

"What do we owe the past?"

We live in an age where we are becoming increasingly aware of the effects of historical events which have disadvantaged and continue to affect the development of some nations and their people. Recently the Church of England Commissioners revealed that part of their investment fund (currently £10.1 B. of assets) originated in Queen Anne's Bounty in 1714, and a significant amount of this was invested in the South Sea Company which traded in enslaved people. There is also evidence that several benefactors, like Edward Colston were involved in the Slave Trade. The Church of England announced on the 10th January that it has set up an "Impact Fund" of £100,000,000 to try and address those historic advantages that it gained from what is generally agreed to be one of the greatest crimes against humanity.

David Olusuga is a historian and Professor of Public history at the University of Manchester - he described the Church Commissioners actions as "an enormous step forward." Over the years there have been estimates, and indeed demands for compensation ranging from Billions to Trillions of Dollars.

When Thomas Savery filed his first patent for the steam engine on July 2nd 1698 I don't suppose he ever imagined he had started a train of events that would lead to a Climate Crisis in 2023. On 19th November 2022 a "Loss and Damage Fund" was agreed at COP27 to help smaller nations cope with the irreparable damage of flood, drought, and other climate fuelled impacts. The US and EU have previously resisted the idea of such a fund fearing it would leave nations like the US and the UK being sued for Billions of pounds in reparations.

I was not around when Queen Anne was investing in the South Sea Company, but I have grown up in a country that at one time held sway over about a third of the world and accumulated huge wealth, often at the expense of indigenous people.

Where is justice in all this? and what do we owe those whose development was harmed by the acts of our ancestors?