Between Diaspora, (Trans)Nationalism, and American Globalization: A History of Afro-Surinamese Emancipation Day

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Over since the twenty-one-gun salute announcing the end of slavery was fired at 6 A.M. on 1 July 1863, Suriname's churches, particularly the Moravian Brethren, have played a major role in the annual celebrations of Emancipation Day. Patience, obedience, modesty, and, above all, gratitude to God and King, were key words in their attitude to emancipation, or Keti Koti (the chains have been broken), as it was called by the former slaves. In 1993 the Surinamese daily De Ware Tijd suggested that besides Keti Koti, Emancipation Day should also be known by another name, Koti Keti, which means, more or less, "break the chains," since there is still so much wage slavery and mental slavery from which to be liberated.

During the two centuries of slavery under Dutch rule in Suriname, an important part of the enslavement process consisted of trying to impose a slave identity on the captive Africans. This was based on the lowest European social categories of race, civilization, morality, and ethics. When it eventually became clear that the slave system was coming to an end, the calculating authorities replaced the more brutal aspects of mental enslavement with the conciliatory device of massive missionary campaigns among the slaves. This continued after the abolition of slavery and was augmented by colonial Dutch education. Christianity and Dutch schooling, imposed as a means of disciplining the former slaves, now also offered a way to escape from the lower ranks. The long history of physical as well as cultural resistance and creativity of the slaves had shown the consistent failure of the slave owners to dominate Afro-Surinamese minds. However, it cannot be denied that, particularly in the postslavery era and even today, the main legacy of slavery seems to be a continual struggle among descendants of the slaves regarding what it means to be a Surinamese/Creole/Negro/Afro-Surinamese/African-Surinamese in a (post-) colonial and increasingly multi-ethnic society. Overcoming this legacy has in fact been at the heart of the Emancipation Day celebrations. Therefore, studying the
history of these public celebrations, or commemorations, may represent an appropriate way of understanding the dynamics of this emancipation process in a (post-) colonial setting as well as its relation to the outside world.

In this chapter the historical development of this emancipation struggle is sketched and analyzed from an Afro-Surinamese perspective, looking outward for inspiration and inward for strength. The focus of this inward search is, of course, the Afro-Surinamese population itself, but may at times also refer to Surinamese society at large, particularly where relations with the Netherlands are concerned. The outside world ranges from the rest of Surinamese society, to the Netherlands, as well as to the African diaspora, particularly in the United States. In order to understand these relations with the outside world a distinction is made between diasporic, transnational, and American globalization relations. "Diaspora" in this chapter refers to (a sense of belonging to) an international community of people sharing a history of oppression, exiled from a common former homeland, in this case a more or less imaginary homeland called Africa, and now spread over many countries and even continents. The bonds within the diaspora are often more of an intellectual and spiritual nature than physical and personal, although not necessarily so, and they are at times more important than the focus on the homeland.6

"Transnationalism" in this case means being part of a community which has until recently shared the same homeland but as a consequence of migration has become part of satellite communities elsewhere. These communities are as much connected to the surrounding new society as they are to the former homeland and are in continual contact. The interrelationship of the network is such that it would be hard to separate the different locales from each other since their interconnectedness is the motor of the community's dynamism, socially and culturally as well as economically.7 Generally, the number of countries connected by a transnational network is far more limited than, for instance, in a diaspora, let alone compared to the deterritorialized worldwide links engendered by globalization. Here it is limited to Suriname and the Netherlands, and practice shows that it is even more limited to each different ethnic Surinamese population group on either side of the Atlantic, here the Afro-Surinamese.

Finally, reference is made in this chapter to American globalization, referring to the earliest definitions of globalization which viewed rapid capitalist modernization of the world as a one-way process coming from the West with the USA at its center.8 Although since then globalization has increasingly (and correctly) been defined as a two-way or even multi-directional process with many different and constantly changing centers,9 in this case the old definition suffices. In this chapter it refers to the dominance of Afro-Americans in the African diaspora as a consequence of American dominance in general.

The changing composition over time of these outward and inward oriented dimensions of Afro-Surinamese emancipation result here in a three-phase periodization of the history of Emancipation Day. The first period, 1863–1953, is
characterized (at least partly) by liberation from the constraints of the (Moravian) Church and attempts to link to developments elsewhere in the African diaspora, particularly in the United States. The second period, 1953–1993, is characterized by a massive outward flow of people, mainly to the Netherlands, combined with a wave of inward-looking nationalism leading finally to independence. Although nationalism and the resulting political independence were mainly supported by Afro-Surinamese, they hoped to create a multi-ethnic nation state for all Surinamese. The third period (from 1993), started after the initial postcolonial turmoil had abated and the Afro-Surinamese felt increasingly bypassed by population groups that they had never considered to be as Surinamese as themselves. This seems to be leading to a new, inward-looking ethno-nationalism with, paradoxically, increasing diasporic and transnational, as well as globalizing, dimensions.

1863–1953: DIASPORIC BEGINNINGS

Little evidence exists to suggest that before the twentieth century, Afro-Surinamese felt they were part of a wider history and of more international communities than that of the Dutch colonial empire. Naturally, there was an awareness of having African roots, but there do not seem to have been any ties, or desire for ties, with the mother continent. Neither do they seem to have turned to other Africans in the diaspora for support and inspiration. The first generation after emancipation was apparently too busy surviving and securing a place in colonial society to be concerned with the wider world. As financial opportunities increased, so did the opportunity to look beyond the borders, literally and figuratively, and at the same time the wider world started to intrude into Suriname. A striking example of this new development is J. P. Rier, who from 1904 succeeded in turning Emancipation Day into a day of black consciousness, without, however, abandoning the cult of gratitude to God and the king.

As an adult, Rier joined the local branch of the American National Baptist Convention in neighboring Guyana. His experience abroad enabled him to make his fellow former slaves aware of the existence of an African diaspora, and Emancipation Day was one of the vehicles he used to raise this diasporic consciousness. Rier had left the dominant Moravian Church to found his own. While he did to a certain extent stay within the Dutch-Christian emancipation discourse, at the same time he linked this to the discourse of an African diaspora, in which it was mainly Afro-Americans from the USA who set the tone. On 1 July 1904 a crowd of between three and four thousand people gathered in and around the Concordia Freemasons’ lodge in Paramaribo, which he had rented, to listen to his two-and-a-half-hour “religious lecture,” as he called it, although it was actually more like an eighteen-point program. During his speech he consistently addressed his
audience by the diaspora term "Ethiopians," while English phrases and terms like "Afro-Dutch" and "emancipation progress" point to the influence of the diasporic discourse from the United States.

Following Rier's initiative, Emancipation Day became a platform for Afro-Surinamese identity, and for the first time it became separated from the church and linked to a wider diaspora context. The didacticism attached to the commemoration was reinforced by this new context, with Christian morality supplemented by the diaspora morality of the Black race, or the African nations, showing the world, and themselves, what they were capable of. For the first time, too, Emancipation Day was not only seen as a joyful, future-oriented liberation celebration, but also as a common expression of the traumatic legacy of slavery, since it was no longer formulated exclusively from above but had also been claimed and realized non-institutionally, by a man who gave a voice to the ordinary Afro-Surinamese and placed the initiative in their hands.

After Rier, therefore, 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 school teacher and Afro-Surinamese consciousness-raising activist T. A. C. Comvalius 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 had already mentioned it in Suriname. At the golden jubilee of the Emancipation in 1913, even the president of the Moravian Brethren referred to Booker T. Washington and his promotion of Afro-American socioeconomic autonomy, as a result of the development of which white society would no longer be able to ignore them. 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 Surinamese branch of the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), headed by the brothers Rijts and evangelical preachers such as Rier. This international mass movement was founded by the famous Jamaican activist Marcus Garvey, who called for a return to Africa. Yet return never became an important issue in Suriname, although it seems that the process of Black awakening was finally set in motion in those days and was freed from its local isolation.

Emancipation Day was the one public occasion when this new consciousness was expressed. And even though Black leaders still held up the Christian role model as an example of development, progress, and liberation, it was a Christianity of their own choosing: it was without ties to the colonial authorities and it had its own substance. With their links with the diaspora, the new evangelists, more than the Moravians, conveyed a genuine grass-roots Christianity. But despite its loyalty to God and the Dutch monarchy, and the propagation of the Dutch language as a means of progress, this autonomous attitude posed a threat to the colonial status quo. The new evangelists began the fight for and introduced pride in
an autonomous Afro-Surinamese identity at a time when the government was trying to assimilate this part of the population to Dutch culture. Ethnic awareness has since become the dominant theme of Emancipation Day, although religion has never completely disappeared from view.

This Afro-Surinamese awakening continued to be linked to a considerable extent to the colonial discourse of God, the Dutch monarchy, and most of all, Dutch civilization. The didacticism observed by Higman in most British Caribbean commemorations also dominated the Surinamese Emancipation Day discourse, in which the Christian morality of emancipation by God was supplemented by the bourgeois morality of striving for the social progress of the Afro-Surinamese group. Radical rhetoric, which had figured elsewhere in the Afro-Caribbean emancipation discourse as much as a century earlier, remained inconceivable in Suriname until the Second World War. However, the establishment of links with an international Afro-American community resulted in the emergence of a small group of Afro nationalists, for whom Africa and the African diaspora was the source of emancipation and not necessarily Dutch civilization and/or Christianity. Their focus was on the United States, since the Afro community there lived less in isolation and ignorance than the communities in the Caribbean colonies, where the entire infrastructure had always been geared toward the European mother countries. Therefore, the turn toward Afro-America was in itself an act of emancipation. Indeed, some Surinamese, including the internationalist Otto Huiswoud, worked at Marcus Garvey’s UNIA head office in Harlem, New York. Furthermore, and still before the Second World War, a Dutch Guiana League was founded which is said to have had ties with the growing negro movement in the USA. Finally, there was also a branch of the League of Coloured People in Suriname, which “helped to reinforce race consciousness,” and which undoubtedly stimulated the growth of the group working to achieve this objective beginning in the 1940s.

The godfather of this new black-nation and Afro-culture consciousness movement in Suriname was a former schoolteacher, J. G. A. Koenders (1886–1957), who is said to have been influenced by Garvey and Otto Huiswoud. He showed himself a worthy successor to men like Rier, and like the latter he used Emancipation Day as a platform to stimulate and popularize the emancipation process. Language, specifically the Surinamese Creole language, now called Sranan, was the vehicle he used for emancipation, because the “Surinamese Negro was not used to resisting the stigmatisation of his mother tongue with inferiority.” Koenders launched his public career in 1943 with the publication of a Sranan grammar to coincide with the eightieth commemoration of the abolition of slavery, which he called Foe Memre Wie Afo (In Memory of the Ancestors). A few years later he started a monthly magazine, Foetoë-boi (Servant), which ran from 1946 to 1956, promoting the value and beauty of his “mother tongue,” and in which he advocated making Emancipation Day (Manspasie) a
national holiday. Although he did not live to see this, he did witness a line from a short poem he published in *Foetoe-boi* become the name of a new, nationalist movement, supported mainly by Afro-Surinamese: 'Wie Eegie Sanie'. This movement, however, was founded in the Netherlands.

1953-1993: (TRANS-) NATIONALIST GROWTH

Until well into the twentieth century the main motive for Surinamese migration to the Netherlands was education. Between 1900 and 1950, around three-hundred students from Suriname studied at one of the three oldest universities in the Netherlands—Leiden, Amsterdam, and Utrecht—and an unknown number at other educational institutions. The majority of these students belonged to the "light-skinned Creole" higher echelons of colonial society. This changed abruptly around 1950 when higher incomes in Suriname as well as a new system of educational scholarships brought study in the Netherlands within reach of other groups. Within ten years not only did the number of students from Suriname increase substantially (in 1957 alone there were 350 Surinamese students at Dutch universities), but most were from the Afro-Surinamese middle and lower classes. Moreover, students were now outnumbered by working-class labor migrants from Suriname: in 1960 some 1,500 Surinamese were living in Amsterdam alone.

Since the early twentieth century, these—often temporary—migrants had organized themselves in a number of associations of which Ons Suriname (Our Suriname) and its predecessors were the most important. After the Second World War, Otto Huiswoud served as president of Ons Suriname for several years, which doubtless influenced its growing nationalist, anti-colonial character. Moreover, in 1950-1951, a small group of active members founded a separate cultural association with, significantly and for the first time, a Sranan name: 'Wie Eegie Sanie' (Our Own Things). This group of mainly Afro-Surinamese cultural activists, including several later (nationalist) politicians and intellectuals in Suriname, fought for the emancipation of Surinamese culture, meaning Afro-Surinamese culture. Assimilation to Dutch (colonial) culture, particularly for the Afro-Surinamese, had been official policy since the end of slavery. Now, there was an Afro-Surinamese intelligentsia, which had been raised with the idea that everything black was bad and uncivilized and everything white was the standard to aim at. It was only when studying in the Netherlands that they understood that despite their education they would never be accepted as equals by their white colleagues. In reaction they turned to their own cultural roots for self-respect. Thus, just as Panafrikanism and Negritude were born in Europe, the (organizational) basis for Surinamese (cultural) nationalism was laid in the colonial mother country, not in the colony it-
self.27 However, already in 1954, the leader of these nationalists, the lawyer Eddy Bruma, returned to Suriname and brought Wie Eegie Sanie with him to the colony.28 So (cultural) nationalism became a transnational phenomenon, stimulated by Surinamese and a few white Dutch29 on either side of the Atlantic. A growing number of Surinamese students and artists discovered their Surinamese identity in the Netherlands and returned with their newly found cultural pride to Suriname. Later, part of this developing cultural awareness was exported again to the growing Surinamese community in the Netherlands, and this two-way cultural travel has continued ever since.

This transatlantic cultural renaissance was far more transnational than diaspora oriented. In the first place, although it was mainly Afro-Surinamese in membership and actual orientation, these nationalists claimed at least to be fighting for an all-Surinamese nation and culture, not a pan-African nation. And although references were made by Afro nationalists to developments elsewhere in the African diaspora, most of those involved focused only on Suriname and the Netherlands. In the early years there were signs of a more international orientation, and particularly among the Afro-Surinamese, a diasporic orientation. Later references to the Negritude movement as well as to Frantz Fanon in this regard are numerous.30 And although it is perhaps questionable how many really had read Césaire, Senghor, or Fanon, debates were certainly organized on themes such as Negritude.31 Furthermore, Wie Eegie Sanie invited famous Afro-Americans to lecture in Amsterdam, including James Baldwin, Richard Wright, Langston Hughes, and W. E. B. DuBois, and some read books on Indonesian nationalism.32 However, Wie Eegie Sanie’s position was later described as a “self-imposed isolation,” and one of its leaders, Hein Eersel later stated: “If an African got lost in Amsterdam we invited him to come and talk with us. But even the international negro movements we were hardly aware of.”33

On the ninetieth anniversary of emancipation in 1953 transnational cooperation found expression in the form of a special issue of West Indische Gids34 with articles by Dutch and Surinamese historians. That year in Amsterdam the Emancipation Day activities of Ons Suriname, the largest association of Surinamese migrants in the Netherlands, from which also Wie Eegie Sanie had sprung, had a more public character. A musical parade was held with Surinamese women in traditional kotomisi dresses, proceeding from the official residence of Amsterdam’s mayor to the central Frederiksplein; there were public lectures, as well as entertainment and the opening performance of a play written by “the Surinamese student Eddy Bruma” titled The Birth of Boni, about the famous eighteenth-century Maroon leader.35 Emancipation Day became as much a public festival—with emancipative as well as didactic dimensions—in the (Afro-) Surinamese community in the Netherlands, particularly in Amsterdam, as it was in Suriname. For instance, on 1 July 1955 Otto Huiswoud gave a lecture on the long history of African civilization and the arts, which he finished with an
appeal that "Boni's determination and devotion to the ideal of liberty may be a source of inspiration to us in our aspirations to the right to have complete disposal over our own destiny."\textsuperscript{36} At the centenary of emancipation in 1963 again a folkloristic parade was held in the streets of Amsterdam by several hundred Surinamese, but they also carried banners with texts such as "Liberty for the oppressed" and "Respect yourself, so that others will respect your country." And the president of Ons Suriname, Frits Moll, stressed that year in his speech "that it had been the slaves who had liberated themselves of the yoke of slavery."\textsuperscript{37} This was a revolutionary idea compared to the rather Netherlands-centric essays in the \textit{West Indische Gids} ten years earlier, which attributed abolition mainly to the efforts of abolitionists in the Netherlands as well as idealistic governors in "the West" and the civilizing influence of missionaries in Suriname. Slaves and Maroons played only a minor role in these analyses of emancipation.

During the 1960s a new generation of young nationalists began to dominate Ons Suriname, which was by now the oldest association of Surinamese in the Netherlands. Among them were several intellectuals who, for some time, would play a prominent role in Surinamese politics after independence in 1975 and the military coup of 1980, such as André Haakmat and Henk Chin a Sen.\textsuperscript{38} From the 1950s until well into the 1980s the African diaspora was always present in the background, because Afro-Surinamese dominated the nationalist movement and Afro-Surinamese culture and history were considered the roots as well as the core of the nation's identity. However, Bruma, the undisputed leader of cultural as well as political nationalism explained that the diaspora was not his aim, nor his focus or framework. At a conference organized for Emancipation Day by Wie Eegie Sanie in 1957 in Paramaribo he rejected the internationalism of various opposition movements in the developing world, and stressed the national individuality and the harmonious unity of state and people.\textsuperscript{39} Surinamese nationalists were consciously looking inward, unlike nationalists in Trinidad and Jamaica, for example, who deliberately allied themselves with diasporic movements such as Rastafarianism, Black Power, and other back-to-Africa ideologies.\textsuperscript{40} One of the consequences was that despite being mainly Afro-Surinamese, the nationalist movement in Suriname supported the initiative by Prime Minister Pengel and others in making Emancipation Day a national holiday for all population groups, and renaming it the Day of Liberties.\textsuperscript{41} And although in the Surinamese community in the Netherlands, 1 July remained Emancipation Day and was dominated by the Afro group, it was advertised as a typical Surinamese rather than an Afro-Surinamese celebration.

Since then, there has been a continual movement back and forth between Suriname and the Netherlands, mainly of intellectual Surinamese, who felt obliged to help build up their country, particularly around the time of independence, as well as shortly after the military coup in 1980. The main movement, however, was a one-way flow of Surinamese migrants fleeing the political and
economic turmoil. As a result the Surinamese community in the Netherlands grew from around 29,000 in 1970 to 275,000 in 1994. Although this community became increasingly integrated in Dutch society, first-generation, and to a certain extent second-generation, migrants still had strong family and cultural ties with Suriname. Dutch society, therefore, had imported a piece of its long-forgotten past: slavery and its legacy. Not only were many of the immigrants aware that their ancestors had been taken from Africa to the Americas, but like the students in the 1950s and '60s, many now woke up to the fact that they were black people living in a white society, and had to find a way of coping with this historical legacy. Meanwhile, in Suriname, the deterioration and criminalization of the economy since the advent of the military regime in the 1980s, together with the increasing economic power of some Asian-Surinamese, heightened the ethnic consciousness of the descendants of the slaves. This became clear when in 1993 requests were made, among others by the Emancipation Commemoration Committee, to rename the Day of Liberties by the popular Afro-Surinamese name of Keti Koti (Break the Chains). In a ten-point program the committee stated that Emancipation Day had "intrinsic and historical value" only for the Afro-Surinamese. Moreover, strategies would be developed to stimulate an "inner processes of black consciousness" as well as "group identity and group solidarity," and Afro-Surinamese should become aware of their distressed socio-economic situation. The government, sensitive to these rising ethnic tensions, granted the request to rename the Day of Liberties. Thus 1 July became separated from its national connotation and reclaimed as a distinct Afro-Surinamese commemoration. Although there may be some doubt regarding the extent to which the Day of Liberties had been a day of commemoration for every Surinamese, it was a clear break with three decades of political fraternization and nation building among the various ethnic groups.

1993 ON: DIASPORA, TRANSNATIONALISM, OR GLOBALIZATION?

Reclaiming Emancipation Day as an icon of Afro-Surinamese identity has been part of a development in Suriname in which a growing group of concerned Afro-Surinamese activists and intellectuals openly declared that the worsening position of their own ethnic group in Surinamese society, compared to other population groups, was due to the legacy of slavery. "Many of us don't even know who we are and they submit to everything. That is why we are culturally weak and occupy a low place on the social ladder," one of them stated, and she is certainly not alone in her views. These concerns have stimulated the emergence of new Afro-cultural organizations, and breathed new life into existing bodies. Emancipation
Day is their natural public platform. Its importance and symbolic meaning was underscored when on 1 July 1996 sixteen Afro-Surinamese cultural organizations formed the Feydrasi fu Grupu fu Afrikăn Srananman (Federation of African-Surinamese Cultural Groups) to promote unity and social and cultural elevation among the Afro-Surinamese, rewrite history, and rehabilitate the ancestors. Various Emancipation Day activities have been combined in the 1 July Keti Koti Foundation, comprising many of the same organizations and people as the federation. The socio-historical analysis, the socio-economic, cultural, and psychological aims, and the way Emancipation Day is used to express these is not unique to Suriname, but can be found throughout the Caribbean, particularly in the Anglophone areas. The main difference being that there the commemoration of emancipation had almost vanished as a socio-political and cultural platform during the twentieth century and has since been revived, whereas in Suriname it never disappeared. And here too, impoverishment combined with ethnic competition to stimulate the revival and reclamation of Emancipation Day. Indeed, the ethnic factor is perhaps the main element that ensured that despite changes in content and name, Emancipation Day never disappeared in Suriname. In multi-ethnic societies, with strong inter-ethnic competition, like the Surinamese, the various population groups appear to need to publicly stress their ethnic profile occasionally. Emancipation Day is the ultimate Afro-Surinamese public platform. It has been suggested that this also explains why the day is hardly celebrated in the Dutch Antilles, the other former Dutch slave colony: there is no substantial Asian population, therefore no subaltern interethnic competition, and thus no need for an ethnic icon or platform such as Emancipation Day.

Several aspects of the revival of this Afro-oriented Emancipation Day indicate that it is part of a heightened diaspora consciousness. Not only in the transnational sense of intricate networks with the Afro-Surinamese community in the Netherlands, but also in the sense of a bond, and a search for connections with Afro communities elsewhere in the Americas, as well as a conscious experience and search for links to African roots. The latter in particular is new. Until recently public references to Africa in relation to the population group that preferred to see itself as Creole or Negro were generally taken as an insult. Although those terms have not yet disappeared, some now consciously call themselves African-Surinamese or Surinamese Africans, and the term “Afro-Surinamese” is becoming less unusual in everyday discourse. Even the president has used it. In his opening speech to a conference on the African Diaspora (sic) organized in Paramaribo on the 140th anniversary of emancipation on 1 July 2003, the president, himself an Afro-Surinamese, expressed his awareness “that the period in which the African roots were denied was not long past. A denial,” he said, “that manifested itself in attacks on persons who declared that they had African roots and denial by persons who were unwilling to acknowledge privately that there were lines that traced their origins back to ‘Mother Africa.’”
Clearly, this denial is now a thing of the past. For instance, during the 2003 Keti Koti festivities a Surinamese travel agency advertised an eight-day “Ghana Homecoming Tour,” and one of the highlights of this 140th commemoration was the official visit of the current reincarnation of the legendary Mandingo Lion King, who lived in seventeenth-century Gambia. Remarkably this turned out to be a woman of Afro-Surinamese origin, Yvonne Pryor, who was received with much honor and media exposure. The importance of the event was emphasized by a Surinamese weekly which published a debate on whether “The Lion King is important for Afro-Surinamese identity.” The diasporic character of the event, however, had a typical transnational dimension: The organization had a Dutch as well as a Surinamese base, because the reincarnated Gambian Lion King lived in Amsterdam, the Netherlands.

Parallel to the growing diasporic discourse, therefore, the 140th commemoration of emancipation also revealed a growing transnational dimension. For example a database was presented to the president, listing all the enslaved (around 34,000) who were emancipated in 1863, compiled by a Dutch university professor of Afro-Surinamese descent assisted by researchers in both countries and based on archive material in Paramaribo and The Hague. Furthermore, a dramatized documentary series on the history of slavery for school television was written by a team of professionals and scholars of Surinamese, Antillian, and Dutch descent, one of whom had been a co-founder of Wie Eegie Sanie in the 1950s; the series was sponsored by the Dutch government and recorded by a Dutch-based film director of Afro-Surinamese descent whose oeuvre includes a substantial number of films and documentaries on Surinamese history and culture. This series was also presented to the Surinamese president. Moreover, the 140th commemoration also featured the opening of a long-forgotten type of creolized theater known as Du, written and co-directed by a woman of mixed Dutch-Surinamese descent, Thea Doelwijt, who has lived in both countries and has dedicated her work to the cause of Surinamese cultural nationalism. A final illustration of transnational developments in this respect is the prominent role in the aforementioned conference on the African diaspora of a few Afro-Surinamese leaders of Afro organizations from the Netherlands, particularly Barryl Biekman, president of the black women’s organization Sophiedela, as well as of the Landelijk Platform Slavernijverleden (National Slavery History Platform or LPS), and Edwin Marshall of the Nationaal Instituut Nederlands Slavernijverleden en Erfenis (National Slavery History and Heritage Institute or NiNsee) and author of a dissertation on the history of Surinamese nationalism.

All of these transnational activities have clearly influenced the emancipation discourse. For example, the Surinamese media regularly reports on Afro activities in the Netherlands and several Black organs in the Netherlands keep the Afro-Dutch in touch with what is going on “at home.” For example, according to one newspaper, the school television series was “received with mixed feelings.”
Although the majority of the editorial board who had compiled the scenario and the film director were of Afro-Surinamese descent and despite the approval of Afro-Dutch spokespersons such as Biekman and Marshall, part of the Afro-Surinamese public perceived the film as too suave and failing to focus on white responsibility for the slave trade. In other words, some found the film too Dutch (i.e., too white). Nevertheless, the film series and the accompanying educational material developed in the Netherlands are now used in Suriname too and will undoubtedly influence the way slavery is perceived.63

This growth of the transnational dimension in the emancipation discourse is no coincidence. Since the 1970s, substantial immigration of Afro-Caribbeans from Suriname, the Dutch Antilles, and Aruba, as well as immigration from West Africa, particularly Ghana, has turned the Netherlands, once a major player in the transatlantic slave trade, into another home for the African diaspora. By the 1990s this new Afro-Dutch part of society was substantial and had struck roots. After years of more or less marginal attempts at gaining recognition for the history of slavery and its contemporary legacy in Dutch society, finally, in 1998–1999, the time was right and the issue took center stage. However, this was not only about the Dutch colonial legacy, it was a global development. Everywhere in the world appeals were made for western countries to accept responsibility for the wrongs they had committed in the past and/or were still committing. Global migration as well as the information and transport revolution took this subaltern discourse to the West, and to the international forums, such as the United Nations. As a consequence the long silence regarding the horrors of the transatlantic slave trade and its legacy had finally been broken and the subject had become an issue on the international as well as national political agenda. During the quinquennial commemoration of Columbus's voyage to the Americas, Pope John Paul II, on a tour of the Caribbean, asked forgiveness for the crimes of the Catholic Church committed over five centuries against Native Americans and apologized for the enslavement of Africans. President Clinton, visiting Africa in 1998, also apologized for America's involvement in the slave trade and slavery. In Britain major exhibitions were held on the country's role in the transatlantic slave system, and at the same time UNESCO started its Breaking the Silence/The Slave Route project and declared 23 August an international day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and Its Abolition. Meanwhile, when France commemorated the 150th anniversary of the French abolition of slavery in 1998, a deputy from French Guiana presented a motion in parliament to condemn the history of slavery as a crime against humanity, which was eventually accepted three years later. Also in 2001, slavery and its legacy was a major issue at the United Nations Conference on Racism in Durban, South Africa.

From a global perspective, the time was right to appeal to Dutch society in general and the government in particular to take responsibility for its historical involvement in slavery. In 1998, the 135th anniversary of emancipation, numerous
activities took place. The Curagaoan novelist and linguist Frank Martinus Arion made a strong public appeal on several Dutch forums for the government “to take a first step towards concrete external Wiedergutmachung, not only to the Netherlands Antilles and Suriname but also to the whole West Indian world. This first step would be to place a monument [ . . . ] with the simple words: never again.”

This more or less overlapped with a petition presented to the Dutch cabinet concerning Emancipation Day, named Traces of Slavery, by the Afro-European women’s movement Sophiedela. Since that summer the issue has remained on the political agenda. It has also become obvious that there are two discourses at work, one black and one white, while a few people are (desperately?) trying to build bridges between the two.

The first discourse clearly is subaltern and increasingly inspired by, or even part of, a diasporic discourse which is particularly rooted in the USA and to a lesser extent the UK. This American discourse is characterized by a strongly Afro-centric view of (world) history, furthermore by a conviction that white supremacists are trying to destroy the African “race” — from the Black Holocaust to HIV — and one of its keywords is “reparation.” The Black discourse in the Netherlands differs from the African-American discourse in that it is combined with an anti-colonial discourse, which it shares with other, non-Afro-Surinamese and Antillians and Arubans as well as some colonial legacies, such as the traditional bonds with the royal house of Orange. Moreover, the Dutch Black discourse differs fundamentally from the North American because the former belongs to a transnational setting interacting between a small Third World country and a relatively small First World country. The African-American discourse, on the other hand, is part of the internal national dynamic of the world’s most powerful nation, which often thinks that its problems are the problems of the whole world. These postcolonial asymmetrical power relations influence the Black discourse as much as transnational colonial legacies. Therefore, different histories and different circumstances make the articulation of the two black discourses often less smooth than many of its participants imagine. However, linking to the “international” African-American discourse, different though it may be, obviously gives more impact to the black discourse in the Netherlands. It certainly influences (political) timing and stresses the need to stay in close touch with black grassroots experiences.

The white discourse, on the other hand is not white because of an intrinsically racist character. Although some would certainly stress that a white discourse is racist by definition, it is profoundly concerned with anti-racism. However, far more than its black counterpart, it is a top-down and not a bottom-up discourse and is therefore viewed by many Afro-Dutch as paternalistic. This discourse is more readily found among the political, cultural, and scholarly establishment and is less involved in transnational ethnic networks. However, there is a keen awareness of global developments and of the state of international research in this field.
Those involved in the white discourse often find the black discourse oversensitive and offensive. It is consensus seeking, but often unaware how Eurocentric, or Netherlands-centric, or ethnocentric this consensus is.

The trouble with discourses like these is that they sometimes seem to employ the same language, particularly when concrete goals are formulated, but actually they do not. As long as the (preferably short-term) realization of a common goal is within reach, both discourses, or at least their participants, may be united temporarily, particularly when discussions do not go beyond concrete subjects and formalities. However, as soon as the different meanings attached to the common goal become evident, the two discourses split again. In fact, the distinct social bases of the Black and white discourses and their different interests, almost force them to differentiate (again) between “them” and “us.” The history of the national slavery monument in Amsterdam is an interesting illustration of the articulations as well as clashes between those distinct discourses.

In the autumn of 1998 it became clear that the appeals to the Dutch government for a monument to commemorate slavery had not fallen on deaf ears. A high-level discussion was organized by the Prince Claus Fund attended by the deputy minister of culture, the plenipotentiary minister of the Netherlands Antilles, the ambassador of South Africa, the director of the fund, and the Dutch novelist and television personality Adriaan van Dis. From a Black-discourse perspective this was an all-white, establishment group. Nevertheless, they were genuinely in favor of a monument and hoped to stimulate debate on this theme. They did so by asking historian Gert Oostindie to compile a book of reflections about the commemoration of slavery from various perspectives and countries. Less than a year later the book was presented in the former Dutch parliament building on 30 June, the eve of Emancipation Day, to the queen’s husband Prince Claus, the aforementioned Frank Martinus Arion, and the minister of metropolitan policy and integration, Van Boxtel. A few hundred members of the white and Black political and cultural establishment were present, as well as a few Black grassroots leaders. With this book and the accompanying public events, Oostindie hoped to strengthen the case for a monument and “to broaden the scope of what had so far been a rather parochial debate”; he complemented that in the English edition two years later with: “and to add to our understanding of commemoration and the perils of victimhood.” Although in both books the reconciliation model of white discourse seems to dominate, the trauma-and-reparations model of Black discourse is also represented. These books have certainly influenced debates within the white discourse. Within the Black discourse they have played no role whatsoever in the Netherlands, with the exception that the editor of both books, Oostindie, is considered by some as belonging to “them.”

The Black discourse developed within the Afro-cultural, self-help, and empowerment organizations, a number of which united in 1999 in a Landelijk Platform Monument Slavernijverleden (National Anti-Slavery Monument Plat-
form). This was in response to the minister's request, who had reported to parliament that "in principle the cabinet is willing to speak with a representatively composed committee, which conversations could lead to the founding of a national monument to commemorate the abolition of slavery." The different discourses are immediately obvious in the description of the goals: commemoration of the evils of slavery as opposed to commemoration of the abolition of slavery. Nevertheless, both parties found common ground in the desire to found a monument and an institute. The government officials (some of them Black) and representatives of the platform often disagreed, and each step was fought over, in this clash of discourses. Yet on 1 July 2001 the design of the monument by the Surinamese artist Erwin de Vries, selected from among nine proposals, was presented; one year later the Dutch Slavery Monument was unveiled in the presence of the Queen; and again one year later, on Emancipation Day, or Keti Koti as it is now called, Ninssee opened its doors. But although the time had been right to achieve this, the two discourses were now increasingly divergent.

The first sign was the installation by the minister, just a few months after he had recognized the platform as the official negotiating partner, of an advisory committee, consisting of moderate Black and white intellectuals and artists to advise him and promote the idea of a monument. The government was distancing itself from the platform they had helped create; time and again the platform was considered insufficiently representative, meaning too radical. On the platform several organizations refused to accept any money from the government and left.

A second sign of increasing discursive division was at the UN Conference on Racism in Durban 2001. There, in front of the entire world, the Dutch minister responsible for the monument declared on behalf of the Dutch government, i.e., Dutch society, his "remorse" for the role of the Dutch in the transatlantic slave trade and slavery. It would have been of great significance if the minister had been surrounded by the various Black NGOs, including the platform, but he was not. Fearful of acquiescing to appeals for (financial) reparations the minister distanced himself again, whereas the NGOs of the African diaspora, having finally found a global forum to support each other and make themselves heard, declared that the Dutch apology fell far short.

A third indicator of opposing discourses occurred at the unveiling of the monument on 1 July 2002. Because the queen, the prime minister, other members of the cabinet and a number of ambassadors were to be present, the people in charge of security decided to divide the memorial site from the rest of the park with high fences covered in black plastic. The crowd of a few thousand mainly Afro-Dutch had not been warned about this, and had to watch the ceremony, attended by a small group of invited guests, at least half of them white, on a video screen somewhere else in the park. Loud applause was heard on both sides of the fence when Minister Van Boxtel, again, on behalf of the Dutch government, expressed his "genuine and deep remorse about what has happened in the past in
relation to slavery and the slave trade. [...] May this statement of genuine remorse be the beginning of recognition, coping, and above all the idea “this never again” as well as working towards a common future.” That wish was contradicted later in the ceremony, however, when part of the crowd outside loudly requested to be admitted to the memorial site, but were stopped by the police. Instead of remorse and reconciliation many experienced the ceremony as a continuation of a long history of discrimination and exclusion. It was only after the unveiling, when the officials had left, that the crowd was admitted to the site. Many people now lovingly and emotionally covered the monument with thousands of flowers, touched and stroked it, often in tears, and obviously connected to their ancestors who had never experienced freedom. The wide media exposure of the dramatic event as well as the mutual accusations in the following weeks about who was responsible for the organization publicly revealed the clash of discourses.

More than two years later now, the monument regularly serves as a site for African diaspora ceremonies and the NiNsee Institute has started a series of educational activities, including a permanent exhibition on the history of slavery, as well as debates and research projects, such as on oral history and slavery related cultural heritage. Nevertheless, the monument, although intended as a symbol for all of Dutch society, mainly serves as a new lieu de mémoire in the African diaspora. Meanwhile NiNsee is still searching for a position in which it can serve as a liaison between the different discourses. It has yet to find a balance between those who provide the funds, i.e., the government, for future-oriented education on (the legacy of) slavery for society at large, and those who want the institute to be the home of Black emancipation. The platform still exists but hardly participates in NiNsee and many of its active members have now joined the Dutch branch of the Global African Congress (GAC). This organization was founded in the aftermath of the Durban conference and focuses on the interests of Africans and Africans in the diaspora, particularly in relation to racism and reparations as a consequence of slavery and the slave trade. The former president of the platform has now become the president of GAC’s European branch. In October 2004 GAC’s constitutional conference was held in Paramaribo. This more or less coincided with the decision of the 1 July Keti Koti Foundation in 2003 to connect Afro-Surinamese initiatives to international activities and use “the global Afro possibilities.”

CONCLUSIONS

After almost 150 years of emancipation celebrations and commemorations, it is clear that the process of overcoming the legacy of slavery has not ended and may
be even more alive than ever. Studying that history sometimes leaves one with a sense of déjà vu. The initiatives in the 1990s to turn Emancipation Day into a public stage for the interests and emancipation of the Afro-Surinamese, as well as the conscious attempts to link these initiatives to the African diaspora, are reminiscent of the initiatives of people like Rier or Comvalius some three-quarters of a century earlier. Nevertheless, much has happened since those days. By taking Afro-Surinamese emancipation out of its religious-colonial context (i.e., colonially acclaimed Moravian Church paternalism), by giving this emancipation process a respectful public stage (i.e., annual celebrations organized by Black intellectuals), and by connecting these activities to developments elsewhere in the African diaspora, particularly the English-speaking part, Afro-Surinamese emancipation gained momentum and dynamism. Emancipation Day also provided Afro-Surinamese intellectuals with a platform. At the same time it was the ideal occasion on which to make the descendants of slaves aware that apart from the ongoing obedience and humility owed to God and king, they were also entitled to be proud to form part of an international community, or even race of “Ethiopians” or “Negroes” who were progressing rapidly toward a bright future. Although only a few Afro-Surinamese were in fact able to see these black achievements for themselves, enough information was available to make the African diaspora or the “Negro race” part of a generic future-oriented, Afro-Surinamese identity.

Nationalism was a logical next step in this emancipation process. Knowing that there was an international community ready to inspire and provide support, it was now time to think about the national community. Again Emancipation Day became an important podium for this process. Paradoxically, these nationalist feelings were largely ignited in the Netherlands by Black intellectuals. They did not feel accepted as Dutch by white society and were therefore forced to reconsider what it meant to be Surinamese. However, since the other Surinamese population groups, particularly British Indians and Javanese, had only just started their own emancipation process and had not yet participated in the student migration to the Netherlands (and back), nationalism became an Afro-Surinamese phenomenon. This was stimulated by the fact that the majority of Asians were “only” first- and second-generation Surinamese, whereas the Afro-Surinamese, or Creoles as they were called, generally saw themselves as the only genuine Surinamese, who had already for three centuries shed blood, sweat, and tears for their country. Nevertheless, the formal adoption and re-definition in 1963 of Afro-Surinamese Emancipation Day into a national Day of Liberties for all Surinamese by the young, now more or less autonomous Surinamese government headed by the first Afro-Surinamese prime minister, Pengel, illustrated the interethnic fraternization policy of those days and the nationalists’ willingness to share with others. Still, the content of the national emancipation struggle, because of its mono-ethnic leadership, was mainly an extension of Afro-Surinamese group emancipation. Therefore, in the end, Afro-Surinamese nationalism may have been more ethnically
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divisive than unifying. This became clear around independence in 1975 and the massive wave of migration to the Netherlands around the time of this historic event, when all population groups without exception turned out to have migrated in large numbers to the Netherlands.

Paradoxically, increasing transnational networks between Suriname and the Netherlands stimulated the nationalist discourse. Several Afro-Surinamese who had migrated to the Netherlands returned to help build their country, and many migrants became more (Afro-) Surinamese in a society that did not welcome them. In the end, however, when Afro-Surinamese on both sides of the ocean started to see that Hindostani and later also Javanese now emancipated much faster than they did, they began realizing that nationalism hampered their own emancipation. As a result of renewed feelings of exclusion, again on both sides of the ocean, a new focus on the African diaspora, now including the African homeland, emerged. The book on slavery was re-opened and 1 July was even recognized by the Dutch government as a day of national commemoration. Slavery and its legacy have become a point of identification for an increasing number of Afro-Surinamese on both sides of the ocean. However, thanks to the effects of globalization (especially the transport and communications revolution) people have become aware that the African diaspora is a living reality. This gives the struggle with the legacy of slavery impact and power and heightens the Afro or African identification. The increasing call for reparations from different corners of the diaspora, including the Netherlands and Suriname, is a case in point. Emancipation Day has become an icon as well as a public podium for these demands on both sides of the Atlantic.

The successful struggle for a national monument and institute concerned with Dutch slavery and its legacy, as well as the effect of active participation in the UN Anti-Racism Conference in Durban 2002, have de-marginalized Afro-consciousness activities in the Netherlands and have provided for institutionalized infrastructure. As a consequence of the lively transnational Afro-Surinamese networks this has also stimulated Afro consciousness in Suriname. A major difference with the consciousness movement of the early twentieth century, apart from its substantially expanded international embedment, is that today it is more concerned with the past: first reparations, then reconciliation. Then, within the constraints of the colonial setting, the focus was mainly on the future through progress in emancipation, today, within the constraints of the colonial legacy, there is an awareness that progress in emancipation toward a hopeful future depends on all parties genuinely and fundamentally coping with the past. Maybe this is one of the major differences between the Black and white discourses: the substance and extent of coping with the past. The contradictions between these two discourses have been most obvious during the activities and publicity surrounding Emancipation Day celebrations and commemorations, particularly in the Netherlands.
Meanwhile, there is growing Black awareness among Afro-Surinamese on both sides of the ocean, which is not necessarily a consequence of the emancipation process. This new, more Black than Afro consciousness can be attributed to the globalization of African-American popular (youth) culture. In some respects, particularly entertainment and sports, black is “cool,” internationally trend setting, and also much copied by non-Blacks. This sort of globalized blackness obviously stimulates self-awareness in the African diaspora, but it operates independently from diasporic discourse. Particularly for the relatively large group of Afro-Surinamese who do not wish to be bothered by the burdens of the past this is a stimulating alternative focus of identification. Being part of a sort of de-territorialized Black modernity, away from a traumatic past, is probably attractive to many. However, inevitably, even in this globalized black culture references are made to the past as well as to the specific locales and nationalities of the past. And even the most globalized and/or future-oriented people are at times curious about their roots. Therefore, globalized Black culture may in fact show people the way to diasporic discourse and/or their specific historical background and legacies.

Thus, over time, different stimuli coming from abroad have shaped the specific emancipation process of the descendants of the Afro-Surinamese slaves. Initially diasporic, nationalist, and transnationalist orientations more or less succeeded each other. Today, as a consequence of migration and globalization, these distinct stimuli have become intertwined, resulting in different dimensions of Afro-Surinamese identity. The perfect day to see all those dimensions expressed is still 1 July, in Paramaribo as well as in Amsterdam.

NOTES

1. I would like to thank Stanley Wassenaar, Paul Rogers, Oswald Braumuller, and the “Tori Oso paper clipping service” for all the information they gathered for me particularly on recent 1 July celebrations.

2. The role of the church as well as the process of secularisation of Emancipation Day are analysed in Alex van Stipriaan, “July 1: Emancipation Day in Suriname, a contested lieu de mémoire, 1863–2003,” New West Indian Guide 78, nos. 3 & 4 (2004): 269–304, to which this essay is a sequel.

3. De Ware Tijd, 26 June 1993


14. The fact that the Dutch standard of civilization set the tune may be clear most of all from the fact that the Maroons were not regarded as an equal part of the progress.
16. Fred Verhees, "Een speurtocht naar Rijts; Een fragmentarische reconstructie van een religieuze beweging," *OSO, Tijdschrift voor Surinaamse Taalkunde, Letterkunde, Cultuur en Geschiedenis* 19, no. 2 (2000), 309–319. According to Verhees these must have been Otto Huiswoud and Florian Faverey. About the latter nothing is known. Huiswoud (1893–1961), was the only Black co-founder of the American Communist Party, CPUSA, he became a member of the Comintern, and even spoke in private with Lenin in 1922 on the situation of the blacks in America. Huiswoud "gained a considerable reputation as a communist organiser in the Caribbean" and was banned from several countries there. During the 1930s he lived in Europe, where he edited *The Negro Worker*, the monthly of the communist International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers. During the early 1940s he was imprisoned in a Surinamese internment camp for twenty months; after the war he and his Guyanese wife immigrated to the Netherlands. There he became an active member of the emerging Surinamese nationalist movement, which he stimulated towards a more international orientation (Sources: Gert Oostindie, "Preludes to the exodus: Surinamers in the Netherlands," in *Resistance and rebellion in Suriname: Old and new*, ed. Gary Brana-Shute, Studies in Third World Societies 43 (1990), 231–258. Allison Blakely, *Blacks in the Dutch world; The evolution of racial imagery in a modern society* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 263–267; Frits Corsten, "Otto Huiswoud en de internationale arbeidersbeweging: De geheimen van een Surinaamse postbeamte," *Onvoltooid Verleden* 1 (1997), 49–55; Ruud Beeldsnijder, "Nogmaals Otto Huiswoud," *Onvoltooid Verleden* 3, (1998), 33–38; John Jansen van Galen, *Hetenachtsdroom. Suriname, erfenis van de slavernij* (Amsterdam/ Antwerp: Contact, 2000), 130–134.
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more lovely than you / Although there are others, we still want you / Because you, Sranan, are our own thing [translation by the author].


28. Actually the Suriname branch had already been founded in 1952, but was not very active until the coming of Bruma at the end of 1954. Since then the core of Wie Eegie Sanie’s activities moved to Suriname too; nevertheless, the Dutch branch still fulfilled its role as a second home to many Surinamese nationalists in the Netherlands well into the 1960s (Meel, Autonomie, 198).

29. For instance linguist Jan Voorhoeve who worked in Suriname and was an admirer of Eddy Bruma, and painter Nola Hatterman, who left for Suriname in 1953 and stimulated the emergence of a nationalist (Afro-) Surinamese art (world) (Cf Meel, Autonomie; Alex van Stipriaan, “Roads to the roots or stuck in the mud? The development of a Surinamese art world,” in 20th Century Suriname. Continuities and Discontinuities in a New World society, eds. Rosemarijn Hoeftje and Peter Meel (Kingston: Ian Randle, 2001), 270–295.

30. Voorhoeve and Lichtveld, Creole drum,183; Oostindie, “Kondreman,” 84; Jansen van Galen, Hetenachtsdroom, 153, 278–280; Gobardhan-Rambocus, Onderwijs, 419.

31. Essays from Présence Africaine, “Cultural Review of the Black World,” were the basis for these discussions (Meel, Autonomie, 196).

32. Meel, Autonomie, 196; Jansen van Galen, Hetenachtsdroom, 143.

33. Cited in Oostindie, “Kondreman,” 84; translation by the author.

34. Today’s New West Indian Guide.

35. Cited from the announcement in Oostindie, “Kondreman,” 78. The Birth of Boni has been performed on a number of subsequent Emancipation Days. In 1957 Bruma staged it in Suriname in a Sranan version, in later years followed by other 1 July plays such as The River, Basja Patake, and Tata Kolin all situated in the slave past (Cf. Meel, Autonomie, 200–201).

36. Jansen van Galen, Hetenachtsdroom, 139; translation by the author.


38. Meel, Autonomie, 184.


42. Gerlof Leistra, Parbo aan de Amstel, Surinamers in Nederland (Amsterdam: Arbeiderspers, 1995).

43. These figures do not include unregistered migrants; Surinamese, particularly in the 1994 figure, are defined as anyone who has at least one parent born in Suriname.

44. Part of that legacy, of course, was the immigration of Asian indentured laborers to Suriname after the abolition of slavery, who were now also participating in the migration to the Netherlands. In this essay, however, I mainly focus on Afro-Surinamese.

45. The former trade union leader and minister of education, Harold Rusland, defined it as follows: “People who passed for practically white here [in Suriname] realised that they were considered differently there [in the Netherlands]. People with a lot of knowledge realised that this was not
sufficient to survive over there. Then, shockingly, you are thrown into reality. You must do something with yourself, to make yourself defensible. That movement of Bruma's and Sedney's [i.e., Wie Eegie Sanie] resulted from the realisation that you cannot survive if you don't find your identity" (cited in Jansen van Galen, 'Hetenaachtsdroom', 208; translation by the author).

45. Cited in De Ware Tijd, July 3, 1993.

46. When the Afro-Surinamese 1 July celebration became an official holiday for the whole nation in 1960, the Hindu feast of Holi Phagwa and the Muslim feast of Id Ul Fitre were declared official holidays too, at the cost of two Christian (=Afro-Surinamese) holidays. In practice some people participated in the festivities of “the other,” but generally the majority of those celebrating belonged to the ethnic group whose feast it actually was. Gowricharn, remembered from his youth that on 1 July “Hindustani, Chinese and Javanese people [ . . . ] 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” (Ruben Gowricharn, “The Creole Janus face,” in Facing up to the past; Perspectives on the commemoration of slavery from Africa, the Americas and Europe, ed. Gert Oostindie (Kingston: Ian Randle, 2001), 123–126).


48. Elfriede Baarn-Dijkteel, president of the oldest Afro-cultural organization in Suriname, cited in Iwan Brave 1999:46–47 [translation by the author]. Iwan Wijngaarde, president of the Federation of African-Surinamese Cultural Groups added: “While in the past Afro-Surinamese set the tune socially, economically and scientifically, today they have been surpassed on all sides by other ethnic groups” (Iwan Wijngaarde, “Hoe zelfbewust is de Afrikaan in de diaspora,” in Het verleden onder ogen; Herdenking van de slavernij, ed. Gert Oostindie (Amsterdam/The Hague: Arena/Prins Claus Fonds, 1999), 53–59; translation by the author).

49. For instance the former sports and cultural organisation NAKS (Na Arbeid Komt Sport/After Work Comes Sport; since 1948) now calls itself Organisation for Community Work, NAKS. Among the other organisations are the Afro-Sranan Foundation (Afro-Suriname) and the Africa Caribbean Cultural and Research Centre, ACCUR. One of the new associations which have been active on 1 July is Mofina Brasa, which, for example, in 1998, on the 135th celebration, organized Anansi storytelling events, Afro-religious winti ceremonies, traditional music performances, a parade in traditional dress, a Christian Lord’s Supper, a human chain of prayer, presentations of Rastafarian cooking, Afro herbal medicine, etc. (Source: Culture Calendar by the Culture Department of the Ministry of Education and Popular Development, published in De West, 29 June 1998.)


52. Higman noted: “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 recognise the unique significance of slavery and emancipation in the history of the region, interpreted within the frame of post-colonial politics” (Higman, “Remembering slavery,” 103). Beckles added: “Ethnic minorities who arrived during the post-slavery period have inherited and accumulated a disproportionate share of the scarce resources, leaving behind the concept of black economic exclusion as a living reality” (Beckles, “Emancipation,” 94).

54. For example, in 2003 the 1 July Keti Koti Foundation publicly announced that a new focus on the African diaspora will become a major priority because “the African-Surinamese community” (!) has remained too much in isolation from international developments in the diaspora (website *De Ware Tijd*, 22 October 2003).

55. A striking illustration is Van de Walle’s description of a lecture he gave in Paramaribo in the mid-1940s, in which he called the descendants of slaves Afro-Americans, a term which was then coming into vogue in the USA. In Suriname, however, his use of the term met with substantial opposition. It was only much later that he realized that the word Afro was considered the abusive term of an outsider who wanted to make fun of the Surinamese and insult them” (Van de Walle, *Een oog*, 134).

56. Website of *De Ware Tijd*, 24 June 2003.


59. *De Ware Tijd*, 11, 12, and 16 June 2003.

60. See for example *De West*, 17 June, and *De Ware Tijd*, 19 June 2003.

61. For example Suriname’s biggest newspaper, *De Ware Tijd* of 8 January 2003, brought a substantial report on the celebration of Unesco’s Black Civilisation Day in Rotterdam, the Netherlands (Lead: “Black Civilisation Day in Winter”) written by a dedicated Catholic Dutch priest who had lived most of his life in Suriname and recently returned to the Netherlands. The photo accompanying the article showed the celebration of this day in Brokopondo, Suriname.


63. Remarkably also was the daily series on the history of slavery in *De Ware Tijd* during the week preceding 1 July, which was taken from a Dutch history school book (*Sprekend Verleden* part 2, The Hague: Nijgh and Van Ditmar, 1991).

64. Frank Martinus Arion, “Un beau geste,” in Facing up to the past; Perspectives on the commemoration of slavery from Africa, the Americas and Europe, ed. Gert Oostindie (Kingston: Ian Randle, 2001), 114–117.

65. This does not mean that the colour of the discourse is necessarily also the colour of its participants, although probably particularly with respect to the Black discourse the overall majority of participants certainly are Black, whereas participation in the white discourse is probably more mixed. Furthermore, a large proportion of the population, white as well as Black, do not want to be bothered by discourse at all.

66. The works of for example Molefi Asante, Frances Cress Welsing, or Amos Wilson are well known within the Dutch Black discourse and people like Yosef Ben-Jochannan, Leonard Jeffries and Raymond Winbush have visited the Netherlands to give lectures and workshops.

67. Cf. van Stipriaan, “1 July.”


69. Gert Oostindie, “Stony regrets and pledges for the future,” in Facing up to the past; Perspectives on the commemoration of slavery from Africa, the Americas and Europe, ed. Gert Oostindie (Kingston: Ian Randle, 2001), 9–18.

70. Gert Oostindie, ed., Facing up to the past; Perspectives on the commemoration of slavery from Africa, the Americas and Europe (Kingston: Ian Randle, 2001).


72. The board of the Platform consisted of representatives of twelve to fifteen Dutch organizations with a Surinamese, Antillian, Aruban, Amerindian, or West African background as well as a few experts, among whom a white historian, who is also the author of this essay.

73. Letter to the chairman of the Second Chamber of the States General d.d. 26 May 1999 [translation by the author].
74. Cf. Alex van Stipriaan, “The long road to a monument,” in Facing up to the past; Perspectives on the commemoration of slavery from Africa, the Americas and Europe ed. Gert Oostindie (Kingston: Ian Randle, 2001), 118–123.

75. Cited in Het Parool, 2 July 2002 [translation by the author].

76. Press bulletin and De Ware Tijd, 22 October 2003. Not surprisingly the GAC was mentioned as the global coordinating body to reach this goal.