

Stephen Small



*Living History
The Legacy of Slavery in the Netherlands*

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Living History

The Legacy of Slavery in the Netherlands

Inaugural lecture delivered upon appointment to the chair of Extraordinary Professor of History of the Dutch Slavery and its Legacy at the University of Amsterdam on October 5th , 2012

by

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*Mevrouw de Rector Magnificus
Meneer de Decaan van de Faculteit der Geesteswetenschappen
Leden van het Curatorium van de NiNsee leerstoel
Excellenties
Collega's en vrienden
Dames en heren
Zeer geachte toehoorders,*

I am here today to talk about the legacy of slavery. But first I ask: Do you remember the days of slavery!

Burning Spear – Slavery Days lyrics

*Do you remember the days of slavery?
Do you remember the days of slavery?
And how they beat us?
And how they work us so hard?
And they used us!
'till they refuse us!*

For those of us involved in a rigorous and uncompromising program of research on the nature and consequences of the legacy of slavery, the one thing we must confront is the plain and simple fact that we are living history at this very moment; living the legacy of slavery at this very moment; right here, right now, in this hall, in this university, in this city, in this municipality and in this nation.

The legacy of slavery can be identified throughout the Netherlands today even if it is not currently so explicit, not so visible, not so palpable as it could be. It is manifest in the very presence of the Black community across the Netherlands; it is manifest in Dutch institutions and cultural practises; and it is evident in the international nexus between the Netherlands and its colonies, as reflected, for example, in business, migration, educational exchange and political relations. There is a legacy of slavery manifest in Dutch businesses and shipping, because colonialism and the slave trade established international shipping links – between Europe, Africa, the Americas and Asia – that served as a basis for business a long time after slavery legally ended. The ports and businesses that developed during slavery did not suddenly become bankrupt when slavery ended; no, many were transformed into other economic activities and

profitable enterprises. And other businesses, that had no apparent links to slavery, fed upon them, expanded because of them, long after slavery was legally abolished.

The legacy is evident in how Dutch attitudes towards the colonies have been shaped and influenced. For more than a hundred years, race was a fundamental organizing principle of Dutch slavery (Nimako and Willemsen, 2011). It was the marker and identifier of enslavement. It was the major classification and control mechanism of who was to be enslaved and who was to be free. Racist ideas were institutionalized and legalized in politics, economics and society in the colonies; and ideas of race were the basis of sovereignty, national identity and society right here in the Netherlands itself (Nimako and Willemsen, 2011). These attitudes continued long after legal slavery ended – on the one hand, a sense of superiority; and on the other hand, a sense of self-doubt, self-hatred and even ‘mental slavery’ among so many of the descendants of the enslaved (Essed, 1991; Van Dijk, 1984).

Six hundred years ago, before the Dutch slave trade began there was no Suriname, no maroons, no Dutch Antilles; there was no Christianity either, not the forms used to civilise, nor the forms used to resist the civilising mission; no Hinduism either in Suriname, before the labor demands of the 1870s. No Dutch language, no creole languages, no Sranan Tongo, no Papiamentu. No distinctive clothing and head wraps, like those most visible at the July 1st commemorations in Oosterpark; no Caribbean family structures; no creole food; no museum exhibits. No slavery monument in Oosterpark; no NiNsee; no seminars, symposia or conferences on the legacy or on reparations. And no Black community organizations dedicated to collective uplift.

One of the most visible aspects of the legacy is the collective demand for recognition and commemoration. This demand has existed in Black communities from the day slavery was legally abolished in 1863. It grew, like a seed, in the former colonies; but it took far longer for the seed to grow in the Netherlands itself, for obvious reasons. The seed grew much more rapidly in the Netherlands after the 1970s with the thousands of immigrants that arrived here. And it has been growing and spreading over more and more ground ever since. It has grown among the ‘commemorators without commemoration’ described by Glenn Willemsen (Willemsen, 2006); and in the work of community organizations, including those established or expanded by many people sitting in this very hall today.

And the legacy involves language and terminology; in what is said and not said; in what can be said and what should not be said; in the words that we

use and those that are not supposed to be used (Miles and Small, 1999). We have inherited a legacy of language that is sometimes antiquated and inappropriate; sometimes insulting or offensive; and sometimes just plain wrong. I do not use 'slave' and 'slave-master', I prefer enslaved, and master-enslaver, which highlight the constantly active and negotiated roles (Eichstedt and Small, 2002). I do not say that Europeans went to Africa and got slaves! No, I follow Walter Rodney who wrote in 1973 that Europeans went to Africa and kidnapped Africans, made them captives and turned those that survived the middle passage into slaves, what I now call 'enslaved' (Rodney, 1973). I do not call maroons 'runaway slaves' because after a certain period of time, the majority of maroons were born free. I do not talk about abolition, but rather legal abolition; I do not use freedom and emancipation interchangeably, because they are not the same thing; instead I draw on Nimako and Willemsen in discussing 'abolition without emancipation' (Nimako and Willemsen, 2011); and I remind my colleagues that the demand for reparations is also a demand for compensation (Zunder, 2010; Brennan, 2005). This terminology is neutral, conceptually clear and less likely to be offensive.

And you will be smartly aware that I mention race explicitly and deliberately, even though part of the legacy of slavery in the Netherlands is a reluctance, even opposition, to mentioning race. Scholars and government officials here do not like to talk about race, or Black people – they prefer to talk about allochtonen (Essed and Nimako, 2006; Nimako and Small, 2009). Although I must confess that I have never met a Black person in the Netherlands who likes this word! So I mention race and racism, because they were key organizing principles, institutional dynamics, inextricable aspects of nation and identity formation; and they need to be mentioned if we are to understand and study the legacy.

These are highly complex issues that must be addressed. I accepted the NiN-see leerstoel because my goal is to build relationships, not to destroy them; to make allies not enemies; so that I might work with everyone interested in carrying out a rigorous and uncompromising program of research on Dutch slavery and its legacies in the Netherlands. This task, I believe, is more likely to succeed if we work as a team bringing our collective knowledge, skills and insights to the task at hand.

It is not a surprise that we might find such a vast and encompassing legacy of slavery in the Netherlands given the vast and encompassing involvement of the Dutch nation in the slave trade and slavery. This involvement lasted more than 200 years (Emmer, 2006); it involved hundreds of voyages; thousands of men working on Dutch ships; tens of thousands of Africans and their descendants

enslaved in the colonies; hundreds of thousands of Africans kidnapped and transported across the Atlantic; millions of Africans whose lives were disrupted or destroyed, including those that remained on the African continent; and tens of millions of guilders in economic activity (Eltis and Richardson, 2010). These actions inextricably and irreversibly connected the continents of Africa, Asia, the Americas and Europe. And all of this has left a permanent, pervasive and irreparable legacy that we still confront today, which is not over yet, and which we do not fully understand.

The legacy of slavery in the Netherlands is a complex and complicated idea (Oostindie, 2001); like the legacy of slavery in other nations, it is ambiguous, amorphous and evasive (Small 1994b). And peoples' attitudes to it are ambivalent and variable. Some say the legacy is everywhere in the Netherlands; others say it is nowhere. We know, for example, when the Dutch slave trade and slavery officially began and ended. But when did the legacy begin and end? Did it begin the day that slavery began, or the day that slavery ended? Is the legacy with us still, or has it ended? I believe that the legacy began long before slavery legally ended – because the racist ideologies, political and economic institutions that existed once slavery ended, had already been in place during more than several hundred years of slavery. And when Dutch slavery legally ended, it had already been decided that there would be no real freedom for Black people (Nimako and Willemsen, 2011). And these decisions shaped the legacy that followed.

And when Black people talk about the legacy of slavery, they almost invariably mean two things; its negative aspects and Black resistance to them. They mean biological racism, social Darwinism, eugenics; they mean the cultural distortions to Black lives and families that resulted from the demands of slavery; they mean the mental inferiority imposed on Black people, and resistance to it – as in Bob Marley's phrase – 'emancipate yourself from mental slavery' (Hira, 2012). And they mean the collective resistance that developed in slavery, by Black men and women, in destroying plantation property, poisoning master-slavers, running away, organizing rebellions, and establishing maroon communities.

When they talk about the legacy of slavery right here in the Netherlands, they mean the growth of racism here, as the organizing principle of the politics and economics of slavery; how slavery benefited and profited the Dutch nation in both production and consumption, in jobs and salaries and profits, and in food and clothes (Nimako and Willsemsen, 2011). They mean the legacy in education and culture and museums; and they mean the lack of compensation, the demand for reparations. All issues that should be central components of a

rigorous and uncompromising program of research.

As for me, I believe that the legacy of Dutch slavery is potentially everywhere, and that every institution across the nation deserves to be studied closely. But as we can't start everywhere, then we must start somewhere. We must have priorities, and so I'll tell you where I decided to start when I accepted the NiNsee leerstoel two years ago, and where it has brought me today. I'll do this by raising a series of questions.

1. What kinds of assumptions should we make about conducting our research?

Several assumptions are central to my research. First, I firmly believe every topic, every issue should be open to inquiry and investigation; I want to uncover the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. Even though I don't expect it to be pretty, I think it is necessary and inevitable. And it is the right thing to do.

Second, I insist that we should take nothing for granted. We should search behind every bush, branch and leaf, leave no stone unturned, and fully explore both the obvious and the most obscure issues and sources that help us understand the breadth and depth of the legacy of slavery. For two reasons! The first reason is that the current literature on the legacy of slavery in the Netherlands is so limited, that we have barely scraped the surface. An example, from Birmingham, England highlights the issues in the Netherlands. The year 2007 in Great Britain was the 200th anniversary of the legal abolition of slave trade in British Empire. Dr. Clive Harris of the Franz Fanon Centre in Birmingham contacted me and said that English people in Birmingham deny that they ever had anything to do with slavery. They say it was Liverpool not Birmingham. So we want you, Stephen, as a Liverpool born Black, to set the record straight.

The truth is that industries in Birmingham made guns and chains and shackles for the slave trade and slavery; banks and insurance companies provided finance; thousands of people were employed directly and indirectly; Birmingham residents consumed millions of pounds of cotton, sugar and coffee produced by enslaved labor; and they wore clothes and textiles made by enslaved people. And after legal abolition, other businesses drew from these beginnings to expand and prosper. But these facts were hidden in the archives, or in obscure books, had not been researched extensively and were not public knowledge. And Birmingham is not the only place to benefit after slavery was legally abolished – as Marika Sherwood demonstrates in her analysis of British government duplicity after legal abolition (Sherwood, 2007).

A second reason we should take nothing for granted is that the facts of what happened, even facts that are long established, can turn out to be completely wrong. Take another example from Great Britain, The Slavery Abolition Act 1833 paid a total of 20 million pounds to more than 30,000 owners of enslaved people in the West Indies and British Caribbean (Draper, 2010). Until recently, most British scholars argued that the money paid was limited in scope, did not affect many people in Great Britain and did not produce millionaires. But recent work by Nicolas Draper of the University of London has demonstrated almost the opposite - that ownership of enslaved people or financial benefit from slavery was widespread in populations across England, in towns you would expect it like London, Bristol and Liverpool; and in towns that you would not expect it, like Cheltenham, Bath, Southampton and Brighton. This compensation directly produced several millionaires; and he identifies in the Compensation records more than one hundred MPs who sat in Parliament between 1820 and 1835 alone.

My third assumption is this - don't let obstacles or impracticalities prevent us from doing our research on the legacy. Don't let the fact that there is no national tradition of research in the Netherlands on the legacy discourage us. Don't let the lack of widespread public support for investigating the legacy prevent us. Don't let the limited funds available for research impede us. And don't let the cut to funds for NiNsee hold us up. Support is there and it is growing. Besides, national traditions change. For example, when I lived in Bordeaux ten years ago, I knew the city had been a big port in the French slave trade, but I couldn't find research or public discussion. A Bordeaux colleague told me: 'Stephen, there are two things in Bordeaux we do not discuss, research or write about. One is collaboration with the Nazis, and the second one is slavery.' That was then, but just two weeks ago, President François Hollande inaugurated a new Holocaust memorial centre in which he acknowledged that the reality of French collaboration with the Nazis had been demonstrated and accepted, and argued that now we need to focus on how to transmit knowledge about these facts. And in May of this same year, President Hollande also attended a memorial on the legacy of slavery in France. Similarly, Brazil had a national tradition of avoiding any mention of race, or doing research on these issues. But now Brazil is explicit in its discussions of race. President Dilma Rousef has recently signed into law a powerful initiative on affirmative action for Black people against all the apparent opposition, and is insisting that slavery and its legacies be at the center of education and research.

So we must seek to change the national tradition in the Netherlands. We

must continue to raise the funds needed to do research. The University of Amsterdam has recognized that rigorous and uncompromising study of the legacy must be undertaken and the university continues to support this NiNsee leerstoel. And the Amsterdam city council has also offered continued support, again recognizing that knowledge production and dissemination about slavery and its legacies is the right thing to do and that those of us doing such work are on the right side of history.

2. What is the relationship between academic research and community research and insights?

Most research in the Netherlands on slavery and its legacies is carried out by professors and lecturers working in universities; some of it is undertaken in research organizations; some of it is done in community organizations; and some is carried out by dedicated individuals. Typically there is a major split between the academy made up of paid professionals that produce, modify and disseminate knowledge; and the community in which unpaid professionals and amateurs also produce knowledge. But this is a false binary. Universities often provide outstanding research and excellent questions; but academic traditions can also constrain the types of knowledge produced. Many people who complete university education do not work in the university, including many people with PhDs. They move on to produce knowledge elsewhere. Many fantastic academic questions and much intellectual inquiry come from the broader society and community. And it is produced by people with a wide range of educational backgrounds, research experience and analytical insights. The community can also influence knowledge production and dissemination in highly beneficial ways.

For example, in Great Britain the narrow scholarship on the slave trade and slavery that dominated the academy for decades was broadened only after the arrival there from the 1950s of hundreds of thousands of West Indian immigrants, including my father who came from Jamaica (Sivanandan, 1990). These immigrants challenged racism in school books and academic texts; insisted that there had been Black people enslaved in England itself; insisted that racism was widespread in England, even if it did not take the same form as the United States and even if there was limited research on it (Miles and Phizacklea, 1984); and highlighted the role of gender in shaping these experiences, and the activities of Black women in challenging them (Sudbury, 1998; Williams, 1993; Bryan, et al, 1985). Influenced by the Race Today Collective, the Institute of Race Relati-

ons, Bogle-Ouverture and New Beacon Books there is a far more rigorous and uncompromising literature on slavery and its legacies in Great Britain today (Sherwood 2007; Goulbourne, 1990). These initiatives clearly set the foundation for the excellent work currently being done in Great Britain.

Community mobilization and research also played an indispensable role in The Atlantic Slave Trade Gallery, which since 2007 became the International Slavery Museum (Small, 2011a; Tibbles, 1994). When discussions for that gallery first began in 1990, I was contacted; I became a curator, a member of the board of advisors, and I wrote several chapters in the museum catalogue. As a result of mobilization the museum changed fundamentally. Instead of just the slave trade, it focused on slavery per se; instead of beginning with slavery, it began with life in Africa before slavery; instead of ending with slavery, it closely examined the legacies of slavery; and instead of one curator it employed eleven curators, including Black men and women with diverse knowledge, experiences and perspectives from across the continent of Africa and from the diaspora (Small, 1997). It is not perfect but it is far better because of community involvement than it would have been.

If not for influences like these, I would never have become an academic. When I was at school in England I was taught almost nothing about slavery, nothing about colonialism, nothing about resistance by Black people. I had never heard the names of Marcus Garvey, nor Paul Bogle, nor Nanny of the Maroons. The only time Africa was mentioned had to do with savages in the jungle, Tarzan the Ape-man, and civil war and famine in Biafra. I was constantly reminded that the British had abolished slavery and forced other nations to do the same; and that they had brought civilization to Africa. And I was told that slavery was a thing of the past, and that I should not waste my time studying it. My story is the story of thousands of young Black people in the educational system in Great Britain, the Netherlands and the United States. Some have succeeded, but far more have failed. But for me the message from my family, my community and from reggae music, was that I should study slavery, and remember it, not forget it. And that I should remind others about slavery and its legacies too:

Mutabaruka – Remembrance!

*And after so much years,
We still a cry tears!
From off a we foot dem tek the chain
Now it seem dem put it on 'pon we brain!*

*Have fe remind yuh!, Have fe remind yuh! Have fe remind yuh!
Me have fe remind yuh! Say me have fe remind yuh!
Me say me have fe remind yuh!, Me say me have fe remind yuh!
'Bout the rowing of the boat
And the bodies that float
And the travels cross the sea
That rob we liberty*

Me have fe remind yuh!

*About the missionaries dem
Dem said dem a we friend
Dem rob we of we gold
And wealth untold
And the pie in the sky
After we die!*

Me have fe remind yuh! Me say me have fe remind yuh!

*'Bout the cotton and de cane dat we plant ina de rain
The sun in a we back,
The whip dat crack!*

Me have fe remind you

*About Garvey, Malcolm, Lumumba and the rest
Who walk this land with a free man plan
And the blood did run, fe we freedom*

*And the fire in we eye
When see how much die
And the chain round we neck
The woman dem tek, AND WHIP!*

Me say me have fe remind yuh! Me say me have fe remind yuh!

'Bout colonial rule

*That turn we fool!
Use we like tool
Mek we work like mule*

*And dem mash up we plan
cause we never understand
Fe dem religion*

*Me say me have fe remind yuh!
Me say me have fe remind yuh!*

*And the pain and the chain still hang 'pon we brain
And the sons that die, we still ask why*

Me have fe remind you

*Me say me have fe remind yuh! Me say me have fe remind yuh!
Me say me have fe remind yuh Me say me have fe remind yuh!
Me say me have fe remind yuh! Me say me have fe remind yuh!
Me say me have fe remind yuh! Me say me have fe remind yuh!*

Reenergized by such encouragement, the study of slavery and its legacies was central in my education and research. When people say to me, Stephen, why do you criticize the educational system in England seeing as how they gave you so much? My response is I criticize the English educational system because I want it to be a better than it is; and I succeeded in English education not because of what they did for me, but in spite of what they did against me.

So when we study the legacy of slavery in the Netherlands we should not accept that knowledge production or dissemination is located only in universities; we should not accept that inspiration to study comes only from within the education system. We should draw on knowledge produced both inside and outside universities.

3. What analytical insights can be derived from international comparisons?

There are two types of benefits from international comparisons; the first are academic; the second are non-academic. In my work on the legacy in the Netherlands I systematically draw on the best research traditions, insights,

experiences and inspiration from other nations, while also maintaining a research program on the Netherlands that recognizes and respects its unique historical trajectory.

What are the academic benefits? All nations reveal exceptional, unique, and distinctive features; but many nations also reveal commonalities. This is true for those nations involved in slavery. So when some scholars say that we should not compare Dutch slavery with slavery in other nations, when they say slavery in Louisiana and Suriname had nothing in common with one another, and that there is nothing to be gained from a comparison of these two places, I disagree. I think such a view is misinformed and mistaken. I believe that there are tremendous insights to be obtained from such comparisons. Slavery in Louisiana and Suriname both involved state sponsored systems of exploitation based on race; both resulted in the kidnapping, and enslavement of tens of thousands of people; both resulted in violence, brutality and oppression. Both gave rise to ideologies of racial superiority and inferiority; and both involved a sustained refusal by the enslaved to accept inferiority, a refusal that involved resistance, rebellion and revolt (Schalkwijk and Small, 2012).

But the main benefit of comparison has to do with evidence, data, and research methods into slavery and its legacies. In the literature on Louisiana there are detailed studies of the variety and vitality of Black life, culture and resistance under slavery (Hall, 1992); on the role of gender, and the experiences of women (Malone, 1992); on the obstacles that Black people faced during slavery and after it legally ended (Scott, 2005). There are detailed insights into the best methods for collecting archival and non-archival data and evidence, including evidence from art, sculpture and music produced by Black people (Small, 2011b; Wilkie, 2000). There are studies that address how the master-enslavers that became millionaires under slavery redirected that money into other businesses after slavery ended (Scott, 2005); how the port of New Orleans a major port in the slave trade, developed shipping routes and businesses, and remained a leading port for the next hundred years. We also have detailed studies of how political and social institutions in Louisiana today sanitize the history of slavery and its legacies in favour of highlighting supposed unity and togetherness (Eichstedt and Small, 2002; Small, 2011, 2009). There is extensive research on all these issues, and it is a mistake not to examine it for the insights it can share with us.

The research literature in the United States on gender, Black women, slavery and its legacies is one more area with fantastic potential for academic comparisons (Glymph, 2008; Morgan, 2004; Fox-Genovese, 1988; Hull, et al, 1982). Some of these benefits have already been recognized in several important works

on gender and race in the Netherlands (Essed, 1991; Wekker, 2006); and their value has already been actively recognized and embraced for a long time now by scholars of race and gender in Great Britain, France and Germany (Hine, et al, 2009; Mirza, 1997). And at the present time, studies from the United State provided tremendous opportunities for theory, concepts and data collection in the study of slavery and its legacies in the Netherlands (Dill and Zambrana, 2009). Once again this includes work on documentary and non-documentary sources (Battle-Baptiste, 2011; Gallie and Young, 2004).

Comparison is not just about academic benefits, but also includes the motivation and inspiration we feel from seeing the achievements of Black people elsewhere in the diaspora (Small, 1994a). Comparisons can give us strength in our daily lives, and also motivate us to do better research. For example, Black people in England and the Netherlands continue to draw on the United States, and elsewhere in the diaspora to help us in our quest for survival and success (Goulbourne, 2002). In the Netherlands this is clear in the work of Barryl Biekman, Kaikusi, Glenn Codfried and many of the activities that took place at NiNsee.

There is a lesson to be learnt from a comparison of the Netherlands with recent developments in England. In 2007, during the 200th anniversary of the legal abolition of slavery, there was a flurry of public attention, exhibits, galleries and research on legal abolition. And we all know how the British just love to celebrate legal abolition! But then, just like magic, 2007 came and went, and now there is very little left over from these activities. It was like: 'Now you see me! And now you don't!' Most of the exhibits have gone, the funding has dried up and the research has slowed down. The life of critical appraisal lasted as long as the life of a butterfly! But people persevere. Some research continues to be carried out. And many people, particularly Black people, continue to focus on changing British institutions in more fundamental ways. A lesson for us here in the Netherlands when we think about 2013 – to make sure we build a platform that will last longer than a year.

Finally, let me add: I don't revere the United States or the United Kingdom uncritically; I don't genuflect to all their institutions or values. But I do believe that in the struggle so far of Black men and women for freedom, in evidence of multi-racial alliances, in research traditions and knowledge production, each nation has established a tradition of inquiry, a tool kit of concepts, an extensive array of theories and methods, and a volume of empirical research and data that we should acknowledge and from which we must learn. And in light of the obstacles to success for Black people in Europe, we know how important it is to

look for role models elsewhere.

4. In light of these issues, what is the historical research that I am doing right now?

As I said earlier, we can't start everywhere, so we must start somewhere. With concrete projects, with specific questions, with detailed data collection and with analysis, writing and publication. So what is my current research since I began as NiNsee professor? First, my framework. In order to develop a long-term program of investigation I have organized my research projects around three historical periods that reveal different and unique configurations of the legacy of slavery. I raise common questions for each of these three periods; and at the same time, I raise specific questions unique to each specific period. The common questions in each period are: (1) how is the legacy of slavery manifested in Dutch institutions and society? (2) how is the legacy of slavery manifested in Black communities and organizations? and (3) how is the legacy of slavery manifested in the international nexus between the Netherlands and the colonies?

The first historical period is the 1860s: in which Black people have just emerged from slavery, have been granted legal freedom but not provided with the conditions or the resources for real emancipation; in which the existing Dutch institutions reflect the results of two hundred years of imposing state-sponsored inferiority upon Black people, with Black people resisting; in which the primary goal of the master-enslavers at this time was to maintain a subordinate and docile labor population. Also at this time, the dominant ideologies of the day were strong remnants of biological racism and an increasingly vigorous social Darwinism; and the majority of Dutch people have had no personal interaction with Black people. Internationally relevant is the fact that most African and Caribbean nations remained colonial dependences.

The second historical period is the 1960s; in which slavery has legally been over for around 100 years; levels of literacy among Black people have been significantly raised; Black people in the colonies are still heavily dependent upon Netherlands but are increasingly pressing for independence; UNESCO has formally denounced racism as ideology; the public face of the Netherlands is opposition to racism; and the majority of Dutch people have still had no personal interaction with Black people. Internationally relevant is the fact that many African and Caribbean nations are just becoming independent, and the power and successes of the Civil Rights Movement and Black Power in the United States

are widely publicised.

The third historical period is the 1980s and 1990s, a period in which several hundred thousand Surinamese and other Dutch Caribbean people have relocated permanently to the Netherlands; educational and occupational stratification in the Black population is higher than ever before; national independence has been achieved by Suriname, but relations with the Netherlands are still strong; and large numbers of Dutch people, especially in the biggest cities, are now having significant personal and social interaction with Black people. Internationally relevant is the fact that more African and European nations are now independent, including recently liberated Black populations in Zimbabwe and South Africa.

Over the last two years I have been involved in two active research projects.

FIRST STUDY: THE AFRICAN DIASPORA AND BLACK SOCIAL THOUGHT IN THE NETHERLANDS (1980s AND 1990s)

My first study examines the ways in which ideas, ideologies and institutions from across the African diaspora shaped social and political thought among Black people living and working in the Netherlands in the 1980s and 1990s! By the 1980s, as you all know, tens of thousands of Black people had recently arrived in the Netherlands and were establishing families, communities and organizations. They brought Caribbean insight and experience, and they brought knowledge of ideologies, institutions and collective struggles against racism and inequality in several areas of the African diaspora with them too. They had just seen the successes of the Civil Rights Movement and Black power in the United States; they had just seen or heard about national independence for countries across British and Francophone Africa and the British Caribbean; and they were seeing and hearing about the anti-apartheid struggles that were at a peak right then around the world. This information came to them in television, music and other media, from political and social literature, from family and friends, and from personal travel.

We have evidence that in the Netherlands, behind the scenes, away from the public eye, Black people commemorated and remembered slavery and its legacies. But how exactly did they do that? What groups and organizations existed? What issues did they discuss? And what ideas, ideologies and institutions from across the African diaspora did they draw on to evaluate such issues? In other words I want to know how Black people in the Netherlands, especially

those involved in organizations, churches, and in social mobilization, drew on the African diaspora for influence, motivation and inspiration. We know from research on the African diaspora around the world that Black populations have always drawn on one another for information, insights and inspiration. We have seen this in the Pan-African Congress meetings, in Marcus Garvey's movement, in the Negritude movement and in the Reparations movement. I want to know exactly how that happened in the Netherlands.

One key aspect of this study is very important to me. While archives play a significant role in my data collection I am not reliant on archives alone for my answers. Instead I am going directly to the people involved, many of whom are still alive and have many documents, photographs, and are allowing me to do oral history. This study is in its early stages and I'm still collecting evidence and data. I've mentioned some of these data in presentations but I have not yet published any of the research from this project.

By the way, I lived and worked here in Amsterdam, in Watersgraafsmeer, for almost one year in 1979-1980. I had many friends in the Bijlmermeer and in Amsterdam Oost, and I went to both places frequently. I saw first-hand the influence of the African diaspora among Black people here – reading books by civil rights and black power leaders; political analysis from Caribbean authors; listening to inspiring and informative lyrics from reggae music; and from travel to other parts of the diaspora.

SECOND STUDY: PUBLIC HISTORY AND COLLECTIVE MEMORY OF SLAVERY IN THE NETHERLANDS IN 1980s AND 1990s

My second project is about public history and collective memory of slavery in the Netherlands, in the last 40 years. This is a collaboration with my colleague Dr. Kwame Nimako. We want to know about the most prominent organizations and groups explicitly talking about slavery and its legacies in the public realm in Dutch society, including politics, community organizations, education, cultural organizations and museums! What exactly have they been saying? What are the main issues raised? What are the main images presented? And what access to knowledge production, knowledge dissemination and political power do these different organizations have? To what extent do they promote social forgetting or social remembering?

Nimako and I argue that in the Netherlands today public history and collective memory of slavery and its legacies is currently reflected in the activities of five prominent social movements or trends. The remembrance and commemoration

moration movement that seeks explicit and public acknowledgement of slavery and its legacies, including emphasis on the humanity of the victims of slavery. The reparations movement which seeks financial payments to the descendants of the enslaved, the return of stolen artifacts and precious items held in museums and significant revision of the historical record to tell a more accurate and complete story of slavery and the slave trade. The anniversaries and apologies trend demands public and official acknowledgement of anniversaries associated with slavery and slave trade; and apologies from government, religious organizations and other prominent groups that were involved or profited from slavery and the slave trade.

The fourth trend is the museum heritage and artefacts trend, which involves the legacy of slavery in terms of objects, artefacts, art and physical infrastructure. This trend involves museums, exhibits, galleries, monuments and related buildings. The fifth and final movement is the new anti-slavery movement, which builds on the anti-slavery movement of the past. This movement argues that so-called 'modern slaves' live in conditions that are worse than the conditions suffered by Africans during chattel slavery in the Americas. This movement remembers slavery primarily as a metaphor, and a foil. Because of its moral claims, and its resonance with state management of international migration this movement is currently the most visible of all the movements and receives far more attention in media and politics than all the other movements combined.

These five movements or trends reveal unequal processes of social forgetting and social remembering; and they promote dramatically different public histories of the nature of slavery and its legacies. They also reveal highly divergent access to knowledge production, knowledge dissemination and political power. The differences between these groups are fundamental and highly consequential. Nimako and I are researching how these groups have developed over the last 40 years. We are collecting documentary evidence from a wide range of sources; we are doing interviews and oral history; and we are identifying images such as photographs, portraits, art, paintings, in which slavery and its legacies are represented in museums, exhibitions, and other areas; and we are examining tape, video and television recordings. We have already presented several papers on our research and published one book chapter (Nimako and Small, 2012a, 2012b; Small and Nimako, 2012). Our book is half finished and will be completed in 2013.

5. And what does morality, civility, humanity and politics have to do with it all?

I did not accept the NiNsee leerstoel to make political statements or to preach morality to the Dutch nation. My responsibility is to undertake research. But I cannot pretend that the political context and moral evaluations are irrelevant. Historically politics and morality are major reasons why the Netherlands lacks a robust tradition of research on the legacy of slavery; politics and a sense of injustice are major reasons why large numbers of people in the Netherlands mobilized to secure a monument and an institute and a NiNsee leerstoel. Politics are clearly a reason why NiNsee has experienced a significant funding cut. But politics and morality are also the reason why so many people are still working hard to secure more funding and ensure that research and knowledge dissemination continue.

With regard to my own morality, I regard slavery as a crime against humanity; I regard it as irrepressibly exploitative, violent, brutal and immoral. To me slavery and the slave trade denied human dignity, and should be condemned. I also believe that the legacy of slavery in all the aspects I've discussed today are not marginal issues, but issues that continue to shape, in fundamental ways, relations between the descendants of the nations involved in the slave trade, and the descendants of those who were enslaved. I believe strongly that it is a moral issue that these issues be studied and understood. These are my views. But such strong beliefs do not stop me from doing rigorous research; they do not stop me from identifying and collecting the best evidence; they do not stop me from asking uncompromising questions about exactly what happened under slavery and what are the consequences; and they do not make me hesitant to publish my work or subject it to critical review.

With this in mind, I say three things. First, my primary goal is to undertake a rigorous and uncompromising program of research, and to articulate the criteria and reasoning that shapes such my research priorities. I hope to do this in a way that encourages others to undertake their own research, and perhaps work together in collaborative ventures. Second, I believe strongly that I have a moral and professional responsibility to contribute to training the next generation of young scholars and to ensuring that freedom of speech and inquiry really and truly means that any topic is open for rigorous and uncompromising research, including studying the legacy of slavery in the Netherlands. And third, I believe that it is an injustice to the Dutch nation to leave its people in such ignorance of the facts of Dutch slavery or its legacy. This is a civil issue, a moral issue, and not an issue that should be subjected to petty politics. Undertaking research on

the legacy of slavery in the Netherlands is the right thing to do; it will be done, no matter what; and people should recognize that if they support us they will be on the right side of history.

Conclusion

The legacy of slavery in the Netherlands is vast, voluminous, multi-dimensional, multi-faceted, contradictory and highly consequential; since slavery started and legally ended, the legacy has flowed like a river that is irreversible; its effects are endemic in ways that are irrepressible; its consequences so diffuse that they are immeasurable; and the forces to which it has given rise, incalculable.

As I have made it clear throughout this inaugural lecture, I accepted the position of the NiNsee leerstoel because my goal is to build relationships, not destroy them; to make allies not enemies; so that I might work with everyone interested in carrying out a rigorous and uncompromising program of research on Dutch slavery and its legacies in the Netherlands. This task, I believe, is more likely to succeed if we work as a team bringing our collective knowledge, skills and insights to the task at hand.

I remain optimistic; despite all the reasons to be pessimistic. National traditions change, as we have seen in Great Britain, France and Brazil. Tremendous advances in knowledge production and dissemination about slavery and its legacies have been made across many nations, even in my lifetime. We now have a strong tradition of research, and a significant literature upon which we can build. Besides, I have worked with so many good, decent and dedicated people that I can always draw water from the deep well of the human spirit in its quest for the truth.

I have discussed the legacy as an issue of the past; and an issue of the present; but I want to insist that the legacy is also about the future. What legacy will we leave for future generations in the Netherlands? The best legacy is a rigorous and uncompromising research program on the history and legacy of slavery; and the best methodological, conceptual and theoretical frameworks within which to carry out this research. If we don't complete such a task, then public discussion of Dutch past will continue to be characterized by impressions, rumors and exaggeration.

It is an historical fact that of the European nations prominent in slavery and the slave trade, the Netherlands was the last European nation to legally abolish slavery. It would be unfortunate, and also a shame, if the Netherlands found itself the last European nation to fully document the legacy of slavery. I hope

scholars, and the public alike, will act to ensure that this does not happen. And it is institutions like University of Amsterdam and the NiNsee leerstoel that I occupy, which can provide the stimulus. For this we thank you.

Before I finally conclude, I would like to thank the organizations and individuals that have worked so hard to bring discussion, analysis and research on the legacy of Dutch slavery out from the private realm and into the public realm, out from the margins of the academy and into the heart of mainstream academic research; those who have worked to bring about the existence of the Slavery monument in Oosterpark and NiNsee; who worked tirelessly as directors, advisors, researchers and staff at NiNsee; all those who are working still to bring NiNsee back into its rightful existence.

I would like to thank my colleague and friend Dr. Kwame Nimako, who generously suggested the title for this inaugural lecture, and in this way also shaped several of the ideas in the lecture itself. Another great example of how teamwork produces better results than individuals working on their own.

I thank Dr. Eddy Campbell and the members of the Bestuur; I thank The Board of the University of Amsterdam in hosting this NiNsee leerstoel; I thank the dean of the faculty of the humanities; I thank the Research Director of the Faculty, Hotze Mulder, and I thank Professor James Kennedy. And I thank all those students and researchers, professional and amateur, who are dedicating their lives to researching and disseminating knowledge about the legacy of slavery. It is because of their tireless work, their efforts, their passion and their irrepressible human spirit, that I am here.

IK HEB GEZEGD!

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His research addresses public history and collective memory, the Black Diaspora in Europe, and people of mixed origins. He has just finished a book on 21st Century Antebellum Slave Cabins and Public History in Louisiana (which will be published in 2013); and he is co-writing a book (with Dr. Kwame Nimako) on Public History, Museums and Slavery in England and the Netherlands. His most recent book (published September, 2009) is entitled *Black Europe and the African Diaspora* (co-edited with Darlene Clark Hine and Trica Danielle Keaton). He also published *Representations of Slavery: Race and Ideology in Southern Plantation Museums* (with Jennifer L Eichstedt, Smithsonian Institution Press, 2002).

