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Remembering Slavery, Forgetting Indenture?

Bangor University, UK, September 9-10, 2011

Bangor University, UK, in conjunction with the Centre for the Study of International Slavery in Liverpool. 2011 marks the ten-year anniversary of the French Taubira law of 21 May 2001, which recognized the slave trade and slavery perpetrated in the Americas, the Caribbean, the Indian Ocean and Europe as a crime against humanity. This key date provides an opportunity to examine responses to memories of slavery which have emerged in France and internationally over the past decade. It enables us to reflect upon the recent substantial body of research that has been conducted into the cultural processes of remembering and representing slavery and the slave trade. Importantly, however, it also leads us to question whether this 'memory law' has opened up a space in which to explore memories of other, interconnected forms of colonial exploitation, such as indentured and forced labour. Has the emphasis on the need to defend the memory of the enslaved equated to a failure to recognize other forms of colonial and post-slavery exploitation?



The focus of this two-day conference will be on comparing the continuities and discontinuities between the ways in which slavery, indenture and forced labour have been remembered, narrativized and commemorated. It will bring into dialogue academics working on memories of slavery with those working on memories of indentured and forced labour systems, particularly in France and the former French colonies, but also extending to other global contexts. Confirmed keynote speakers are Dr Françoise Vergès (Goldsmiths, University of London), head of the Committee for the Memory and History of Slavery in France, and Professor Charles Forsdick, James Barrow Professor of French at the University of Liverpool. Taking a comparative, interdisciplinary approach, the conference will call into question the chronological and semantic divides between slavery and indenture by fostering debate around key questions, such as: Historical and contemporary definitions of slavery and forms of enslavement, indenture and forced labour: where to draw the lines? Processes of remembering, forgetting, commemorating and memorializing that have shaped

representations of slavery, indenture and forced labour (in historiography, museums, literature, film, etc.). France's 'memory wars': colonialism, slavery and the problem of the devoir de mémoire. Constructing identities and cultural memories of slavery and indentured labour in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries (for example, literary and political movements such as négritude, créolité, coolitude). Ongoing economic, cultural, social and political effects of slavery, indenture and forced labour in former colonial contexts. Individual papers should be no longer than 20 minutes. Please send a 250-300 word abstract and a brief biography to Nicola Frith (n.frith@bangor.ac.uk) or Kate Hodgson (K.Hodgson@liverpool.ac.uk) by 29 April 2011.