

## Press release

### Departures – immersive exhibition explores 400 years of emigration from Britain

*Departures*, a new immersive exhibition exploring 400 years of emigration from Britain from the *Mayflower* to the present day through personal narratives, contemporary art and a range of media, opens today (30 October 2020) at the Migration Museum in London.

British emigration has been one of the largest movements of people in modern history. Tens of millions of people have left the British Isles over the past 400 years. Today, some 75 million people across the world self-identify as having British ancestry, greater than the population of the UK itself.

But while immigration dominates debates, Britain's emigration story is often overlooked. Why is this? Who are the many millions who have departed these shores and why did they go? Can exploring their motivations help us better understand the motivations of people who arrive? What impact has this mass movement had on the world – and on Britain?

*Departures* puts this lesser-explored story at centre stage. Visitors will embark on an immersive journey starting in a 'Departures Lounge' featuring guidebooks for emigrants and an animated timeline, proceeding through 'Passport Control' to a series of themed 'Departure Gates' exploring reasons and motivations for leaving, finishing in an interactive 'Baggage Reclaim' hall in which visitors are invited to share their thoughts on the complex legacies of British emigration.

The exhibition features dozens of emigration stories spanning four centuries – from *Mayflower* Pilgrims to *Windrush* deportees, Cornish and Welsh emigrants to South America to 'Ten Pound Poms', Black Londoners resettled in Sierra Leone in the 1780s to Black Britons who have recently moved 'back' to their parents' countries of birth across West Africa.

Highlights include:

- An animated timeline exploring 400 years of British emigration by Bafta-nominated director Osbert Parker.
- Responses to the 400th anniversary of the *Mayflower* voyage by a range of voices including Sarah Sense, an artist of mixed Native American and European heritage; and historian Rebecca Fraser.
- *The Disowned Briton*, a textile tapestry by artist Rachelle Romeo, whose father was forced to prove his British nationality for 12 years as part of the Windrush Scandal.
- The story of the 'Dunera boys', Jewish refugees who had sought refuge in Britain wrongfully deported to Australia during WWII, told by TV presenter Nick Ross, whose father was one of the deportees.
- *Greetings from Europe* – postcards from Britons living across the EU as they face up to Brexit.
- *Repats* – stories of Black Britons who have moved 'back' to their parents' countries of birth across West Africa.

"It is impossible to quantify the huge impact that British emigration has had – both on Britain and the wider world. Yet we rarely talk about emigration in Britain, and when we do, we do so in a way which is largely detached from broader debates around migration – and often using very different language," says Aditi Anand, head of creative content at the Migration Museum and curator of the exhibition.

"We cannot begin to understand immigration, or contemporary Britain and its relationship with the world, without understanding Britain's emigration story. *Departures* places this story at the centre of conversations around migration and identity, inviting us to reflect on the reasons why people have left these shores over the past 400 years and how these are often similar to the reasons why people arrive."

*Departures* opens at the Migration Museum (Lewisham Shopping Centre, Molesworth Street, London SE13 7HB) on 30 October 2020. It runs until June 2021.

ENDS

For more information, contact Matthew Plowright: E: [matthew@migrationmuseum.org](mailto:matthew@migrationmuseum.org) T: +44 (0)7585117924

# Notes for editors

## **Visitor information**

### **Dates**

*Departures* opens to the public at the Migration Museum on Friday 30 October 2020 at 11am. It runs until June 2021.

### **Opening hours and admission**

*Departures* will be open Fridays–Sundays, from 11am–5pm. Admission is free and advance booking is not required – although, in line with Covid-secure guidelines, the Migration Museum may need to restrict the number of visitors in the exhibition at any time. For more information on the measures that the Migration Museum is taking to keep visitors, volunteers and staff safe, visit: [www.migrationmuseum.org/reopening](http://www.migrationmuseum.org/reopening).

### **Address**

Migration Museum

Unit 11, Lewisham Shopping Centre (Entrance in Central Square)

Molesworth Street

London SE13 7HB

For directions and visitor information, please visit: [www.migrationmuseum.org/visit](http://www.migrationmuseum.org/visit).

### **Contact details for visitors and general enquiries**

Telephone: 020 3488 4508

Email: [info@migrationmuseum.org](mailto:info@migrationmuseum.org)

### **Website and social media**

Website: [www.migrationmuseum.org](http://www.migrationmuseum.org)

Twitter: [@MigrationUK](https://twitter.com/MigrationUK)

Facebook: [@MigrationMuseumUK](https://www.facebook.com/MigrationMuseumUK)

Instagram: [@MigrationMuseumUK](https://www.instagram.com/MigrationMuseumUK)

Exhibition hashtag: #DeparturesMM

### **About the Migration Museum**

The Migration Museum explores how the movement of people to and from Britain across the ages has shaped who we are – as individuals, as communities, and as a nation. Migration is a pressing contemporary issue and is at the centre of polarised political and online debate. But there's an underlying story of comings and goings stretching back many centuries. And this story goes to the heart of who we are today. Britain has thousands of museums, but none comprehensively focused on this important theme that connects us all. The time is right for a highly relevant, accessible visitor attraction that shines a light on who we are, where we come from and where we are going.

From our current home in the heart of Lewisham Shopping Centre, we stage engaging, interactive exhibitions and dynamic events, alongside a far-reaching education programme for primary, secondary, university and adult learners. Our museum is reopening to the public on 23 October 2020. We also have a growing digital presence, and launched our first major digital exhibition, *Heart of the Nation: Migration and the Making of the NHS*, on 5 October 2020. For more information, visit [www.migrationmuseum.org](http://www.migrationmuseum.org)

### **Credits**

#### *Artists*

Becky-Dee Trevenen, Cat Santos, Dawn Parsonage, Ed Hall, Emma Bingham, Kate Anderson, Louise Daneels, Meryl McMaster, Osbert Parker, Rachelle Romeo, Sarah Sense, Sue McAlpine.

#### *Contributors*

Alan Taylor, Avril Loveless, Barry York, Carole and Norman, Carol Feldman, Clare Jethwa, Deborah Briers, Elwaldo Romeo, Hannah Ajala, James Evans, Jenny Mallin, Josh and Laura Thompson, Leslie Trotter, Lila Tognetti, Lucy Taylor, Michaela Benson, Nick Ross, Nico Yennaris, Rebecca Fraser, Sasha Perera, William Jervois

#### *Filmmakers*

Chocolate Films, Mark McEvoy, Tim Smith

### *Curators*

Aditi Anand, Sue McAlpine

### *Curatorial Assistant*

Debbie Meniru

### *Advisors*

Jean Smith, Jill Rutter, Jim Hammerton, Marilyn Barber, Marjory Harper, Martin Spafford, Michaela Benson, Murray Watson, Robert Winder, Sarah Kunz

### *Researchers*

Anaïs Walsdorf, Kam Puwar, Kate Kelsall, Liberty Melly, Lisa Lee, Maria Pintado, Mona Jamil

### *Interactive design*

Clay Interactive

### *Sound design*

Bill Bingham

### *Installation technician*

Nathan Black

### *Carpentry*

JPW Carpentry

### *Printers*

Image Print Centre, Panopus

### *Podcast*

Culture Wise Productions

### *Catalogue*

Andrew Steeds, Kalina Norton, Lewis Johnston

### *With thanks to:*

Al Thompson, Ian Murphy (National Museums Liverpool), Dr Johanne Devlin Trew (Mellon Centre for Migration Studies), Jonathan Beckett, Kim Tao (Australian Maritime Museum), Kate Clements (Imperial War Museum), Liam Corry, (National Museums Northern Ireland), LSE Library, Marion Osgood (OMF), Mike Kiernan (Cornish Global Migration Programme), Roger Kershaw and Hannah Carter (National Archives), Salvation Army International Heritage Centre, Stefan Dickers and Polly North (Bishopsgate Institute) and volunteers Carinya Sharples, Disha Deshpande, Haruna Takeda, Huizi Maio, Iman Zaman, Lewis Johnston, Molly Chapman, Nafang Liu, Nelima Islam, Seulgi Ryu, Valerie Ee and Yeona Lee.

### **Acknowledgments**

This exhibition is generously supported by Arts Council England; Goldsmiths, University of London; Hogan Lovells; Northwick Trust; the Stelios Philanthropic Foundation; and the US Embassy London. We would like to thank all of the artists, contributors, filmmakers, researchers, advisors, installers and everyone who has contributed to this exhibition and made it possible. We are grateful to all of our funders and donors, including Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, Paul Hamlyn Foundation, Alfred Caplin Charity Settlement, Trust for London and Unbound Philanthropy. We would also like to thank Landsec for generously enabling us to host our museum at Lewisham Shopping Centre.



Supported using public funding by  
**ARTS COUNCIL  
ENGLAND**

**Goldsmiths**  
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

*stelios*  
STELIOS PHILANTHROPIC  
FOUNDATION  
WWW.STELIOS.ORG



**For interview requests, media assets or more information, please contact Matthew Plowright:**

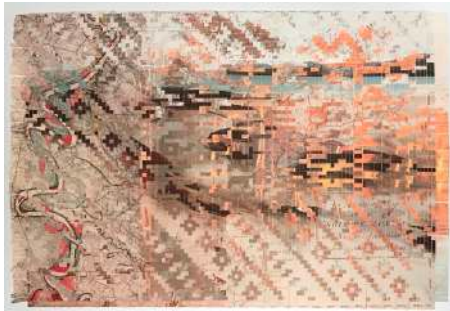
**Email: [matthew@migrationmuseum.org](mailto:matthew@migrationmuseum.org)**

**Telephone: +44 (0) 7585 117 924**

## Media assets

### Selected exhibition artwork, images and stories

#### **New Orleans 29.9372° N, 90.0615° W, Galway 53.2690° N, 9.0473° W – Sarah Sense (© Sarah Sense)**



"As a woman of mixed Native American and European heritage who lived in the United Kingdom and Ireland for over six years, I have experienced both sides of British-American colonialism. In light of the *Mayflower* anniversary and celebrations, I have found myself looking inward.

For this piece, I am connecting my own story of migration between these two continents with two historically significant ports: New Orleans, ancestral territory to the Chitimacha tribe of Louisiana; and Galway, a port explored by Christopher Columbus before sailing to North America, and where I once lived and where my first son was born."

#### **Poem for Hans (Image and text courtesy Nick Ross)**



"The '*Dunera* boys', including my father Hans, found themselves behind barbed wire outside a town called Hay. But, unlike the hostile British guards on board the *Dunera*, the Australians were relatively friendly – and bemused. After all, the internees must have been one of the most extraordinary group of prisoners ever assembled. Most Germans who had escaped from the Nazis were highly educated, and the internees quickly created their own orchestra, art classes, lectures and camp administration. Inmates printed their own newspapers, and even their own currency.

After their eventual release in 1941, many chose not to make the dangerous journey back to the UK and became notable contributors to Australia's academic, artistic, commercial and scientific communities. Others, like my father, returned to join the British Army, though they were often given support roles until the authorities came to trust those with German accents in their ranks." – Nick Ross

#### **Adjoa, from Repats: a project by Hannah Ajala (Image © Junior Dwaah)**



"I came to Ghana for a Christmas holiday. As I was leaving for the airport to go back to England, I was bawling my eyes out in the taxi. That's when I knew that I had to move back. And so I went back to England, packed up my stuff and moved.

It's going to sound so clichéd, but I moved to find myself. With everything that was going on in my life – my relationship breaking down, my health being down the gutter, me not feeling at home in England – I just had to leave and find who I am, what I want to do with my life." – Adjoa Manu

#### **Olive York in Brunswick, with pet cat (Image courtesy Barry York)**



"My mother, Olive York (née Turner), was born in Hackney in 1916 and grew up in West Hampstead. She lost her father when she was 10 and left school at the age of 14 to work as a photographic assistant. Olive lived through the Depression and the Blitz.

She married her Maltese husband, Loreto, in London in 1947. They migrated to Melbourne with me, aged 3, in 1954 – prompted by London's Great Smog. Mum told her sister, Vida, and brother, Gus, that she would be back within two years. However, she fell in love with Australia.

We settled in Brunswick, an industrial suburb of Melbourne where my mother continued to work in the photographic trade. During the 1970s, Loreto became Mayor of Brunswick and mum was Mayoress. In retirement, she became a community journalist for the local newspaper. She died in 2003. A local street is named in her honour." – Barry York



**The Disowned Briton – Rachelle Romeo (Artwork © Rachelle Romeo)**



“My father was one of the first to be thrown into the media spotlight after fighting to prove his British nationality for 12 years. I myself had to fight to prove his status and in doing so faced much adversity.

This tapestry expresses how I feel two years on; the turmoil, the anxiety and the distrust I have in my so-called country. A prose expressing the emotional aftermath of being affected directly by the Windrush Scandal in 2018.”

**Y Wladfa (Image: Welsh National costume 1911 © National Archives)**



“Why is there a Welsh community in Patagonia? They left Britain to set up a new Welsh homeland where they could govern themselves, trade and bring up their children according to Welsh values and in the Welsh language. In Wales, public life was conducted in English and Welsh people felt oppressed by English disdain for their tongue. Y Wladfa (the homeland/colony) was their paradoxical response, paradoxical because their anti-colonial effort entailed creating a colony. The Argentine government portrayed Patagonia as if it was theirs to give away, but actually it belonged to indigenous people. So was this stealing? Maybe, though government endorsed.

In fairness, the Welsh recognised the indigenous as ‘the original owners of this land’ and traded peacefully with them. Yet they also thought the ‘Indians’ were savage and inferior. What did the indigenous think? They were glad of a convenient place to trade and enjoyed Welsh bread, though few records remain. Why don’t we know more? Because the Argentine army arrived in 1885 and decimated indigenous society in the name of capitalism and civilisation.” – *Dr Lucy Taylor, Aberystwyth University*

**Journeys – Kate Anderson (Image: Life Below Deck, published in 'The Graphic', 1872 © Bridgeman Images)**



Many migrants spent weeks or months travelling to their destinations on board slow, crowded ships. The lucky few travelled first class, but the majority were confined to dark, unsanitary quarters below decks in “steerage”. Modern travel is more comfortable. But imagine if you had to endure an old-fashioned voyage. What would be going through your mind if you were leaving friends, family and loved ones behind forever and setting out to start a new life on the other side of the world?

*Journeys* is a 270-degree projection by animator Kate Anderson bringing to life historical drawings and paintings of sea journeys.

To arrange interviews with contributors or curators, for high-res images or for more information on stories and content in the exhibition, please contact:

**Matthew Plowright (Email: [matthew@migrationmuseum.org](mailto:matthew@migrationmuseum.org) Tel: +44 7585 117 924)**