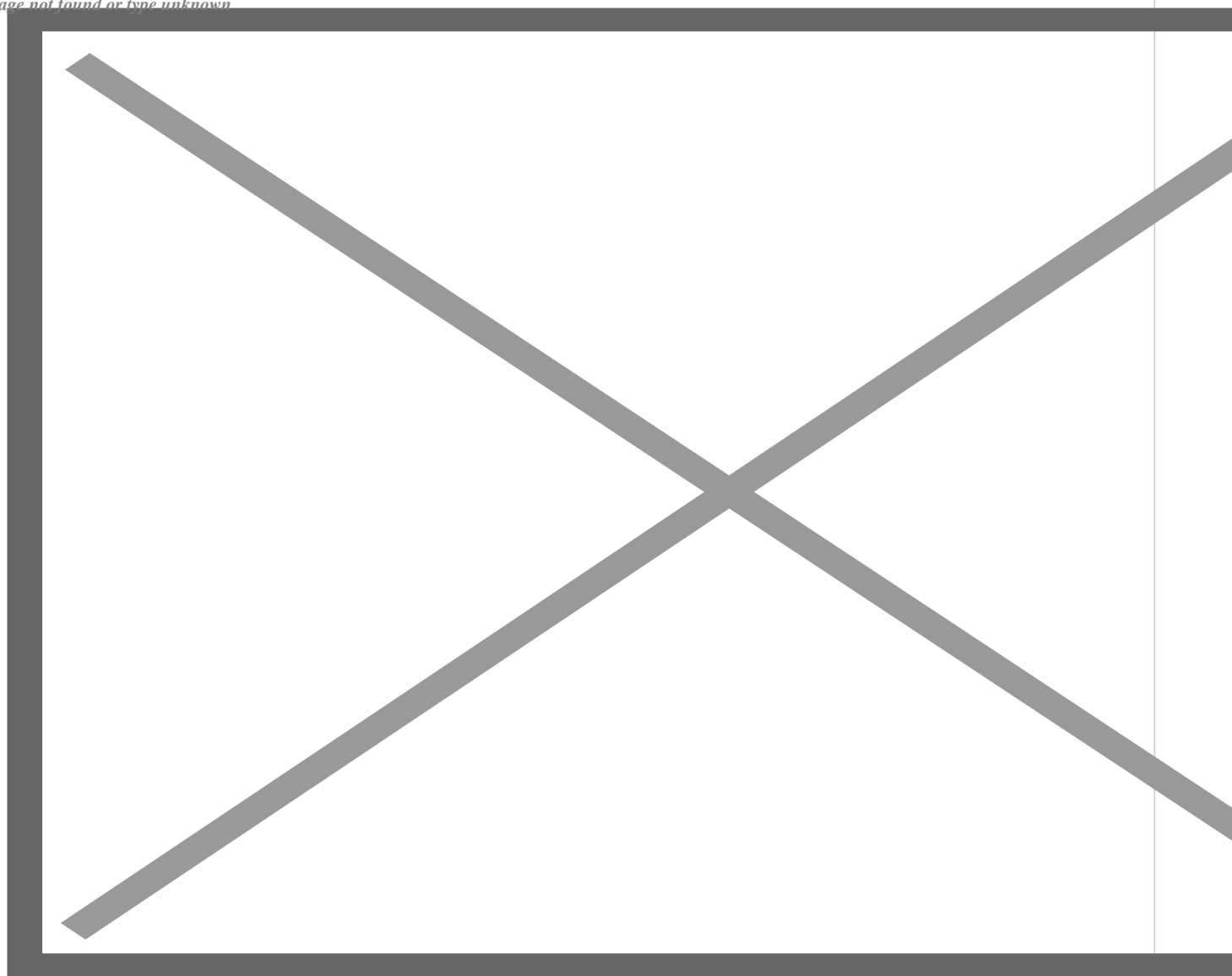


London to remove two statues over links to slave trade

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A statue of English merchant and slave trader Sir John Cass is mounted on the wall of the Sir John Cass Foundation in central London. (Photo: Tolga Akmen / AFP)

London, January 24 (RHC)-- The local authority that runs London's historic financial district is removing the statues of two British colonial-era politicians over their links to the slave trade. The City of London Corporation has voted to remove the statues of two 17th and 18th-century figures because they had accrued wealth through the slave trade.

The monuments to William Beckford, a former London mayor who drew his wealth from plantations in Jamaica that used slave labour, and John Cass, a member of Parliament and important figure in the Royal Africa Company that facilitated the transatlantic slave trade, will be resited.

The corporation launched a public consultation on monuments connected to slavery in September in the wake of Black Lives Matter protests that swept the United Kingdom and Europe following the death in United States police custody of an unarmed Black man, George Floyd, months earlier.

The demonstrations, which culminated in the toppling of a statue of Bristol slave trader Edward Colston during an anti-racism protest, sparked nationwide calls to remove monuments linked to Britain's colonial past.

The movement also faced a significant backlash, particularly after a statue of the UK's wartime Prime Minister Winston Churchill was targeted by protesters.

Catherine McGuinness, the City of London Corporation's policy chairwoman, said the decision to remove the statues from London's Guildhall was the result of "months of valuable work" by their Tackling Racism Taskforce.

Tackling Racism Taskforce co-chairwoman Caroline Addy said the committee had voted for the "correct response to a sensitive issue." "The slave trade is a stain on our history and putting those who profited from it literally on a pedestal is something that has no place in a modern, diverse city," she said.

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