



Museums Association Applicant Information Pack

Anti-racist Museums Programme

July 2026

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Welcome letter

I am delighted to introduce you to our Anti-racist Museums Programme. We live in worrying times where polarisation and division are rife in our communities and work around equity, diversity and inclusion risks being undermined – which is why it is more important than ever for us to understand how we can become inclusive and anti-racist organisations.

One of the reasons that we developed this programme was the challenge put to us and the sector at our conference in Liverpool in November 2021. In the session ‘From words to action: Museums and anti-racism’, speakers explored the declarations that many museums made after the tragic death of George Floyd and the sense that not enough was being done to turn those words into actions. The panellists at that session, Nasir Adam, Miles Greenwood, Errol Francis and Sara Wajid, reflected on the lack of progress in addressing institutional racism in museums and on what more could be done. A challenge was issued to the audience, the MA, and everyone who works in museums to seize the opportunity to address anti-racism and diversity in the workforce and across collections and public programmes.

As a result of that discussion and many conversations with colleagues since, the MA launched a pilot programme to create a cohort of museums that were actively working towards becoming anti-racist organisations. Since then six museums have taken part in the Anti-racist Museums Programme and continue to work together to share and develop their practice.

While we understand the everyday challenges that museums and museum workers face – from supporting community wellbeing to simply keeping the doors open – by launching the programme we highlighted the need to deal with racism in our organisations as a priority. We have now taken on board the external evaluation from the pilot to run the programme again and will continue to listen, learn and act on the outcomes of this work.

We know it won’t be easy, and tackling racism won’t be resolved with just this one programme, but we hope to learn from each other and to create museums and museum

workers that understand the complexities of everyday racism and the role we can play in overcoming systems of exclusion and discrimination.

I am delighted that we will once again be working with expert facilitators Cheryl Garvey and Julian Walker who have developed an intensive participatory experience for you and your colleagues, and I very much look forward to growing and learning with you.

Sharon Heal

Director, Museums Association

About us

Founded in 1889, we are the oldest professional body for museums in the world, with a global reputation for leading museum policy and practice. We are the only organisation for all museums in the four nations of the UK. We recognise the differences in context, culture, legislation, policy and practice between the nations and we strive for equitable treatment for all our members in the UK. We are independent and not-for-profit and advocate for museums without fear or favour from governments or funding influences.

Today we represent over 11,000 individuals and 1,800 museums and galleries, with a vibrant network that engages many more in all types of museums and roles.

Our Mission

Inspiring museums to change lives

Museums make us healthier and happier and increase our wellbeing. They make us proud of our places and our communities, and they inspire, motivate and challenge us. Everyone should have the right to engage with and participate in museums and have access to a high-quality museum service near to where they live. Our mission is to inspire and support museums to work with their communities to make a positive difference to people's lives.

Our Vision

Inclusive and sustainable museums at the heart of communities

As we face increasing polarisation and inequality in society and significant challenges such as the climate crisis, our vision is for museums to use their collections to play a vital role bringing communities together to deliver social and climate justice.

Our Priorities

To deliver our vision and mission, in 2030 we want to achieve:

People – A representative museum workforce where diverse knowledge, skills and experiences are respected, supported and valued.

Collections – Empowering, relevant and dynamic museum collections that reflect the rich diversity of our histories, our communities and our planet.

Communities – Museums and communities working as equal partners to address the challenges of our time through learning, participation and engagement with collections.

Planet – Working with museums to be brave in raising awareness, championing change, and embedding action to tackle the climate crisis.

About the facilitators

We're delighted to be working with our partners Talk Listen Create again.

Cheryl Garvey and Julian Walker will lead the intensive participatory experience for senior leaders from six museums, with a programme of bespoke online learning sessions to support the development of a cohort of anti-racist museums. The programme will use techniques such as coaching, facilitation and action learning to support organisations to embed the necessary changes for their institution to become anti-racist.



Cheryl Garvey

Cheryl Garvey is Birmingham born and based and has spent her career working in the charity and private sectors, holding executive and CEO roles for key local, regional and national charities.

Cheryl began her career in youth and community development practice and currently specialises in equalities, organisational and leadership development and facilitation. She works with a range of audiences, from large-scale public institutions to vibrant non-profit micro-businesses. Cheryl is trained in Deep Democracy and Process Work methodologies and is currently adding psychotherapy to her skills arsenal.

On her appointment, Cheryl said: "The work to realise an anti-racist culture future, the kind that is honest, disruptive, emergent and embodied, is difficult stuff but unbelievably rewarding when you see growth in self and system. I'm delighted to collaborate with the MA on this exciting programme. The sector's role as custodians and architects of our collective histories has rarely been more acute.

"We make no promises regarding the protection of comfort or safety, for they are rarely deployed in service of the oppressed. We can promise a space full of compassion, commitment, and an unerring ambition for each of our participants to leave the programme with greater confidence, capacity and courage to make anti-racism real."



Julian Walker

Julian Walker began her career as a Home Office civil servant before the first Blair government. She served as a speechwriter to both Michael Howard and then Jack Straw, before leaving Whitehall in 2001 to become a self-employed consultant.

Over 15 years in public sector improvement – working in UK central government and in Afghanistan, Libya, Palestine, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Turkey, Tunisia, and Uganda – she learnt experientially of the global nature of white privilege; the long after-effects of colonialism; and the tendency for ‘help’ to come in a form that allows helpers to feel better about themselves more often than it helps the ‘helped’. She also learnt that the gap between political leaders’ ambitions and the systemic results they can achieve is a global phenomenon.

Since 2020 her work has focused on anti-racism learning and development for individuals, groups and organisations, working with [brap](#) and [HR-rewired](#) and as faculty on the [NTL Global OD certificate programme](#).

Her critical examination of whiteness in service of anti-racism began 15 years ago when she was UK director of policy and research at Barnardo’s. As leader of the organisational race equality and diversity programme, she was given Peggy McIntosh’s ‘White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack’ by one of her team and challenged by the Black Staff Network to examine power and privilege, and never looked back.

Her work delivering anti-racism learning for the Museums Association feels like the culmination of all this experience, learning and passion for challenging injustice both globally and domestically.

About the programme, Julian said: “The work of dismantling systemic racism requires strong coalitions, between institutions and communities, across the sector and between individuals. It’s not easy for some to trust, or for others to become trustworthy. But we need to be able to develop authentic relationships between those who – historically and

today – have received material and psychological benefits from colonialism and white supremacy, and those who have been marginalised, belittled and harmed.

“I am excited to have the opportunity to model what coalition looks like, and to help participants explore their own inner and outer work to make such collaboration a reality.”

Jamie Spurway

Jamie is a skilled diversity and inclusion facilitator and coach, with a focus on race, religion, culture, and gender. He has worked with a wide range of public, private, and third sector organisations — including Police Scotland, Glasgow University, and the British Red Cross — delivering impactful workshops on equality, inclusion, and social justice.

An associate of Interfaith Scotland since 2013, Jamie has deep connections with Scotland’s diverse faith communities and regularly advises the Scottish Government on issues of religion and belief. He also leads workshops on gender, particularly in schools and refugee groups, and is actively involved in efforts to end gender-based violence through his work with the White Ribbon campaign.

With a background in Psychology and Philosophy, and qualifications in Gestalt coaching and training, Jamie brings a thoughtful, engaging, and compassionate approach to all his work. Before settling in Glasgow, he spent five years working as a tour guide across the Middle East, North Africa, and the Indian subcontinent — experiences that continue to inform his global perspective and cultural insight.

About the Anti-racist Museums Programme

Purpose and context

Museums are in a unique position to confront systemic racism because of our engagement with diverse audiences and communities, and due to the tangible and ideological links between collections and Britain's imperial past. In a time of increasing polarisation in society anti-racist practice is vital to making museums relevant, resilient and accessible for the future.

The MA began work on anti-racism and decolonisation in 2018, when research for our [Empowering Collections](#) report showed that more people in museums wanted to engage with decolonisation. We convened a [Decolonisation Guidance Working Group](#), resulting in the widely used [Supporting Decolonisation in Museums](#) guidance, published in 2021. The murder of George Floyd radically changed the context of this work as it progressed, and in museums – as elsewhere in society – we witnessed widespread statement-making alongside a failure to make real change.

As a result, the MA created the Decolonisation Confidence and Skills programme, with support from the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, John Ellerman Foundation and Art Fund. We wanted to capitalise on willingness and support workers to practically apply decolonisation in their work, and the ways in which the [programme succeeded and failed](#) demonstrated both the emotional challenges of working in this area and a need to work towards anti-racist systemic change.

The Anti-racist Museums Programme (ARMP), now in its third year with partner Talk Listen Create, works with museum leaders to build their knowledge of anti-racism and enable them to embody change at their organisations. [Evaluation](#) shows the programme is a challenging and rewarding experience; and an opportunity to create meaningful change in the UK museum sector through organisational and professional development. The Anti-racist Museums Programme is creating a thriving network of museums and leaders that are committed to personal and organisational change; collaboration and peer learning; and being at the forefront of anti-racist practice in UK museums.

The MA defines anti-racism as the active process of identifying and dismantling policies, practices, behaviours and beliefs that perpetuate institutional and systemic racism against racialised people of colour. An anti-racist museum can be defined as:

- a museum that understands the complexities of racism in its everyday, institutional and systemic expressions, and publicly acknowledges its own role in perpetuating some of these systems of exclusion and differentiation for racialised people of colour, including its staff and audiences.
- a museum which is actively developing and implementing policies and practices to dismantle institutional racism within their organisation and is embedding this work across programmes and activities throughout the institution.
- a museum which is actively and sustainably decolonising its collections, programmes and practices to create a fairer, better and more equitable museum space.

Made up of an induction meeting, six half-day learning sessions, five half-day facilitated action learning set sessions and individual coaching calls, this programme will equip senior museum leaders with the necessary skills and knowledge to explore issues relating to racism within the sector, as well as the tools and action plans for critically exploring how their own institutions could be perpetuating systemic racism. The Anti-racist Museums Programme will be an intensive, rewarding and supported experience with an emphasis on “self as an instrument of change”. We purposely work with positionality in the programme and recognise the additional burden on global majority colleagues in undertaking this work. Global majority participants will be offered additional support, for example as a peer group within the 2026 cohort.

Participation in the Anti-racist Museums Programme will:

- increase participants’ knowledge and skills around structural, systemic and institutional racism endured by racialised people of colour, as well as examples of anti-racist practice within the heritage sector.
- build the capability of museum leaders to address the systems, processes, policies, practices and governance frameworks which perpetuate racism within their organisations.

- provide tools and techniques to critically engage with issues relating to racism in all its expressions within society, the sector and the respective organisations.
- prepare leaders to plan and take action to ensure that their organisations and their teams are working towards the development of becoming a fully-fledged anti-racist organisation.
- create agency, confidence and momentum to transfer the learning from this programme to their own respective institutions.
- create a consortium of museums who have publicly committed to tackling racism within their organisations and are actively creating opportunities for the professional development and advancement of museum professionals of colour.

By the end of the learning sessions participants should:

- be able to demonstrate a sophisticated understanding of racism and its complexities within the museum and cultural sectors.
- feel more confident and competent to start actively dismantling institutional racism within their own respective organisations.
- be conscious of their own actions and the actions of their institutions in creating an anti-racist organisation.
- engage with peers and stakeholders, for example through the ARMP alumni network, as an active coalition tackling racism.

Who we are looking for

We are looking for applications from museums in all four nations of the UK that are ready for the opportunity to participate in this programme. Participation is free, and the programme is an outstanding opportunity to bring together individual professional development and organisational development in an area that is vital for the future health and relevance of museums in the UK.

Please read the selection criteria below carefully and get in touch with any questions you have.

We are mindful that the programme will ask a lot of participants and we will work with you to support participants' emotional health throughout the process. It is important that you consider carefully who from your museum will join the programme and that they have

protected time and support to engage fully in the process, including time to reflect on sessions and take action. Talk Listen Create say: “We intentionally work with emotion and embodied experience during this programme. Resisting racism is not a purely intellectual pursuit. It requires our hearts, stomachs and spirit as well as our brains. So, it’s crucial that you think about how you will take care of yourself during this programme to support your learning and your ability to integrate what you learn. This is both an emotional and a practical necessity.”

Dates to commit to

Date	Events
27 July – 2 September 2026	Contact sally@museumsassociation.org with any questions about your application
Wednesday 2 September 2026	Application deadline
15 September – 24 September 2026	Online selection interviews
Tuesday 6 October 2026	Confirmation of 2026 cohort of museums
October – November 2026	Complete Supporting Anti-racism online learning course and baseline evaluation
Monday 2 November 2026	In person induction session at Birmingham Museum (14.00-16.00), the day before Museums Conference. The induction session will include: • building foundational knowledge • affinity and expectations during the programme • learning from ARMP alumni at Birmingham Museums ARMP participants are invited to a free day at Conference on Tuesday 03 November, where you can meet ARMP alumni at a networking session over lunchtime.
Thursday 03 December 2026	Learning session (am) Action Learning Set (pm)
Tuesday 12 January 2027	Learning session (am) Action Learning Set (pm)
Thursday 18 February 2027	Learning session (am) Action Learning Set (pm)

Wednesday 17 March 2027	Learning session (am) Action Learning Set (pm)
Thursday 15 April 2027	Learning session (am) Action Learning Set (pm)
Thursday 20 May 2027	Learning Session (am) Joint meeting with MA and ARMP alumni (pm) We plan for this meeting to be held in person, perhaps at a cohort member venue
Coaching calls will take place individually by appointment with TLC	

Selection criteria

Mandatory criteria

Applying organisations must meet the following criteria:

- The organisation commits 3-5 senior leaders* who will attend all learning sessions and relevant action learning and/or coaching throughout the programme. Individual participants will be named in the application form.
- All participants complete the MA's online learning course [Supporting Anti-racism](#) before the programme begins**.
- The organisation is ready to make the most of the opportunity to participate in the Anti-racist Museums Programme, evidenced by a background of policy documents and/or minuted decisions that are referenced in the application form; and a ring-fenced budget commitment to implement change as a result of the participating in the programme.
- The organisation is of a size and scale to achieve and measure substantive change because of this programme, evidenced by a description in the application form. We anticipate that this will be museums of medium to large size (a minimum of 10 FTE staff) but equally we are looking for applicants to make a case for their own potential.
- Applicants must be institutional members of the Museums Association and named participants must be individual members***.

Differentiating criteria

We are looking for museums that excel in one or more of the following:

- A strong case for the change that the individuals nominated to join the programme can make at an organisational level.
- A strong case for the change that the organisation can make and the potential impact that will have, e.g. in the place where the organisation is based, stakeholder communities and/or partner organisations.
- Creating a strong case study for the UK museum sector to learn from, for example through leading practice or modelling replicable change.

A balanced cohort

With limited places available, it is important for us to explore and evaluate impact in different contexts in the UK museum sector; and at this point we are selecting participants that can act as exemplars to others. This means we will balance the cohort that we select based on representing all four UK nations and a range of governance types.

* Each applying organisation will choose who will join the programme according to what works best for the applying organisation. We ask for this information in the application form so that a) organisations can think in advance about who is best to attend and plan for the care of participants; b) we can be sure that the named individuals are MA members who are committed to the programme and are well-positioned to make change at an organisational level; and c) all participants understand their commitment and set aside relevant dates for events. We imagine that larger organisations will send more participants, but this is for the applying organisation to decide. You are welcome to discuss your approach to who you select with the MA before you complete the application form.

** The online learning course builds participants' foundational knowledge as preparation for taking part in the programme. It takes time and we recommend you consider how to support your own and colleagues' wellbeing through this process. Participants will have at least one month in which to complete the course between places being confirmed and the first induction meeting, if they have not already done so.

*** The Anti-racist Museums Programme is pioneering, ambitious and challenging where commitment to the MA [Code of Ethics for Museums](#) and [Museums Change Lives](#) are essential; and where the resources available to MA members are highly beneficial, for example our online learning, wellbeing hub resources and support networks. ARMP is free-to-access and individual participants will receive a free day at MA Conference to attend the first induction meeting. Free individual memberships are available each year for [people facing barriers to inclusion](#).

How to apply

The closing date for applications is **11.59pm on 2 September 2026**.

Please send your completed application form to Sally Colvin at sally@museumsassociation.org.

To discuss your application and ask any questions you may have, please contact Sally Colvin at sally@museumsassociation.org. You can also book a Teams meeting directly using the following Calendly link: [Sally Colvin Calendly](#).