

MAPPING HISTORIES AND TRACING LIVES

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How do we restore the humanity behind the numbers of the slave trade? What does it mean to write history from the perspective of those born free, rather than those defined by their enslavement? How can digital tools help us trace the movement, resilience, and testimony of African individuals across centuries and continents?

This launch event serves as the official re-launch of Freedom Narratives, a digital humanities project that reframes our understanding of the trans-Atlantic slave trade by centering the biographies of people born in Africa between the 16th and 19th centuries. Moving beyond traditional 'slave narratives', the project curates a growing online repository of testimonies, legal records, and biographical data capturing where individuals came from, why they were enslaved, and what became of them. In this new phase of the project, we are demonstrating not only how our large dataset allows us to trace the movement of individuals, but also how to record life narratives, map life trajectories across the Atlantic Ocean, and show personal connections between different groups of people. In many cases, these are stories of people born free who later reclaimed their freedom, or who never experienced enslavement at all. By treating narratives as fundamental units of analysis, Freedom Narratives challenges us to see the past through individual lives, not aggregate suffering.

During this symposium, we invite specialists to discuss various forms of gathering life narratives to show the diversity of experiences and methodologies.

The event is generously supported by the Medicine and the Making of Race project at King's College London, directed by Hannah Murphy.



King's College London



Monday, 7 September 2026



9:30 AM – 6 PM (BST)

Event Registration Link:

fn-launch.eventbrite.com

PROGRAM OF ACTIVITIES

- 9:30 AM Registration & Welcome Refreshments
- 10:00 AM Freedom Narratives website launch
- 11:30 AM Panel 1: Fragmented Archives, Writing Narratives
- 1:00 PM Lunch Break
- 2:15 PM Panel 2: Life Narratives on the Body
- 3:45 PM Coffee Break
- 4:00 PM Panel 3: Mapping Narratives, Location and Displacement
- 5:30 PM Closing Remarks
- 6:00 PM Reception

Co-organized by:

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