

# Bristol George Floyd protest: Colston statue toppled

By Jack Grey



The name Edward Colston can be seen all over Bristol, with streets and buildings named after the 17th Century merchant and slave trader.

On Sunday, protesters at an anti-racism demonstration in the city toppled a statue of Colston and dumped it in Bristol Harbour.

Thousands of people attended the demonstration in Bristol, one of many in the UK sparked by the death of George Floyd while he was under arrest in Minneapolis in the United States last month.

A group of protesters surrounded the statue on Colston Avenue. The statue was put up in honour of a man whose ships sent about 80,000 men, women and children as slaves from Africa to the Americas between 1672 and 1689.

Colston's memory has divided the city for years, with some thinking history can't be changed and others campaigning successfully for his name to be erased from streets, schools and venues.

The statue in Colston Avenue was erected in 1895

There was clear frustration in Sunday's crowd, partly because the statue still stood in 2020, but also because it had simply been covered for the protest.

Once the covering was removed, three protestors climbed atop the statue to fasten two ropes around the head. Thirty seconds later Colston was on the floor. Many jumped on the fallen statue, others holding a Black Lives Matter banner climbed the plinth where it had stood. The statue was then dragged the short distance to Bristol Harbour and dumped over the quayside.



The statue in Colston Avenue was erected in 1895

## Who was Edward Colston? (1636-1721)

- Colston was born into a rich Bristol merchant's family and, although he lived in London for many years, was always closely tied with the city
- By 1672 he had his own business in the capital trading in slaves, cloth, wine and sugar
- A significant proportion of Colston's wealth came directly or indirectly from the slave trade
- In 1680, he became an official of the Royal African Company, which was a company that traded slaves, among other things
- He donated to churches and hospitals in Bristol, also founding a school

Source: Adapted from BBC News Website

### Comprehension Questions

1. What does the word 'toppled' mean?  
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2. What is meant by an 'anti-racism demonstration'?  
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3. How many people went on the demonstration?  
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4. Why do the protesters dislike Colston?  
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5. When was the statue of Colston put up?  
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6. How many protesters climbed on the statue to wrap ropes around it?  
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7. In your opinion, was Colston a bad man?  
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8. Do you think the protesters were right to pull down the statue of Edward Colston? Give a reason for your opinion.  
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