



## **Arms Wide Open**

Case Studies on diversity from the 2019 International  
Conference of National Trusts, Bermuda

---

## Foreword

### Queen Quet

### Chieftess of the Gullah/Geechee Nation



Throughout the world, the stories of the Transatlantic Slave Trade are often ignored or diminished in the field of historic interpretation. Thus, the doors and gates of many of the locations of National Trust properties are not places that people of African descent find trustworthy. How can spaces that were built with the blood, sweat, tears, hands, and intellect of people of African descent not include the stories of African people unless they are in the state of subjugation or being used as tools of entertainment? How do we change this incorrect depiction that has proliferated these spaces? Whose heritage matters? These are the questions that took not only arms to open wide, but minds, mouths and wounds to open as well as the members of the International National Trusts Organisation gathered at the conference in Bermuda.

The Spirit led me to ensure that my keynote address that opened “Arms Wide Open” would embody the theme, which could not be fulfilled if we were unable to get up and stand together holding hands in a circle. This would allow us to feel our global connections and truly face and look at one another. Arms that may have been unwilling to open automatically had to open, as each person reached out on the right and left to touch the next person. With this voluntary opportunity to enter the circle of healing, trust was necessary. Everyone in attendance showed that they were willing to trust this process and the journey that we would now take hand in hand together.

Immediately following the conclusion of the circle, I was encircled by the arms of various people from around the world who were truly open to examining the topics that the committee had outlined, including “Whose Heritage Counts?” For me, that roundtable dialogues should have been a plenary session, because when one thinks of maintaining historic sites and providing for programming therein, calculating the funding is often all that boards think of. However, we challenged them to think on how you calculate the loss of cultural heritage? How do you calculate the psychological damage and pay restitution for the damage caused by attempts to eliminate the stories of your people from the earth by damaging their temples, destroying their written and artistic works and revising and promoting narratives that make it appear that African people have only been enslaved and do not have humanity, intellect, spirituality, and tremendous accomplishments?

The challenge that was put forth at “Arms Wide Open” remains to be accepted and overcome by each and every director and board member of a national trust that was present. Will the arms be open to remove the paintings and erroneous captions from the walls and grounds of the sites that they oversee and then replace these with accurate stories that respectfully include the cultural heritage of ALL people and that elevate the status of the “Black history” and African legacies of all of these spaces? I put my hands together faithfully in prayer that this will be the case. I pray that full funding will be appropriated to have people of African descent tell the stories of the Africans that built these historic places and that literally slaved to build these communities and countries to which tourists flock annually. When this is the case, we can embrace and the healing that started flowing into the circle in Bermuda can and will spread around the world.

---

## Introduction

**Catherine Leonard**

**Secretary-General of INTO**



What is ‘cultural diversity’? Article 1 of the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity refers to it as ‘a source of exchange, innovation and creativity [...] as necessary for humankind as biodiversity is for nature’.

But what does it mean to us, the National Trust movement, in practice? At our sites and in our work, we want all people to feel welcome. Wherever they come from, no matter the colour of their skin, faith, language, age, sexual orientation, ability, culture or heritage. But what about the more complicated questions relating to cultural diversity? How to balance the different sites and values recognised by diverse groups? What skills do we need to develop to better understand the heritage issues of different communities? Is the demographic of our profession a problem? And what can we do to build trust?

At our conference in March 2019, we heard from delegates, including many INTO member organisations, about the work they are doing to increase diversity, inclusion and equality. This report captures some of the best practice that was discussed there. It brings together examples of work by National Trusts globally that responds to these questions, from across the spectrum of the movement. We hope that the case studies can act to inspire further activity, as well as providing a framework for activity in other parts of the world and so we’ve linked them wherever possible to tangible resources that can provide inspiration, learning or be a practical template. INTO’s members are typically sector-leading in their national contexts; this report aims to share that best practice in an international arena.

It is generally accepted that heritage programming should be linked to issues of race, diversity and social justice, although that hasn’t always been the case. And whilst we’ve made huge progress as a movement, some vestiges of that mistrust, misunderstanding and misrepresentation can linger on.

I believe that INTO can have a role in creating group cohesion, building trust, comfort and space for the benefit of our global National Trust community. INTO is a wonderfully diverse organisation. It brings together heritage conservation organisations from over 60 countries and territories: big and small; young and old. All are different and our job is to pull together the threads that connect them. By creating space for these organisations to learn from each other, cooperate and innovate, we enable them to grow and develop.

Some might think that the work of a National Trust is about preserving places for the benefit of future generations. That’s certainly true, but it’s also about telling stories, providing access and creating space for reflection today. As David Brown asked in his conference address: ‘What if the period of significance is now?’, echoing Augustus Casely-Hayford’s plea for heritage to ‘draw communities together to forge common narrative and [provide] shared spaces where we can all feel comfortable’. The case studies that follow show heritage preservation firmly within its external context. Not as something elite or irrelevant. That, I think is what cultural diversity is about.

---

## Resources

We've collected materials from the INTO members with work included in this document. Underlined text in the INTO logos throughout the document is clickable content, simply hold ctrl and click to leave this document and learn more.

We hope that the addition of this content will provide inspiration, learning and tools.

If you're reading a print version of this document and would like to access the links, please access the digital version at [bitly.com/INTOReport](http://bitly.com/INTOReport).

## Resources

---

### **Be inspired**

Click here to see  
Queen Quet's  
Keynote Address  
*[link to YouTube]*

### **Learn more**

Learn more about  
the Gullah /  
Geechee culture  
*[link to website]*

### **Join INTO**

Learn more about  
membership  
on INTO's website  
*[link to website]*

### **Be inspired**

Follow INTO on  
Twitter  
for updates  
*[link to Twitter]*

---

## A diverse society: ethnicity

Delegates in Bermuda discussed techniques for inclusive interpretation, sharing examples of how they have engaged with minority communities within their own societies. In Italy, the *Fondo Ambiente Italiano* (FAI) has piloted a programme that gives heritage in Italy meaning for those who were not born there. FAI *Ponte tra culture*, a bridge between cultures to culture, offers free courses on Italian art history to people born outside of Italy but who are living or working there, before inviting them to give tours of the heritage from their own perspective, targeted at both Italians and others of their own culture.

As part of *Ponte tra culture*, recent migrants to Italy have interpreted FAI collections in their native language for both Italians and people from their own community. For example, volunteers with roots in Africa and Latin America have interpreted the Mexican and African collections at the Villa Panza in Arabic and Spanish. Pictured is a Chinese resident in Italy who has presented an East Asian collection to an Italian audience, situating it within her personal experience and understanding of China. FAI highlights how the FAI *Ponte tra culture* programme brings together the rich diversity of modern Italian society, building a bridge to ensure that all those living in Italy can appreciate it.



*Ponte tra culture* © FAI

FAI is a non-profit organisation founded in 1975, with headquarters in Milan and sites across Italy. Sites include public historical buildings, castles, gardens and natural areas, open thanks to the contributions of thousands of visitors, private supporters and companies. The Trust organises national events throughout Italy, opening hundreds of historical, cultural and natural sites to the public for free. FAI's core mission is to educate and create awareness among the public of the beauty and value of Italy's vast cultural, historical and natural heritage.

---

Engaging with a variety of audiences in a meaningful way was also key for Lauren Williams, Conservation Officer at the National Trust for Guyana, created by an act of parliament in 1972 with a mandate to promote the permanent preservation of property of beauty or historic interest. The Guyanese state recognises six main ethnicities within the nation's population and Lauren's National Trust has at times grappled with expectations from partners that programming should always reflect all six groups equally.

In consultation with its audience, however, NT Guyana has found that the public can react poorly if community engagement heritage work appears artificial or tokenistic in its approach to diversity. Lauren explained to our audience in Bermuda that the best approach to take may depend on specific cultural norms or expectations, so there can be no 'one size fits all' approach. Instead, NT Guyana gives careful consideration at the whole trust level, delivering a range of targeted programmes to engage as broadly as possible through the country's diverse population, making the most of opportunities afforded by events like 'Amerindian Heritage Month' to focus programming around a group in a meaningful way.

## Resources

---

### Learn more

**Read about Ponte  
Tra Cultura from FAI**  
*[link to website, in  
Italian]*

### Be inspired

**Read about the  
Villa Panza  
Collection on FAI's  
website**  
*[link to website]*

### Elsewhere

**See the Cross-  
Cultural Foundation of  
Uganda's statement  
on Diversity**  
*[link to website]*

### Be inspired

**See an example of NT  
Guyana's Amerindian  
heritage focus**  
*[link to pdf]*

## A diverse society: Youth

The National Trust movement is at times associated with an older demographic: stately home enthusiasts with time to volunteer post-retirement. However, the International Conference of National Trusts (ICNT) 2019 in Bermuda provided an opportunity to see some of the innovative programming that INTO members are developing for a younger audience.

Her Royal Highness Princess Dana Firas of Jordan, President of the Board at the Petra National Trust (PNT), gave an impassioned keynote address that outlined the PNT's commitment to working with youth in Jordan as a cornerstone of its heritage advocacy and outreach. Petra National Trust is Jordan's national institution for the protection and preservation of national cultural heritage – with a focus on the World Heritage Site of Petra. It aims to instil a sense of identity and pride in Jordan's cultural and natural heritage.

---

PNT's work with children and youth has included design and implementation of curricula relating to Jordan's heritage, reaching well over 3000 young people between 2010-2019. More recently, PNT commissioned an impact assessment of its education, outreach and awareness programme, delivered by EUNIC, the European Union National Institutes for Culture, which identified PNT's programmes as the largest and most sustainable civil society initiative in the Ma'an Governorate.



*Jordanian child engages with heritage at Petra © Petra National Trust*

On behalf of PNT, Princess Dana persuasively made the case that work in the heritage space must focus more on youth, an experience echoed by INTO members National Trust for Land and Culture of British Columbia, Canada and the National Trust for Trinidad and Tobago. Both won INTO Awards in Bermuda for their excellent programming that meaningfully works with youth to enliven their engagement with cultural heritage.

In Trinidad and Tobago, the National Trust has been dedicated to the preservation of built and natural heritage since its formation in 1991, with a board that combines elected and government appointed experts.

The Trust's 'Heritage Keepers' youth programme is establishing vibrant heritage clubs in some 20 schools across the islands. Education about historic architecture and heritage sites is delivered in a fun and creative way to capture the youth, with the content closely tailored to the national education syllabus on topics including history and social studies. The National Trust of Trinidad and Tobago takes the children who are becoming Heritage Keepers on a tour of their local heritage, including Port of Spain's 'Magnificent Seven', a famous grouping of mansion houses. The Heritage Keepers programme creates longevity and relevance of the work of the National Trust of Trinidad and Tobago through youth engagement.



Heritage Keepers programme © National Trust of Trinidad and Tobago

### **Be inspired**

Hear about the PNT's  
social objectives  
achieved through  
education

*[link to YouTube]*

### **Adapt & use**

Heritage Hunt  
Worksheet used in  
Trinidad

*[link to doc: 0.5MB]*

### **Learn more**

Find out the details  
of the Heritage  
Keepers

*[link to website]*

### **Stay up to date**

Follow the Petra  
National Trust on  
Twitter

*[link to Twitter]*

## **Resources**

---

## A diverse society: LGBTQ+

John Orna-Ornstein, Director of Culture and Engagement for the National Trust England, Wales and Northern Ireland (EWNI), gave a keynote speech in Bermuda that outlined how his Trust has found that inclusive programme also means activity focused on communities that have been historically oppressed in British Society. Attitudes can be slow to change, and curation that speaks to the LGBTQ+ community has not been without controversy in the British public space, in particular with elements of the UK press. Nonetheless, the National Trust (EWNI) has moved forward with innovative and thought-provoking work in this space.

In 2017, activity was centred around the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the partial decriminalisation of homosexuality in Britain, under the banner of the 'Prejudice and Pride' programme. This took place at properties right across the NT (EWNI) portfolio, including an installation at Kingston Lacy, a seventeenth century Italianate country house in Dorset, south-west England.



*Prejudice and Pride at Kingston Lacy © National Trust*

The residence was once home to the traveller and collector William John Banks, who fled Britain after being caught in his second 'indecent act' with another man – a crime which then carried a penalty of death by hanging. Titled 'In Memoriam' and developed in partnership with LGBTQ+ rights organisation Stonewall, this installation was a tribute to the men hanged under laws that criminalised same-sex acts during Banks' lifetime. It featured 51 nooses suspended in an attic room, one for each man whose life was taken from him.

In the USA, the National Trust for Historic Preservation is also interpreting LGBTQ+ history at its historic sites. The Glass House, a National Trust Historic Site in Connecticut, opened an exhibition in May 2019 called *Gay Gatherings: Philip Johnson, David Whitney, and the Modern Arts*, in conjunction with the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Stonewall Uprising in New York. The exhibition tells the story of Johnson and Whitney and their 45-year relationship, as well as the stories of other gay men such as John Cage and Merce Cunningham who visited the Glass House and made a tremendous impact on modern culture.



*Kingston Lacy (CC) Richard Croft*



*The Glass House (CC) Mark Schlemmer*

### **Be inspired**

Read more about  
Prejudice and Pride  
programming across  
the National Trust  
*[link to pdf: 3MB]*

### **At a glance**

See an overview of  
the activity and  
impact of Prejudice  
and Pride.  
*[link to pdf: 4MB]*

### **Learn more**

Read the detailed  
analysis of visitor  
engagement with  
Prejudice and pride  
*[link to pdf: 4MB]*

### **Plan a visit**

See the listing for the  
Glass House Gay  
Gatherings exhibit  
(until Dec 2019)  
*[link to web site]*

## **Resources**

---

---

## Unseen narratives: Urban heritage

Returning to England, the heritage of squatters is perhaps unexpected territory for an organisation that preserves historic buildings, but the National Trust there is doing exactly that. In Sutton House, a property in vibrant East London that dates from 1535, this inclusive approach to interpretation reflects elements from across all periods of the site's history, including the stretch in the 1980s when it was inhabited by squatters. Sutton House became the 'Blue House' and illicit rock concerts were held, all of which has left its mark in the 'decoration' found on the walls when the squatters left the property.

The decision was taken to preserve this graffiti, as part of the historic fabric of the building that represents an important moment in the site's development. When considering the appeal of a heritage site to the young, urban population of East London, the National Trust (EWNI) also felt that it was important to preserve stories that can speak to their interests. This has required programming on themes that might once have been considered outside the organisation's comfort zone, but which allow it to increase its offer to a part of society that has fewer opportunities to engage with the archetypal rural stately home. This reflects the National Trust's chartered directive to hold sites in trust 'for ever, for everyone'.

We also heard in Bermuda from David Brown, Chief Preservation Officer at the National Trust for Historic Preservation (NTHP), who reminded the assembled trusts that 'the places that we choose to preserve tell us a lot about who we are as a people'. Reflecting on a long career with the NTHP, David's choices for his organisation's greatest recent successes were consequently not the typical picture of a National Trust property, reflecting instead a focus on the memories and associations of the local community.



*The A G Gaston Motel in Birmingham, USA (CC) Alan Spears*

---

Recent grants and awards from the NTHP in places like the Crosstown Concourse in Memphis and the Franklin Theater, also in Tennessee, reflect a desire to prioritise preservation of heritage that looms large in the memory of local people, rather than according to any measure of age or architectural uniqueness.

Protected as part of the 'National Treasures' portfolio, the A. G. Gaston motel in Birmingham, Alabama has been a focal point for NTHP for its centrality to the American Civil Rights movement and the hotel lies at the heart of the 'Birmingham Civil Rights National Monument', designated by President Obama in 2017. Its historical importance is linked to its associations with giants of the modern era: in the 1960s, Dr Martin Luther King, Jr made room 30 a 'war room' for the movement's top leaders, in what was then one of the few places where newly middle class African-Americans could find a welcoming hotel in the segregated American South. A self-made millionaire and a central figure of Birmingham's African American business community, A.G. Gaston himself paid the \$160,000 bond to release Dr King when he was later jailed.

## Resources

---

### **Learn more**

Read more the history  
of the AG Gaston  
Motel from the NTHP  
*[link to website]*

### **At a glance**

See an overview of  
the community  
groups using  
Sutton House  
*[link to website]*

### **Plan a visit**

Plan to see the  
Birmingham Civil  
Rights National  
Monument  
*[link to website]*

### **Be inspired**

Watch a short video  
about Sutton House  
and its diverse  
stakeholders  
*[link to YouTube]*

## Unseen narratives: Heritage of slavery

The ICNT 2019 in Bermuda sought to have open conversations about race, slavery and the National Trust movement. With extensive representation at the conference from the Caribbean and Atlantic region, the majority of delegates came from countries that share a historical connection to the horrors of slavery; and were consequently able to bring a broad and rich range of best practice to discuss.

Organisations within the National Trust movement typically engage with the interpretation and maintenance of heritage buildings, many of which are linked to this history of enslavement. This manifests itself differently in the different geographic contexts of INTO's member organisations: In the Americas many historic homes were also the home and worksite of enslaved Africans. In Western Europe where slavery was a less visible part of

---

society, the wealth from the purchase and sale of Africans frequently funded the construction of prestige buildings. The heritage of enslavement is also visible in Africa, although there were unfortunately no West African INTO members in attendance at ICNT 2019. One example of engagement with this heritage in an African environment is Sierra Leonean INTO member, the Monuments and Relics Commission, who have recently coordinated significant restoration work on Bunce Island, site of a seventeenth century British slaving castle.

Since 2017, the Monuments and Relics Commission has worked with the World Monument Fund to carry out documentation and stabilisation efforts at the site, building on impetus generated by a small grant from INTO. Bunce Island bears testimony to a transformative and traumatic period in local history and so much work has focused on engagement with the local community, seeking to understand the value of the site from their perspective and reflect this in the preservation strategy.



*Bunce Island (CC) bobthemagicdragon*

The considered approach taken on Bunce Island reflects the need to ensure that histories of the enslaved are not forgotten, while simultaneously underlining the need for care in their interpretation. How can National Trusts reflect the complex and often painful histories of enslavement? To adequately engage with all of society, it is clear that these narratives must be brought to the fore and so methodologies must be developed to engage sensitively. It is with this in mind that the delegates in Bermuda came together to share their expertise and best practice.

Ajala Omodele, from the African Diaspora Heritage Trail in Bermuda, stimulated discussion with a challenging presentation, describing how for him the impetus lies with those who have benefitted from oppression to improve race relations – society must not look to historically oppressed minority groups for the impetus for change. Ajala and others in the room pointed to the importance of initiatives including the local African Diaspora Heritage Trail, created in Bermuda in collaboration with the Bermuda National Trust (BNT).

In Bermuda, where the history of slavery has meant that there are few historic prestige buildings whose owners were of African heritage, the BNT has looked actively for opportunities to engage with and reflect the heritage of people in this community, including through collaboration with the African Diaspora Heritage Trail. This Trail passes through BNT property Verdmont, built by African slaves, and there is dedicated interpretation on site

---

that links this to other sites of African diasporic interest on the island. In view of its success as an initiative, attendees agreed that there remains much more work to be done in this space, on Bermuda and elsewhere.



*Bermuda National Trust's property Verdmont © Bermuda National Trust*

Walter Hellebrand, attending the ICNT 2019 on behalf of the Monument Foundation of Sint Eustatius, described his own experience of celebrating the little-known narratives of slave resistance, reminding all delegates of the necessity of engaging with those parts of history that can be difficult to discuss, and indeed pointing to ways that these can be celebrated.

From Walter, we learnt of a call among the Afro-Caribbean community on Sint Eustatius, or 'Statia', to look into the heritage of the island for inspiration. Statia residents sought to change the fact that youth of Afro-Caribbean heritage would typically look to North America for their role models, rather than finding inspiration within the history of their own community. Having recently completed a research project on the history of slavery on Statia with the St Eustatius Historical Foundation, Walter had a suggestion.

---

On the 12 June 1848, the Statia Slave Revolt took place. Led by a local free man of colour, Thomas Dupersoy, five enslaved Statians gathered a group of their peers and marched on the house of the Dutch governor to demand freedom. When the governor refused to grant freedom that day, the people refused to return to their plantations and the governor consequently ordered the guards to open fire, leading to the deaths of many.

In spite of the loss of life, the St. Eustatius Historical Foundation points to this as a pivotal moment in moving forward the abolition agenda in the Dutch Empire, noting that the event was much discussed within the colonial government on Curaçao and the central government in The Hague. Slavery was finally abolished in the Dutch West Indies in 1962.



*Statia Slave House © Walter Hellebrand*

On Statia, Walter and his colleagues have lobbied for the monuments that represent this heritage to be protected. These include the 'Slave House' (pictured) where those enslaved Africans that survived the Transatlantic crossing were housed, and the plantation building where the revolt began. Walter is keen to galvanise support for the restoration and stewardship of the sites. In the meantime, advocacy efforts on the island continue in support of changing the celebration of Statia's National Day to the 21 June, in order to coincide with the Slave Revolt.

---

## Resources

---

### **Be inspired**

Hear the importance  
of Bunce Island in the  
words of people in  
Sierra Leone  
*[\[link to YouTube\]](#)*

### **At a glance**

Read more about  
Statia's heritage of  
slavery  
*[\[link to Facebook\]](#)*

### **Plan a visit**

Prepare for a visit  
to Verdmont on the  
BNT's website  
*[\[link to website\]](#)*

### **Learn more**

Read about the  
African Diaspora  
Heritage Trail on  
Bermuda  
*[\[link to pdf: 2MB\]](#)*

## A diverse workforce

Speaking effectively to all audiences requires staff with diverse perspectives, and there were also opportunities in Bermuda to discuss how to get the most from staff and volunteers alike, attracting talented people from a range of backgrounds.

Jeremy Harris is Director of the Saint Helena National Trust, a small British Overseas Territory in the South Atlantic and one of the most isolated places on earth. In Bermuda, Jeremy gave an insightful presentation into his policies on retaining the best people to deliver work with his unique mix of natural and cultural island heritage.

Referencing the work of Dan Ariely and Dan Pink as inspiration, Jeremy made clear that his model for success accepts that salaries in the sector will never be as high as people might earn privately. As a consequence, the Saint Helena National Trust seeks to prioritise those aspects of a career that are real drivers for job satisfaction: personal autonomy and control of your own area of work, capacity to master a skill and a clear understanding of the purpose of work. Jeremy was persuasive in describing how these policies have allowed him to improve job satisfaction and morale across his entire team.

Justin Scully, General Manager of Fountains Abbey in Yorkshire for the National Trust (EWNI), also described the importance of managing team satisfaction. As in many parts of the INTO movement, in the UK volunteers form a key part of the capacity of National Trusts. Justin emphasised the importance of treating volunteers equally to staff. Volunteers should know that they have a voice, access to training that they need and understand their own role within the organisation's structure.

To put it simply, in order to secure a wide and diverse pool of volunteers, they must receive real job satisfaction. This is reflected in the NT policy on volunteering, which aims to ensure that volunteering opportunities at the Trust receive the same attention to structure and content as any paid position.



*Volunteer at Fountains Abbey © National Trust*

Volunteers are key to the success of the National Trust movement across many member countries, but words of caution came from some delegates in Bermuda about the assumption that volunteers should always form part of the workforce. European members from countries with a tradition of an amplified state role in civil society, particularly in the former Soviet Bloc, suggested that an absence of volunteering culture within society can be a challenge for funding applications that assume a given cultural frame of reference.

Queen Quet, representing the Gullah/Geechee Nation, also noted that volunteering in the sense understood by much of the Anglosphere is not always appropriate. In Gullah/Geechee communities, community activism can and does take place, but a request for unpaid work on a prestige building must be sensitively delivered or risk being poorly received, potentially inferring unwelcome connotations of slavery. Both viewpoints underlined the importance of understanding the local culture before creating a plan for your local staffing.

### **Be inspired**

**Watch a short video  
about St Helena and  
its National Trust**  
*[link to website]*

### **Learn more**

**Access a training  
course developed  
for volunteer  
management**  
*[link to pdf: 2.4MB]*

### **At a glance**

**Read the National  
Trust (EWNI)'s  
Volunteering FAQs**  
*[link to website]*

### **Be inspired**

**Read about  
opportunities to  
volunteer with the  
National Trust (EWNI)**  
*[link to web site]*

## **Resources**

---

## Concluding Remarks

**Alana Anderson**

**President of the Bermuda National Trust**



It is stories that connect all of us unequivocally. They define our past, give us a sense of who we are in the present and shape our future. It is stories that bring understanding, generate new ideas and spark movements. But as we have learned not all stories are there to inspire, they can also divide a nation, evoke controversy and oppress people. Regardless of how they are used stories form a basis for all of society and infuse the connections between us.

The 2019 International Conference of National Trusts aspired to bring these stories from across the globe together. The backdrop, Bermuda, a 22 square mile paradise in the middle of the Atlantic, rich with its own histories regarding its culture, built heritage and natural beauty. With welcoming arms friends and delegates were embraced and a fantastic array of sessions and activities set out to highlight best practices for the arms open approach. From beginning to end the breadth and depth of the programming sparked impassioned debates, which at times veer towards controversial or uncomfortable subject matters.

The dialogue continued as residents opened their homes such that delegates and guests could dine intimately with local hosts. Eating, drinking and sharing our experiences together confirmed a sense of commonality and inclusion speaking to the heart of the conference theme 'arms wide open' and even more so, true Bermudian culture. For centuries, we have prided ourselves on our hospitality, friendliness and warmth. Breaking bread across the table with people who were mere strangers just days before allowed for any challenging discussions to be met with a palatable light-heartedness.

It is the testimonials of those present that give credence to the National Trust movement and impact that the conference discussions had. Ms. Simmons, a local Bermudian, had only interest in attending one session regarding the African Diaspora Heritage Trail. Prior to the conference Ms. Simmons' viewed the Bermuda National Trust as an arms closed organisation with which she had little in common. However, after engaging in thought-provoking dialogue, she later described how her perception had completely changed. 'I do feel like this is a place for me now' she writes. This small example illustrates a bigger picture – National Trusts that successfully programme with diversity in mind will find that their membership base grows in a sustainable way, reflecting all of the society in which they live. We look forward to seeing Ms. Simmons at future Trust events.

This post conference paper memorialises the conversations that occurred on our small island, but I have no doubt that the ideas that were generated are vast. The programming and execution would not have been possible without the help of many. As such on behalf of the Bermuda National Trust I would like to extend a sincere thank you to the INTO Trustees and Secretariat, the local INTO conference committee, all of the speakers and panellists, the Bermuda National Trust staff and volunteers, various sponsors, partners, and the local Bermudian community. We were honoured and humbled by this experience and look forward to continuing the conversations in Belgium in 2021.

The International National Trusts Organisation (INTO) is registered as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation in England and Wales (No 1175994). Our registered office is 20 Grosvenor Gardens, London, SW1W 0DH, UK.

