



# HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT

## Commission brief for an artist residency to commemorate and celebrate the development of race discrimination legislation

### Appendix Two – Case Study

During 2015, as part of a year-long engagement programme, *Parliament in the Making*, The Speakers' Advisory Group for the 2015 Anniversaries commissioned nine artists to create 18 large-scale banners to hang in Westminster Hall. This exhibition, *The Beginning of that Freedom*, ran from January 20 2015 until December 12 2015, during which time an estimated 750,000 members of the public visited the Hall and encountered the banners.

Covering 800 years of constitutional history, each banner provided a dynamic visual representation of the milestone moments and movements which 'made a difference' in the journey to rights and representation. Starting with Magna Carta in 1215, the banners covered the great extension of the franchise to working men and women, in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century, and came right up to date with 'Parliament Now' in 2015. They included more recent events, such as the 1965 Race Relations Act, the 1967 Sexual Offences Act, and the 1995 Disability Discrimination Act. Many of them marked key pieces of legislation such as the Bill of Rights. Others – such as the Putney Debates, or the struggle of the Tolpuddle Martyrs or the Women's Suffrage Movement – marked moments not when people actually achieved rights or liberties, but when the aspiration for them was articulated in a clear and ringing way that still resonates profoundly today. Brief text accompanying each artwork brought the history into the modern context, for example the Abolition of Slavery banner marked the 1807 Abolition of the Slave Trade but also encompassed The Modern Slavery Bill (which became law during the exhibition run). During September 2015, the themes of the banners were explored more deeply through *Festival of Freedoms* - a series of 30 walks, talks, workshops and lectures.

The nine artists were selected through an open-call process. They were chosen to reflect the diversity of the UK population, as well as representing a variety of art forms, and different levels of experience. In doing so, the commissioners hoped to provide a truly popular response to the histories covered by the exhibition. It was important that the artists had or felt a specific connection and/or interest in the subjects that they were exploring, the group therefore included artists who identified themselves as disabled, LGBT+ and BAME. The artists and their banner themes were:

- [Alinah Azadeh](#) - 1965 Race Relations Act and the 1897 founding of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies
- [Maria Amidu](#) - 1807 Abolition of the Slave Trade Act and the 1628 Petition of Right
- [Ross Birrell](#) - 1265 Simon de Montfort Parliament and The Putney Debates of 1647
- [Ruth Ewan](#) - 1215 Magna Carta and the 1771 Wilkes: Freedom of Speech in Parliament
- [Rachel Gadsden](#) - 1829 Catholic Emancipation Act and the 1601 Poor Law
- [Joel Millerchip](#) - Parliament 2015 and the 1833 Factory Act
- [Ross Sinclair](#) - 1838 The People's Charter and the 1689 Bill of Rights
- [Paula Stevens-Hoare](#) - 1832 The Great Reform Act and the 1967 Sexual Offences Act
- [Jason Wilsher-Mills](#) - 1833 The Tolpuddle Martyrs and the 1995 Disability Discrimination Act

At the end of the exhibition, the banners were gifted to a range of organisations who had an appropriate link to the banner content and who could continue to allow the public to interact with them on an ongoing basis. These organisations include: Brunel University, Lewes Town Council, Quarry Bank and Styal (National Trust), Shape Arts, St Mary's Church Putney, The National Federation of Women's Institutes and Shire Hall, Dorchester.

More information on: <http://www.parliament.uk/2015-banners-exhibition> and <http://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/evolutionofparliament/2015-parliament-in-the-making/get-involved/2015-parliament-in-the-making-events/the-beginnings-of-that-freedom-/>

