

# Hidden Histories



Collins Seymah Smith, Dr Stephen Collins, Ruth Leticia Annom, Josephine Quaynor, Samuel Lamptey, Stephen Djan, Susana Dartey, Nii Kwartelai Quartey. Outside the James Town Community Theatre Centre

Principal investigator:

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Co-investigators:

**Collins Seymah Smith** (James Town Community Theatre);  
**Nii Kwartelai Quartey** (James town walking tours)

Project title:

**Hidden Histories: The Untold stories of James Town and Slavery**

Duration:

**12 months**

Country:

**Ghana**

This project is a collaboration between the University of the West of Scotland, James Town Community Theatre Centre and James Town Walking Tours.

Project updates are available on the JTCT blog:  
<https://act4changegh.jimdofree.com/blog/>

Working with the local community, the project is investigating, interrogating and developing narratives around the connection between historic and modern slavery in James Town, Accra, Ghana. Locally known as British Accra, James Town is an area of multiple deprivation and significant economic poverty (Tutu et al. 2017). It was one of the first settlements built by the British in Ghana and its architecture and urban development retain many features from that time. James Town has a majority Ga population, as opposed to the larger Akan population of Accra; it has its own language, cultural expressions and identity that are often under-represented in Ghanaian media. (Newell, 1999, Wiggins and Nketia, 2005)

The depiction of slavery in Accra's museums, and more broadly in Ghana, emphasise the role of colonial exploitation in the slave trade. (Perbi, 2004) Moreover, these narratives tend to emphasise a national history, rather than more nuanced local experiences. Similarly, Ghana has well documented issues with modern slavery, particularly in terms of people trafficking and forced labour, for which it is noted as a 'source, transit and destination country for men, women and children' (TIP, 2017; 2018). Indeed, in 2017 the Western Regional Minister, Gifty Kusi, stated that 'as many as 1.86 million Ghanaian children were 'victims of forced labour' (Wamakor, 2017). However, there is little research concerning the specific nature or extent of these issues in James Town. Equally, there is little interrogation of the links between historic and modern slavery, with historic slavery being regarded since the Kufour government of the early 2000s as part of heritage and tourism,

Hence, this project addresses modern slavery by interrogating the continuing legacy of slavery in James Town and its representation on a local and national stage. To do this, we are drawing on interviews undertaken in December 2018, to create a theatre performance for local schools, and a new walking tour of James Town that will highlight sites connected to historic and modern slavery. These outputs, supported by academic articles, will engage the community and visitors to the area in considering the role of James Town in historic slavery, the links between historic and modern slavery and the scale and nature of modern slavery in James Town.