

Geography Club statues and colonialism first session – reading materials and discussion questions

Here's a video to watch and a short article to read. We recommend you stop reading when you get to the part about India, as it gets a little complex and our discussion will mainly focus on Rhodes.

Just a warning, these sources may discuss colonial violence and other difficult themes. Please don't feel like you have to keep reading if you're uncomfortable or upset with any of it.

Video: <https://youtu.be/6WekKiNtFf4>

Article: <https://thedisorderofthings.com/2016/04/02/on-statues/>

Questions

You don't need to think about all these questions, they're just to get you thinking about the topic and to guide your reading. If you think of any questions that arise while you're reading/thinking about the topic, feel free to write them down and we can try to answer them during the session!

- What do you think should happen to the Rhodes statue?
- Why do you think Geographers are interested in the question and idea of statues?
- Why do you think some people believe we should leave all statues in place, even if they're offensive to some people?
- Do you think it's significant that the debate around statues was reignited after the death of George Floyd and subsequent BLM protests?
- Are all statues controversial?
- How can we make statues in the future that aren't controversial/imbued with colonial legacies? Should we ditch statues entirely?
- If you were in power, which statue – out of the ones we've discussed today or other ones you're aware of – would you pull down and why?
- Are we being dramatic about statues? Too emotional?
- How would it make you feel to live next to a statue of a leader who had oppressed you?
- How should Oxford confront its colonial history? This might involve many different things.
- As geographers, and maybe one day Oxford geographers, what can we do to encourage a re-assessment of statues?