



Immediate release

## **PRESS RELEASE**

### ***Slave ship comes to London***

On 29 March 2007 *The Zong*, a replica 18<sup>th</sup> century wooden square rigger will be accompanied up the Thames by Royal Navy Frigate HMS Northumberland on its pre-scheduled trip from Greenwich, through Tower Bridge at 10.45am to dock at Tower Pier. On board ship will be a group of African, Afro Caribbean and English singers and musicians. This visual reminder of the slave trade is part of the national commemoration of the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the abolition of the slave trade act.

*The Zong* was at the centre of an infamous court case in 1783, after 133 slaves were thrown overboard in an insurance scam. The public outrage it caused led to the rise of the Abolitionist movement. After 1807 a ship like *The Zong* would have been captured by the Royal Navy to face trial and possibly destruction.

At Tower Pier *The Zong* will be open to the public for 2 weeks, with a “Free at Last?” exhibition of 18<sup>th</sup> century slavery. There will be an on-board exhibition, depicting the horrors of the transatlantic trade when Africans were sold to Europeans, then transported to the Americas and the Caribbean.

The on-board exhibition will depict the living conditions of slaves being transported across the Atlantic, complete with artifacts and an audio narrative. The exhibition will continue at All Hallows by the Tower church, 300 yards from Tower Pier, where it will tell the story of the Abolitionists and their 20 year struggle – eventually resulting in the abolition of the British slave trade in 1807.

HMS Northumberland is on another official visit to London but will also support the bicentenary events during her visit. She will berth alongside HMS Belfast where there will be free access for the public on Saturday 31 March, Sunday 1 and Monday 2 April. On board, members of the public can learn about the Royal Navy’s role in helping to enforce the 1807 British Act, and eventually helping to bring an end to the international slave trade. By talking to sailors on board they will also learn about some of the



Navy's modern roles in similar humanitarian and Maritime Security Operations to combat piracy and illegal trafficking of arms, narcotics and people.

For *The Zong*, visitors need to pre-book tickets and will be escorted around the exhibition and on board *The Zong* in groups of 50. Tickets are available at [www.free-at-last.org](http://www.free-at-last.org) or tel: 0871 230 5457 at £12 each.

Charlestown, in St Austell Cornwall will be the venue for a commissioning service involving Cornish churches and the Royal Navy on Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> March. From there the ship will sail for 5 days before being escorted up the Thames by HMS Northumberland on 29<sup>th</sup> March.

Following a civic opening ceremony on 29 March at Tower Pier there will be a press conference in the afternoon at All Hallows by the Tower, when key representatives of Free at Last and the Royal Navy will be available for interview.

On Monday 9<sup>th</sup> April, Easter Monday, a public service will be held at All Hallows by the Tower as a climax to the "Free at Last?" exhibition, before the departure of *The Zong* from London. For more information visit: [www.free-at-last.org](http://www.free-at-last.org)

#### Notes:

Free at Last? is part of the Spirit of Wilberforce project, run by The Centre for Contemporary Ministry (an educational charity based at Moggerhanger Park, Bedford, home of the Thornton family, cousins of William Wilberforce and linked with the "Clapham Group" of Abolitionists). Registered Charity no. 1022698.

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