



Tuesday 10th August 2021

TOPIC: PETITION ABOUT THE TIGER BAY ARCHIVE/ THE HISTORICAL ARCHIVE OF THE ENDS

Dear Janet,

Good morning, and thank you for your letter that you forwarded from Yr Arglwydd Elis-Thomas AM of 6 November regarding Petition P-05-1086 to create a national museum to celebrate Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Welsh history.

I am writing today in response to Dafydd Elis-Thomas' letter sent last autumn. I apologise for my delay in response.

Thank you for your letter on 11th December 2021 regarding Petition P-05-1086 to create a national museum to celebrate Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Welsh history. It is good to hear from you on this matter. Please accept my delay in responding to you.

I agree that the history of our BAME communities is an integral part of the story of Wales. I both disagree and agree that these histories in this essential context require a collective effort from our cultural heritage bodies at both a national and local level, rather than by a single organisation for different reasons.

The focus on ensuring that museums and archives across Wales are able to survive the pandemic is extremely important. The pandemic has coincided with the 2021 census that will prove a higher BAME population across Wales than the 4% that has been given by the Office for National Statistics from the 2011 census. The pandemic does not negate the intergenerational forms of the pandemic that is institutional racism that BAME communities have experienced in Wales for hundreds of years.

I agree that there needs to be a collective approach towards the adequate implementation of representation of people in Wales of all races. I disagree that some of these narratives cannot be run by a particular organisation because of the heavily idiosyncratic nature of Tiger Bay and its history, much in the same way that e.g. Brixton is synonymous with Black culture in South London owing to its history, legacy, migration and settlement. By default, an institution located in South Cardiff, once the most busy dockland and the second largest dockland in the world (after New York City), which is home to Northern Europe's oldest continuous Black community, can say, run an institution that platforms and highlights this unique worldwide history of global importance.

The Tiger Bay Archive was created owing to a systemic lack of inclusion of Black

people and people of colour in archival collection and historiography in and of Wales. For example, an adequate implementation of the Race Relations 1968, its 2000 Amendment or the Equality Act would have seen these issues of racism, race, ethnicity, heritage, history and historiography “on the agenda” far more sooner than e.g. Amgueddfa Cenedlaethol Cymru’s 2020 BLM statement that was only written after the murder of George Floyd.

As such, its nature, historiography, research methodology as a Black and minority ethnic led project is an archive of monumental global significance, and offers opportunities to e.g. partner with international organisations such as the Chicago of Chicago to work exploring the work of Black anthropologist and sociologist St Clair Drake, who wrote his PhD on Racial Association of British docklands, with a pointed focus on Tiger Bay.

It was later to be housed at the Coal Exchange, but this is no longer possible. The archive has not been publicly accessible for most of my adult life. I am 27 years old and I have tried to see the archive for 11 years. I am one of millions of people who would benefit from Wales’ “richness and diversity of our cultural heritage” being protected and platformed in line with the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act, particularly around:

- A more equal Wales
- A Wales of cohesive communities
- A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language
- A globally responsible Wales

For instance, in 1891, Tiger Bay had the largest population of Welsh language speakers in Cardiff. Cardiff itself is a city that is 8.91% Welsh language speaking according to the ONS 2011 Census, and we need more opportunities to platform Welsh language history in the history of Cardiff.

My petition about Tiger Bay Archives directly concerns not only the BAME population of Wales, but specifically, the BAME population of Cardiff, which is currently 20% BAME according to StatsWales and, historically, home to the oldest continuous community of Black people in the United Kingdom. The singular focus on surviving the pandemic. 74% of the Amgueddfa Cenedlaethol staff population is White, 24% chose not to self-disclose their ethnicity, and just 2% are from minority ethnic backgrounds. In Cardiff alone, there are two museums and these museums do not reflect the racial and ethnic population of Wales. The archive is not publicly accessible, while it is stored in appropriate conditions in the care of professionally qualified staff. Amgueddfa Cenedlaethol, for example, is not the owner of the archive: but Glamorgan Archive is. There is a grey area between the institutionally racist nature of state-funded organisations in the representation of BAME communities, and the organisations that contemporarily exist have not given their due regard under the Race Relations Act Amendment or the Equality Act 2010 under their Public Sector Duty to represent the communities that are in Wales, both now and historically.

While writing this letter, the petitions committee confused my petition with another petition relating to BAME topics. This, combined with the long enduring

discrimination and unequal treatment on the basis of membership to the BAME groups arising from systems like the Welsh government, structures like the museums, or expectations that have been established demonstrations of why the archive needs to retain a heterogeneity and autonomy compared to the erasure of BAME heritage in Wales. The museum and heritage organisations in Wales have, to quote the Machperson report, represented a “collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin”.

The Archive has a unique epistemology and ontology that must categorically resist amalgamation into the same systemically and systematically organisations that necessitated not only its creation, but its ongoing existence. Working with local community groups and organisations, a permanent building for the archive in the area of Tiger Bay locating the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act, we can protect Wales’ heritage for future generations in working together.

Yours sincerely,

Yasmin