

Annotated Bibliography: Addressing Racially Offensive Language, Artifacts and Figures in Heritage Contexts

This annotated bibliography compiles museum, academic, and media sources that document how racially offensive language has been addressed in heritage, cemetery, and memorial contexts. The sources demonstrate a range of approaches including contextualization, renaming, replacement, removal, consultation, and archival retention. Each annotation notes how racially offensive language was managed in practice, providing relevant precedent to support Council decision-making.

Atlas Obscura. (2020, August 14). The museum where racist and oppressive statues go to die. <https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/museum-of-toxic-statues-berlin>

This article describes how racially offensive monuments are removed from public honorific settings and placed in a museum where they are clearly contextualized. Racist language and symbolism are addressed through non-heroic display and interpretive text that explicitly critiques the values represented.

Auret, H., & du Preez, J. L. (2024). Rescripting contested monuments amid shifting regionings of concern. *Built Heritage*, 8(1), 53. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1186/s43238-024-00161-0>

This case study examines how a racially and politically contentious monument was recontextualized through design interventions before being removed. Offensive commemorative meaning was destabilized through interpretation and consultation prior to relocation.

Burch-Brown, J. (2022). Should slavery's statues be preserved? On transitional justice and contested heritage. *Journal of Applied Philosophy*, 39(5), 807–824. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/japp.12485>

This article analyzes how racially offensive monuments and inscriptions can be managed through preservation with interpretation, recontextualization, removal, or reclamation, emphasizing the need for explicit acknowledgment of racial harm.

Canadian Art. (2016, October 3). Offensive artwork titles in Canadian museums: What's in a name? <https://canadianart.ca/features/offensive-terminology-in-artwork-titles/>

This article documents how Canadian museums address racially offensive language in titles by renaming works for public display while retaining original terminology in archives, supported by interpretive explanation.

Collections Trust. (2021, July 26). Tackling racist language in collections.

<https://collectionstrust.org.uk/spectrum-resources/cataloguing-spectrum/tackling-racist-language-in-collections/>

This guidance outlines a systematic approach to identifying racist language in collections and replacing it with appropriate terms, supported by contextual notes explaining historical usage.

Coventry Live. (2020, July 3). Racist pet gravestone removed from Coombe Abbey Park. <https://www.coventrytelegraph.net/news/coventry-news/racist-pet-gravestone-coombe-abbey-18535192>

This article reports on the permanent removal of a racially offensive pet gravestone in Coventry. The stone was removed following public concern and heritage consultation, with the artifact retained in archives rather than displayed publicly.

Deseret News. (2011, October 18). Calif. headstones marked with racial slur replaced. <https://www.deseret.com/2011/10/18/20224109/calif-headstones-marked-with-racial-slur-replaced/>

This article reports on the replacement of human grave markers at the Mormon Island Relocation Cemetery in California. Racially offensive language that had been carved into headstones during a 1954 relocation was removed during a 2011 project, with new monuments created using appropriate language.

Historic New Orleans Collection. (n.d.). Statement on harmful or offensive content. <https://catalog.hnoc.org/web/arena/thnoc-statement-on-harmful-or-offensive-content>

This statement explains how racially offensive language is retained only where historically necessary and addressed through clear contextual statements that emphasize documentation rather than endorsement.

Jim Crow Museum of Racist Memorabilia. (n.d.). Why I collect racist objects. <https://jimcrowmuseum.ferris.edu/collect.htm>

This essay explains how racially offensive language and imagery are deliberately retained and interpreted through blunt explanatory text to confront and educate audiences about historical racism.

London Museum. (n.d.). Making collections more inclusive. <https://www.londonmuseum.org.uk/collections/improving-our-collections/making-collections-more-inclusive/>

This statement outlines how racially offensive language in collections is acknowledged, contextualized, and interpreted in ways that explicitly distance the institution from discriminatory viewpoints.

Museums Victoria. (n.d.). Cultural stereotypes & racism in Museums Victoria collections. <https://collections.museumsvictoria.com.au/articles/13230>

This article explains how racially offensive language and imagery are identified, explicitly labeled as harmful, and reinterpreted through a decolonizing framework.

National Coalition Against Censorship. (2019). Museum best practices for managing controversy. <https://ncac.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Museum-Best-Practices-2019.pdf>

This resource advises institutions to address racially offensive language through transparency, public communication, and interpretive framing rather than censorship.

Sky News. (2020, July 17). Dambusters dog's memorial replaced by RAF to remove racist name. <https://news.sky.com/story/amp/dambusters-dogs-memorial-replaced-by-raf-to-remove-its-racist-name-12030664>

This article documents the replacement of a Royal Air Force dog memorial in Lincolnshire due to racially offensive language. The new gravestone removes the name while retaining historical context, allowing commemoration without repeating the offensive term.

TV Ontario. (2019, August 27). Why Museum London is using racist artifacts to fight prejudice. <https://www.tvo.org/article/why-museum-london-is-using-racist-artifacts-to-fight-prejudice>

This article describes how racially offensive language and imagery are retained within exhibitions but reframed through explicit interpretation to explain their role in historical prejudice.

University of Reading. (n.d.). Statement on potentially harmful content – Museums and collections. <https://collections.reading.ac.uk/about-us/statement-on-potentially-harmful-content/>

This statement outlines how racially offensive language is retained but contextualized through updated descriptions, consultation, and transparency.