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In this newsletter we will look back on various recent events. These include the Caribbean ‘Catshuis sessions’, at which the six countries and islands of the Caribbean part of the Kingdom met in order to give follow-up to the discussions on the slavery past. We will reflect on the rehabilitation of Tula, which was postponed until the 4th of October because of a sudden tropical storm but was a very impressive ceremony the following day.

We will also look at the latest developments within the Slavery Past Programme, including the detailing of the memorial fund and the forthcoming dialogue sessions all over the country in the next few months, at the name-changing scheme that is currently the subject of an Internet consultation, and to the Catshuis session to be held in the Netherlands.

Looking back: Caribbean Catshuis session

On the 15th of June 2023, a Catshuis session was held at the Zuid-Holland provincial government building in The Hague to discuss the progress of the follow-up given to the apology. This was a significant opportunity to flesh out a number of key subjects with descendants and other stakeholders from the European Netherlands, the Caribbean part of the Kingdom and Suriname.

To ensure that this discussion was not limited to the European Netherlands, a Caribbean Catshuis session was organised on the 1st and 2nd of October 2023. This session was held on St. Maarten. The session was attended by a broad representation of government bodies, NGOs, stakeholder organisations and individuals from the six countries and islands (Curaçao, Aruba, St. Maarten, Bonaire, St. Eustatius and Saba). A range of key issues were discussed, with the programme focusing on the memorial committee, the memorial fund, archives, culture, oral history and education. Each of the countries and islands involved could explain their priorities, what challenges they are facing, and what they hope to achieve. The session provided insight into the joint progress made to date and brought the parties together. A priorities agenda for each country and island is currently being developed. The discussions and presentations produced valuable input towards the design of the memorial committee and the subsidy scheme for community initiatives.

The meeting took place in a constructive atmosphere. It marked an important step on the road to reconciliation, understanding and cooperation among the various parties.

Looking back: the Netherlands rehabilitates Curaçao freedom fighter Tula

“The Dutch government unreservedly acknowledges the justice of Tula’s fight, and that of others who resisted slavery, and looks back with regret and shame at the manner in which they were treated by our historical administrative predecessors. On this day, the 228th anniversary of his death, Tula is rehabilitated by the Dutch government.”

With these words, spoken by Alexandra van Huffelen, the State Secretary for Digitalisation and Kingdom Relations, the Curaçao freedom fighter Tula was formally rehabilitated posthumously by the Dutch government. Tula’s official

rehabilitation had been scheduled for the 3rd of October in the Parke Lucha pa Libertat on Curaçao. However, because of a tropical storm which suddenly developed, the ceremony took place at a covered location on the 4th of October. State Secretary Van Huffelen gave a speech in Willemstad, in which she looked back 'with pain and shame' at the role of the Netherlands in Tula's conviction and execution. As the State Secretary delivered the rehabilitation in Papiamentu, emotions in the auditorium were palpable. Her speech received loud applause. There was also much appreciation for the King's personal letter to the people of Curaçao, which was read out by Governor Lucille George-Wout. After the ceremony, a plaque bearing the formal text of the rehabilitation was unveiled. This happened on the spot where Tula and the other leaders of the revolt had been executed.

In order to foster acknowledgement and awareness of this part of history also in the European Netherlands, a memorable evening was organised on 3 October at the Korzo Theater in The Hague, in the presence of Hugo de Jonge, the Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations. On the 18th of August, the Korzo Theater also hosted the performance Biba Tula as a tribute to the freedom fighter. This performance was attended by the Ministers Plenipotentiary of Curaçao, Aruba and St. Maarten. At the start of the evening, there were speeches by Alderman Mariëlle Vavier of the Municipality of The Hague and by the Minister Plenipotentiary of Curaçao, Carlson A. Manuel. The Theater van Keti Koti told Tula's story in a special way, accompanied by music. After the performance, Minister Hugo de Jonge gave a speech during which he presented the plaque with the formal text of the rehabilitation to the Minister Plenipotentiary of Curaçao. The intention is that the plaque will travel around various municipalities in the Netherlands, where it will be a starting point for participation and dialogue about the slavery past.



Design of the memorial fund

Work is underway in the Caribbean part of the Kingdom, the Netherlands and Suriname on proposals about the subsidy scheme for community initiatives and policy reinforcements. Examples include DNA testing on Saba, the rehabilitation of Tula and the revision of the curriculum in primary and secondary education. The government has established that people in the Caribbean part of the Kingdom, the Netherlands and Suriname are working on these plans in different ways. There are also many different ideas. The government has made a total amount of €200 million available for fleshing out activities relating to the commemoration, impact and acknowledgement of the slavery past and for a scheme for community initiatives. The government believes that there should be unambiguous rules on the manner in which people can put forward ideas and apply for these funds, since the available money is limited to €200 million. For this reason, the government wants to issue clear-cut rules on how ideas can be developed.

These rules will be formulated in consultation with descendants, social groups and other stakeholders in the country, but what matters is that the community of people with African roots in the Netherlands, the Caribbean part of the Kingdom and Suriname take centre stage. We want to discuss what kind of projects are eligible for funding, what parties can make an application, but also how we can ensure that the scheme for community initiatives is easily accessible.

The government has also looked at the distribution of the money, aiming for a balanced distribution between the Caribbean part of the Kingdom, the Netherlands and Suriname. The proposal is to divide the money into three equal portions: one for the Caribbean part of the Kingdom, one for the Netherlands and one for Suriname.

On the 1st and 2nd of October, the State Secretary for Digitalisation and Kingdom

Relations spoke with representatives of social organisations and government bodies on St. Maarten about the proposals and the distribution of the funds. In the coming period, the government will further discuss this important aspect in the Netherlands and Suriname.

Design for and with Suriname

From the 9th to the 13th of October, Frederique de Man, the Special Envoy for the Slavery Past, paid a meaningful visit to Suriname. Various important themes were raised in a series of open and productive discussions, such as the healing process, representation, the allocation of financial resources, and the development of a Slavery Past Platform. Frederique de Man spoke with a highly diverse group of discussion partners, including the National Coordinator, heads and members of national committees engaged in the commemoration and reparation of the slavery past, descendants' organisations, representatives of the Marron and Native communities, and delegates from various social and cultural organisations focusing on sustainable development.

Dialogue sessions on Slavery Past - update

In earlier newsletters, we announced that a series of dialogue sessions would be held in the European Netherlands in the autumn of 2023. These sessions are organised in order to give descendants and other interested parties the opportunity to provide their input in the creation of the memorial committee and the subsidy scheme for community initiatives.

Preparations for the dialogue sessions are well underway. Together with the TrueTalk team introduced in the previous newsletter, we have selected a number of locations where the dialogue sessions will be held. In doing so, the team never works alone but checks the plans with its (own) wider network. We identified the locations mindful of the importance of visiting all the regions. We have contacted local organisations that will host the dialogue sessions, with support from consultants of organisers TrueTalk. The local organisations will assist in reaching out to people and facilitating the discussions, because they know their region like no other. The dialogue sessions will comprise both one-to-one discussions and group discussions, so as to obtain the best possible information that will help us answer the following questions:

- How should the Kingdom commemorate the slavery past? What tasks would you assign to the Memorial Committee? What kind of individuals should be a part of the committee?
- Which initiatives in your community deserve to be supported or strengthened?

The calendar of dates and locations is published on [Dialogsessies Slavernijverleden - TrueTalk](#). For more information, please send an email to dialogsessies@truetalk.nl.

Looking ahead: Catshuis session Netherlands

Soon we will organise another meeting in the Netherlands, as already announced in the progress letter of the 23rd of June. During this Catshuis session, we will talk about the results produced by the dialogue sessions in the Netherlands and the Caribbean Catshuis session, and about the information gathered by the Special Envoy in Suriname from social organisations and government bodies.

As on the previous occasion, invitees will include stakeholders both from the European Netherlands and from the Caribbean part of the Kingdom and Suriname. We will ask the islands and countries to select two delegates per island or country for this meeting: one person representing the social organisations and another person attending on behalf of the local government.

The invitations will be sent out in the coming month.

Internet consultation on changes of name by descendants of enslaved people

The 9th of October saw the launch of the Internet [consultation Naamswijziging nazaten van tot slaaf gemaakten](#) ('Changes of name by descendants of enslaved people'). This consultation involves a proposal for new rules on surname changes. The Ministry of Justice and Security would like to know your views on the proposal.

Do you think that it offers sufficient change options?

Content of proposal under consideration

The rules are intended for adult individuals (18+) who wish to change their names because they bear the name of an ancestor who was enslaved in the colonial past. This name was not a choice but was usually imposed on the ancestor. In many cases, this name is related to the (former) slaveholder or the plantation where the ancestor worked.

Persons wishing to make use of this scheme will not need to prove that the name originates from an ancestor who was enslaved in the colonial past. A (written) declaration that this is the case will be sufficient. By means of this proposal, the government wants to help foster social recovery and address the consequences of the Dutch slavery past. In these cases, the change of name will be free of charge. There is no certainty at present how long this will remain so. Whether the fee waiver is permanent will be considered after three years at most.

A name that is linked to the slavery past can be changed in various ways. The following options are available:

- change a number of letters in the current name;
- add a prefix or suffix;
- choose an entirely different surname. This can be a surname which:
 - a. belongs to a parent or ancestor, or
 - b. does not yet occur in the Netherlands.

A person cannot change their name by adding a name to their current surname.

Slavery Past Memorial Year

The government is supporting social initiatives within and outside the Kingdom during the Slavery Past Memorial Year. To this end, two subsidy schemes were opened last year at the Mondriaan Fund and Fund for Cultural Participation (Fonds voor Cultuurparticipatie). After the initially available €2 million was strongly oversubscribed, the government decided to increase this amount to €6 million. The Fund for Cultural Participation has also made an additional €1.2 million available. The Fund for Cultural Participation has reserved €0.8 million specifically for the Caribbean part of the Kingdom and will assign a guide to each island. This guide can assist in making and submitting a subsidy application.

Anyone in the Kingdom who wants to organize an activity in the Slavery Past Memorial Year can apply for a subsidy. The assessment committee of The Fund for Cultural Participation evaluates the applications. This committee has knowledge of the slavery past and the involved communities. In the upcoming newsletter we will be highlighting some of the social initiatives to which subsidies have been granted.

The scope of the Slavery Past Memorial Year is broader than the scope of the fund (€200 million)

The government believes it is important that the Slavery Past Memorial Year, which is for the entirety of the Kingdom, sheds light on the history of the slavery past and narratives closely connected to it. The starting point of the year is the Transatlantic slavery past. At the same time, we also want to provide space and opportunity for perspectives related to slavery in Asia and contract laborers and allow their (hi)stories to be told. The fund of €200 million that was made available by the government in response to the report of the Slavery Past Dialogue Group has only the Transatlantic slavery as its scope, with a focus on Suriname and the Kingdom.

Working visits during the Slavery Past Memorial Year

During the Memorial Year, all the members of the cabinet will pay working visits to various commemoration events, celebrations, exhibitions, theatrical performances and community initiatives, either in the Netherlands or in the Caribbean part of the Kingdom. The government does this in order to endorse the significance of the slavery past and its impact, and to keep drawing attention to the subject. Thus, Prime Minister Mark Rutte and State Secretary Gunay Uslu attended the play *Ik zeg toch sorry* ('I said sorry, didn't I') two weeks ago. This is a play about the slavery past which exposes the poignancy of the social divide.

At the end of September, State Secretary Alexandra van Huffelen visited the exhibition *Voortschrijdend Inzicht* ('Evolving insight') in Breda. Here she talked with a number of members of the Breda Foundation for Commemorating the Abolition of Slavery (HASB), who had expressed the wish to realise an artwork to commemorate

the abolition of slavery. She also spoke with two of the six artists who had been asked to present a vision of this artwork, which had resulted in the exhibition *Voortschrijdend Inzicht*.

The other cabinet members' working visits are currently at the planning stage. Therefore, we are asking you: if you know of any inspiring exhibitions, significant dates, or other special initiatives, please let us know by sending an email to pdr@minocw.nl. We will then check whether it is possible to invite a cabinet member.



Looking back: State visit to South Africa

King Willem-Alexander and Queen Máxima paid a state visit to South Africa on the invitation of Cyril Ramaphosa, President of the Republic of South Africa. The state visit was all about good relations and an equal partnership between the two countries. In the context of the slavery past, the royal couple visited the Freedom Park in the capital Pretoria. There they walked past a 700-metre-long wall bearing the names of the people who had lost their lives in the fight against apartheid and slavery. They also visited the Slave Lodge Museum in Cape Town. The Slave Lodge was built in 1679 and was used until 1811 to accommodate enslaved people. The building now houses the Slave Lodge Museum, which tells visitors about the history of slavery in South Africa. At the museum, King Willem-Alexander and Queen Máxima reflected on the shared past. During the visit they saw and listened to various performances that brought the history of slavery to life through poetry, music and dance.



Conclusion

If there is any particular subject which you would like to see addressed in this newsletter or which you would like to discuss with us, please let us know. You can contact us via: PostbusProgrammaSlavernijverleden@minbzk.nl