SLAVERY MONUMENT
OOSTERPARK

SHARED HISTORY SHARED FUTURE

Oosterpark is not just a green oasis in the city of Amsterdam. Between the trees and footpaths you will find the National Slavery Monument. A place to reflect on a history that has shaped the Netherlands and is still impacting the present.

When you listen to '**OOSTCAST – National Slavery Monument Oosterpark Amsterdam**', you are taking part in a unique walk through the park. At various points you will find out more about the history of slavery. About Dutch colonialism, kidnapping people from Africa, oppressing the enslaved, the ruthless plantation system and the deep legacy of slavery.

You will hear about Indigenous people who saw their land disappear and learn more about resistance: from *the Maroons* and *Tula* to *Anton de Kom*. You will also find out about fake freedom and how this history is still tangible today. At the end of the walk we celebrate the resilience and bravery of citizens – the strength resulting from their fight.

Listen to experts ***Nancy Jouwe, Glenn Helberg, Mercedes Zandwijken, Sherlien Sanches, Simba Mosis, Naomie Pieter, Vincent de Kom, Lara Nuberg, Alana Helberg-Proctor*** and ***Kjelld Masoud Kroon*** who will accompany you on this audio tour.

Please scan the QR codes – you can find them on the stickers in the park. Enjoy your guided walk.

We invite you to listen to and reflect on a history that affects all of us.

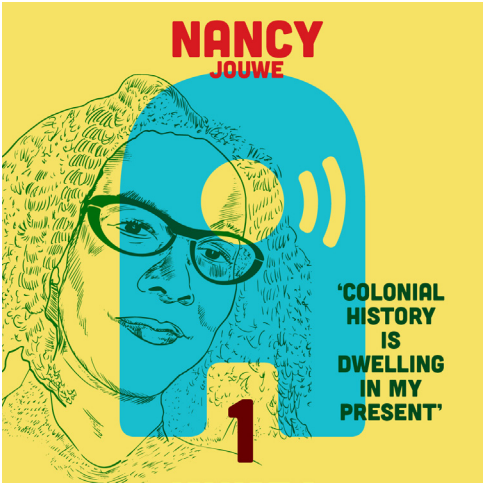
DUTCH COLONIALISM

THE COLONIAL PAST

A growing part of the Dutch population is aware of the fact that the Netherlands played a crucial role in the colonial history of the world, including slavery. "We see this in our museums, but also on our streets. There are street names throughout the Netherlands referring to colonies, spices and names of the men who used violence to turn this land into colonies." There are also numerous buildings that are connected to slavery, such as the official residence of the mayor of Amsterdam.

Many Dutch cities have now commissioned research into their colonial past and their role in slavery. Mayors have officially apologised. For example, Mayor Halsema apologised on behalf of the city of Amsterdam – which was co-owner of the colony of Surinam and even had its own small colony on the Delaware river. Apologies have also been made by the mayor of Utrecht, where Nancy Jouwe lives. This is a city without a port and without offices of the Dutch East India Trading Company (VOC – Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie) and the Dutch West India Trading Company (WIC – West indische comagnie), but still Utrecht is closely linked to colonial history. This history still affects the present and continues to do so. "This is the case for many other cities in the Netherlands."

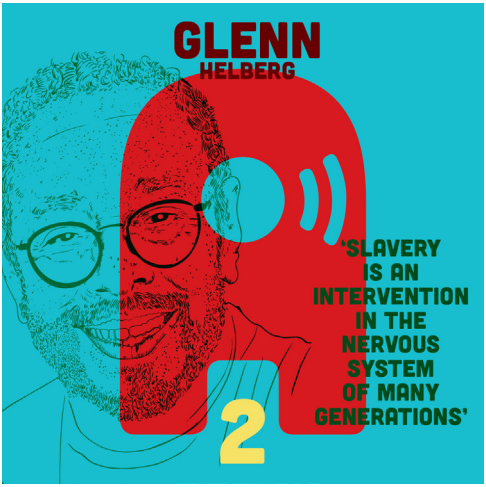
According to Nancy Jouwe, knowledge about colonial history and slavery is not yet being shared enough in Dutch education. "Something needs to be done about this," she says. "We still have so much to learn from the past which will help us with our future."



The grandparents, parents and brothers of **Nancy Jouwe** (1967) were born and raised in a Dutch colony. "To me, this means that colonial history is not something from the past, but it is dwelling in my present." It was discussed at our kitchen table every day. "Whether it was the food served, including my first spoonful of sambal (spicy sauce) when I was six years old – which my brothers found hilarious – or my father's serious monologues to which I listened carefully while feeling his emotions." Nancy Jouwe is a cultural historian and works as a freelance researcher, lecturer and writer.

ENSLAVED PEOPLE FROM AFRICA

‘THE COLOURED BLACK OTHER’



The Dutch-Carribean psychiatrist **Glenn Helberg** was born in Willemstad, Curaçao (Dutch Antilles) in 1955. In the early 1970s he moved to the Netherlands to study medicine. He saw the limitations of the western views on mental health and began to study in more depth how the people from Africa, Asia and South America view sickness and health. “Language, history and culture shape people.” He became convinced about this. According to Helberg, slavery is not something of the past. When people are living in unsafe circumstances for a long period of time, the body adjusts to this. These stress responses affect many generations to come. Glenn Helberg has become a pioneer of transcultural psychiatry. He speaks out against racism and for the Caribbean community in the Netherlands. Glenn Helberg is also an advocate for LBHTIQ+rights.

The story of slavery “is not just about what happened,” says Glenn Helberg. “It is about what is still happening to day.” In this part of the audio tour he explains what it has meant for all those millions to become enslaved: they were not just taken to another continent, but they were dehumanised. Their name was taken away, their family history was cut off, and their body was reduced to a possession. “You were no longer a human being, but a number. Not a mother, but merely reproduction. Not a child, but just a product to trade.” This process was systematic and driven by profit. Violence and punishments were not incidents, but structurally used tools.

As psychiatrist, Glenn Helberg connected this past to the present: “What used to be necessary to survive, can now get in the way of living a free life.” Slavery is an intervention in the nervous system of many generations. The impact is not only personal, but also structural: in institutions, policy making and daily thinking about the coloured, Black other.

Glenn Helberg invites us to recognise what has happened. To feel what remains relevant today. And to give words to what had to be kept quiet for many generations. “It is only when we truly see what this dehumanisation has done, that we can give room to being human again.”

THE PLANTATION SYSTEM AND ITS LEGACY

IT IS TIME FOR THIS TO STOP

“I have now found the courage to discuss a topic that has been on my mind for years,” says Mercedes Zandwijken in this audio recording. It is about plantation culture still echoing after all these years. She returns to the root of the problem: the plantation where her ancestors had to work, obey and be quiet. “They were treated as objects or animals that could be traded or given away.”

The effect of oppression and dehumanisation in the past is still playing a key role in how many Afro-Surinamese-Dutch parents are raising their children today. The patterns are still clearly visible. For example, Surinamese mothers who shout at their children: “Don’t touch that! Come here! Did I not warn you?” If people are being shouted at for 350 years, and also tortured and threatened, they are highly likely to pass this on. “It is not suprising that this behaviour has been passed on from generation to generation.”

Mercedes Zandwijken also has examples from her own childhood. Her mother could suddenly become very angry about something small. She would also threaten her with violence. “If you don’t shut up now, I’ll break all your bones.” The source and root cause of this is a type of punishment dating back to the time of slavery: the breaking wheel. There was no room for emotions, not on the plantation and not in the home of Mercedes Zandwijken. “Save your tears for later, when I’m dead,” her mother used to say. They had to be strong, just like their ancestors. She never experienced any compassion. She still sees these patterns in present day, and that’s why she concludes: “It is time for this to stop.”



Mercedes Zandwijken (1957) grew up in Amsterdam with her Surinamese parents. Looking back, she can clearly see how much her own upbringing and that of many other Afro-Surinamese-Dutch families is wrought with plantation culture. Mercedes Zandwijken has been the engine behind organising many Keti Koti Dialogue Tables in the Netherlands for the last 15 years. They include rituals, a structured dialogue and a reconstruction of a meal for the enslaved. With time to reflect on how we deal with the legacy of the colonial past and the history of slavery. Her mission is clear: to encourage social justice and to connect people. She sometimes calls herself ‘a therapist for society’.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

AN INDIGENOUS UNKNOWN, COLONIAL PAST

In recent years, the city of Amsterdam has acknowledged its role in colonial history. The descendants of the enslaved African people have been offered official apologies and there are now initiatives to repair the damage. However, Indigenous people have not been offered any recognition or repair at all," explains Sherlien Sanches in this part of the audio tour. "We are forgetting a fundamental part of history."



The name of **Sherlien Sanches** (with an 's') sounds Spanish, but is in fact Surinamese. Colonial history continues to live on in her surname. Her mother is an indigenous person (Kari'na), and her father is Afro-Surinamese. When Sherlien was only eight months old, they moved to the Netherlands. As founder and chair of the Indigenous International Knowledge Centre, she strives for more visibility, maintaining and recognising Surinam's indigenous language, culture and spiritual traditions. "It's time to work on more inclusive history textbooks showing the relationship between Indigenous people and the colonial past. Research and education are needed for this."

This is 'the story of red slavery'. Not only people from Africa were enslaved, but also the Indigenous people from North America. It started with Columbus, when European conquerors reached Turtle Island (the indigenous name for the continent of North America) and came into contact with Indigenous communities for the first time. "This was the beginning of genocide, oppression and stealing land," says Sherlien Sanches. Dutch colonisers came across some twenty different Indiginous populations halfway through the 17th century. Indigenous people spoke their own languages, had their own infrastructures and advanced knowledge about agriculture and irrigation. Their land was taken away with violence, after which many of the Indiginous people were enslaved. Millions of Indigenous people died because of European diseases, war, mass murders and the general collapse of society.

For more than 50 years now, the Indigenous people have been fighting for recognition and their original rights. Sherien Sanches: "Our knowledge has largely been wiped out or it has been completely taken over and claimed by others. Through forced assimilation, many Indigenous people no longer speak their language and indigenous knowledge has been lost." This is such a tragic waste, because "we can learn so much from Indigenous people: ecological, social and societal knowledge."

FIGHTING FOR FREEDOM

The history of the Maroons is not about being victims, but about people who refused to obey. These enslaved Africans escaped from the plantation system, moved to other parts of Surinam and built new communities based on their own values and leadership style. In this audio tour, Simba Mosis explains why they deliberately use the word 'escaping' and not 'fleeing'. "The word 'escaping' shows that this was a deliberate act of resistance: taking back their freedom."

Their resistance was not only physical, but also strategic. "It was a long process of escaping, surviving, protecting, building and passing on." The peace treaties, one of which was signed on 10 October 1760, did not come from the good heart of the coloniser, but because the Maroons could not be beaten. "They were not simply given their freedom back, but they had to fight for it and force them to record it." Not only July 1st (Keti Koti, the date on which slavery was abolished by the Dutch), but also October 10th remains an important date for the Maroon community. "These two dates combined tell the story of oppression, resistance and hard-won freedom."

Simba Mosis explains that resistance was also about community. "It was about family, taking care of each other, solidarity and knowing that nobody can truly be free when others are not free." This strength is still very much alive in the Maroon culture. Women are playing an important role in this: they pass on their knowledge, upbringing, spirituality and a sense of community from generation to generation.



Simba and her twin sister **Susi Mosis** (1982) moved from Surinam to the Netherlands at the age of eight. They are part of the Maroon community: descendants of Africans who escaped from the plantation system during slavery. This is not just a story to them about something that happened a long time ago. "This history still lives inside of us." The twin sisters founded Sisa Events ('Sisa' means 'sister') to share the beauty and strength of Maroon history. "Our ancestors had to fight for their freedom and to keep their African languages, rhythms and spiritual knowledge alive – taking great pride in this. Their stories continue to live on in our music, dance, art and the way we connect nowadays."

NATIONAL SLAVERY MONUMENT OOSTERPARK AMSTERDAM

The National Slavery Monument, created by Surinamese artist *Erwin de Vries* (Paramaribo, 1929–2018), serves as a place for reflection and remembrance of the Netherlands' transatlantic slavery past. It was unveiled in 2002.



foto: Anne Reinke

"The National Slavery Monument goes beyond a one-sided account of history.

It is an invitation to shared responsibility and to breaking the silence.

It commemorates not only the suffering, but also the resistance, resilience and struggle for justice."

- National Institute for the Study of Dutch Slavery and its Legacy (NiNsee)

Learn more about the National Slavery Monument.

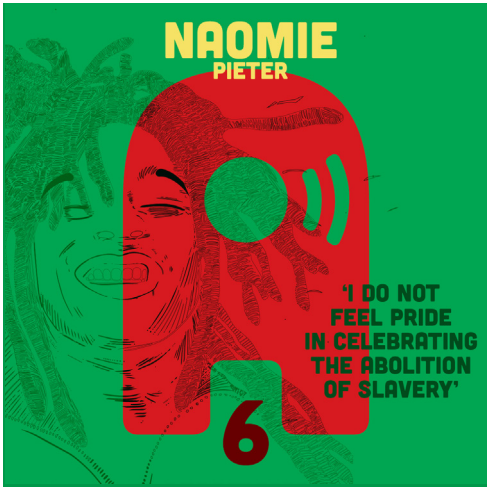
RESISTING SLAVERY: TULA ON CURACAO IN THE CARIBBEAN

WHY IT IS IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER

Near Fort Amsterdam on Curaçao – which used to be the centre of Dutch colonial power and is now the seat of the government of Curaçao – there are two signs next to each other. Naomie Pieter explains: One of them honours the King of the Netherlands as noble and good and mentions the 'free and grateful people'. The other sign honours Tula, who was the leader of an uprising by the enslaved on Curaçao, executed in 1795 by the colonial rulers. Naomie Pieter: "There is tension there, and that's why it is important to remember what happened in history."

Naomie Pieter does not feel proud of the abolition of slavery. In her opinion, freedom that is first taken away, and later 'given back' is not something to celebrate. However, it is important to remember what happened in history. "We were not always free. Let's not forget that. Even under the most inhumane circumstances, people's spirit could not be colonialised completely."

What's more, remembering our history helps us to recognise that anti-black racism is not an abstract idea. It is a structural system of violence that can still be felt today. And that is why it is important to meet up in Oosterpark, concludes Naomie Pieter: "Not because the past has ended, but because it has not ended yet."



As a descendant of the enslaved with her roots in Curaçao in the Caribbean, **Naomie Pieter** (1990) carries the history of her ancestors within her. "This is not something only from the past, but it still continues to impact the present. It is in the structures, in the inequality, in how Black bodies are seen and treated." She is a performance artist and activist, and she stresses the importance of joy in activism in the black queer community. With Black Pride and Pon Di Pride, she is creating spaces where Black people and Black queer people are not only reminded of their pain, but can also exist in "joy, love and expression".

RESISTING SLAVERY: ANTON DE KOM IN SURINAM

WE SLAVES OF SURINAM

In this part of the audio tour, Vincent de Kom talks about his great-grandfather Anton de Kom who was born in Paramaribo in Surinam in 1898. He was the son of previously enslaved parents. In a society that was still deeply affected by the colonial exploitation, he openly spoke out against racism and injustice. He was arrested in 1933 and exiled to the Netherlands without a trial. During the Second World War, he joined the resistance movement against the Nazi's who occupied the Netherlands. He was arrested and died in a German concentration camp in 1945.



The great-grandfather of **Vincent de Kom** (1991) is not just anyone: *Anton de Kom* was a Surinamese hero of the resistance movement, a writer and an activist. Vincent grew up in Amsterdam, where his great-grandfather's book *Wij slaven van Suriname* (We Slaves of Surinam) has always had a prominent place in his book case. Following in the footsteps of his great-grandfather, Vincent also stands up for people who are having a difficult time. His great-grandfather inspires him and "gives him the strength to keep going day after day, despite the headwinds." He is on the local council of Amstedam-Zuidoost and he wants to make Amsterdam a better place to live for everyone.

Anton de Kom is best known for his book *Wij slaven van Suriname* (We Slaves of Surinam, 1934). For the first time he describes Surinamese history from the perspective of the oppressed, rather than the perspective of the coloniser. He fought against slavery, colonialism and racism, pleading for justice and equality. His message was clear: Freedom can only exist, if all racism, injustice and exploitation is recognised and fought."

Vincent de Kom sees that Anton de Kom's book is still being read and talked about today. His book inspires new generations to take a critical look at society and history. "Resistance against racist ideas grew and became a large movement in society, supported by many."

THE ILLUSION OF FREEDOM

WHEN SLAVERY WAS ABOLISHED

“Slavery was abolished by law,” says Lara Nuberg in this audio tour, “but this certainly did not mean that the people who used to be enslaved were suddenly seen as equal.” The abolition of slavery was merely a legal change, and not yet a change in people’s minds and attitudes. In Surinam, the formerly enslaved continued to be put under supervision of the state for another ten years. On Curaçao, the formerly enslaved continued to depend on the Paga Tera system because of debts. And contract workers from India, China and Indonesia who were free on paper, were subjected to new forms of forced

Lara Nuberg explains how the colonial system in the former Dutch Indies (now Indonesia) forced the local population to grow crops for the Dutch, as compensation for the abolition of slavery in the Dutch West Indies. “This is how freedom in one place was created, but it meant the end of freedom somewhere else.” What also stings is that it is not the formerly enslaved who were paid compensation, but the plantation owners. “The people who had suffered did not receive anything. Whereas the people who had profited received money.”

A question that Lara Nuberg asks is: “Has colonial thinking ever really disappeared?” Look at who can freely travel around the world and who can’t. Look at economic inequality reflecting old power structures. She concludes: “True freedom doest not exist, but merely an illusion of freedom.”

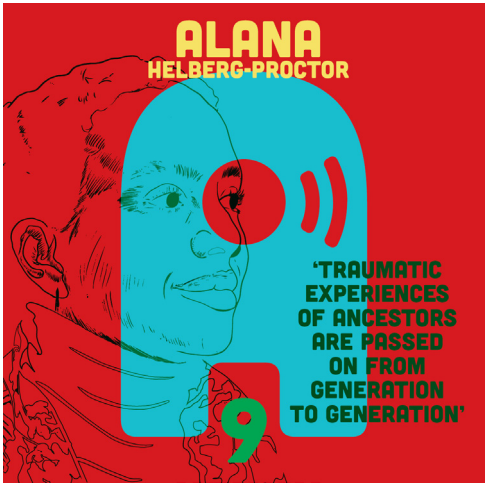


Historian **Lara Nuberg** feels connected to the colonial history of the Netherlands, because her grandmother was born in the former Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia). She writes, gives lectures and makes audio tours about colonial history, remembrance culture and identity. Knowing all about history, means that “you can’t lean back in the present. Freedom does not truly exist until everyone is free.” That’s why it is important to keep sharing the history of slavery, colonialism and how this still impacts the present. “It forces us to look beyond laws and dates of the past and historic facts that are considered to be over.”

THE EFFECT OF SLAVERY IN DOCTOR'S

CONSULTATION ROOMS

"Health care played an important part in the slave trade," says anthropologist Alana Helberg-Proctor in this audio tour. "Ship's surgeons examined the enslaved when they were bought, and kept an eye on the 'human cargo' on board." When they arrived in the colonies, the doctors became part of the medical service for slavery. This history has impacted the development of medical knowledge, medical institutions and contemporary views in health care.



Alana Helberg-Proctor (1984) is a lecturer and researcher at the Department of Anthropology of the University of Amsterdam. She studies inequality in health care focusing on racialisation in health care and the impact of slavery. Research shows that the Dutch slave trade still affects the wellbeing of the descendants of the enslaved and their communities. And it also has an effect on the socio-economic structures and, obviously, on anti-black racism in our society."

"Slavery has an effect on the mental and physical health of the descendants of the enslaved, and it also has an effect on the Dutch health care system," explains Alana Helberg-Proctor. This works in three different ways. First of all, the traumatic experiences of ancestors are passed on from generation to generation in the upbringing of children, in protection mechanisms, in customs, habits and eating culture. "Sometimes people are aware of this, but usually they are not aware."

Secondly, the history of slavery has left traces in socio-economic structures determing the access to health care. And finally, racist thinking during slavery is still seen in anti-black racism today. This can lead to stress responses affecting people's physical health.

Her call for action is clear: more research is needed to fight the effect of slavery on health care and on anti-black racism. Only then can we "fully understand the mechanisms of how traumatic experiences are passed on from generation to generation."

CELEBRATING COMMUNITY

RESILIENCE & CIVIC COURAGE

Empowering the community is not an abstract idea to Kjelld Masoud Kroon, but something he sees all around him on the Caribbean islands. In this interview he talks about the Papiamentu language and Tambú music and dance. At some point in history, these were forbidden by the Dutch colonial rulers. However, they are still being spoken, played and danced today. As a result of successful resistance, Papiamentu has become an official language in the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Another example of the resilience of the community is people supporting each other after a hurricane. And how mothers and grandmothers always put a meal on the table, even when they don't have much.

Kjelld Masoud Kroon strongly believes that not only a strong community is important for the healing process, but also civic courage. Speaking out against injustice, such as the lower wages on Bonaire, beaches becoming too expensive for the local population, mass tourism deciding what the island looks like based on the wishes of Europeans or climate injustice. It is also important to talk about how the history of slavery still has an impact on the European part of the Netherlands. "This is a country that calls itself tolerant, but racism, discrimination and exclusion are still taking place far too often. In daily life, in education, in prejudices, in who we see as Dutch and how we interact with each other."

His call for action is practical: become a member of an organisation, start a reading group, donate money to grassroots initiatives. But perhaps the most important one: "It all begins with you." Which unconscious biases do you have?



To **Kjelld Masoud Kroon** it is all about one thing in the end: community. He was born in the Netherlands, but raised on Bonaire in the Caribbean. He worked as community organiser with programmes about anti-racism, the impact of the history of slavery and to empower communities. "As a result of the trans-Atlantic slave trade and the colonial past, many local communities are broken and deformed." Working in and on communities is a crucial part of the collective healing process, according to Kjelld Masoud Kroon. For example, by involving young people on Bonaire in running the island in the BIT Lab (Bonaire's Innovation and Technology Lab).

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OOSTCAST Slavery Monument Oosterpark is a collaboration between BUROBRAAK (concept, design), Beyond Walls (podcast) and Van Gisteren (editorial), commissioned by the City of Amsterdam, District East.

Gemeente Amsterdam BUROBRAAK BEYOND WALLS van gisteren