Many a historian, since the late 1980s and early 1990s and particularly in the United States and Western Europe, has delighted in pinpointing, describing, and analyzing national lieux de mémoire (realms of memory). These historians have concentrated on a wide variety of historical icons in nation-states. However, the nation-state does not necessarily have a monopoly on lieux de mémoire. Any group or community may have their lieux de mémoire as icons of a shared history. Diasporas are good examples: on the one hand, they are globalized communities with a common history and a common homeland or conception of the homeland that may exceed the nation-state. On the other hand, diaspora communities are rooted and located in particular nation-states or state-like constructs, like colonies, within which they often find themselves in a minority, and often subaltern, position. Therefore, diaspora lieux de mémoire may be part of a nation-state’s memories, but it is just as possible that they belong to shared identities or ideologies that undermine, and even exceed, the nation-state. As a consequence, lieux de mémoire may be heavily contested areas of history.

At the same time, those in power – those who decide what is good or useful for the nation to remember, and what is not – initiate, or at least censor, lieux de mémoire. Most lieux de mémoire are thus introduced from the top down, and are therefore also lieux d’amnésie (realms of amnesia or forget-

1. See Kammen 1991, Den Boer & Frijhoff 1993, Van Sas 1995, Nora 1996-98. Lieux de mémoire are tangible or intangible historical “sites” (memory places) that actually or allegedly constitute a nation’s identity. “Memory as Nora conceives of it does not constitute a monolithic entity. Beyond the repertoire of monuments, institutions, events, and commemorative dates, Realms of Memory also evokes the conflictual spaces and symbolic divisions within [for Nora] France that reconfigure its relationship with the past” (L.D. Kritzman in Nora 1996:x).

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ting). For example, the U.S. government was responsible for the erection of Civil War monuments, though according to John Gillis (1994: 10) they were the icons of whites only. Post-Civil War American identity was forged by forgetting the contributions of African Americans to the military effort, forgetting even what the struggle had been about. Faced with oblivion of the quintessential "other," ex-slaves invented their own commemoration of the Emancipation Proclamation, known to them (and largely only to them) as "Juneteenth."

This lieu de mémoire may do double duty as a lieu d’amnésie, but that role is not always accepted by those who are forgotten, the "people without a history" (see Wolf 1982), and for that reason, a realm of memory is also a realm of contest that is transformed "from below." These transformations may mirror societal changes (see Trouillot 1995, Price 1998). 3

I focus on what is probably the most important lieu de mémoire of the African diaspora, apart from Africa itself: the abolition of New World slavery and its commemoration since that time in the former Dutch slave-plantation colony, Suriname. Has the commemoration of July 1, 1863 been used as a realm of memory — to forget — and how and why? How has this realm of memory been contested, and has it been influenced by being, or feeling, part of a diaspora?

EMANCIPATION AND THE CHURCH

Long before the twenty-one salute shots announcing the end of slavery were fired at 6 a.m. on July 1, 1863, the colonial government in Suriname had begun replacing its policy of controlling the enslaved by a combination of force and segregation with a policy of mental control and discipline. Until the late 1820s, the enslaved had legally been no more than property, and they were therefore forbidden to learn to read or write, among other things, nor could they generally become Christians. This began to change because of interference by Governor General Van den Bosch, who was sent to the Dutch West Indies to investigate the poor economy there and propose plans for recovery in the radically changing circumstances of the time. The importation of Africans had formally ended during the British occupation of Suriname in 1808, but until Van den Bosch’s mission, tens of thousands of Africans were brought into the colony illegally. Illegal importation gradually ceased, with the support of the British, who were on the verge of abolishing slavery in the Empire, including Suriname’s neighboring colony British Guiana, 4 altogether. Van den Bosch’s reports resulted in a series of socioeconomic and political changes, but the enslaved were probably most affected by his recommendation to begin converting them to Christianity. He even recommended which missionary society seemed to be best suited to this purpose, reporting that

in the general interest, the doctrines of the Moravian Brethren seem to offer most advantages because they predispose the mind to patient resignation and contentment with the present destiny, and inspire aversion to changing this by force. 5

Thenceforth Moravian missionaries were encouraged to start missionizing among the enslaved in the plantation areas, and after initial obstruction by many of the planters, they were able to carry out their missionary activities. Consequently, by 1863, the majority of the enslaved had been converted at least nominally, most of the Moravians and a minority by Roman Catholic missionaries.

Neither the Moravian nor Catholic churches had ever taken any action to put an end to slavery in Suriname. On the contrary, the churches were often used by the plantocracy as agents for their own interests (Lamur 1985: 44-49). However, they did care about the fate of the enslaved and often tried to improve their conditions. Furthermore, as part of their missionary activities, they learned the creole language of the enslaved and translated the Bible, other religious books, and songbooks into it.

These missionary activities were not new to the Moravians. They had shown a keen interest in missionizing among the Saramaka Maroons in the interior of Suriname since the eighteenth century. They had been playing a liaison role for the colonial government ever since and kept an eye on everything that might disturb the colonial status quo. As a result, there were no other whites or free persons that the enslaved had more contact with and trusted, to a certain extent. And at the same time the authorities were in a position to know that the enslaved would not become a threat to the colonial status quo. Thus the Church, particularly the Moravian Church, was the ideal partner for the colonial authorities to realize a smooth transition to freedom.

3. Often, according to Trouillot (1995: 4-31), historians produced narratives approved by those in power, academically or politically, causing a silencing of other or counter-narratives. Historians have largely ignored the alternatives, even though "any historical narrative is a particular bundle of silences, the result of a unique process, and the oper-
The cult of gratitude and modesty — and more generally, morality — was thus constructed on the grounds of Moravian ideology, and it has been reproduced and renewed in every emancipation celebration since. Until at least the second half of the twentieth century, the Moravians stressed that the formerly enslaved owed gratitude to the Europeans for being led out of slavery; modesty was required because physical emancipation was not the same as emancipation from moral or mental slavery, which was said to be a long way away, particularly for Afro-Surinamese. The chief Biblical text to which references have been made on Emancipation Day almost every year since 1863 is John 8:36: “if the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.” This text was used during slavery to tell the enslaved that they should not strive for physical freedom, but that they should strive for freedom of the soul. In 1863 it was used to keep the emancipated from rioting and to fit them smoothly into the apprenticeship system of state supervision. Since then it has also been part of colonial assimilation policy: only decent Christians can be free. Theologian and historian J.M. van der Linde (1953:14) therefore defined this text as “programmatic.”

Some examples of the use of this text follow. On the fiftieth anniversary of emancipation in 1913, the well-known Surinamese composer Helstone, together with the poet Marcus, composed a hymn that was published and has often been performed (quoted in Van der Linde 1953:32). It paraphrased the text of John 36:

No more slaves, yes no more slavery.
The chains of slavery are unbound.
King's mighty word has made us free
And given light to all around.

But he who was made free by the Son,
Is truly free, is truly free from guilt and sin.
All broken are their ties anon
And happiness from him they win.

In the Emancipatie Courant of January 1, 1928 no mention is made of this text, but its echoes can unmistakably be heard in the answers of readers who have been asked whether they have done their duty in the previous year, or if they have remained “slave[s] of passions and desires ... a slave, despite the twenty-one gunshots of 1863 which broke your slave chains.”

During the celebration of the emancipation centenary in 1963, many references were made to the text from John, and one columnist of the daily De West even explicitly referred to Van Calker’s sermon of one century before, while adding that real freedom was much more than just social emancipation and could only be found in following God. Thirty years later, in the other
Surinamese daily, De Ware Tijd, it was suggested that besides ketti ketti, one of the names for Emancipation Day, meaning "the chains have been broken," another name be added, ketti ketti, which means, more or less, "break the chains," because there was still so much wage slavery and mental slavery to be liberated from. Although in this the paternalistic tone has not changed much, the fundamental difference with previous texts is that it does not support the status quo but seems to be an appeal to fight it. Yet it was not the first time that Emancipation Day was claimed as a means or symbol of opposition against the status quo. It was just one the outcomes of a process that had started at the beginning of the twentieth century but that had been restrained for a long time by colonial repression.

A CULT OF GRATITUDE

What role did the Church play in the creation of a colonial version of history that has long clung to Emancipation Day? Encouraged by the government, the Church has more or less dominated Emancipation Day and its yearly celebrations since 1863. The cult of gratitude that surrounded these celebrations had two characteristics, both of which were instrumental to the creation of a new narrative of emancipation, that is, to covering up the atrocities of slavery. First, the Church had always diminished the importance of physical freedom and promoted the pursuit of mental freedom by being a good Christian. The pursuit of this superior form of freedom was always presented as being achievable by following a long and arduous path, not only because it was said to be too difficult to reach something superior, but also because those that had to follow the path were considered so inferior. Turning heathenish - primitive - Africans into decent - European-like - Christians took much time and effort. However, this notion of racial inequality was also a way of denying slavery: inequality was presented as the natural state of things. This natural state could only be overcome under Christian leadership, and according to this reasoning, it followed that white guidance was beneficial for Africans. At the same time, the emphasis on trying to achieve Christian superiority was a denial of the centuries-long role Christianity had played in legitimizing the Dutch slave trade and slavery. That slaves in Suriname had been denied membership of Christian churches for the greater part of slavery was disregarded.

The second characteristic of the Moravian-led Emancipation cult was the ritualization of gratitude. The emancipated were pressed to be grateful to God and the Church for leading them out of slavery. They were to ask His help for real emancipation, that is, of the soul. But that was not all. The cult of gratitude was a means of denying the atrocities of slavery, as on June 30, 1863, when everywhere in the country, church services were being held to clean the soul by asking forgiveness for all sins committed during slavery. On the contrary, no such thing was expected of the slave masters. One Moravian missionary described in a letter that "on all plantations in my district the Negroes, after the day of their Release, applied to their masters, as I had impressed strongly upon them, to ask their [master's] forgiveness for everything they had been guilty of previously, and at the same time to express their thanks."

The inversion of roles only happened on that occasion, and never recurred. On the other hand, the governor obtained a permanent role in the cult of gratitude. Immediately after the official church service on July 1, 1863 in the main Moravian church, the so-called Mama Kerki, everyone present in, and many more outside, the church marched in a procession to the square in front of the governor's palace. The governor congratulated the emancipated on "the great gift given to them by the king," and continued to speak, "as a father would speak to his children ... that they should be hard-working, orderly, obedient, and grateful to the government." The crowd then covered him with flowers and sang songs of gratitude to him, whereafter, according to eyewitnesses, he "could not hold back his tears of joy and satisfaction."

Governor Van Lansberge and Attorney General Gefken had always been in favor of abolition. Gefken had even been an official member of the Abolitionist Society, so expressions of gratitude to him were not out of place. Van Lansberge's successors, however, had played no role whatsoever in the abolition of slavery, but until well after World War II, they were presented with an avalanche of songs of gratitude and praise every July 1. By that time these expressions of gratitude, often led by church officials, were not addressed to the governors personally, but to the person he represented: the king, later the queen, of Holland. Particularly King William III, who had signed the Abolition Act, became an icon in the commemoration of abolition in Suriname, which was attributed to him personally. However, because there is no indication that he had done any more than sign one of innumerable laws, it is evident that his figure was used to appease any feelings of hatred toward those who had

11. Here I refer to both the Roman Catholic and Moravian churches, though primarily to the Moravians because the Roman Catholic Church began its missionary activities among the enslaved only shortly before emancipation, and was therefore much smaller. Their approaches differed very little, however.
15. In Tamse's (1979:307-57) analysis of William III's reign, for example, the abolition of slavery is not even mentioned.
be responsible for the longevity of the slave system and its atrocities in the first place. William III came to be represented as the person who, practically on his own, had liberated the Afro-Surinamese people from slavery, and the Church actively promoted this representation. The metaphor of Moses leading his people out of Egyptian slavery was often evoked.16

William III's immense popularity among the Afro-Surinamese probably originated in October 1862, when final abolition on July 1 of the next year was announced to the enslaved population. This proclamation, which was written in Dutch as well as in Surinamese and often read aloud to them by missionaries, gave the impression that the king was addressing the enslaved directly and personally:

It has pleased the King to decide on the day on which slavery will be abolished forever in the colony of Suriname. On July 1 you will be free! But the King, longing to see everyone under his paternal authority living happily, has wanted to announce to you these happy tidings now, so that you may await this moment you have wished for so much in joy and contentedness.17

Soon afterwards Moravian missionaries started rehearsing with the enslaved a song that was composed by the president of the Moravians, Van Calker, and missionary Rau, to the tune of a Dutch patriotic song.18 It would come to be known as the King's Song:

The King's name be esteemed! Thanks be to the King! Come, let us sing his praise In loud voices! He made us, poor Negroes, free From shame and slavery! God bless King William the Third For such a mark of goodwill!

During the three-day celebration in 1863, this seven-stanza song was sung, often three times or more, at every church service, to every senior colonial official, and at every more or less formal gathering. Since its inception it was sung at every July 1 celebration until well after World War II. A whole body of so-called King's Songs even came into being, including an endless series of poems praising the Dutch monarchy (the House of Orange), the production of which ceased only after independence in 1975 (Van Kempen 2002, III: 222-23).

As time passed, King William's role as the undisputed advocate of the enslaved and the "Moses of the House of Orange" reached mythical proportions, culminating at the 1913 Emancipation Golden Jubilee. An "Emancipation committee" of dedicated citizens had spent a long time raising money for a carved image of the late King William, made in the Netherlands, which they offered to the colonial government. The colonial authorities placed it in front of the "tower building," which overlooked Government Square and housed the colony's Financial Administration. Praise was lavished on William, cockades with his image were sold in the streets, and the "national composer" Helstone composed several Jubilee songs in which William figured prominently. One of these songs showed that after William's death in 1890, his position as the patron saint of the Afro-Surinamese was passed on seamlessly to his daughter Wilhelmina:

Io vivat, Io vivat, Hail to our Queen! We celebrate in good spirits We celebrate in good spirits The memorable fiftieth anniversary Io vivat, Io vivat Hail to our Queen!

In the second stanza, the "our Queen" was replaced with "our Princess" (Juliana), then came "the Governor," and finally the Dutch and Surinamese peoples (Marcus & Helstone 1913). Whether the singers actually knew what Io vivat meant is doubtful, given that oral tradition turned it into Fio fifat (see De Drie 1984: 103). William's "sanctification" and that, subsequently, of his royal successors took root firmly. Much later, when the role of the Dutch was no longer undisputed in the colony, an observer noted that
JULY I: EMANCIPATION DAY IN SURINAME

Suriname and were beginning to constitute a substantial part of the population, a need emerged for space to express an autonomous ethnocultural Afro-Surinamese public identity. Both emigration and the presence of Asian immigrants stimulated the diasporic and ethnic dimensions of Afro-Surinamese identity, which was reflected in the new form and substance given to July 1. On the one hand, Emancipation Day became the ultimate opportunity to express Afro-nationalism, and the way in which it was expressed was linked to an international diasporic discourse. On the other hand, the July 1 celebration of being Afro-Surinamese became localized and folklorized to a considerable extent, which mitigated the potential threat to the colonial status quo propagated by July 1. In spite of the continued central position of God and the Dutch royal family in the July 1 discourse and the sustained dominance of a didactic tone, Emancipation Day began to move into the secular world. Religious morality was not replaced but was supplemented with a colonial-civil, as well as an ethno-nationalistic, morality.

EMANCIPATION DAY BEYOND THE CHURCH

When the ten-year period of state supervision came to an end on July 1, 1873, and slavery was finally truly abolished, the festivities were almost a replica of those in 1863. It was hardly celebrated outside the church, and, in fact, was hardly celebrated at all, in particular in Paramaribo. In a speech in 1904 Rier remarked, The day of liberty, which is held in such high esteem by peoples elsewhere, was mainly forgotten here. The emancipated and the children of the emancipated hardly cared about it. The emancipation zeal is still largely alive among the common people of the [rural] districts, but in town it is almost dead. (Rier 1904:5)

People in Paramaribo may have found the didacticism of the Moravians little-inspiring or even stifling, or maybe reminding the colonizers too much of the days of slavery was not conducive to a successful colonial career. The different reaction in the rural districts, where church control was looser and where a colonial career hardly counted, seems to confirm this assertion. Furthermore, until King William's death in 1890, it was the king's birthday, not July 1, that was celebrated more exuberantly because it was less provoking or offensive to those who had been responsible for almost two centuries of slavery in Suriname.

Around the turn of the century, when Afro-Surinamese started to emigrate and some of them consciously started to link Afro-Surinamese to the African diaspora, particularly in the United States, things began to change. In response to the awareness that Asian immigrants were going to stay in

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This National Baptist Convention maintained international contacts, with Georgetown, for one, and later with Paramaribo. After his return to Suriname in 1890, Rier founded a Free Evangelization community together with two others, and became a minister in his own Free Gospel Hall. He translated the American Sankey songbook into Sranan, but was at the same time “an ardent advocate of Dutch as the vernacular, and the language of education and culture as well, to develop the Negro population socially. The language of his heart, however, continued to be Ninge,” according to Abbenhuis in 1963. In 1903 Rier left to continue his studies in the United States, where he qualified as a minister. He must have drawn much inspiration from the activities of the Baptists, but also from Afro-American pioneers like Booker T. Washington. Upon his second time returning to Suriname, Rier argued fervently that it was a disgrace that Emancipation Day, or the Day of Liberty as he called it, was no longer observed in Suriname, and worse, that people were ashamed of it and that its fortieth anniversary in 1903 had passed unnoticed. He took the initiative to change this apathy for good. Rier said, “he heard the voice of his race, of Ethiopia, as he calls his Negro people.”

He persuaded the members of the Suriname Evangelisation Baptist Community to follow this “prompting of the Lord” with him and he set up a men’s committee and a women’s committee, “the former for organizing and the latter for the embellishment and decoration of the festivity.”

The two committees were made up of the rising Afro-Surinamese middle class of civil servants, supervisors, craftsmen, traders, shopkeepers, and their wives. In the days preceding July 1, Rier launched a media offensive of advertisements and articles in which he used phrases like “unity is strength,” and he published a poem that included the following stanza:

Hail to you, race too long oppressed!
You, deeply humiliated and despised!
Anoint your head and happy face,
And clothe yourself in festive attire!
Forget your weals and wounds!
They have been healed or bound
By the message of peace sent to you. (Rier 1904:12-13)

Thus, Rier did not place himself outside the religious discourse, though he did not use it to filter out the violent past of slavery. Moreover, he emphasized self-awareness rather than the usual modesty.

On July 1, 1904 a crowd of three to four thousand people gathered in and around the Concordia freemasons’ lodge, which he had rented, to listen to his two-and-a-half hour “religious lecture,” as he called it, though it was actually more like an eighteen-point program. During the lecture he consistently addressed his audience with the diaspora term “Ethiopians” and English phrases, and terms like “Afro-Dutch” and “emancipation progress” pointed to the influence on his thought of the African diaspora in the United States. Although he neatly conformed to the rhetoric of gratitude to God and the king, and in so doing seemed more fervent even than the Moravians, tacitly he sketched an altogether different picture of the events surrounding emancipation than the one that had been accepted. According to him, slavery was abolished because God had ordered the governments to do so, because there was a growing realization that the “Ethiopian” was the brother and equal of the European, and because of the “resistance of the slaves against their masters,” in which Rier said, the voice of God was probably to be heard as well (1904:35, 44). He also spoke of the “slavish wealth” that Suriname produced and “which the Netherlands was rolling in,” and his rhetoric nearly turned socialist when he talked about “the struggle between capital and labor.” He also hammered at “the sense of self-esteem, honor, duty and mutual help” of the Afro-Surinamese and put forth a petition, which was strongly reminiscent of similar actions in the United States, making demands for better education and scholarships, protection of labor, and the protection of women (Rier 1904:22-23, 75).

At the same time, he constantly searched his own, “Ethiopian” conscience, but pointed out a culprit too, “it is sad to see the traces of the former slave life, morals and customs - fortunately wiped off many of the emancipated - but still to be found among most, clearly and unaltered” (1904:49-50). Rier mentions, for example, shamelessness, a lack of a sense of duty and honor, polygamy, polyandry, licentiousness, a lack of mutual trust, the worship of money and not God, the vain worship of folk dancing. According to him, Sunday had become a day of sin and “lesbian love” abounded. He blames it all on the colonial “popular educators” who had not acquitted themselves well of their tasks (Rier 1904:49-51). No member of the Moravian Brethren had ever uttered such sharp criticism, let alone beaten on the drum of black self-awareness.

With Rier’s initiative and Emancipation Day a symbol of and forum for Afro-Surinamese identity, for the first time it was partly removed from the Church and linked to a wider diaspora context. The didacticism attached to this day was doubled by this new context, for the Christian morality was supplemented with the diaspora morality of the black race, or the African nations, which had to show the world, and especially itself, what it was capable of. For the first time, too, Emancipation Day was not only seen as a joyful, future-oriented liberation celebration, but just as much as a common expression of the traumatic legacy of slavery, and that was because Emancipation Day was no longer given shape exclusively from above but was also claimed and realized noninstitutionally, by a man who gave a voice.
to ordinary Afro-Surinamese and placed the initiative in their hands. The diasporan and black-consciousness dimension of July 1 has not disappeared since Rier, though it was more evident and people were more active in voicing it in certain periods than in others, often because of one or two people. What did change with time was the awareness and self-awareness of those who gave form and substance to this dimension of July 1. Rier was still largely influenced by the religious tradition surrounding emancipation. If he had broken too abruptly with it, he probably would not have been readily accepted by a wider public, for it had been brought up in this tradition for decades. Even more difficult would have been his acceptance by the colonial authorities, who feared nothing so much as opposition and a change in thought. But because he was a man of the church, albeit a fairly oppositional one, it is quite plausible that Rier diverged from the dominant discourse not as a result of strategic considerations, but because he sincerely did not want to. Incidentally, this sometimes led him to express paradoxical points of view.

On the one hand, the clouded view of the slavery past was brought into focus by the explicit mention of a tradition of resistance, as well as by referring to the legacy of trauma left by the system. When he spoke about the Maroons in the country's interior, Rier (1904:55) left little room for misunderstandings when he stated that "with grim faces, [they] can read the history of the past on each tree leaf in the book of Memory."

On the other hand, Rier (1904:47) produced - re-produced, in fact - an unemancipated sense of history by his constant demonstrations of loyalty to the Dutch monarchy, and King William III in particular. This even led him to use the Bible and the French Revolution in a remarkable mixed metaphor to sound his monarch's praises: "this Moses, resolute and unshakeable as a rock in his decision, bearing the banner of equality in one hand, and that of brotherhood in the other, planted the tree of freedom in Suriname" (Rier 1904:37-38). Moreover, having people repeatedly sing "Wien neerlands bloed door d'adren vloeit, van vreemde smetten vry" seems to negate historical reality.

Nevertheless, these inconsistencies pale into insignificance when they are compared to Rier's (1904:60) statement about the descendants of slavery "to extend our warm and heartfelt thanks to those who - by God's leave - carried our ancestors from the fallen African regions into slavery in order to teach us with the help of discipline, as best they can, morality, humanity, liberality, activity, fraternity, civility." It seems almost too ironic to be sincere. While the colonial view of the slavery past is broken with, it is at once counteracted with a point of view that had been current among slave owners, especially in the early days of slavery. Essentially Rier's message is not one that calls Afro-Surinamese to be proud of who they are, but proud of what they may achieve when they shed their African primitiveness and let themselves be led by European standards of civilization. He probably meant to instill this awareness at the functional and cognitive levels in particular, but wanted the Afro-Surinamese to be proud of their ethnic and cultural identity at the emotional level. Rier's (1904:67) strong advocacy of Dutch as the language for advancement, while at the same time he lovingly translated many eminent, mostly religious texts into Sranan (Van Kempen 2002, III:366), attests to his envisaging a split between the practical benefit of European guidance and Afro-Surinamese cultural pride. Rier took a similar dualistic stance vis-à-vis the diaspora. He invoked the Bible to commemorate the day on which Moses led his people back home out of Egyptian slavery, while on the other hand he called the African diaspora "our blessing and ascent" and made an appeal to love the native soil and regard it as holy (Rier 1904:26, 18).

However contradictory and paradoxical he may be at times, it is clear that since Rier's activities, part of the Afro-Surinamese population established a link with, and drew inspiration from, what was happening elsewhere in the African diaspora in the New World, particularly in the United States. Speeches by teacher and Afro-Surinamese consciousness-raising activist T.A.C. Comvalius clearly reveal that he was familiar with the work of Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. Du Bois. For example, in the same year that a pan-African conference was held in Paris, Comvalius (1919:11) made mention of it in Suriname (Gedenkboek 1913:86). At the Emancipation Golden Jubilee in 1913, even the president of the Moravian Brethren referred to Booker T. Washington and his promoting Afro-American economic initiatives whereby no one could ignore them, and by which they would become independent (Voulaire 1913:81-82). In the 1920s, a church and school were established in Suriname under the auspices of the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AMEC) from the United States, and in 1924 there was even a branch of the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), Marcus Garvey's international mass movement, which called for the return to Africa, set up in Suriname and headed by the Rijts brothers. Yet the return has never become an important issue in Suriname, though it does seem that the process of black awakening was finally set in motion in those days and was freed from its local isolation. 22 The July 1 celebration was the one occasion in a year when it was expressed.

22. The following sources bear witness to the newly formed links with other parts of the diaspora: "it seems that some Surinamese worked at the UNIA head office in Harlem, New York, that is, Otto Hulswoud and Floribon Faverey" (Verhees 2000:318); "even before the Second World War, the Dutch Guiana League," which occasionally made itself heard during the war, was founded. [It] had ties with the growing "Negro movement" in the United States" (Van de Walle 1975:19); there was at some stage also a branch of the League of Coloured People in Suriname, which helped to reinforce race consciousness. After 1940 the group working at this objective became even stronger (Van Lier 1971:210-11).
July 1 and emancipation had clearly shaken the colonial-government-approved Moravian Church's hold. Still, emancipation discourse hardly shed its Christian overtones. Rier had his own evangelization congregation, the Rijts brothers were soapbox preachers, Comvalius praised Christian education (Comvalius 1919:5), and AMEC was in fact an international religious community. Even though these people held up the Christian role model as an example of development, progress, and liberation, it was nevertheless a Christianity of their own choosing: it was without ties to the colonial authorities and it had its own substance. In contrast, the Moravian Church, though it had always been a black working-class church insofar as its members were Afro-Surinamese and the language in which they professed their faith was Sranan, continued to have very European leaders, and the message preached in its churches reinforced the status quo. With their ties to the diaspora, the new evangelists, more than the Moravians, conveyed a true grass-roots Christianity, so that they posed a threat to the status quo, despite their loyalty to God and the Dutch monarchy and their use of the Dutch language as a means for progress. The new evangelists sparked a fight for, and introduced a pride of, the Afro-Surinamese character at a time when the government wanted to integrate this part of the population into the Dutch culture. Ethno-awareness has since been associated with the July 1 celebrations, while religion gradually, though not entirely, disappeared from it. It returned in part, however, in the course of the twentieth century, as little by little, the Surinamization of the Moravian Church's leadership, as well as that of the Roman Catholic Church, began, which stimulated loyalty to these church communities. It is worth noting, in this context, that in an article on cultural emancipation in the 1958 Emancipatieblad both the Moravian and Roman Catholic missions were praised for their sustained efforts to work “at the religious and social edification of the creoles, that is, at their cultural and social emancipation,” whereupon a plea followed to involve “in the process of cultural development” the Maroons in the Surinamese interior, who were not yet converted to Christianity. Even after independence, Afro-Surinamese continued to be loyal to the Church, as is clear in an evaluation of the 125th anniversary of emancipation, which stated that thanks were owed to the missions for their pioneering work in the field of “conversion and civilization” to this day.

The Afro-Surinamese awakening continued to be linked to a considerable extent with the colonial discourse of God, the Dutch monarchy, and most of all, Dutch civilization. The didacticism observed by Higman (1998) in most British Caribbean commemorations also dominated the Surinamese July 1st discourse, in which the Christian morality of emancipation by God was supplemented with the bourgeois morality of striving for the social progress of the Afro-Surinamese group.23 Radical rhetoric, as could be heard elsewhere in the Afro-Caribbean emancipation discourse as much as a century earlier (see Breton 1996), was hardly conceivable in Suriname until World War II.24 Even after emancipation, one author went so far as to say, with reference to Emancipation Day, that “it turns out that assimilation to the Western cultural pattern and the interethnic acculturation process have certainly influenced ethnic attitudes, and for the better.”25 In addition to the Church and the government, the ethnic factor should also be considered for the role it played in the struggle for July 1 as an arena of awakening.

THE ETHNIC FACTOR

Particularly on July 1, many descendants of slavery have referred to internalized feelings of inferiority that are an indisputable legacy of slavery, and that seem to have gone virtually unaltered. The trauma stems directly from the long history of slavery, segregation, and racism, and it was stimulated by ethnic rivalry that gradually arose with the arrival of indentured workers from Asia who were said to be given preferential treatment by colonial authorities. Moreover, as a unified group unburdened by the slavery past, it was much easier to out-distance the Afro-Surinamese, thereby giving rise to friction.

Worth noting is the similarity in two action programs announced around July 1, 1928 and 1993. The first originated with the Afrikaans Gemeenschap Verbond (African Joint Union), which was closely associated with the Emancipation Committee that helped structure the July 1 celebrations in the late 1920s, and in which Comvalius was still doing pio-

23. The fact that the Dutch standard of civilization set the tone may be clear most of all from the fact that the Maroons were not regarded as an equivalent part of that progress.
24. Breton writes about the August 1 – Emancipation Day – celebrations in Trinidad: “One speaker at the 1849 banquet, for instance, called on the descendants of the free coloureds to proclaim their kinship with, and sympathy for, the ex-slaves, pointing to the example of Alexander Dumas, who proudly announced his African ancestry. Another felt free to paint a lurid picture of the terrors of slavery, stating unequivocally that African slavery in the New World was worse than any form of bondage in human history, and stressing the guilt of the slave owners, ‘blood-stained and insolent usurpers.’ Such speeches, and supporting editorials and letters in the press, reveal a new self-confidence on the part of these educated coloureds, who were self-consciously constructing an ideology of racial identity for themselves” (Breton 1996:88).
25. De West, June 30, 1988. Given the Indian background of the author of this evaluation, it is, however, possible, that the view he expresses is not entirely representative of the views on emancipation in Afro-Surinamese circles.
neering work. The points of action included, at the time, “bringing together all Negroes” so that they could get to know, appreciate, and love one another more and learn to be proud of themselves and one another; improving their social position and fighting the contempt for their own group; promoting harmony and fighting “divisive elements” within the group, such as “selfishness” or “spitefulness.” Sixty-five years later, on the 130th anniversary of emancipation, the Emancipation Commemoration Committee, which had been called the Emancipation Committee until then, issued a ten-point proclamation that pleaded for:

- a movement to bring about the mental liberation of the Afro-Surinamese ... the decolonization of the spirit and the realization of constant changes in the thought processes of the Afro-Surinamese;
- strategies for developing inner processes of a black consciousness so that 1) Afro-Surinamese may identify themselves as an ethnic group; 2) the myths and stereotypes stigmatizing the Afro-Surinamese are disposed of; 3) the group identity and solidarity are promoted;
- the education, re-education and training of the young and for the cultivation of the will to be oneself and not to develop a negative self-image.

Evidently, Comvalius’s (1913:77) call to “no longer regard your ‘being a Negro’ as the condition that may pull you down, but acknowledge your origin and honor it” had not yet met with general acceptance. Nonetheless, since Rier, voices were being heard that were a sort of counterbalance, propagating the superiority of the African “race.” These voices drew upon the Bible story that the Europeans had formerly used to legitimize slavery, that is, the cursing of Noah’s son Ham after he had mocked his father and been expelled from the house and condemned to eternal servitude as a punishment. Ham was supposed to be the ancestor of the Africans. The voices promoting the

26. The chairman of the AGV was J. Vriese; Comvalius was the secretary of the Emancipation Committee, and A.L. Waaldijk was the editor of the Emancipatie Courant.
27. Emancipatie Courant, July 1, 1928.
28. Declaration of July 1, 1993, printed in De Ware Tijd (July 3, 1993) and signed by the Emancipation Commemoration Committee, which consisted of Dr. A. Kramp (chairman), Mrs. I. Dest, née Day, R. Botte, Mrs. N. Becker, and R. Spa.
29. In this July 1 speech Comvalius (1913:84) attributed the lack of progress among Afro-Surinamese to “the total absence of cooperation, losing sight of social differences; but especially the contempt for your being a Negro.” In his opinion his companions in the United States were doing much better, judging by “the great Negro professor Dr. Booker Washington from Alabama” (Comvalius 1913:86). There are, Comvalius (1913:88) says, “in our Surinamese society thousands of people ... who deny their being a Negro. We think that no credit can be gained from the fact that he tries to prove mathematically of wishes to argue philosophically that he is not a Negro, however close the color of his skin

superiority of the African race interpreted the story to mean that God had put Ham and his offspring to the test, precisely because they were His chosen people. Rier first clearly formulated this interpretation of the story, while the AMEC and the Rijts brothers first brought out into the open the idea of the Africans as God’s chosen people (Verhees 2000:313-14). In 1918 the Rijts brothers launched a movement and a periodical named after Ham’s grandson, Nimrod, the first powerful king on earth. This periodical was devoted to “the spiritual and material interests of the full-blooded Negroes in the colony of Suriname,” and only “full-blooded Negroes” could subscribe to it (Verhees 2000:309). Nine years later another periodical appeared which was edited by one of the Rijts brothers and bore the title “De Neger-Christenen van het Vierde Koninkrijk van het Christendom” (the Negro Christians or the Fourth Kingdom of Christianity). According to it, the African “race” would ultimately bring God’s kingdom to earth, after all other races had failed to do so. Later, too, echoes of this interpretation of the story of Ham could be heard. And while it seems an inversion of the European Bible interpretation, in reality it probably marked a shift toward a more diasporan way of thinking, for the Afro-Surinamese claimed the Biblical role of the Jews. Not the Jews – who had formed a substantial part of the colonial elite in Suriname since the beginning of slavery – but the exiled Africans were the tried, the chosen people.

30. Rier stated that God’s purpose for scattering the Hamites was to give them training for edification by means of oppression and humiliation. “We, too – children of the Ethiopians, Dutch subjects – have been entrusted by God to the house of the Netherlands, as servants of God, to form us into useful citizens here and the life hereafter” (Rier 1904:27). Moreover, science has proved “that the Hamites are just as much susceptible, if not more so, to development, improvement, etc.” (Rier 1904:31).
31. Such an extreme form of Afro-centrism of the blood, difficult to keep up in Suriname, where a large proportion of the Afro-Surinamese population has at least one non-African ancestor, and often more, has remained an exception. Rier, for example, explicitly addressed the “children of the Ethiopians, [of] mixed or unmixed blood” (Rier 1904:37), and Comvalius (1919:2) expressed his joy that, according to him, the division between light and dark-colored Afro-Surinamese had closed since the Golden Jubilee of Emancipation, and he said, “these days most colored people feel one with their race, the Negro race.”
32. This periodical appeared only once (see Van Lier 1977:281; Verhees 2000:309-14).
33. This does not mean that the Afro-Surinamese consciousness-raising movement has any anti-Semitic nuances. There are several Jewish people with Jewish names in the emancipation committees (for example, in 1938, del Prado, de Miranda, H. J. de Vries), while in 1927 Comvalius, who describes himself as “pitch-black,” (1919:11) thanks, in his July 1 speech titled “Strengthening of the Sense of Race,” the Moravian Church and the AMEC, “but above all the Jewish community for their contribution and attention to the emancipation celebrations” (Emancipatie Courant, July 2, 1928).
The descendants of the enslaved Africans also felt chosen in another way. They liked to present themselves as the only true Surinamese, apart from the largely marginalized indigenous people. Their status of "true Surinamese" was, and still is, often brought up in relation to the existing rivalry with other segments of the population, and July 1 has provided a suitable platform for it. In 1904 Rier (1904:46) asked himself, rhetorically, "hasn’t immigration, devised and carried out to keep our country from ruin and to guarantee a prosperous future – on the pretext that the Hamites are lazy – partly pushed aside the advancement of the emancipated? Weren’t the immigrants rated above us in nearly everything?"

Fifty years later, the 1958 Emancipatieblad clearly illustrated how ethnicity was linked to Emancipation Day and emerging political nationalism. Its opening article stated that although the descendants of the enslaved no longer constituted the majority of the population, certainly "it is this group that provided the basis for what we tend to call Surinamese ... If there is a Surinamese people one day, these eerstkomers [those who came first] will have to claim and uphold their birthright so that order may come at last.” Then E.W. Rellum says that he no longer has visions of the whip and shackles during the July 1 commemoration, but of "the Negro who ... shows the world in a fair fight that he is not inferior in anything. And that given time and opportunity he will show himself to be superior in many things" (Rier 1904:46). He counsels,

Don’t be discouraged if, in comparison, some group in some way is doing better than you. They did not have the same troubles as your ancestors in the past. On the contrary, let it be an incentive to you to work even harder, strong in the conviction that we, children of Mother Africa, are capable of great things.34

This Emancipatieblad concludes with a poem by E.D. Rellum from 1915 that reflects both the ethnic rivalry and the feeling – or is it a wish? – of being the chosen one:

The Negro’s tomorrow!
Though I must be the object of derision today
And of contempt by “yellow” and “white”
Tomorrow the day will surely dawn for the Negro
That he will justify be in a leading position.

Tomorrow being “black” will no longer be inferior
Tomorrow “black” will demonstrate his equality
In the great race for the precedence of the races
“Black” will reach the finish first.


J. van de Walle does not shrinks from the proposition that, if there had been no ethnic rivalry in Suriname between the formerly enslaved and Asians, the July 1 commemoration would have lost much of its importance, just like in Curacao. However, halfway through the twentieth century it seemed as if they said to everyone willing to listen, “now look, this is our day. This day brings to mind the time when we, Creoles, wrested Suriname from [Mother] Nature under inhuman conditions. Our Surinamese has now become a sort of colony inhabited by foreigners, Chinese, Coolies and Javaneses. Yet this country is ours. We have built it. Nobody else!” (Van de Walle 1975:49-50)

Van de Walle adds almost cynically that Emancipation Day made little impression on those immigrants and their descendants. Nevertheless, attempts have been made to turn July 1 into a less exclusively Afro-Surinamese celebration. Although in 1919 Comvalius concurred with the Public Interest Committee’s wish to publicly declare that the governor should make July 1 a national holiday, because “we are the majority of the population in the colony; so it is reasonable that our day of liberty should be acknowledged as a special one” (Comvalius 1919:2), it was not actually made a national holiday until 1960, when it was renamed the “Day of Liberties,” and it was intended for the entire population.35 In practice, however, it remained primarily an Afro-Surinamese celebration, clear from, for instance, its being referred to in popular speech as Manspasi (Stafman for emancipation) or Keti Kott. A sociologist of Hindustani-Surinamese origin remembers:

The day the abolition of slavery is celebrated in Suriname, July 1, is not simply a day-off, it's a national holiday. This is especially noticeable in the Kleine Markt: bands playing Creole music and Creole women dancing in traditional kostome dress dominate the scene. Typical too are the porters and odd-job men, and the numerous Surinamese soft drinks and snacks, which are handed out to everyone for next to nothing, including to the Hindustani, Chinese and Javanese people, who also watch the spectacle, though usually from a respectful distance. However familiar it all may be, celebrating the abolition of slavery continues to seem a little strange to them. (Gowerscham 2001:123)

35. This poem has five stanzas; these are the second, third, and fifth stanzas.
In 1984 the day was even renamed “Day of National Unity,” though that was a one-time occasion because July 1 marked the end of Ramadan for the Javanese and Muslim Hindustanis. On July 1, 1993, however, the Emancipation Commemoration Committee issued a declaration, the first point of which read, “to record for posterity, particularly the descendants of Afro-Surinamese, and in connection with the fact that July 1, 1863 is of intrinsic and historical value wholly and solely to this segment of the population, this day shall, as of today, be known to us as Ketki Koni.”

Not everyone agreed with that. A high-profile Afro-Surinamese member of the National Assembly, Frank Playfair, held the view that on July 1 the abolition of a specific production system was being commemorated, and that, in fact, concerned all people. These opinions and views coexist on Emancipation Day, and people seem to have chosen the term that best suits him or her. And so it happened that in 1998, President Wijdenbosch cordially invited everyone to the 135th anniversary of Ketki Koni Day, the Suriname Postal Corporation brought out a special stamp on the occasion of Ketki Koni, wishing all Surinamese a sweer 'Manspaas', while the same company announced that it would close early because of the ‘Day of Liberties’ on July 1.

Throughout the twentieth century, there was similar confusion about the terms used by Afro-Surinamese to refer to themselves. There has always been a difference between politically conscious and more traditional, perhaps more popular, terminology. Some elderly people in particular still use the term ninge (Negro) to this day, many call themselves blak man/uma (black man/woman), particularly light-colored people refer to themselves as crookikreoro, and Afro-Surinamese in general often use the term Surinamer/Suranaman to indicate their own group. The claim that Surinamer is synonymous with “Afro-Surinamese” is, of course, a political statement in the ethnic rivalry: “we have the oldest rights.”

In official discourse, too, the terminology used on July 1, the day on which the Afro-Surinamese present themselves as a group, changed and was indicative of a changing consciousness. The official churches had always referred to the enslaved and their descendants as ninge or “Negroes.” The consciousness-raising evangelists like Rier and Rijs consistently used “Ethiopians.” In doing so they concurred with the new diaspora discourse, which came from the United States and later Africa and Jamaica (see Price 2003) where Baptists and leaders like Wilmot Blyden and Marcus Garvey were active, and became highly popular in the diaspora for a time. This discourse was simultaneously viewed from outside the diaspora by the established order with distrust because of its anticolonial and Afrocentric character. Thus, Rijs was watched closely by some Moravian missionaries on suspicion of being influenced by the Ethiopians from the United States. Governor Staal wrote in the late 1920s,

For some years, attempts have been made from outside to introduce something into Suriname that could be termed a realist aspiration, a sort of Negro-Zionism: the return of Ethiopians to Africa. This Ethiopianism has not, however, found acceptance (Staal 1927:349).

The matter was not taken very seriously, for it was assumed that the Afro-Surinamese were too well off, and besides, would be surpassed by the Asian immigrants (Verhees 2000:315). Ethiopianism never in fact did develop into a mass movement in Suriname like it did in Jamaica. The position of the Moravians was probably too strong for that, perhaps partly because they also used Ethiopianist rhetoric from time to time. For example, the president of the Moravian Church, Voellaart (1913:75-76), spoke of “the Ethiopian race” in 1913 in a lecture on the Surinamese “race issue.”

There has always been much more discussion in Suriname about the word “Negro” and direct references to Africa than about Ethiopianism. In his July 1 speech about race, Voellaart (1913:74) stated,

Just what exactly is the crux of our race issue in Suriname, which is causing so much commotion? We answer: nothing but the memory of slavery which has not yet been eradicated. The fact that the word negro, which simply and solely means a black person, and consequently obviously indicates race and is interpreted in this way all over the world, is used and interpreted here as a synonym of slave, explains everything and also proves that two notions have got mixed up. Once this practice has been corrected, it is to be expected that it could contribute considerably to peace and quiet.

It appears that many people found the term “negro” hard to accept because it was interpreted as a synonym of “slave.” In the diaspora, especially in the United States, however, it was the term that was coming into vogue, in particular “Negro” with a capital N. Comvalius joined in by consciously promoting the term “Negro.” He spoke of “Negrohood,” “Negroness,” the

41. In a note Staal (1927:349) added, “is it an echo of it that is heard in the name of the ‘Committee for the celebration of July 1 as a general day of thanksgiving for the strengthening of the sense of race’?” This was the Emancipation Committee that Comvalius was also a part of.

42. There were no ideological connotations in Voellaart’s use of the term Ethiopian. His speech makes it perfectly clear that he only used it to differentiate it from the other human races, i.e. Caucasian, Mongolian Melanesian and American.

37. De Ware Tijd, June 29, 1984.

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progress of the “Negro race,” and of the July 1 celebration as the “Negro celebration” (Comvalius 1913; 1919). He did not exclude anyone, like the Rijts brothers did, for his use of the term “Negro” included everyone with some African blood in their veins. Not surprisingly, he fulminated against “some brown Negroes” who took no notice of their race, particularly those who had risen to great social heights. Some of these were even said to deny their origins, and Comvalius ascertained in his July 1 speech that there “will not be just a few who wish to protest vigorously and prove mathematically that they are not negroes, for [to them] a Negro is only the pitch-black person standing before you this evening” (Comvalius 1919:11). Comvalius touched a nerve with the Afro-Surinamese and did not attempt to avoid ensuing discussions, but rather tried to initiate them. To him, “Negro” was an almost honorary nickname that was part of the identity of those who would neither deny their existence or their past in slavery. In the Emancipatie Courant of July 1, 1928, Comvalius published an article taken from the U.S. periodical, The Crisis, in which an Afro-American student argued in favor of abolishing the term “Negro”: “Negro or nigger is a white man’s word to make us feel inferior. I hope that this word will be abolished.”

Comvalius commented that “yes, that name annoys many in Suriname, but it would be better if they gradually bring themselves to acknowledge their Negrohood. We are not inferior to others.”

It seems that Comvalius was proved right in the 1940s, because Van Lier (1971:281) observed in his 1949 thesis that “the word Negro is gradually losing its offensive sound for people from the black community.” In 1947 a party was even founded that bore the word “Negro” in its name: the Negro Political Party.” At the same time, however, another discussion began about a new term. The colonial civil servant Van de Walle, who first worked on Curacao, related in his memoirs of his time in Suriname, that in 1943 he had to give a lecture about the differences between Antilleans and Surinamese, and had to look for an alternative word for creool, simply because it was not used in the Antilles. The historian, J.F.E. Einaar, “who was well informed about the developments among the Negroes of America” (van de Walle 1975:72) and also a member of the Emancipation Commemoration Committee, suggested that Van de Walle use the term “Afro-American,” which was being used more and more, especially in the United States:

All colored people in the western hemisphere who are originally of African descent could be called by this name, Einaar thought. I was quite happy, for I thought the idea fresh and original. The word caused a commotion during the lecture, which was attended by many Creoles. The audience had taken offense to the prefix “Afro-.” For them, Africa was a sort of wilderness inhabited by uncivilized people. Perhaps some sort of civilization would flourish there at some time in the distant future, but it did not look as though it would for the time being.

In short, in that environment and in those days it was painful to recall that the civilization of Suriname partly came from Africa. I had always been surprised at the success of generations of Benjamins and Van Ommerens,44 who referred to the ties between Surinamese and Dutchmen with stubborn one-sidedness. After my lecture, a man asked to speak. I knew him as an excellent essayist, and he had contributed to the daily De West many articles, written in at times humorous and always refined Dutch. His name was Comvalius, and he had been trained as a teacher. I expected a question, but he said quite simply, “I’m not an Afro-American. I’m a Negro,” a point of view that is often defended in present-day North America by young, progressive colored people, who, in their isolation, wish to put things clearly even though, in addition to outward similarities with the Afrikaners, they have also been defined by their American heritage.

People who did not attend the lecture but read a report on it in the newspaper, reflected on the notion of Afro-American. A well-known physician, whom I had always regarded as a typical Creole Dutchman, brought it up. His projection was the following: in the future, the African countries would play an important role on the world stage. When he said this, during the war years, virtually all of Africa was colonized, either to some extent or wholly, and his prediction amazed me. He was right ... [But he was the exception, because] thirty years ago the word “Afro” was seen as a term of abuse coming from an outsider who wanted to insult and ridicule the Surinamese. (Van de Walle 1975:72-73, 114)

Therefore it was not until independence, and for some much later, that a term like “Afro-Suriname,” with its reference to Africa, stopped being felt as offensive. Until that time, “Negro” was used widely, and on the hundredth anniversary of emancipation, ethnic consciousness-raising, begun by Rier, was described, without any embarrassment, as “Negro nationalism” and “National Negro Consciousness.”45 Yet “Negro” was gradually overshadowed by “Creool” “As a Creool one considers Negroes to be the descendants of Negroes and anything in between.”46

There was a gradually increasing demand because of the demographic shifts in the ethnically compartmentalized politics of Suriname for a term that could encompass everyone who was non-Asian, and Creool was the answer. Likewise, the Maroons, who, until then, had always been referred to as the Bush Negroes, were officially called Boilandcreolen. These were also the terms used in the Emancipation centenary celebrations in 1963, and the terminology continues to be used today. However, in the last few years

44. Benjamins was the Inspector of Education and co-author of the Encyclopedia of the Dutch West Indies (1914-17). Van Ommeren was a newspaper publisher and journalist, as well as a politician.
there has been a change, which is expressed around the July 1 celebrations in particular. There has been a move to link the terminology to developments in the diaspora, particularly those in the United States. In the July 1 declaration of 1993, the Emancipation Commemoration Committee only speaks of Afro-Surinamese, which has been customary since for individuals and organizations concerned with Afro-Surinamese awakening and cultural heritage.

It is no longer even shocking to speak of African-Surinamese. On July 1, 1996, sixteen Afro-Surinamese cultural organizations formed the Feydrosi fi Grupu fi Afrikan Srananman (Federation of African-Surinamese Cultural Groups), headed by Iwan Wijngaarde. Their aim is the unity and social and cultural elevation of the Afro-Surinamese, the rewriting of history, and the rehabilitation of the ancestors (Melker 2001:159). Even the Surinamese president, Venetiaan, frequently used the term "Afro-Surinamese" in an opening speech at an international conference on the African in diaspora, held in Paramaribo on the occasion of the 140th anniversary of Emancipation, nevertheless pointing out "that the period in which the African roots were denied was not long past. A denial that manifested itself in attacks on persons who were unwilling to acknowledge privately that there were lines that traced their origins back to 'Mother Africa.'"47

Finally, there are the Maroons who reject their official name of Bosland-creolen (literally, bush Creoles). They have always considered themselves as having been responsible for their own emancipation, as opposed to the plantation slaves who, in their view, were only granted their freedom by the whites. This antagonism increased over the years as they were largely ignored or even frustrated in their — often modest — demands by the government in Paramaribo, even when this was dominated by Afro-Surinamese. For that reason the Maroons have hardly supported the urban emancipation commemorations even to this day. They have even established their own day of commemoration, Maroon Day, which is celebrated on October 10 and marks the day the first peace treaty between the colonial government and the Ndyuka Maroons was signed in 1760. Maroons in Suriname, as well as in the Netherlands, have commemorated the day of their liberation struggle since the late 1970s-early 1980s. Despite several requests, the national government of Suriname is not willing to recognize Maroon Day as an official holiday (see Pakosie 2001, 2004).

For the first fifty years after 1863, July 1 was a continuation of the pacification policy that had been launched decades before the abolition of slavery, rather than a point at which Surinamese — let alone the Afro-Surinamese — national identity was experienced or from which it was developed in the same way that, according to Nora, for example, "Armistice Day memorials... seemed to exemplify an important aspect of the idea of "Frenchness."48 It has never acquired this instrumental role in the shaping of Surinamese national identity. It is a commemoration by the Afro-Surinamese nation, not the Surinamese nation. In the 1960s and 1970s attempts were made, it is true, to turn it, as the Day of Liberties and possibly part of the "fraternization policy" — a pragmatic alliance of Afro-Surinamese and Hindustani political parties to bridge ethnic antagonism — into a lieu de mémoire for all Surinamese. Under the influence of increasing ethnic rivalry between Afro-Surinamese and Indian Surinamese, July 1 has been claimed increasingly more by the former in the last few decades. To them alone it is a true lieu de mémoire. As a matter of fact, it may still be part of the national memory and/or of nation building for, in a state such as Suriname which has the motto "unity in diversity," the variety of ethnically defined lieux de mémoire may be part of the emerging unity, although Nora never meant it that way.

**Secularization**

Since Rier took the emancipation celebration beyond the confines of the Moravian Church at the beginning of the twentieth century, this commemoration has become increasingly secular and popular, although it has never completely broken away from the Church, nor from a strong didacticism, although this didacticism came to be charged with ethnic and cultural consciousness-raising. The various Emancipation Day committees that, since Rier, took it upon themselves to organize the July 1 celebrations and publish, yearly, if possible, Emancipation papers, did much to influence the shift in this didacticism. Partly as a result of the shift away from church didacticism, the Afro-Surinamese started to pay more attention to their own distinctive culture and history.49 The consciousness of colonial history that had surrounded Emancipation for so long and had thus obscured the slavery past gave way tentatively to a history with its own heroes and a cultural heritage of which Surinamese could be proud. The nationalists of the post-World War II period gave this history a further boost (see Marshall 2003).50

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47. De Ware Tijd June 24, 2003, on website.
48. See the introduction to Nora 1996, volume II.
49. Consider also the work of "Papa" Koenders, a school teacher and cultural activist who was one of the first to promote Sranan, the Surinamese Creole language, instead of the colonial "national" language, Dutch. He also strongly promoted turning July 1 into a national holiday.
50. The nationalists of the post-World War II period, a group of mainly Afro-Surinamese intellectually led by Eddy Bruma, were trained, as well as radicalized, in the Netherlands. They wanted, for example, to declare Suriname an independent country on the centennial of Emancipation Day in 1963 (see Jansen van Galen 2000:327).
The most tangible expression of these changes on July 1 are the various monuments that were put up in Suriname. On the occasion of the centenary in 1963, Prime Minister Pengel, the leader of the largest Afro-Surinamese political party, unveiled a liberty statue, made by the Afro-Surinamese artist Josef Klas, which represented a slave shaking off his chains. That same day, Governor Currie held a speech in Paramaribo in which he recalled that on the very same spot, 130 years ago, the enslaved Codjo, Mentor, and Present “were put to death [for arson] in a degrading manner. For it [the execution] makes us realize once again what a brutal system slavery must have been, at least for those who were forced to live under it.”

Furthermore, Currie’s wife planted an “emancipation tree” in Paramaribo, and another abstract memorial was put up in the district of Nickerie, where other monuments had been unveiled, with the first one in 1938. There was another emancipation tree planted in the district of Coronie. Ten years later, a statue of Alida, the ultimate symbol of the cruelty of the slavery system in the Afro-Surinamese historical consciousness, was erected in the town of Wageningen (Suriname). At the 1984 Emancipation commemoration, in Coronie, Prime Minister Udenhout laid the first stone for the statue of Tata Colin, the messianic leader of an aborted rebellion in 1836. Less public, but no less monumental and symbolic, was the presentation of the on-line registers listing all the slaves emancipated in 1863 to President Venetiaan on the occasion of the 140th commemoration in 2003. Clearly, these monuments also mark the very active role the government has come to play in promoting a new historical consciousness.

Until the 1960s, the role of the government at the time was appeasing rather than encouraging when it came to the July 1 commemoration. Traditionally, the governor was presented with an aubade by hundreds of schoolchildren on July 1, and he helped maintain the mythologization of the day by praising the special relationship between the Afro-Surinamese population and William III and his royal descendants and giving thanks to them in their role as a kind of patron/patroness of the former. This item, however, disappeared from the program in the 1960s and has been replaced by an official reception hosted by the head of government. Moreover, it was the government that provided, and still provides, the facilities and resources for a broad-based popular celebration. Boat races on the Suriname River have been organized for years, just as they were on the King’s or Queen’s birthday: they were, in fact, a continuation of an old tradition from the days of slavery. Sports events became a part of the July 1 ritual at an early date. Not only the authorities encouraged these activities, but the Emancipation committees, too, motivated by their didactic and educational ambition, used them to reach as wide an audience as possible.

In 1927, for example, this citizen’s committee organized a soccer tournament for which the prize was the “Emancipation Challenge Cup,” because “sports have made great progress in the last few years, and have brought together many heterogeneous groups.” The names of the participating teams incidentally, sounded very colonial, for they were the same as those of Dutch soccer teams: Ajax, Excelsior, Go Ahead, and MVV. Sports events have formed a fixed part of July 1 activities, and they have been a means of involving people other than the Afro-Surinamese in celebrations.

In addition to sports, an increasing number of cultural events have come to be included on the July 1 program. Koto mist shows and other traditional costume processions, usually accompanied by music and often the military band, have been a set item since at least the 1950s. Since the 1950s, too, special theatrical productions dealing with the slavery past have invariably been performed on July 1. These productions are put on by both professional troupes as well as by amateurs. Amateur troupes, in particular, originated in the 1920s and are a continuation of the dramatic tradition from the days of slavery. Conivalus greatly stimulated this tradition, and since the 1950s, cultural nationalists and various organizations have given it a substantial boost (Van Kempen 2002, IV:289-309).

The sports, cultural, and theatrical activities have helped to bring into focus the slavery past, even though this focus is often on the exoticism of cruelty. For example, there is a beauty contest held yearly that is named after Alida, the female slave that was treated so brutally by Susanna Duplessis, and Van de Walle observed in the 1940s and 1950s that in spite of the, at times, somewhat pathetic nature of the emancipation celebrations, they pointed to the desperation, cruelty, and arbitrariness which characterized slavery. A sort of folklore emerged about it. Gruesome tales

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52. At the corner of Saramaccastraat and Zwartenbogenbrugstraat.
53. In 1938 on Commissarioplein, at the corner of Voorstraat and Emmastraat; in 1963 at the corner of Voorstraat and Waterloolaan (see Surinaamse Courant 1997:1).
54. Alida’s mistress, Susanna Duplessis, is said to have drowned Alida’s child in her presence because it was crying. The jealous woman cut off one of Alida’s breasts and fed
circulated. Brunings, who was both a civil servant and an actor ... could even show me a vault in my office where one Mrs. Lesseps was said to have personally tortured her male and female slaves to death. Sailing on the river in her costly "tent boat," this peculiar sadist was said to have forced mothers to throw their own children into the water ... At one time, Brunings claimed, she had lived in the house that now accommodated our clerk's office, and if you worked overtime at night, you could still hear the screams of the victims. (Van de Walle 1975:50)

Additionally, cultural roots activities, ranging from meetings and performances of traditional dance and music, to workshops on natural medicine and medicinal plants, are being organized with increasing frequency, especially since independence in 1975.

An Emancipation Day party is not a party if there are not many opportunities for dancing, eating, and drinking, organized either privately, by organizations, or by Afro-Surinamese political parties. Shopkeepers are keen to take advantage of the opportunity, judging by the numerous Keti Koti specials and Mamispasi sales, particularly of fashion, food (e.g. "emancipation chops"), and drinks. Even in the commercial opportunism there are hints of didacticism, as in a 1958 advertisement in Emancipatieblad for Surinamese Parbo beer, which shows a drawing of a self-assured black man with a glass of Parbo beer and a text that says, "help give meaning to the emancipation of your country. Support your own country's manufacturing industry. A country will never become great without a flourishing industry." Noteworthy is the only other illustrated advertisement in the same paper, one for Heineken beer, in which a white waiter carrying a large glass of Heineken on a serving tray says, "Your Heineken, Sir." The caption underneath says, "Heineken bierte, wrokman priesterie" (Heineken beer, a working man's pleasure). Although the text itself is not emancipatory, it is the only one in Sranan. Gradually more texts about Emancipation Day, including advertisements, have begun to appear in Sranan. Language, indeed, is a crucial part of the emancipation struggle of the Afro-Surinamese population (see, for example, Eersel 1997).

Since July 1 escaped from the confines of the Church, the process of folklorization entailed on the one hand informal fun and Emancipation Day as a popular festival that did not pose a threat to social relations and seemed rather to perpetuate them. It had begun in colonial times in order to make the commemoration acceptable to everybody, including the colonial authorities. The Surinamese authorities continued it as part of the ethnic "fraternization policy" and general nation building. On the other hand, folklorization has resulted in the growing Afro-Surinamese awakening because it allows for room to express the cultural distinctiveness that had been formed since the beginning of slavery, but that had been eclipsed for many, many years by colonial cultural assimilation policy. The loss of cultural distinctiveness was reversed as a result of the emergence, from the 1950s onward, of Afro-Surinamese nationalists, who linked cultural emancipation to an anti-colonial discourse. Although this nationalism eventually led to the decolonization of Suriname, July 1 seemed to folklorize rather than radicalize as a public forum for the Afro-Surinamese. Indeed, nation building, rather than group emancipation, was the motto in this period. However, the number of organizations active in promoting this cultural distinctiveness is increasing, and gradually more attempts are being made to draw closer to similar initiatives elsewhere in the diaspora, particularly those in Anglophone regions and the Netherlands.

It is only since the 1980s that the folkloristic Emancipation Day has become more politically charged. This is no surprise really, for as a result of a military dictatorship, an internal armed conflict, followed by a return to democracy, Surinamese society as a whole has become politicized. Since the "revolutionary" 1980s, July 1 has increasingly been reclaimed as a pre-eminently Afro-Surinamese platform, while the commemoration of what happened during slavery is given shape and emphasis in much more radical terms. An Afro-Surinamese committee, for example, demanded that no fewer than four squares in the center of Paramaribo should be named after Cojo, Mentor, and Present, formerly depicted as the criminal slaves who had set fire to Paramaribo, but honored nowadays as resistance heroes. Eventually, a more radical approach was named after the first of three of them (Melker 2001:154-66). Increasingly more attempts are being made to join the diaspora. These attempts are largely an interaction with the Afro-Surinamese diaspora community in the Netherlands, where a large number of organizations united in the National Slavery Past Platform succeeded in getting the slavery past and its legacy on the political agenda. Renewed focus on the slavery past has led, in the Netherlands, to the creation of a national monument and an institute, both meant to make the slavery past visible (see Oostindie 2001). Moreover, attempts are being made to establish contact with the diaspora elsewhere in the Americas, particularly in the United States, where there are increasingly louder calls for "reparations" which are starting to resonate

58. Little attention is paid to the role of these nationalists in this paper because others have done more research on the nationalists (the work of, for example, John Jansen van Galen (2000), Peter Mee (2001), and Edwin Marshall (2003)). It is true however, that the nationalists have been of great importance to the breaking of the silence on the slavery past and the revaluation of Afro-Surinamese culture, but they have not specifically used the emancipation commemorations to this end.

59. As a result of this public attention for the slavery past at the UN Antiracism Conference in Durban in 2001, a Dutch government minister speaking on behalf of his government, expressed his "deep remorse" for the Dutch slavery past.
in Suriname. By way of example, the Stichting 1 juli Keti Koti recently decided that it would join diaspora activities abroad because it had been cut off from them for too long.

The reclaiming of Emancipation Day as a distinctive Afro-Surinamese event, as well as the renewed linking up with the African diaspora elsewhere, seems to run parallel to what Higman found elsewhere in the, mostly Anglophone, Caribbean:

The abandonment of Emancipation Day by some territories around the time of independence suggests a willing embrace of modernization models and hopes for a bold new era freed from the injustices of the past. The revival of Emancipation Day in the 1980s and 1990s parallels a general disillusionment with those modernizing paradigms and a need to recognize the unique significance of slavery and emancipation in the history of the region, interpreted within the frame of post-colonial politics. (Higman 1998:103)

It is interesting, Higman says, that historians have increasingly come to concern themselves with the experience of slavery, but that public interest is in fact still focused on the abolition of slavery and the "new" resistance heroes who fought for it. Thus we find emerging a new yet partly familiar discourse that present-day political leaders in the Caribbean like to appropriate, especially on Emancipation Day. At the same time, this discourse fits in with the feelings of uncertainty many Afro-Caribbean people have about what liberty in fact means today (Higman 2001:103). For Afro-Surinamese, the uncertainty is intensified by their rivalry with the Asian population groups, who arrived in the country after slavery, but who have now surpassed them, at least from a socioeconomic point of view (Hassankhan et al. 1995:273).

CONCLUSION

Emancipation Day in Suriname has been used, in collaboration with the Church, to discipline and control the formerly enslaved and their descendants, creating what I call a "cult of gratitude" to God and king, as well as an ideology "didacticism" by which Emancipation Day was used to underline the mental slavery people still had to free themselves from. The commemoration of July 1 thus was used to strengthen the colonial status quo. It was turned into a lieu de mémoire to forget the slavery past and for the Afro-Surinamese to "become civilized." And thus, it almost became a lieu d’amnésie.

Since the resuscitation of the slavery past, Emancipation Day has always been contested as a historical "site." There are those who want to remember, and those who want to forget, though both have in mind the future. Those who want to forget want to secure the future by keeping the present as it is. Those who want to remember want to change the present to make a better future.

Therefore, the idea of a mental slavery was not used by those who contested the colonial July 1 discourse to accept their subordinate position in colonial society, but to develop into a self-conscious "nation." The African diaspora proved to be an inspirational and probably crucial context for stimulating the refusal of subordination. As a result, Emancipation Day gradually secularized, though never completely. Almost parallel to its secularization, it underwent a process of folklorization. It allowed the state to pacify distinct and/or subaltern claims by making it a national day for all Surinamese. However, the state has not been able to overcome interethnic rivalry, and in fact, it is at this very level that rivalries are played out. The government has failed to transform Emancipation Day into a genuine national realm of memory. Instead, July 1 is being reclaimed by a politically influential avant garde as an exclusively Afro-Surinamese lieu de mémoire supported by a growing orientation toward developments elsewhere in the African diaspora, particularly in the United States and in the Netherlands. As a result, July 1 seems more alive than ever as a platform for Afro-Surinamese emancipation.

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