

ALISSANDRA CUMMINS INTERVIEW

Key:

EHdK: Dr Eve Hayes de Kalaf (Interviewer)

AC: Alissandra Cummins (Respondent)

Date/Location:

2nd March 2023. Barbados Museum & Historical Society, Garrison, Barbados.

EHdK 00:01 I'm here with Alissandra Cummins who is an art historian, educator and scholar and currently the director of the Barbados Museum and Historical Society. She's also the former president of the International Council of Museums and is currently president at the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience (ICSC). Thank you so much for agreeing to speak with me today. Let's start with a bit about your career. About what brought you to the museum. What is your background and your interests?

AC 00:01 My background is as an art historian and as a museum history scholar, if you like. And those would be the basis of my two degrees. But coming to the Barbados Museum, well that was very much a recruitment process. I was in the UK finishing up my art history degree at University of East Anglia and was faced - as someone who had received a scholarship from the government of Barbados - was faced with a decision as to what could my employment be, and I really didn't fancy the notion of becoming an art teacher. But that would have been the most applicable role. And so, I was very happy to be recruited while I was in the UK in the last six months of that programme by my former head teacher who said, are you interested in becoming a member of staff of the Barbados Museum? And that's where it all started. All my interviews were held in the UK. And my recruitment happened in the UK as a result of the direct interest of my head of the school, Dr Elsie Payne and other members of the board of the Barbados Museum and Historical Society.

EHdK 02:24 And your career has taken you to carry out some fascinating roles. You were the former chairperson of the UNESCO Executive Board from 2011 to 2013. And you've also been an integral...you have been central really to working in museums and pushing for greater collaboration, basically, across the Caribbean in the area of heritage studies. Can you tell me a bit about that?

AC 03:04 Well, how that all started was in doing my research for my master's on the history and development of Caribbean museums. I was at Leicester doing that degree. I came to realise in my studies that a major report had been written by the Museums Association in the UK in the 1930s. And that report, which was a Commonwealth-wide study of museums around the world, pointed out that where I could not find histories of many of the small museums or the national museums in the Caribbean anywhere else. That report contained

potted histories of museums or the main museums on most of the islands in the Caribbean. When I looked up the findings of the report, one of the ultimate findings was that island museums were the most...they regarded them as the most critical issue of isolation in the world. They were examining museums in Africa, museums in Asia, museums obviously in the UK itself. And this was the critical issue. The isolation of museum workers and museum institutions around the world was led off from the Caribbean and they're critical...This is the report on museums in the Commonwealth and in the British Empire. Their solution was that we should look at the sharing of resources including human resources amongst the small islands who would never have the resources to develop their own facilities and, therefore, recommended the formation of an Association of Caribbean Museums.

EHdK 05:36 And when was that association formed?

AC 05:39 Their report was in 1933. I didn't say that it was formed then, I said their report was 1933. The formation of the Museums Association in the Caribbean happened in 1987. After another report by UNESCO in 1973 which said the same thing again.

EHdK 06:07 I would be interested in hearing about the influence of the British, basically, over the dissemination of knowledge and how history was being narrated. And, obviously, I would assume, and I think that people listening to this would assume, that there was a very dominant colonial narrative and hugely Anglocentric and problematic ways in which that that history was being framed. So, can you tell me what you know about that era and talk me through the transformation?

AC 06:48 Okay. Well, you know, so for me in doing this research, I wanted to understand how this museum came to be. So, it was formed in 1933 but it came out of a long heritage of proposals and aspirations and ideas of museum development. And, of course, leading the fray were the actual creation of museums in Jamaica, Trinidad and Guyana. These were 19th century institutions that had come out of colonial developments and ideas. And they were linked in a number of different ways. The earliest museum motif was actually promoted by Governor William Reid in the 1838/39, early 1840s while he was in Bermuda. And what I don't think people really understand is when you look at what he's proposing, it's definitely...this is a governor who has come to the region and seen the way in which thousands of ex-enslaved people now have to earn a living. And a key component of that was both agricultural improvements as one way of making a living but also education. And he saw these early institutions as critical entities associated with libraries as well as schools as well as churches. And he thought to create opportunities for technical, at least initially, technical and scientific training that could help to promote education and industrial labouring relations amongst these people. So, when you look at when these museums were first created. His first legislation in Bermuda, it is an immediate response after emancipation. So many people around the world don't necessarily understand that museums were created in the immediate emancipation, post-emancipation era and as a result of needing to find ways to improve the conditions of formerly enslaved people. And that is something that really

hasn't evolved in people's imagination. Of course, it continued really to have that kind of necessity. Of course, there were other interests at hand. A number of the engagements in collection building were more about the curiosities and scientific interests of colonial subjects in the Caribbean who thought connections with the major institutions, the British Museum and others, in the intervening period after the formation. But a lot of it was also driven by the desire of the British Empire forming, you know, coming out of this era of emphasis on industrial development, the resources from the Caribbean, the sugar industry and what have you, having pushed and propelled the development of the Industrial Revolution in Britain and then, you know, into the period into the 19th century and beyond. And now needing to find other ways to help increase their economic development. And one of the key ways was the Great Exhibition in London in 1851 required that all of these small islands helped by collecting objects and putting them on exhibition. And that practice from 1851 into the 1870s, 1880s, 1890s and pretty much into 1924 was a key component of how these museums were created as a response. And helping to collect things to display.

EHdK 12:02 So museums, essentially, were a tool of empire.

AC 12:02 Museums were definitely a tool of empire and were used to extract both knowledge and artefacts primarily as a commercial enterprise. In other words, a lot of the exhibition, the international exhibitions, the world expos, were invested in by these colonies because they saw it as an opportunity to inform the broad public about the types and opportunities of these very mild, you know, now that they're no longer...they are happy communities of subjects. Very industrious who could be put to work in a kind of iniquitous continuation of the field labour, of the other industrial forms of labour, encouraging investment in those colonies, encouraging migration to those colonies through the various ways in which they exhibit themselves and their artefacts.

EHdK 13:20 Can you think of one specific exhibition or example from this museum, for example, that...?

AC 13:26 Well, remember I'm talking about a period that pre-exists this museum, so I don't have direct examples from this museum. If you look at the 1924 exhibition in London. I can't remember the name offhand, but it is it is accessible on the web. What you will see is that all of these small communities were encouraged by their governors to contribute. And from Barbados, it's a very interesting story...from Barbados you have the creation of exhibits by the Lady Gilbert Carter who was the wife of the governor and then her group of industrious ladies. But amongst them artists who contributed exhibits who literally designed, painted backdrops showing the, you know, the great white planter in his superb background backdrop against a tropical environment and the 1924 exhibition in London was a great enterprise amongst the various colonies. And one of the cohorts from Barbados was led by Lady Gilbert Carter, the wife of the governor Sir Gilbert Carter who created a whole, if you like, environment in which one was enthralled by both the tropical productions but also the beginnings of a nascent tourism experience. Come to the Caribbean, enjoy the bucolic

splendours of the Caribbean. And perhaps you could consider investing in the Caribbean as a result of these kinds of displays. So, it's a kind of colonially inspired exhibitionary practice and language that was being promoted with the exhibitions and the catalogues that were generated. And that would have been from, as I said, from 1851 and under.

EHdK 16:11 So when this museum was founded, what would you expect to see?

AC 16:17 It was an interesting question you asked because one of the key results of the report by Barber and Shepherd for the Museum's Association in 1933 was they found that while there was a lot of support and interest in museum-making there were very few professionally qualified curators, educators, even scientists accessible for these museums and therefore, they proposed...they ended up seeing the kind of efforts that were being made by communities but without guidance. The guidance that they offered was, museums are important education tools and you need to cover the geology of the island. Yes, you could talk a little bit about the history of the island but primarily, from the point of view, you were producing sugar, cocoa, coffee, whatever it is. And then you come down to the current times and you can be looking at A, B, C and D. So, it was very much...they very much sought to tie the development of these institutions in the Caribbean to a formula which seemed to them to best suit the needs of the population.

EHdK 17:46 Did that change at all in the build-up to the independence? Were there discussions that took place or was this a concern in any way?

AC 17:59 As in many different ways, people did not necessarily understand or comprehend that museums should in any way significantly change from the national narratives that had been promoted from Britain. You were part of the British Empire. Therefore, what you're presenting needed in some way to, if not comply with, at least complement what was the national narrative in Great Britain at the time. You understood your peripheral role as a colony. There were some discussions but not at the government level. What you see is the importance of the University College of the West Indies then the University of the West Indies based out of Mona in Jamaica. And it is in Jamaica that you see a first critical review through the efforts of Dr Elsa Goveia, a Guyanese historian based in Jamaica at the time who approached the issue of explaining whether we should be part of a Federation. The West Indies Federation, the archives you're going to look at...she was saying that people needed to have different ways of understanding the Federation. Some people, yes, could read about it in the newspapers or what have you but others needed to be shown what it meant. And it is her presentation of this history of the Caribbean in the Jamaica library that was part of the institution to make it use that discussion in 1959 which really set the stage for a completely different understanding and narrative as to what should be presented to the West Indian communities.

EHdK 20:20 I would like to hear about you now and your journey to the UK and that experience, particularly how the studies that you bring engaged in, and how you kind of utilised that both in your perspectives in terms of where you are now, in your career.

AC 20:45 I was happily studying art history at East Anglia and very much enjoying learning more, I should say, because I was very well schooled here. More I was enjoying studies about Flemish 15th century painting, Dutch 17th century painting, British 18th century landscape painting and seeing it purely through the eyes of someone who appreciated those artworks and really enjoyed learning more about those works. Particularly because I was in the UK and was able then to go and access directly the works that I was studying. Not just through the art history texts that I had previously encountered. I had seen work in Canada and the United States through family trips, and whatever, but this was a kind of opportunity to really live with the works in the various museums that I was visiting at that time, I, let me see, I had an internship or an attachment as they called it with the Museum of Mankind in London. And it was at that stage where I was working with their collections when I came to understand how misunderstood the Caribbean could be in that context. They had very, very important archaeological specimens but didn't really know the difference between Saint Thomas in Barbados, and Saint Thomas in the US Virgin Islands. It was that kind of dissonance that really first occasioned for me an understanding that perhaps not everybody fully understood what the Caribbean was about. And it was from that that I became much more critical in my assessment of how knowledge about the West Indies was being documented, presented, even just in catalogue cards in UK museums. So that kind of triggered my interest in where I should go next and developed my, as I said, lack of interest in being an art teacher to more an understanding of how institutions like this could, in fact, help better educate and fundamentally misunderstood stories. Both amongst our own population as well as in the UK. And that's why I went to look at the history and development of Caribbean museums and why I examined in depth a number of reports, a number of annual institutions but also because those documents were in Britain. They weren't in the Caribbean. So, it really again explained to you why you were, as a historian of museums or art history, completely separated from the source material that you would absolutely need to fundamentally understand what you're doing. The information about the development of a Museums Association for the Caribbean came as a result of both my research and comprehension of these missed opportunities over decades. You know, by the time I was working on my thesis, and at the same time working as an assistant director here at the Barbados Museum, I came to understand there was a need for, if you like...nobody was doing this. We had recognised this problem. We had recognised the need to be better linked. We have recognised that we need a closer association and communication amongst Caribbean museums. And it was at that same time that both UNESCO and the OAS, the Organization of American States, were beginning to demonstrate interest in better conditions for museums and heritage sites in the Caribbean and generated new reports that needed to be examined.

EHdK 25:47 Where did that interest emerge from?

AC 25:52 In the situation of UNESCO, it seems to me that it very much came out of an understanding that they had just helped the Santiago Round Table on Museums in South America and they had museums specialists from around the region but not one from the islands. And so, UNESCO, taking on board the results of that Round Table realised they needed to conduct surveys in the Caribbean.

EHdK 26:39 What decade are we talking about?

AC 26:41 The 1970s. The Santiago Round Table was 1971 or 1972 and the UNESCO report on museums in the Caribbean was 1973/74.

EHdK 27:00 What about the UK's involvement at that time?

AC 27:03 it had very much receded. Their involvement, if you like, was at that stage Caribbean governments were still...if there was interest in training, it happened two ways. You were still looking to the UK to send out professionals to work in Caribbean museums or with Caribbean museums. And you were still looking to the UK for directors, curators. I hadn't really thought of it this way. But that's where they were...they had already specified and in 1933 that we needed to send those trained people to the Caribbean. It was still happening in 1973. So, there was that. But at the same time, there was an acknowledgment that they needed to extend training to West Indians who were prepared to find the money or be supported to attend UK institutions to receive this training. Training in art history, training in museum administration and curatorship. There were some individuals who were sent to the UK for that, including one of my predecessors who would be Neville Carmel. He was a lawyer. He was in the UK training in the 1960s, late 1950s, 1960s. So that was where that investment came from. And then it was 10 years later. So, after his death in 1973, or not quite 10 years, but I then was sent for my training with a UNESCO grant to the UK because there was a convergence in terms of secondary level education that you were getting here with the O-levels and the A-level system in the UK. That has changed substantially now but at the time, it was understood that if you needed further training and things that were not immediately available, you were going to go to the UK for that.

EHdK 29:29 What has the development been like here in Barbados to address some of those limitations? To invest in, for example, ensuring that people have access to resources here?

AC 29:45 The changes occurred post-independence where it was it was beginning to be understood that it was not really suitable that our Caribbean histories, our heritage should be determined, interpreted or dictated, if you like. You know, it wasn't a dictatorship but the parameters of what was being presented in West Indian museums or Caribbean museums

at the time needed to have a stronger underpinning of knowledge from the region, about the region and using national narratives that were being identified and articulated by our own historians and our own people. So, that ties in with the development of the University of the West Indies coming out of Jamaica and into Trinidad and Barbados. And that's happening just pre-independence or around independence. And then it's about a 10-year period, 10-15-year period after independence that you begin to see changes in the way that that the community found it in any way acceptable that you couldn't see yourself in the displays that were going on. You saw wonderful collections of China and silver and glassware. So, you know, ceramics, portraiture, yes, you could begin to see people from the Caribbean in the portraiture but even the furniture and those sorts of traditional objects in the exhibitions were often tied to and interpreted as an extension or expansion or development as a result of European roots.

EHdK 31:47 What year did you join the museum? I know you were quite young.

AC 31:51 Yes, I joined the museum in 1981 as part of my training. They decided they were going to appoint a trainee director. And so that was...under that heading I was then given the opportunity to do training at Leicester University from 1981 to 1983. And again, understanding the tie-ins. You know, you can see things differently from a distance, but we understood the tie-in there coming about as a result of the Barbados government investing in its first written cultural policy is 1981 by [Camal Raza]. And [Camal Raza] is looking at the Barbados Museum and saying, "What is this thing? You're called the Barbados Museum, but I don't see the story of the thousands of Barbadians who should be represented in these institutions. So, he was looking across the board. He looked at the archives, the library, the museum and other institutions. But that particular report then inspired our Minister of Culture to then appoint a committee. Up to that time, the government has provided small incremental funds to the Barbados Museum but basically left it alone. Now it was being pointed out that you couldn't have an institution of this size and nature on the island even though it was a private, non-governmental one, it was de facto the national museum and government needed to pay some attention to what it was seeing and what it was portraying. That advisory committee had as its chair Professor Woodville Marshall, now Sir Woodville, and it was he who guided the process of the development committee in understanding what should in fact occur within a museum of this nature. That it was not telling the story of the thousands of Barbadians and it needed to change that narrative. And understanding what needed to happen also tied in with the need to train young Barbadians to ultimately become the staff of the museum and not simply import, and continue to import...good people, professionals from the UK but that is no longer acceptable in the post-independence environment.

EHdK 34:53 Recently, I spoke to your colleague Kaye Hall who is an education officer here at the museum and who was involved in an EU-LAC so European Union Latin American-Caribbean initiative, an exhibition on Caribbean migration to Britain, entitled “The Enigma of Arrival”. I am absolutely fascinated by this exhibition for many reasons but I just wondered if you could elaborate a bit more about the origins of that activity? What kind of discussions were taking place and how did this all come together?

AC 35:40 So, EU-LAC museums project was generated out of discussions through the International Council of Museums (ICOM) in 2016. The elaboration of the project was undertaken between the University of Saint Andrews as the project coordinator and then with agreed partners from ICOM Latin America and ICOM Europe. ICOM Latin America was fairly easy to establish that they wanted, you know...there were any number of individuals and institutions that could participate. And those were quickly identified. ICOM Europe also. But what the University of Saint Andrews quickly found was that this would be mainly a Hispanic venture. And they particularly asked for and engaged with the University of the West Indies and with the Barbados Museum. They came to the Barbados Museum obviously because they know me and my links with ICOM and they knew that the museum had a long history. And also that I was teaching Museum and Heritage Studies at University of the West Indies. University of the West Indies, by the way, just to be very clear...had started that process again post-independence but in the early 1990s recognised that if you were going to change museums and change the narrative in Caribbean museums then you also had to change the learning environment of the museum professionals. So, they established Museum Studies and Heritage Studies programmes from around 1993 and then onwards. It was a kind of a hit or miss situation. But it started from there. The need to give to local students indigenous knowledge about what should be the national narratives that were framing their stories in museums. Coming down to EU-LAC museums. As an extension of the relationship between the Barbados Museum and the University of West Indies at Cave Hill, we then became the only other Anglophone country that was involved in the project. And it was interesting because we were then assigned on the various thematic heads. Because EU-LAC was ambitious in scope, seeking to engage with the key, if you like, key considerations of the EU at the time. A number of thematic areas were outlined. Two of them were migration and gender and the Barbados Museum through the University of the West Indies was assigned to engage with those subject areas. And we have no difficulty at all. But when we talked about migration and gender, we were thinking at the outset, “Oh, yes, of course, migration is very important for us.” We had seen a series of migratory events from Panama, from Barbados to Panama and Barbados to Cuba, Caribbeans going virtually everywhere in the region and also in Britain as a result of World War Two, World War Two and these other building events.

EHdK 39:51 Was initially the aim of the project to look at migration in general? Where did the focus on the UK come from? Was that always originally in the conversations?

AC 40:05 You know, it evolved as a result of...okay, let's look at these various instances of migration between this region and that region. And it became very clear very quickly that a key trope of cultural life in the Caribbean was these stories of people migrating from the Caribbean to the UK and elsewhere in the Caribbean. All looking for a better life and particularly as a result of post-emancipation up to post-independence.

EHdK 40:45 I do find it interesting that the time period was from 2016 which was around the time of the Brexit referendum. And I find it fascinating that really this was the EU focus that funded such an important project while the UK essentially was backstepping away from these questions.

AC 41:06 I think it was very germane to our comprehension because as we began to articulate what would be the main strategies in this project, it quickly became clear that, while we might have assumed that we should be dealing with 1914, 1918, 1940s. And, indeed, these are very important migratory moments for the Caribbean that, in fact, we've been dealing with the results of these migratory patterns over decades. Right now, we were beginning to see long exposure in the newspapers and online about Windrush. And so, while it had not been the intent at the beginning to focus on that, it became very clear through our own research around, you know, people going off to war, people coming back from war, people going off to Panama, people coming back. Or the whole interrelationship between and amongst the migrants from the Anglophone countries into the Hispanophone and also into Britain. And the many stories that we have about men and women. Nurses, teachers, bus conductors, policemen. Barbadians became the policemen of the Caribbean if you can imagine. This was not just tied to a historical past 100 years before. This was tied into now. That our people of Barbadian or Caribbean origin were suffering as a result of this incontrovertible truth that the UK had very kindly shuffled off its responsibilities with the Federation and then independence and were happily disengaged. But then there was this whole narrative around, well, these people have now imposed on us and are taking away from us when, in fact, they had been invited to contribute to the rebuilding and redevelopment of a broken Empire after the Second World War.

EHdK 43:48 One of the questions I did want to ask you was, what was the engagement of, for example, the British High Commission? I know it was with EU funding but was there any interest?

AC 44:00 None whatsoever.



EHdK 44:02 And that interests me because recently I spoke to Dr Marcia Burrowes who was talking about an exhibition that they did, I think it was in 2013, where the former High Commissioner was very much engaged, very interested and actually had a Windrush exhibition at his residence as part of the meeting of the British High Commissioners in the Caribbean at his residence. So, we're talking from 2013 until just three years later, three or four years later when there was no involvement whatsoever, no interest whatsoever. And that fascinates me. Did you reach out to them formally?

AC 44:38 Of course. We were kind of stunned really. It was clearly a moment of shared history, shared knowledge, shared experience and we were rather stunned because we had previously with World War One and the whole 2014 to 2018, we had worked on different programmes and exhibitions in consultation and very much with their support. Not financial but very much with their support. And other earlier experiences. Even with the 2007, 2008 explosion of interest suddenly in the experience of the end...the bicentenary of the end of slavery, transatlantic slave trade. There had been some expression of interest and support. Again, not expansive but relational. So, we were rather stunned when there was silence, you know, basically, crickets.

EHdK 45:55 I assume that you had an opening ceremony or an opening the event and that was in 2018? What month was that?

AC 46:03 For us, it was November.

EHdK 46:07 November. So, it was right after then the explosion of the Windrush scandal. It was on the front pages of the newspapers in the UK. This was around April. Around the CHOGM meeting as well when we had Guy Hewitt who we've also interviewed for this project who was there with Kevin Isaac and with a number of other colleagues The Caribbean High Commissioners who were pushing then for the UK government to engage with them to speak to them about the scandal. So, I find that absolutely fascinating.

AC 46:39 It is fascinating and I want to stress that British citizens, British individuals were not dispassionate and were not separate from it. But if you were looking for official representation of interest in support through your High Commissioner, it was not happening.

EHdK 47:02 They did not attend? The High Commission did not attend?

AC 47:05 I don't recall them attending. Not there in a formal capacity. The EU was definitely front and present and participatory. The University of Saint Andrews and many participants in a conference called Itinerant Identities that had taken place just days before at the University of the West Indies. Also a part of this project.

EHdK 47:33 I just question where that hands off approach has come from because that's a very big shift that happened in a very small time period. And you never didn't use the word "Windrush" for the exhibition?

AC 47:47 No, we were talking about migrants to Britain and what was their shared story and shared history. We were not using Windrush scandal. I mean, the term is now stuck. But that wasn't the basis of the exhibition,

EHdK 48:02 The lecture series that you held. When did that take place?

AC 48:05 I think it would be March/April, possibly into May of 2019.

EHdK 48:17 So a year after the scandal? And that was absolutely fascinating, I was watching some of the lectures online recently. And it's just a really rich collection. So that lecture series then led to the book "From Invitation to Deportation [70 Years of the Windrush Generation]" that we were talking about with Kaye in an earlier interview.

AC 48:35 Exactly.

EHdK 48:36 What did you take away from that whole experience from the project? Was there anything that surprised you? Anything that was unexpected? Anything that made you change...?

AC 48:54 We were already...this institution was already involved and had a long gestation period of a major project, internationally funded project which would see the transformation our main galleries. Our historical galleries had served their purpose over time. But we had long wanted to update them, change them and change the contents of them. But that process had started from 2014 or thereabouts. Come 2018, 2019 with this whole research and communications, because while we were developing the exhibition here, we were in consultation with our other colleagues in the Caribbean. And there came the realisation that that this wasn't just about developing a temporary solution for this project. This project was impacting on our understanding about what our national narrative was. What our national/regional narrative was because we couldn't just then reiterate the same kinds of components of typical exhibition in the galleries of the museum. We had to systematically understand that our national narrative involved Barbadian populations overseas who continue, after several generations, to consider themselves Barbadians.

EHdK 50:45 At the lecture series, there were people who stood up who openly stated that they had had immigration issues, or they had encountered blatant racism but also that they were encountering issues...in terms of their status, right? Their status of being recognised as British citizens. And I just wondered if you remember any of those stories, or...?

AC 51:16 I can't remember the details but what struck me was that I felt we were incredibly fortunate that a number of individuals had seen the research series. Had seen it as important for them to inform themselves about what Barbadians at home were learning about the subject. And then, following the lectures and moments of lectures and reflections on what they have learned, comprehending that now was a moment to share with Barbadians at home what have been the kinds of experiences, traumas, critical political practices that have occurred. And most of these people had come home voluntarily. They had spent maybe decades in the UK. They might have been the second or third generation. Some of them had decided it was a moment to come home to the Caribbean and wanted to share their knowledge and experience. They met with hostility in the UK. And some, if you like, unfortunately, some inconsideration in Barbados. In the Caribbean on return. And some of that came out of complete ignorance around the subject. So, the broader population.

EHdK 53:07 Would you say that the Barbadian population are... What would you say is people's knowledge about the subject? Because certainly in Jamaica, I think I can say that it wasn't...for people, it wasn't clear what the scandal actually entailed. They'd heard of the scandal, they knew about The Guardian. It came out in the Gleaner. And there were cases that they saw of Jamaicans being stopped from returning to the UK. So, those kinds of personal stories, testimonies really kind of resonated. But in terms of actually what the scandal entailed which was the fact that you have British people who are recognised as British who travelled on documentation to the UK [and] was subsequently decades later caught up in this very complex web of being told that they were...being erroneously informed that they were that they were, as you would say, illegal immigrants and being completely shocked by this...[pause]. Just as we're coming to the end of our interview then, you mentioned to me that you had met Arthur Torrington when you were recently in London. Could you tell me about that and elaborate who he is please?

AC 54:30 Well, Arthur Torrington is a major leader of the Afro-Caribbean population in Britain. And I would say both in terms of cultural, educational and, if you like, political leadership. Because there needed to be that by credence given to the subject. Also, his involvement with the development of the Black Cultural Archives. Now, for the Barbados Museum, we had had earlier encounters with Arthur Torrington and the Black Cultural Archives. Actually around a number of different initiatives. But in terms of the EU-LAC Museums project, when we were attending one of the first project meetings in the UK, we insisted that we had to have a moment where we paused and went to meet with Arthur, and

I can't recall the name of the other lady. We went to see him because. Here it was, we were developing the knowledge and developing the exhibitions around this whole experience of Caribbean migrating to Britain and back. And we really felt that we could not just go in and just tell a story from one side of these events, but we needed to understand fundamentally what was the interest in, if you like, partnering with the African Caribbean community? What was their knowledge? What were their needs? What were their desires in terms of the execution of a project like this? And we were very well received and Arthur Torrington in particular was very generous in offering his support his personal knowledge and his engagement with project. And throughout our events, I think what we could say is that we have seen at first shy attempts by different UK-based Caribbean communities but with growing interest in sharing the knowledge, sharing the stories, participating in the development of the exhibition through their own experiences. And that was completely enriching for us. We could not have developed Enigma of Arrival without that. Their understanding and their appreciation of what was happening and what their life was like pre-Brexit, what their life was post-Brexit. They understood...they were kind of considered excess to requirements, if you like, in terms of the working population and those who would be beneficiaries of a new and improved Britain that was, in fact, closing its borders or closing itself off from the rest of Europe. Which had not been their experience before. But I want to say more about this relationship because in the development of this exhibition, we the Barbados Museum, benefited tremendously. Both in terms of the continued communication with colleagues but continued communication with the African Caribbean communities that engage and that process continues beyond.

EHdK 58:40 It's a true transnational relationship.

AC 58:42 It's a true transnational relationship because that exhibition has been requested, even as recently as this year. Just a month ago, they want to share that story to other communities on other occasions around Windrush Day and have invited us to participate in that and we're very happy to engage because it's not just our story. We also really, really were thrilled to have a visit from Arthur Torrington to the Barbados Museum just literally a month or two ago. He had taken the opportunity to come when he was in Barbados. Come here to the museum, received tours and received opportunities to explore family histories as well as community histories in Barbados. He shared publications with us and we shared some of the same ones that you have. He was thrilled. And we are continuing that conversation because we are now linked. And we now have a continuing story to tell. And we are looking forward to many continued chapters evolving as a result of that relationship.



EHdK 1:00:00 One of the central...one of the underpinning points of the project was Michel-Rolph Trouillot quote about we must unsilence narratives. And that commitment really to highlighting the hidden histories or the forgotten histories of people and their experiences. And I think Windrush and especially the scandal itself really highlights, you know, the urgency and the importance of doing the kind of work that you're doing here at the museum and really giving voice to those narratives.

AC 1:00:44 Michel-Rolph Trouillot was a major source of inspiration for us because he pointed out that having both museums and archives. If they allow themselves to remain silent because of particular policies that have been generated decades before around the desire to tell certain stories but also to silence others. He often says that slavery is a ghost. And you don't necessarily think that this is relevant in the examination of current day issues. But he points out the longevity of these situations because at various instances around the decision to make an archive, the decision to narrate a story, the decision to save certain histories and stories and not others. All of these were deliberate decisions which excised the humanity and experience of a large slice of the population. And it really required deliberate action amongst museums and archives. And particularly in the region to make those visible, make them real and make them live again.

EHdK 1:02:18 Well, thank you so much for your time today. It's been an absolute pleasure speaking with you.

[END OF AUDIOFILE].