

## [Being Human in Conversation: Rebuilding and Renewing](#)

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Event

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Location:

United Kingdom

Subject Fields:

Cultural History / Studies, Humanities, Literature, Public History, Sociology

As we begin to think about renewing and rebuilding in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, how can the humanities help?

COVID-19 has highlighted afresh the divides existing in our societies. It has thrown a spotlight on class, race and wealth inequalities and underlined divisions between old and young, climate change campaigners and deniers, and even the nations of the UK. Against this backdrop, there has never been a more important time for researchers of all types to enter the public debate, to make their voices heard, to speak up and speak out. It is a time for big ideas. How do we start to rethink our world? How might we refresh and renew our understanding of what it means to be human? How might we, ultimately, be better humans?

This event is an opportunity to listen to the new wave of academics who will approach these issues from a humanities perspective. Being Human festival Director and public intellectual Professor Sarah Churchwell will be in conversation with four AHRC (Arts and Humanities Research Council) New Generation Thinkers, the next generation of researchers bringing their work to a wide audience. They will discuss their research into contemporary issues and how they are communicating and working with the public so that it has real-world impact in our challenging times.

The COVID-19 pandemic will leave a lasting mark on the world, yet as we begin to think about the future, this event will ask what role the humanities can play in our new world.

### **Speakers:**

- **Sarah Churchwell** is Chair of Public Understanding of the Humanities and Professorial Fellow in American Literature at the School of Advanced Study, University of London, where she directs the Being Human festival, the UK's national festival of the humanities. Her most recent book is *Behold, America: The Entangled History of America First and the American Dream* (2018).
- **Christienna Fryar** is a historian of modern Britain, the British Empire, and the modern Caribbean. She leads the first taught MA at a British university in Black British History at Goldsmiths, University of London. Her research interests include global sports and race as well as language politics in Modern Britain, the British Empire, and the British Commonwealth.
- **Darragh McGee** is a sociologist based at the University of Bath where he traces our shifting cultural attitudes towards gambling and the role of social class in shaping the popularity of

gambling historically. Darragh also looks at the way smartphone technologies are transforming young people's relationship with online gambling today.

- **Tom Scott-Smith** is Associate Professor of Refugee Studies and Forced Migration at the University of Oxford. As a former aid worker, Tom is particularly interested in the paradoxes of aid, focusing on how humanitarians respond to basic human needs and negotiate political disputes. He is now writing a book on disaster shelter, studying seven attempts to provide emergency accommodation to refugees since 2015.
- **Christine "Xine" Yao** is currently a lecturer in early and 19th century American literature at University College London. She researches topics such as race science, feminist fashion, queer tarot, and anti-racist practices. She co-hosts a podcast, PhDivas, which interviews women from across the STEM/humanities divide about their research and experiences of working in academia.

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