

Greens back return of appropriated cultural objects



Green Party

2 October 2022

Green Party conference today called for objects obtained “during the period of imperial expansion and colonialism, and in other conflicts and periods” to be returned to their original owners. [1]

Museums and galleries around the world are beginning to ask deep-seated questions about how objects came to be in their collections, and it is time the government did so too, Greens declared.

Objects held in institutional and private collections should be referred to an expert Restitution of Cultural Objects Panel.

Where the expert committee finds, and a government Minister agrees, objects would be returned to their original owners, descendants or the state from where they were appropriated.

Green Party Culture spokesperson Jack Lenox said:

“This model worked well in relation to cultural objects stolen in the run up to the Second World War. It’s time for the same principles to be applied to other collections”.

“We recognise that each case will have to be considered on its merits. There will be issues about legal ownership, but also important moral arguments. This will involve discussion with the individuals and states from where objects were taken and the holding institution or collection.”

Martin Hemingway, who proposed the successful motion, said:

“This is as much a moral question as a legal one. The universities of Oxford and Aberdeen have already established ways of considering these issues. Other museums, like London’s Horniman, are returning objects taken from Africa. [2]

“We need a proper process in place that enables everyone with an interest to make their case and for objects to be returned to their rightful homes.”

ENDS

Notes

1

The full motion can be read here:

<https://greencoordinate.co.uk/agenda/motions/restitution-and-repatriation-of-cultural-objects/>

2

<https://www.theguardian.com/news/audio/2022/aug/30/the-benin-bronzes-return-to-nigeria-podcast>

For more information or to arrange an interview contact the press office on press@greenparty.org.uk or call 0203 691 9401

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