



## Queen Elizabeth II's Death Is a Chance to Examine the Present-Day Effects of Britain's Colonial Past

(Adapted from *Time Magazine*, September 13, 2022)

By Anisha Kohli

Since Queen Elizabeth II was crowned in 1952, dozens of nations colonized by the British Empire have gained independence and continue to rebuild their societies. Some critics of the royal family see last week's death of Britain's longest-reigning monarch as an opportunity to re-envision the monarchy's role and to finally acknowledge the struggles of all those who were affected by British imperialism around the world.

The legacy of colonization has been well documented and often included slavery and the forced movement of people, brutal suppression, and the extraction of resources at the expense of local economies. "For many of us from the 'colonies,' the death of Elizabeth II signifies in very particular ways that she was the symbol of an empire built on genocide, slavery, violence, extraction, and brutality, the legacies of which continue in our present day," says Anna Arabindan-Kesson, a professor of Black diasporic art at Princeton University. "She was not only a symbol, she was complicit in this empire."

This part of the monarchy's history is often "conveniently hidden or ignored in Britain," says Arabindan-Kesson. This history needs to be addressed in the wake of Queen Elizabeth II's death, she adds. "The current rhetoric, pageantry, and colonial nostalgia around her death reinforces this refusal to acknowledge and deal with this imperial history."

The length of the Queen's reign and her personal popularity may have prevented a full discussion about the impact of colonization. "I think Elizabeth II's rule prevented a reckoning and allowed for a sense of continuity and continued denial about the extent of change in the last 70 years," says Priya Satia, a history professor at Stanford University who specializes in the British empire. "Decolonization was supposed to force the acknowledgment of wrong. That never came because it was always masked by the continuity of the Queen."

Although the Queen was the head of state and not government, meaning she had limited decision-making power, as a political figure she had the opportunity to be vocal. But she opted for silence, says Satia. "The crown jewels, they're mostly made up of stones that have been stolen from various places in the British Empire. The Queen always wore them, never suggesting in any way that they be returned," Satia says. "There hasn't been a moment in which the monarchy turned its back against empire and said, 'No more,' or, 'We regret having been part of this.'"

Today, researchers consider ethnic conflict, LGBTQ oppression, and environmental injustice as a few of the issues enabled by British imperialism in former colonies.

“The monarchy, in general, is an incredibly spectacular symbol of the huge social and economic inequalities of modern Britain,” Arabindan-Kesson says. She adds that is particularly true amid a cost of living crisis where people are “struggling to heat their houses, pay bills, and feed their families. The fact that so much attention and so many resources are spent on this institution seems completely anachronistic and really, a complete waste of resources.”

### **I. Compréhension écrite (6 points)**

Using your own words, answer the following questions about the text (concise answers are expected):

1. Overall, why do some people in former British colonies object to the royal family? (1 pt)
2. According to the article, how has colonization negatively impacted former British colonies? (2 pts)
3. Why might the longevity and personality of the Queen have prevented a full discussion about the impact of colonisation? (1 pt)
4. Explain the following expression: “*a reckoning*” (line 18). (1 pt)
5. Explain the following sentence: “*The monarchy, in general, is an incredibly spectacular symbol of the huge social and economic inequalities of modern Britain.*” (line 32-33). (1 pt)

### **II. Expression écrite (14 points)**

Write an essay on the following topic (+/- 300 words)

*In your opinion, should King Charles III publicly apologise for the role of his family in British colonization? How else could the legacy of British colonisation be addressed?*