baby, and the treatment they gave there is really good.”

“**I was in favour of the statues remaining, with a really positive and uplifting write up going along with it** to demonstrate other people, the people that were not named, that did have names and how, through them the wealth was acquired to be able to build even St Thomas', I just think that something like that should be picked up.”

“I don't need a physical object in front of me, for me to have conversations about what are we going to do to begin the process of repair, **I don't need a statue**. I don't see why we have to have a monument to remind us of the atrocities that we went through”

“Deciding to move them. It's, it's a choice and it's a choice saying that we think that and **there are aspects of these people's past that we shouldn't celebrate**, you know they're literally on a pedestal.”

“I think I'm totally moving [them] to [a] museum just because that feels like I'm, you know, [it's] a good opportunity to really explain the history because you still want to be doing something with them and have good information about their past. ... People really need to know about what happened at the time, etc. ... **leaving them, it just doesn't feel, with just an explanation on the side or whatever - it doesn't feel appropriate anymore.**”

“**I do agree that just leaving them there as they are at the moment is not an option** ... if you move them to a different place, you miss a bit of opportunity of having the conversation in the place where it is now, and possibly reaching people who wouldn't be going to a museum to find out about it ...I'm quite agnostic as long as they don't just stay there as they are right now”

“**I don't think they should be where they are, especially the one in Guy's because as soon as you walk in, that's the first thing you see** ... this is supposed to be someone who [is idolized] or is like a really big symbol in the university or especially for the medicine school because literally, he's so linked to it.”

“**I'm actually on campus today and I think the statue should definitely be kept on campus and I think actually having it**, keeping the statue in a place where you can actually explore who Thomas Guy was in a more in depth way rather than just seeing a statue which is a surface level.”

“**If the statues are kept where they are, it honestly reads that King's is apathetic to change**. We are not proposing that the statues be blown up or chopped into pieces or thrown into the sea, we're just asking them to be presented differently.”

## EDUCATION AND INTERPRETATION

"I think it intrigues me, like, it's very interesting especially when it has the dates worked in and has some information on it **I find it really curious. I'm very intrigued to know about it.**"

"...**if it's history, you must tell all the stories of this hospital, it's not because you gave money that you did any more.** I get that the money was important for, just for the hospital to be built, and to be functional, but that's not the only story that must be remembered. You know, so it's like have a statue of everyone that's been fighting this year to save people, like, erect thousands of statues aside this guy's, these people's."

"**I find it really frustrating and difficult to look at those individuals through the lens of today.** What I can do is to say, okay, we have to remember that there is a story behind these individuals. And we have to ensure that there is a balance in those stories in terms of one part, they made their money, but more importantly, what their legacy will be."

"...**if they are kept or put somewhere else, whether you could put sort of an explanation under it,** you know, saying the context of it and why at the time, it was more acceptable than it is today."

"**Guy and Clayton were totally different people, Clayton was heavily involved in the slave trade, he just gave a bit of money for a bit of an extension.** Whereas Guy actually founded Guy's, he founded it with the intention of treating incurables, other London hospitals, like St Thomas' would not take a whole category of patients, and he founded Guy's specifically to treat those patients that others would not."

"...**society should know about how the wealth in this country was obtained. And all of us on this call here have gained indirectly from that the wealth and the application of that over two centuries.** And so it has been hidden, I think and not brought forward and the right use of the statues, leaving aside the differences in the moment, the right use of the statues is to educate the population."

"It's the complexities I suppose **acknowledging the histories, and it's intertwined with the history of this country and of London,** trying to find a balance of viewpoints and where some people feel, you know, positive about a statue that they had their picture taken in front of when they got their degree from King's versus somebody who is an ancestor of people who were exploited in this process and how you balance those two points of view."

"I also just wanted to pick up on the point around distance and just kind of build on that in terms of more thinking about transparency and, you know, whatever we decide to do with the statues. **We shouldn't shy away from our connections and we should find a way to talk about them that is accurate and honest and transparent,** regardless of what happens over the next few months."

“Increase the narrative, **be open and honest about their involvement.**”

“You **can’t rip up history, but you can enrich it.**”

“There should be re-writing, complementing, **adding more to the narrative. Diversifying through art, conversations.**”

“We shouldn’t be celebrating those whose actions we would generally condemn. We should expose the entire story, **who else was part of their story. Riches came at a cost, what else about them?**”

## FUTURE

“I tried to draw the symbol for equality [statue included the ‘scales of justice’], there, if there is equality for all humans, no matter your colour, no matter your ethnicity. **No matter, all the dividing factors, then there’ll be more happiness**”

“I’ve been around a lot of privileged people who are steeped in this institutionalised racism and feeling protected. And I don’t want to see these people in front of my eyes anymore. **I don’t want to see it. I don’t want to see a plaque that keeps on what they’ve done.**”

“**There’s no harm in creating something new, creating a new energy, writing our own story.** You know, why do we have to latch on to this story when we have our story?”

“**I think that that whole statue thing, it really needs to be thought of as a pivot** to maybe redirect and think about where you want to go as an institution.”

“I think that there does need to be more ethical investments and just looking at what are they doing with their endowments, now, **what steps can we do now really to make things better, and head in the right direction**”

“Clayton and Guy may have been typical of the time, but that is not really relevant to whether or not we keep the statues up now. **It is what the statues symbolise to people today that matters, and for many people they symbolise the wealth generated from the suffering and death of African and other slaves.**”

## ONLINE SURVEY

As referenced above, while our initial aim was to gather approximately 600 responses to the survey (350 responses to the shorter survey and 250 to the longer survey) from members of our local communities, extensive coverage and promotion led to more than 3,000 responses from across the UK.

**In particular, a national organisation called Save Our Statues shared the survey with its supporters. Save Our Statues describes its mission as “protect[ing] Great Britain’s exceptional and irreplaceable historical and cultural heritage.” We have included the survey results as it was a core element of the consultation and the results reflect the strong views held by different groups about the future of these and other statues. However, the data must be read within the context that one group with a specific viewpoint likely dominated the responses.**

The survey had 28 questions. Below are just some of the data. We endeavoured to prompt respondents to think about the broader context behind and related to the statues.

Of the 3,197 respondents to the online survey, 958 people completed a longer form version and many used free-text space to provide detailed comments, with examples shared below.

Respondent categories were self-reported and we would recommend the following respondent figures are read with a degree of caution:

- 86 respondents said that they were from the Trust
- 916 respondents said that they were from the local community
- 112 respondents said that they were from the charity sector
- 368 respondents said that they were from King’s College London
- 1,115 respondents said ‘other’

To begin, respondents were asked to select a few words that evoked how they felt about the statues and what they represented. The five most selected words and phrases were:

**Heritage                  Philanthropy                  British                  Good deeds                  Legacy**

This top five was consistent across respondent categories. However, the small percentage who identified as having a connection with King’s College London (368 respondents) selected a very different set of terms:

**Colonial                  Slave Trade                  Slavery                  Heritage                  Empire**

**This initial divergence serves to illustrate the divergent views that are present in the current public debates on the future of such statues.**

The same trend was notable in a number of other questions.

When asked “If a person uses ‘bad money’ for good things, is it OK?” 63% of respondents overall answered ‘Yes’ and 14% said ‘No’. There is a difference in sentiment between groups, with nearly half (47%) of respondents who self-identified as affiliated with King’s College London answering ‘No’.

In answer to the question “Should we give honour, through statues, to people who invested their money in enslaved people?” 66% of respondents overall answered ‘Yes’ and 17% said ‘No’. In contrast, only 21% of respondents from King’s College London said ‘Yes’ and 63% said ‘No’.

**Some questions, however, had highly consistent answers across respondent groups, with 98% believing that good work should be recognised and 85% acknowledging the role of colonisation and the trade in enslaved people in fuelling the British economy. Comparatively few people (11%) believe the statues tell us nothing about the past.**

On the statues separately, 73% of respondents felt the statue of Sir Robert Clayton should remain in place and 75% felt the statute of Thomas Guy should be kept in place. Virtually all respondents who felt the statues should be removed completely indicated an affiliation to King’s College London. Once again, the data must be read within the context that a single group likely dominated the survey responses.

Alongside these, more open questions helped us gather greater nuance and rich insight into people’s perspectives and sentiments.

A key question from the survey was ‘**How do statues, in public places, shape your view of history?**’ We had hundreds of responses and the following is a small but illustrative sample.

*‘They tell us who is important, who we should admire and respect’*

*‘They show who/what we choose to remember. They symbolise what and who is celebrated.’*

*‘They are a physical reminder of important people and events’*

*‘They define who we consider important. Where are our statues to the people who built up those hospitals over the years through hard work, not just the people who gave money?’*

*‘That we should honour historic figures who were complex but did good things, like founding hospitals, for which we should be grateful.’*

*‘They act as a reminder of all our history, both the good and the not so good elements.’*

*‘They tell me who my society values and approves of. This has ramifications for what values we will continue to praise, and which types of people we will continue to celebrate.’*

*‘They should be contextualised further and the narrative should be shifted towards statues as symbols of neutral history, not of veneration.’*



- 'By highlighting the good they did and how they helped society'*
- 'They serve as a reminder of the past, both good and bad and should be left alone!!'*
- 'Make me proud to be British'*
- 'History written by the victors'*
- 'Provides a sense of security and reassuring, solidity, reminds us of the great deeds and struggles of people.'*
- 'It makes people have a talking point and to learn more about their surroundings and community of times gone by. History and [culture] needs to be around us not hidden in museums'*
- 'They encourage reflection & awareness'*
- 'They provide cultural attachment to the past and help us identify how far we have progressed'*
- 'I feel that the people depicted must have been held in high esteem at that time'*
- 'They suggest that this person was important to some group at some point, this person may have been a "great man" but that doesn't necessarily mean that they were a "good man"'*
- 'They remind us of the misfortunes of poor British people living centuries ago, with little income and no health care. Statues like this make us proud of the people whose charity helped to ease their pain and suffering.'*
- 'They are part of our history and we cannot view history purely on our current views'*
- 'As a woman, as most of the statues are of men, they represent male narcissism and ego. They hurt black people but also women as we were not represented.'*
- 'You would assume they did nothing wrong and were well respected'*
- 'They do not shape my view as they do not reflect anyone from my historical past. They mean nothing to me I pass them by every day without a glance.'*
- 'They do tend to focus specifically on the good, and as a result they effectively ignore any negative aspects of the individual'*
- 'Reminders of our past good, bad or ugly. Above all they are works of art and should be preserved for posterity'*

# CONCLUSION

The statues debate is highly emotive and during the consultation views were expressed at all points along a spectrum – from destruction of the statues to maintaining the status quo.

We have, however, been able to draw important conclusions from the huge range of responses we received and a number of key themes emerged.

**Both the in-depth interviews and discussions and the online survey show that there is no ‘one’ view on the statues. As such, the consultation serves to highlight the importance of identifying a balanced path forward on a polarising issue.**

For almost all the respondents, statues represent more than just the figurative portrayal of an individual; they are seen as “reminders of important people” to be “admire[d] and respect[ed]” and for some, even praised “for the good they did”. For some respondents they engender feelings of “pride” while for others they reflect “narcissism and ego”. Some people explained that for them the statues symbolised the continued presence of structural racism in our society.

**Often, when given time for in-depth discussion, many respondents expressed not wanting the statues of Guy and Clayton to represent a ‘celebration’ of the two figures, or be placed in a prominent position. Conversely, they did not feel they should be removed or hidden either. In addition, a clear commonality across comments was a desire for the full facts of each man’s life to be more widely known.**

It is clear from the feedback gathered that for many people the statues are about identity and whose stories are being told. There is a growing belief that history has to be ‘decolonised’, not told purely from the view of the victor, and challenging incomplete tales of history that statues like these have come to embody.

*“For me, what matters is less the question of whether the statues remain or are removed than what happens next. There needs to be a serious and substantive effort to contextualise the actions of Guy and Clayton. This must include some measure of reparatory or restorative justice.”*

These actions are not about undoing historic wrongs but setting the landscape for building a shared and transparent civic responsibility. This is an important opportunity to revisit, reframe and to change the narrative.

Another key theme from the feedback we received was that we should be striving for a shared history, one that we can all call ours. As one survey respondent described:

*“Given our current values, and the importance of celebrating the diversity of the Guy’s & St Thomas’ community, it seems clear to me that these are not the people who we should be celebrating. Let us celebrate people who represent our values.”*

The work of organisations such as the Runnymede Trust, The Black Curriculum, Young Black Teachers Network UK and King’s College London, amongst others, to develop more inclusive history materials for schools is a positive step towards creating a shared history.

The need to move past Sir Robert Clayton and Thomas Guy and to recognise that the hospitals have been developed and sustained by countless people, not just those who funded them, was clear.

*“If they want to keep this guy, these people, these statues of these men there, then they should also have statues of all the NHS workers that have fought for this, you know, like if it’s history, you must tell all the stories of this hospital, it’s not because you gave money that you did any more. I get that the money was important for, just for the hospital to be built, and to be functional, but that’s not the only story that must be remembered. You know, so it’s like have a statue of everyone that’s been fighting this year to save people, like, erect thousands of statues aside this guy’s, these people’s.”*

Many King’s College London students argued that, as well as the statues themselves, the use of the names Guy and Clayton across the hospital and university estate should also be removed. They argue that a change of name will symbolise a departure from an endorsement of prominent benefactors and provide an opportunity to make a substantial difference with Black and minority ethnic communities.

Respondents highlighted that: *“the Foundation’s responsibility is to the past, present and the future; a responsibility for the past and to talk about the future - de-polarising and supporting long-term work of trust building – is important.”*

As another interviewee explained, *“it’s not just statues...if it’s done right, there’s an opportunity to talk about how you create community.”*

It is noted that Guy’s & St Thomas’ Foundation today focuses much of its investment in marginalised communities in Lambeth and Southwark, with many of the poor health outcomes it tackles being a result of the legacies of enslavement.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

While the initial brief was a consultation on the future of the two statues, as the work began it became apparent that we had a politically, socially and culturally sensitive issue to navigate.

Consequently, we have made a series of further recommendations for consideration. These include suggestions for how Guy's & St Thomas' Foundation can act as an ambassador and influencer for sustainable change that goes beyond the statues debate. Key learnings should also be shared with other stakeholders and organisations for them to consider.

## The statues

In relation to the central question about whether to move the statues, we recommend that:

- The statue of Thomas Guy should be relocated to a less prominent location on the campus at London Bridge. Information about how he made his wealth, in particular his investments in a company whose profits relied on the trade of enslaved people, must be made public knowledge both at the relocation site and in all related media.
- The statue of Sir Robert Clayton does not need to be moved as it is already in a less prominent location. But the full story of how he made his wealth and his involvement in the trade in enslaved people through his work with the Royal African Company needs to be told in new interpretation and in all related media.

## Wider considerations

During this consultation, we also heard suggestions that go wider than the question of the statues. They are shared here for consideration:

- The statues debate has opened the door for institutions to set their own principles for who to honour, put on a pedestal and memorialise. We suggest that Guy's & St Thomas' Foundation consider commissioning, as part of their collection, new artworks that are more representative of the local community, particularly celebrating individuals and groups who have made an outstanding contribution to the health of the local community. Some of the ideas were heard from the consultation included:
  - A frieze or visual portrayal of the people and communities who have made a positive contribution to the health of local people;

- A 'People's Choice' process for identifying individuals and groups who should be honoured;
  - The creation of a 'fourth plinth' in the space left by the relocation of the Thomas Guy statue, providing an opportunity to commission artists who work with the local community and who represent the values of Guy's & St Thomas' Foundation;
  - Guy's & St Thomas' Foundation could also consider opening its fine art and heritage collection to Black, Asian and South American artists to curate, creating a new exhibition that reflects 'unsung heroes' who have contributed to the local health landscape.
- The consultation and historical research have highlighted a number of wider issues that should be taken into consideration as part of the implementation of Guy's & St Thomas' Foundation's 'Diversity, Equity and Inclusion' (DEI) strategy. In particular, Guy's & St Thomas' Foundation should continue to work with other organisations and partners to champion traditionally underheard voices, whether that be through public art displays, educational materials or other workstreams that support the Foundation's objectives.

In addition, there are a number of points raised in this consultation that should be shared with stakeholders and other organisations who can effect change. In particular:

- Given the national interest in statues with incomplete histories, we see the potential for a symbol that informs the general public that there is more to the statue than meets the eye. This could be considered as part of the Mayor of London's Commission for 'Diversity in the Public Realm' and we recommend that Guy's & St Thomas' Foundation share this report with the Commission.
- There is great value in making the historical research on Thomas Guy and Sir Robert Clayton available to the public. It would be invaluable to have evidence that underscores the need for similar action by other institutions.
- Some suggested that relevant institutions consider gradually withdrawing the use of the names Guy and Clayton from public spaces, signs and site usage, following the identification of a range of social contributors.

We hope that this report will assist the Foundation's board to develop a shared understanding of the tensions surrounding the statues and positively contribute to decisions about the future of the statues, as well as the additional, related concerns that arose as part of the consultation process.