Good morning, my name is Carol Rogers and I am the Executive Director for Education, Communities and Visitors at NML.

Our seminar this morning is entitled: Children Young People and Human Rights and we have invited international colleagues to share aspects of their education work with young people. Unfortunately that is slight an amendment to our programme, as due to unforeseen circumstances; Martin Earing will not be presenting his paper as described.

However it is our intention is to engage you with an informative and thought provoking seminar wherein we hope to inspire and stimulate an interesting discussion between us.

To begin, I would like to invite pupils from Gateacre Community Comprehensive in Liverpool to present a short performance of the importance of human rights for children and young people…….

Here at National Museums Liverpool we believe that Cultural engagement enriches the lives of young people. We believe that all young people have the right to an education that nurtures their imagination and creativity, engages their cultural interests and takes them on new journeys as participants, audiences, leaders and creators of culture. We believe that cultural and creative expression is essential for the young to achieve their full potential. It contributes directly to their self confidence, their ability to problem solve, their sense of self-discipline and their communication skills; all vital elements to academic success. Culture can reach out to the young in profound ways, nurturing their talents and re-engaging them when they feel disaffected and marginalised by society.

In the Children’s Plan in 2007, the UK government stated that this was their plan ‘to make Britain the best place in the world to grow up’. Part of that plan focused on the entitlement for young people to have positive places to go and things to do. We live in a world where young people no longer simply want to be passive consumers – they want to be creators, curators, producers. And they live in a world where they can – they can make movies on their mobile phones, take photos all day long, blog about their experiences, have books published before they’re 16. It’s an age of immense cultural productivity and we need to listen to
what young people and children are telling us about how we can support them to engage and access cultural heritage and sensitive histories within.

At NML, we’re developing a new direction and way of working with children and young people and the teachers, scholars, universities and agencies who support their education and development. We understand that Young People have the right to engage in a wide range of cultural forms including those from now as well as those that are inherited from the past and we are developing a new charter for our organisation which identifies that young people have the right:

- to make informed choices about what cultural activities they engage with and how.
- to construct their identity through meaningful interaction with the stories and objects of the past
- to knowledge – knowledge of the enormous body of cultural products that have been produced by human beings throughout the ages
- to access information about the wide range of cultural opportunities available to them and to ask for those that are not
- to have cultural experiences that are relevant and meaningful to them, and the right to reject those that aren’t.
- right to constantly test the cultural products of the past for their meaning and relevance to them now.
- right to feel comfortable in a range of cultural and heritage organisations and venues – as citizens these spaces belong to them
- right to belong to society and feel valued by that society for what they produce
- right to the wide range of benefits that participation in culture can bring

If we’re going to talk about rights, we have to look at barriers. Having the right to engage doesn’t mean you have the confidence, financial ability and the desire to. The main barriers, as we understand them are NML are: attitudinal (museums are not for people like us), spatial (some of our buildings, inherited from another era, are quite daunting), economic (I don’t have the money to engage or I’d prefer to spend it on something else), time (too much else to do), physiological (it makes me feel uncomfortable), psychological (the museum staff will know I’m a fraud and kick me out), motivational (I can’t be bothered), confidence (lack of perceived knowledge/education).
For many children these barriers (perceptual and real) are part of their experience from a very young age and become part of their subconscious behaviors, attitudes and feelings as they grow up. So if we’re going to ensure all children and young people feel equipped to take up their rights, we should aim to embed cultural engagement in early childhood education and create equal opportunity for families to regularly participate together in arts, heritage and cultural experiences.

ISM Core Education programme

At NML is located in one of the most deprived areas in the UK and we are working hard to understand the contexts that we are working in. We cannot exist in a vacuum and need to acknowledge the social realities of our local schools and education community, to acknowledge that they too hold a wealth of knowledge and to create a listening relationship. We’re developing a partnership approach to become genuine enablers of wider participation, and facilitators of lifelong learning across our community.

A good example, is our education programme at the International Slavery Museum where the narrative of the slave trade is placed alongside an exploration of human rights issues today, many of which have their origin in that time. This helps people connect the injustices of history to the injustices of today, rendering it more contemporary and relevant.

Our education programme is focused to offer a positive cultural experience from early childhood, which develops through primary and secondary school education, whilst encouraging families and communities to regularly participate and learn together. Our collaboration with local schools aims to ensure that every child gets the chance to engage on a sustained consistent basis and our partnership with national and international scholars and teachers, aims to establish NML as a centre of excellence for the teaching of sensitive histories.

Case Studies

"We Are One": Exhibition using young people’s responses to the International Slavery Museum

After the first year of its opening, the International Slavery Museum displayed an exhibition called "We are One". The exhibition charted people’s responses to the museum and the lead art work was that produced by students from St. Mary’s College after they had participated in ISM Education Sessions. The exhibition also included letters and drawings that had been sent to museum staff after their visits. Once the exhibition was taken down it was donated to St. Mary’s College for their displays. Pictures and quotes please

The Civil Rights Movement": KS4 Network Project
Working in partnership with local secondary schools, students learn about non violent strategies and the work of individuals such as Diane Nash, watching a performance of "Keep Your Eyes on the Prize" before creating short animations. These short animated films were shown in the Treasure House Theatre and the parents of the students involved were invited to attend. Pictures and quotes please

International Teachers Institute Ghana 2009
In August 2009, National Museums Liverpool worked in with Liverpool Hope University. To develop unique transatlantic teachers training programme that brought together teachers from three different continents to share their experiences, ideas and approaches to teaching the history of transatlantic slavery.

Ten teachers from England began the program by completing five intensive days of training at the International Slavery Museum in Liverpool to provide detailed subject knowledge and an insight into a variety of suitable approaches to teaching sensitive histories.

Once the five day training program was completed, the UK teachers flew to Ghana, where they met with other teachers from Ghana and the United States of America. Staying at the Kokrobitey Institute near to Accra, the teachers spent ten days living, working and socialising together as they shared experiences and exchanged ideas.

Keynote lectures were delivered by leading academics form the UK and USA sharing detailed knowledge and which provided an invaluable opportunity for participants to discuss concerns and questions with leading academics. The lecture program in Ghana was also supported by a number of excursions, which enhanced teachers' learning and experiences. Often referred to as visits to “places of memory” whilst in Ghana, participants will remember their experiences of Cape Coast and Elmina Castle for a lifetime. The teachers were given guided walks and able to see the places they discuss in a classroom first hand, which has most definitely had an impact upon their teaching back at school.

Once the UK teachers returned to England, they met for a series of workshops, during which time they devised their own Continuing Professional Development session to be delivered to other teachers from around the UK. The CPD day is now offered by those same teachers at intervals throughout the academic year at the International Slavery Museum. The first was delivered to an ITE group in January who commented that they had “Outcomes please ….

International teachers Institute 2010
In July this year, we recruited twenty new teachers from across the UK to participate in the second phase of our programme, hosted at the International Slavery Museum in Liverpool.

Need more detail please

What Next?
Across the museum sector we all need to advocate for the rights of all children and young people to access, create, participate in and benefit from cultural opportunities. If we are to do this properly, we really need to place the young person at the heart – of our work, our organisations, our institutions, and value what they bring as much as what we bring to them. It is only through mutual reciprocal exchange with children and young people that real growth and change can happen.

If we can create a society where culture is embedded in the fabric of everyday life for every child, where it’s not something strange but something very familiar, I believe it would make an enormous contribution to young people growing up happy, capable and resilient – young people growing up confident in their cultural literacy. It would result in a more vibrant culture, culturally literate citizens and a genuinely creative future for all of our children and young people