Legacy and Equity Journey Resource List

Roadmap of the resources:

Core Reading:

- On Cecil Rhodes – Tracing the life trajectory of Cecil Rhodes and his ideologies (a long online post – roughly 45 minutes of reading time)

Suggested Readings:

- Analysis of the Rhodes Must Fall movement
    - Amit Chaudhary on the 'Real Meaning of Rhodes Must Fall' (2016) – he explains the grounding of the project and the intentions of the protestors (long Guardian post – roughly 45 minutes of reading time)
    - Short BBC post on the recent protests (2020) – this piece links the recent protests to the larger call for decolonisation (Reading time: 10 minutes)
    - Interview of RMF editors (2018) that explains the relevance of these protests in educational spaces like Oxford (reading time: 10 minutes)
- Why telling someone not to get too angry is not as helpful as you may think?
    - Amia Srinivasan (2014) writes this short piece to find a place for emotions in public debate (pages: 5; reading time: 15 minutes)
    - Audre Lorde's (1981) piece on justifying the role of anger as a tool for empathy and recognition of the inequalities in the world (medium piece; reading time: 30 minutes)
- What parts of British History have been erased from my textbooks?
    - 'Britain's role in Slavery' (2015) by Olusoga – this piece looks at the history of British slave owners and why/how this history was erased (Long guardian piece; reading time: 30-45 minutes)
    - 'Misremembering the British Empire' (2020) by Jasanoff – looks at how we actively remember certain parts of history and what it means to radically confront one's past (long New Yorker read. Reading time: 45-60 minutes).

- Everyday Practice and Encounters:
    - Claudia Rankine on White Privilege (2019) – this piece looks at Rankine's understanding of the space she occupies in predominantly white spaces and what privilege truly means as a lived experience (Long NYTimes piece; reading time: 60 minutes).
    - Video on Stuart Hall's (2017) understanding of media biases against minorities (3 minutes long)
    - White Privilege by Peggy McIntosh (1988) where she questions her own privilege as a white woman (pages: 7; reading time: 20 minutes)
- Personal Engagements with Legacy
    - Naseemah Mohammad (2013) reflects on their own relationship to the figure of Rhodes and to the scholarship (pages: 5; reading time: 30 minutes)
- Poetry
    - 'Give Your Daughter Difficult Names' by Assetou Xango (short poem; reading time: 5 minutes but perhaps a much longer reflection time ☺)
- Video Engagement:
    - BBC Question time on the removal of a statue – the main speaker Bernadine Evaristo is the 2019 Booker prize winner (25 min)

Core Reading

Cecil John Rhodes from South African History On-line

Why should I read this?

The reading traces the life trajectory of Cecil Rhodes, from his early childhood to his arrival in South Africa. It also introduces Rhodes' vision for the world and how this vision of 'civilising' was closely tied to the university of Oxford, which is where he studied and formed secret societies with fellow Englishmen who wanted to change the world on their own terms. The reading further explores what these "terms" were and how they were tied to an assumed superiority of the British empire and thus grounded in notions of fundamental inequality of human beings and cultures. It also recounts speeches given and letters written by the man himself to delve deeper into his notions about the various races of the world, and examines how his theory of change directly led to the systematic oppression and murders of large populations of people across the continent of Africa.

Suggested Readings

1. Analysis of the Rhodes Must Fall Movement

The Real Meaning of Rhodes Must Fall by Amit Chaudhuri (2016)

Why should I read this?

Amit Chaudhury, who used to be a student at Oxford himself, discusses the larger implications of the RMF movement, beyond the actions and deeds of Cecil Rhodes. He explains that the movement calls attention to the fact that young people want to rewrite history and not simply stop their critical curiosity at the statement "he was a man of his time" but question why we are systematically taught to normalise inequality in the past and present alike. He also explains that decolonising education does not simply mean coming to terms with the atrocities of colonialism and figures like Cecil Rhodes but to decouple history from "western" history, and culture from "western" culture, and to bring into questions these seemingly neutral vantage points from which facts and figures emerge.

Most recent protests covered by the BBC (2020)

Why should I read this?

This article looks at the recent protests around the statue, brought back into attention through killing of George Floyd, thus connecting various anti-racism movements around the world into a united voice. It also looks at the various voices in the debates, from the protestors to the official quote from Oriel college, as well as the support for the protest from various MPs from Labour and the LibDem.

Editors of 'Rhodes Must Fall Book' in an Interview (2018)

Why should I read this?

The three editors, Kwoba, Chantiluke and Nkopo explain their involvement and intension of the Rhodes Must Fall movement, and why it has caught on in the world. They explain the crucial difference between diversity and decolonisation, in which the former is part of a marketing ploy that manufactures outer facades whereas the latter is meaningfully questioning places that are unwelcoming and hostile, as well as interrogating the Euro-centric biases within higher education.

2. Why telling someone not to get too angry is not as helpful as you may think?

'In Defence of Anger' by Amia Srinivasan (2014)

Why should I read this?

The core reading might have triggered various emotional responses in you, and you might identify some of these emotions as anger, disappointment, surprise, sadness, guilt or even frustration. But we have often been told that emotions don't have a place in a public debate. Some of the common phrases we have all heard include: "Don't get too angry", "Anger does not help", 'Nobody will take you seriously if you cry" "you are harming your own cause by reacting this way". Such phrases, even if they are well meant, can lead to two things. One, they can shame the person for how they feel (often their anger is a very rational response to the cruelty they face). Two, they can stigmatise emotions as a bad/weak thing. Amia Srinivasan, who is herself a Rhodes Scholar, explains why it is dangerous to dismiss emotional responses, especially when it comes to colonial or racial trauma and discrimination. She insightfully argues that even though the popular expression for anger is "blinding anger", it can serve as a clarifying emotion that helps us identify and engage with unfair systems.

The Uses of Anger by Audre Lorde (1981)

Why should I read this?

We often condemn anger as a useless device but what is it that we are condemning? Are we condemning anger for its lack of grace, and in that case, who are we expecting to be graceful and whose anger are we more tolerant of? Audre Lorde, in this keynote speech, explains why anger is not only a useful channel but also an effective keeper of information and memory. Anger helps her be empathetic and cognisant of the social inequalities that plague the world, and it serves as tool for change. She distinguished anger from hatred, explaining that the latter aims for destruction whereas the former aims for social change. Read the piece to see real-life examples that Audre Lorde cites to explain moments of anger and how this anger was taunted and belittled by those around her.

3. What parts of British History have been erased from my textbooks?

Britain's role in Slavery (2015)

Why should I read this?

Often when we think of slavery, we think of it as a thing of the past and as an "American problem". This reading serves to contextualise the conversations about slavery in the British context, explaining that Britain has been good at covering up its own role in the slave trade and how its exploits took place 3000 miles away in the Caribbean. The omitting of slavery from Britain's past is not an accident, but rather a series of cover-ups, ranging from the centring of William Wilberforce and the abolitionist crusade at the cost of other more uncomfortable histories, along with the changing of names of former slaves to "planters" and "merchants". Read this article to truly understand Britain's role in profiting from the slave trade as well as to understand how Britain has manipulated history to omit its own violence. While reading, keep in mind the question: who writes history and for whom?

Misremembering the British Empire by Maya Jasanoff (2020)

Why should I read this?

How do atrocities get brushed under the carpet? What does it mean to radically confront the past of one's nation and its place in the world? While the previous reading looked at the invisibilisation of Britain's role in slavery, this reading looks at the process of 'misremembering'. The protestors of Rhodes Must Fall are often accused in

mainstream media of 'erasing the past' but hasn't the past been erased and rewritten by those in power for centuries? In this article, Jasanoff explores the practices of the British empire burning their own records and documents as a way of literally erasing the past and their own role in the atrocities committed. Other tactics of misremembering include scapegoating, where some figures were seen as evil as a way of not holding the entirely of the British empire accountable for their actions.

4. Everyday Practices and Encounters

On White Privilege by Claudia Rankine (2019)

Why should I read this?

Born in Kingston, Jamaica, poet Claudia Rankine recounts her experience of flying first class, and all the white men she meets on the flight. She interrogates her own frameworks of the world and asks herself: do I see race in everything? Do I impose it on every conversation? She asks herself this every time a white person cuts her in the airport check-in line, or the airhostess forgets her orange juice. Each time, she tries to tell herself that maybe she is reading race into everything, and maybe these were innocent mistakes. She carried all of these personal reflections from the flight and the airport to her students at Yale where she teaches a class on "whiteness", and tries to understand how white people see race and history. Is race a burden that people of colour have to carry? What does it mean when people say that "they don't see race"? Does it mean that those people don't see racism? How can we imagine equality if we are so focussed on inequality? These are some of the important questions that the reading raises and helps the reader to think through by sharing real life encounters between the author and various white men that she meets in her everyday life, including her white husband.

A Video on Stuart Hall's Understanding of How Media Propagates Stereotypes

Why should I watch this?

Stuart Hall was a 1951 Rhodes Scholar, who found his experience at Oxford quite unbearable, and reflected on it in many books that he wrote in the course of his life. This video explains his media theory as he breaks down the violent stereotypes that we actively and passively consume through the news. He is critical of the culture of "banter" in Britain which tends to hide the violence upon which humour is built – the violence that reduces many people of colour into singular stereotypes.

White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible by Knapsack Peggy McIntosh (1988)

Why should I read this?

McIntosh coined the term "white privilege". What do you think about this term? Claudia Rankine, in the previous reading, said that she does not like the term "white privilege" but prefers the term "while dominance", as the word "privilege" assumes that the hierarchical dominance was desired by all. Do you think whiteness is a privilege? Is it privilege one can let go off? Is it a way of thinking/seeing that can be shed or is it the way one is perceived, beyond one's control? Is it too tightly attached to the person? In this reading, McIntosh lists her own set of invisible and visible privileges. See if the readings prompts you to reflect on your own privileges. Are you privileges fixed or context specific/situational?

5. Personal Engagement with Legacy

Between Rhodes and Me by Naseemah Mohamed (2013)

Why should I read this?

This is a personal reflection of a scholar from Zimbabwe on her relationship to the scholarship, as well as the relationship between the actions of Cecil Rhodes and the current governance in Zimbabwe. The article explains why it's not so simply to simple to rid ourselves of the chains of the past, and why Cecil Rhodes' legacy is not merely symbolic but carried concrete consequences for the region. She also reflects on her reasons for accepting the scholarship, and why the narrative of gratitude is yet another means by the powerful to silence the historically oppressed.

NOTE: If you don't have time for the full reading, prioritize the last two pages that outlines the key reflections of the author.

6. Poetry

Give Your Daughters Difficult Names by Assétou Xango

Why should I read this?

We wanted to end with poetry because it is a medium that truly captures the entanglement of the personal and the political. Assétou Xango and Warsan Shire write these poems to explain the importance of names, especially the names that in Britain might be considered "difficult names". Do you find some names difficult to pronounce?

Do you think these names are difficult, or do we find them difficult because they are unfamiliar? Does the unfamiliarity make you scared, shy or want to shorten the names to a more familiar sound – easier on the tongue? The poems prompt the reader to reflect on the importance of saying someone's full name, making the effort to say it right, and hold words and sounds comfortably in our mouths as a way of decolonising the tongue.

7. Video Engagement

Statue Debate with Bernadine Evaristo (2020)

Why should I watch this?

The debate takes place around the Bristol Statue removal, with Bernadine Evaristo (Booker prize winner) articulating why statues belong in museums and not as celebratory figures in the public space with little or no acknowledgement. Whose sentiments are offended by the toppling of the statue and whose sentiments are at stake by the statue staying up? Why do some people bring up law and order in these debates? Is legality always equal to justice? Were there times in the past where what was legal was terribly unfair and immoral? What does the public space denote and how do statues determine our relationship to the past? Watch the video to get an insight into some of these questions.