A new feeling of unity: decolonial Black Power in the Dutch Atlantic (1968-1973)

Vlugt, D.E. de

A NEW FEELING OF UNITY

Decolonial Black Power in the Dutch Atlantic (1968-1973)

DEBBY ESMEÉ DE VLUGT

A NEW FEELING OF UNITY

Decolonial Black Power in the Dutch Atlantic (1968-1973)

Proefschrift

ter verkrijging van
de graad van doctor aan de Universiteit Leiden,
op gezag van rector magnificus prof.dr.ir. H. Bijl,
volgens besluit van het college voor promoties
ter verdediging op woensdag 8 mei 2024
klokke 16.15 uur

door
Debby Esmeé de Vlugt
geboren te Harderwijk
in 1994

Promotores:	Prof. dr. D.A. Pargas
	Prof. dr. G.P. Scott-Smith
Copromotor:	Dr. P.J.J. Meel
Promotiecommissie:	Prof. dr. G.J. Oostindie
	Prof. dr. M.L.J.C. Schrover
	Prof. dr. R.M.A.L. Höfte (University of Amsterdam)
	Dr. K. Quinn (University College London)
	Dr. Maarten Zwiers (University of Groningen)

This research was funded by the Roosevelt Institute for American Studies (RIAS) in Middelburg, the Netherlands

Roosevelt Institute for American Studies

Cover Image
Protest in Amsterdam on 6 April 1968 following the death of Martin Luther King, Jr.

Photo collection Elsevier, Nationaal Archief, the Hague, the Netherlands.
Original file: http://hdl.handle.net/10648/ae1ab7ae-d0b4-102d-bcf8-003048976d84

A previous version of Chapter 3 was published in the *Journal of American Studies* under https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021875823000427.

A NEW FEELING OF UNITY

Decolonial Black Power in the Dutch Atlantic (1968-1973)

Debby Esmeé de Vlugt

Contents

Introduction

It was late in the evening of Thursday 4 April 1968 when a devastating message reached the Netherlands: American Civil Rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr. had been fatally shot at the Lorraine Motel in Memphis, Tennessee. The news hit hard. For many years, Dutch citizens had followed King's campaign for racial equality with deep admiration. Media outlets of all kinds had circulated his persuasive speeches and reported on his bold protests and political accomplishments. Some had even met King in person during his travels to the Dutch capital, first in 1964 to speak at the congress of the European Baptist Federation and again in 1965 to receive an honorary doctorate from the Free University of Amsterdam.[1] Support for the reverend was so widespread, in fact, that it crossed countless social, cultural, religious, and even geographical boundaries, reaching not only the Netherlands but also its overseas territories, which at the time consisted of Suriname and the Netherlands Antilles. It was no surprise, then, that the news of his assassination swept over the Kingdom like a crashing wave, spreading a profound feeling of loss and reverence.

The ensuing weekend was filled with collective grief and commemoration. Stories about King's life appeared all over the media, dominating newspapers, radio programs, and television shows alike. In the Netherlands, Queen Juliana and Prime Minister Piet de Jong offered their condolences to the King family and President Lyndon B. Johnson.[2] Over a thousand Dutch citizens followed suit, visiting the US embassy in the Hague to sign a book of condolence to be offered to his next of kin on their behalf.[3] In the Netherlands Antilles, Governor Nicolaas 'Cola' Debrot sent a telegram to the US Consul General to share his sympathies on behalf of the islands. Antillean Prime Minister Ciro D. Kroon and Minister Plenipotentiary Efraïn Jonckheer

[1] See for example "Martin Luther King in Politieke Rede," *Algemeen Handelsblad,* August 17, 1964, 3; "Eredoctoraat voor King," *Algemeen Dagblad*, July 21, 1965, 7.

[2] "Telegram van Koningin," *Algemeen Handelsblad*, April 5, 1968, 1; "Koningin Juliana Condoleert Weduwe van Dominee King," *Leeuwarder Courant*, April 5, 1968, 3; "Demonstratieve Optocht," *Algemeen Dagblad*, April 6, 1968, 13.

[3] "Ds. King in Hele Land Herdacht," *Tubantia*, April 8, 1968, 8; "Nederland Herdenkt Ds. King," *Algemeen Handelsblad*, April 8, 1968, 2.

concurred.[4] Though the Prime Minister of Suriname, Johan A. Pengel, did not follow their example, he did make an appearance on national television to announce the construction of a statue in honor of the late reverend, meant to serve as an inspiration to those who fought against racial discrimination in Suriname.[5] On the ground, churches and other associations organized countless memorial services and silent processions to reflect on King's life, bringing together tens of thousands across the empire.[6]

Yet, not everyone wished to express their sorrows quietly. Especially in the city of Amsterdam, the death of the Civil Rights leader also led to an eruption of outrage. Spread over five separate demonstrations from Friday afternoon to Sunday night, thousands of protesters used the occasion of King's death to call attention to African American inequality and to express their anger with yet another racially motivated murder.[7] Side by side, students, communists, anticolonial activists, and anti-war advocates marched through the streets, singing 'We Shall Overcome', holding portraits of King, and calling for direct action.[8] Much like the American protesters who rose up in urban centers on the other side of the Atlantic that weekend, the marchers accused the US government of being responsible for King's assassination, crying "CIA murderers" and holding banners with the words "America, this was your last chance,

[4] "Meeleven Gouverneur Overlijden Ds King," *Amigoe di Curaçao*, April 6, 1968, 3; "Minister E. Jonckheer Betreurt Dood Ds King," *Amigoe di Curaçao*, April 6, 1968, 1; Cover, *Amigoe di Curaçao*, April 10, 1968, 1.

[5] "Suriname Richt Beeld op voor Dominee King," *Amigoe di Curaçao*, April 10, 1968, 7; "Paramaribo Krijgt Standbeeld van Dr. Martin Luther King," *Nederlands Dagblad,* April 26, 1968, 1.

[6] "Nederland Leeft Mee," *Algemeen Dagblad*, April 6, 1968; "Nederlandse Kerken over Moord op King," *Tubantia*, April 6, 1968, 6; "Ons Land Herdenkt King," *De Tijd*, April 6, 1968, 3; "Ook Vandaag en Morgen Nog Vele Herdenkingen," *Trouw*, April 8, 1968, 1; "Ds. King in Hele Land Herdacht," 8; "Oecumenische Dienst voor Dr King," *Amigoe di Curaçao*, April 6, 1968, 2; "Deelneming aan Amerikaanse Volk," *Amigoe di Curaçao*, April 8, 1968, 5.

[7] "Demonstratieve Optocht," *Algemeen Dagblad*, April 6, 1968, 13; "Stille Mars voor King," *De Telegraaf*, April 6, 1968, 7; "Honderden Jongeren Demonstreerden," *De Waarheid,* April 6, 1968, 1"; "Stille Tocht in Amsterdam," *Het Vrije Volk,* April 6, 1968, 1; "Ons Land Herdenkt King," *De Tijd*, April 6, 1968, 3; "Stille Tocht voor King," *Algemeen Handelsblad*, April 6, 1968, 3; "Dr. King Herdacht in Stille Tochten te Amsterdam," *Nieuwsblad van het Noorden*, April 6, 1968, 2; "Nederland Herdenkt Ds. King," 2; "Grote Betoging van Solidariteit," *De Waarheid*, April 8, 1968, 1; "Ds. King in Hele Land Herdacht," *Tubantia*, April 8, 1968, 8; "Vijf Herdenkingen in Amsterdam," *Algemeen Dagblad*, April 8, 1968, 7.

[8] "Stille Mars voor King," 7; "Honderden Jongeren Demonstreerden," 1; "Nederland Herdenkt Ds. King," 2; "Grote Betoging van Solidariteit," 1; "Nederland Herdenkt Ds. King," 2.

this is war you declare to [*sic*] us."[9] Some even seized the moment to promote the ideas of Stokely Carmichael (later Kwame Ture), who had rejected King's nonviolence to promote more radical forms of resistance. "King is dead, Stokely lives!" some shouted, while others held signs that said: "Pacifism is suicide. Black Power attack now!"[10]

In the Dutch Atlantic, as was the case elsewhere, Carmichael had recently become the face of the Black Power movement, which had emerged in the United States in the late 1950s and had since grown into one of the largest antiracist movements in the world.[11] Typically portrayed as the militant counterpart to the nonviolent Civil Rights movement, the aim of the Black Power movement was to protect, empower, and unite those racialized as Black in societies shaped by centuries of racial oppression and exploitation. Though Carmichael had not been involved in the movement in its earliest stages, when Malcolm X had been its best-known leader, he had been a driving force behind its ideological development and expansion. In the summer of 1966, Carmichael had called for Black Power at the March Against Fear in Greenwood, Mississippi, as chairman of the radicalizing Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC).[12] The phrase caught on and, within a matter of months, helped the movement spread its message even further than before.

That first weekend of April 1968 was the first time Black Power was endorsed on such a scale anywhere in the Dutch realm. With that, it marked the beginning of a

---

[9] "Herdenking Martin Luther King (1968)," *Nederlands Instituut voor Beeld en Geluid,* April 4, 2014, accessed via YouTube, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KuHp7JDmdNc&t=53s; "Honderden Jongeren Demonstreerden," 1; "Nederland Herdenkt Ds. King," 2; "Grote Betoging van Solidariteit," 1. All translations from Dutch and Papiamentu to English in this dissertation are the author's own.

[10] "Stoet van Honderden Amsterdammers ter Herdenking voor Martin Luther King Trekt Door Amsterdam," April 6, 1968, Fotocollectie Elsevier, collection nr. 2.24.05.02, inventory nr. 083-0380, Nationaal Archief, The Hague, Netherlands; "Honderden Jongeren Demonstreerden," 1; "Herdenkingstochten na de Dood van Ds. King," 5; "Nederland Herdenkt Ds. King," 2; "Vijf Herdenkingen in Amsterdam," 7; "Grote Betoging van Solidariteit," 1.

[11] This dissertation ascribes to the periodization of the 'long Black Power movement' as defined by Peniel E. Joseph in *The Black Power Movement: Rethinking the Civil Rights – Black Power Era* (New York: Routledge, 2006) and by Yohuru R. Williams in *Rethinking the Black Freedom Movement* (New York: Routledge, 2016). These scholars have shown that the Black Power movement did not replace but coexisted and was often intertwined with the Civil Rights movement as part of the greater Black Freedom Struggle.

[12] Stokely Carmichael and Ekwueme M. Thelwell, *Ready for Revolution: The Life and Struggles of Stokely Carmichael (Kwame Ture)* (New York: Scribner, 2003), 507-508; Joseph, *The Black Power Movement,* 1-2; "Introduction," *Black Power Encyclopedia: From "Black is Beautiful" to Urban Uprisings,* ed. Akinyele Umoja, Karin L. Stanford, and Jasmin A. Young (Santa Barbara: Greenwood, 2018), xi.

new period of antiracist activism in the region. After the King protests, calls for Black Power sprung up around the Netherlands and the Dutch Caribbean, underscoring not only the need for solidarity with the African American movement but also the need to challenge racial discrimination at home. Drawing similarities between the Black experience in the United States and the Kingdom of the Netherlands, such efforts eventually led to the establishment of four self-proclaimed Black Power groups in the region: the Black Panthers of Curaçao, Antillean Black Power, the Dutch Black Panther Solidarity Committee, and Black Power Suriname, which shortly after its formation changed its name to Afro-Sranan. Between 1968 and 1973, these groups collectively formed a small but unmistakable Dutch Atlantic branch of the movement.

As the first in-depth study of Black Power in the Dutch Atlantic, this dissertation seeks to answer the following research question: Why and how did activists in the Kingdom of the Netherlands align with the Black Power movement? Taking into consideration both the local and global contexts in which these groups emerged, it argues that Dutch and Dutch Caribbean activists joined the movement because it offered them a new model for decolonization. Black Power, which was internationalist at its core, conveyed that Black solidarity and cooperation were critical tools in the global fight against racism and imperialism. Using the African diaspora as its foundation, the movement called for racialized peoples everywhere to join hands in their shared struggle against these evils to form a powerful united front. It provided, in the words of Carmichael, "a new feeling of unity – which is essential to our worldwide Black revolution."[13] This approach to Black Power was not universal but did become popular in many parts of the colonized world. This dissertation will refer to this understanding of the movement as Decolonial Black Power.

Within the specific context of the Dutch Atlantic, Decolonial Black Power enabled activists to challenge the persistence of Dutch imperialism in new ways. Since the mid-twentieth century, the Netherlands Antilles and Suriname had existed in the shadows of the 1954 Charter for the Kingdom of the Netherlands, which had granted them domestic autonomy but had prevented them from becoming independent states. Aside from that, Dutch and Dutch-descended elites had kept much of their power in

[13] Letter by Stokely Carmichael in *African Congress: A Documentary of the First Modern Pan-African Congress*, ed. Imamu Amiri Baraka (New York: William Morrow & Company, 1972), 57-58.

the Caribbean, dominating political systems, social orders, cultural hierarchies, and economic spheres. The Black Power movement helped local activists navigate this awkward position as neither independent nor subordinate, as well as other colonial hierarchies in society, offering them an internationalist model for independence that could make their ties to the Netherlands obsolete and, with that, finish what has previously been described as a 'stagnated decolonization'.[14]

While such an approach to Black Power was not unusual in the Black Power movement, it did place these groups into a unique position within the anticolonial movements of the Dutch Atlantic. These movements, which existed separately in Suriname and the Netherlands Antilles, emerged after World War II to address the limitations of the 1954 Charter and to push for a stronger sense of nationalism in the Caribbean parts of the Kingdom. The most prominent voices in these movements were the Surinamese association Wie Eegie Sanie ('Our Own Things') and Antillean literary movement *di-nos-e-ta* ('this is ours'), which offered Afrocentric narratives of cultural ownership and entitlement in pursuit of new identities and independent states. Though local Black Power groups often operated in the same spaces as these movements and shared their dedication to reviving African heritage, their internationalist models for liberation separated them from their nationalist counterparts. Rather than looking inward for their freedom, they looked outward, hoping to become part of something bigger than themselves.

Black Power in Transnational Perspective

To fully appreciate the motivations and efforts of these groups, it is essential to position them in the broader context of both the transnational Black Power movement and the Dutch Atlantic. The purpose of this first section is to do the former, discussing the most relevant historical and historiographical developments that have shaped the study of the movement to date. As mentioned earlier on, the Black Power movement first arose in the United States during the 1950s to challenge systemic racism through a platform of radical, at times even militant, protest. Not unlike other social movements, Black Power spanned a diverse network of activists, organizations, and

[14] Gert Oostindie discusses the use of this term in *Het Paradijs Overzee: De 'Nederlandse' Caraïben en Nederland*, 3rd edition (Leiden: KITLV Uitgeverij, 2000), 173, 182.

coalitions, all with different approaches to racial empowerment. In general, historians have identified three key objectives that bound Black Power advocates together: the need for Black self-determination (rather than integration), self-defense (rather than nonviolence), and self-respect.[15] Although these objectives made Black Power distinguishable from several other contemporary moments, they were not new. Rather, they were deeply rooted in the intellectual tradition of Black nationalism, which asserts that people of African descent have to construct and inhabit a completely autonomous nation away from White domination to reach their full potential as a people and liberate themselves from the legacies of African enslavement and displacement.[16]

In line with the overall diversity of Black Power activism, leadership of the movement was spread out over several organizations. Some of the most formative leaders of the movement were Nation of Islam (NOI) spokesman Malcolm X and Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM) chairman Robert F. Williams, whose endorsements of armed self-defense had inspired a large wave of radical activism in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Their work paved the way for a new generation of Black revolutionaries to arise in the mid-1960s, including Black Arts Movement (BAM) leader Amiri Baraka (formerly LeRoi Jones), Black Panther Party (BPP) founders Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale, and, as mentioned before, Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) chairman Stokely Carmichael (later Kwame Ture). Still others, such as Communist Party member Angela Y. Davis, became part of the movement without any formal affiliations to such groups. While all of these activists shared a dedication to the fundamental principles of Black Power, their specific ideas and methods varied widely, sometimes leading to clashes within the movement itself.

---

[15] For the three shared principles, see: William L. Van Deburg, *New Day in Babylon: The Black Power Movement and American Culture, 1965-1975* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 2; Jeffrey O.G. Ogbar, *Black Power: Radical Politics and African American Identity*, 2nd ed. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2019), 2; Joseph, *The Black Power Movement*, 2-3; "Introduction," *Black Power Encyclopedia*, xi.

[16] This definition of Black nationalism is sometimes considered liberal, as it goes beyond nationalism as a form of territorial nation-building. However, as Robinson E. Dean has argued in *Black Nationalism in American Politics and Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001), 6: "there is no "essential" black nationalist tradition, despite similarities; the positions of nationalists of different eras have diverged because their nationalisms have been products of partly similar but largely unique eras of politics, thought, and culture." The definition used in this dissertation is chosen because it covers the definition of Black nationalism that was most common in the Black Power era. See Alphonso Pinkney, *Red, Black, and Green* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1976) 1-7; Ogbar, 3; Van Deburg, 25-26.

This was especially the case for those who adhered to different forms of Black nationalism, especially cultural nationalism, which prioritized cultural consciousness and pride, and revolutionary nationalism, which prioritized direct political action in line with a Marxist model of resistance.

Although the most renowned leaders of the movement were based in the United States, various scholars have demonstrated that the history of Black Power was by no means confined to American borders. From its inception to its ultimate decline in the 1970s, the movement built on and developed into a complex system of transnational exchange that connected African Americans to like-minded people elsewhere in the African diaspora and, beyond that, the so-called 'Third World'.[17] These circulations took place through human travel and migration, but also through intellectual exchange, media coverage, and interorganizational collaborations, just to name a few examples. Such transnational circuits allowed Black Power leaders to draw inspiration from the revolutionary movements that had swept over Africa, Asia, and the Americas in previous years. Reading the writings of the intellectual architects of these movements, including Kwame Nkrumah, Mao Zedong, Che Guevara, and Frantz Fanon, Black Americans began to better understand how their experiences in the United States were shaped by deeper global systems of oppression, which in turn allowed them to reinvent themselves as not just antiracist, but anti-imperialist and in many cases anti-capitalist as well.[18]

As Black Power activists built upon the ideas of radical thinkers elsewhere in the world, they themselves reached more foreign audiences after two critical events

[17] Despite the contested nature of the term 'Third World', it will be used in this dissertation to place the Black Power movement into the relevant historical context. Within the 'Three Worlds' model of the Cold War, the West was seen as the First World, the Soviet Union and its partners as the Second World, and the remainder of the countries – mostly (former) colonized countries in South America, Africa, and Asia – as the Third World. While this terminology grouped together an extremely diverse variety of countries that had little in common besides their 'otherness' from the first two and clearly placed them at the bottom of the global hierarchy, many revolutionaries in the Third World proudly claimed the term in the 1960s and 1970s to find common ground among the many oppressed nations of the world. As such, 'Third Worldism' became a source of strength and solidarity in these countries' shared fight against imperialism. Its use in this dissertation should be read within that context.

[18] Yohuru R. Williams, "American-Exported Black Nationalism: The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, the Black Panther Party, and the Worldwide Freedom Struggle, 1967-1972," *Negro History Bulletin* 60 (July-September 1997): 13; Brenda Gayle Plummer, *In Search of Power: African Americans in the Era of Decolonization, 1956-1974* (New York: Cambridge UP, 2010), 212; Rychetta Watkins, *Black Power, Yellow Power, and the Making of Revolutionary Identities* (Jackson: UP of Mississippi, 2010); Robin D.G. Kelley and Betty Esch, "Black Like Mao: Red China and Black Revolution," in *Afro Asia: Revolutionary Political & Cultural Connections Between African Americans & Asian Americans*, eds. Fred Ho and Bill V. Mullen (Duke UP, 2008), 97-154.

in 1968: the King assassination protests mentioned earlier, and Tommie C. Smith and John W. Carlos' Black Power salute at the Olympic Games in Mexico. While both incidents were highly controversial in the United States, they generated tremendous interest in the movement abroad, spurred by mainstream media reports and activist networks alike. Over the following years, these channels helped Black Power advocates inspire thousands of activists around the world to join the movement as members, partners, and supporters, especially – but not exclusively – in what Paul Gilroy has called the Black Atlantic.[19] While some of these groups were connected to the movement by imitation only, others became actively involved in its networks, political spaces, and cultural institutions. By the time the movement reached its peak in the late 1960s and early 1970s, it had become fully global in scope.

Scholars have long been interested in the transnational histories of the Black Power movement, starting when the movement itself was still in its infancy. "Looking outward for a way forward at home," Black Power historiographer Peniel E. Joseph writes in his exploratory survey of the field, some of the earliest studies of the movement used the internationalist rhetoric of the Cold War to position African American radicalism into the broader framework of Third World liberation.[20] A particularly strong contribution at this stage was Locksley Edmondson's "The Internationalization of Black Power" in *Mawazo* (1968), which argued that Black Power provided a way for African Americans to reclaim their space among Caribbeans and Africans in a "world from which they ha[d] been removed physically and spiritually."[21] A similar argument was made by James Forman in *The Black Experience in American Politics* (1973), edited by Charles V. Hamilton. In his chapter "The Concept of International Black Power," Forman explained that the very nature of African America as a displaced community necessitated an international approach to Black

[19] Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1993).

[20] For an overview of these debates, see Peniel E. Joseph, "Black Liberation Without Apology: Reconceptualizing the Black Power Movement," *The Black Scholar* 31.3 (2001): 3-4.

[21] Locksley Edmondson, "The Internationalization of Black Power: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives," *Mawazo* 1.4 (December 1968), reprinted in *Black Separatism and Social Reality: Rhetoric and Reason*, ed. Raymond L. Hall (Elmsford: Pergamon Press, 1974), 183.

liberation.[22] While these scholars, most of whom were social scientists, recognized the influence of foreign movements on Black Power, however, they rarely acknowledged the movement's own influence outside the United States.

Although interest in these themes never disappeared completely, the dominant narrative of Black Power soon after shifted inwards. Concentrating almost exclusively on domestic Black Power efforts, early historians writing about the movement in the 1980s and 1990s mostly kept their analysis limited to the United States and, in most instances, specific areas within the country.[23] Characteristic of this period was *New Day in Babylon: The Black Power Movement and American Culture, 1965-1975* (1992) by William L. Van Deburg, often recognized as the first comprehensive study of Black Power and long seen as a standard reference work on the movement. Concentrating on the cultural implications of Black Power, Van Deburg framed the movement as a celebration of "the uniqueness of African-American life" constructed from a "distinctive African-American worldview and way of being."[24] In contrast to the first wave of Black Power scholarship, he thus rejected the idea that Black Power needed to be understood as a Third World project, framing it instead as quintessentially American. Others working on Black Power at the time seem to have followed this line of thinking, commonly arguing that Black Power was a unique product of urban activism in the northern and western United States.

This changed significantly with the transnational turn at the end of the twentieth century. Though there had always been room for internationalist methodologies in Black studies, as Robin D.G. Kelley has emphasized in "But a Local Phase of a World Problem" (1999), the transnational turn did revive academic interest in the cross-border histories of the Black Power movement.[25] As a result, publications on individual Black Power advocates' ties to foreign governments and liberation

---

[22] James Forman, "The Concept of International Black Power," in *The Black Experience in American Politics,* ed. Charles Hamilton (New York: Capricorn Books, 1973), 145-54.

[23] For an analysis of Black Power historiography in this period, see Peniel E. Joseph, "Black Liberation Without Apology*,"* (2001) and the introduction to his later *The Black Power Movement: Rethinking the Civil Rights – Black Power Era* (2006).

[24] Van Deburg, cover.

[25] Robin D.G. Kelley, "'But a Local Phase of a World Problem': Black History's Global Vision, 1883-1950," *Journal of American History* 86.3 (1999): 1045-1077.

movements skyrocketed in the late 1990s, with some of the most acclaimed examples including Timothy B. Tyson's *Radio Free Dixie: Robert F. Williams and the Roots of Black Power* (1999) and Komozi Woodard's *A Nation Within a Nation: Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones) and Black Power Politics* (1999).[26] These books began to pay closer attention to the interactions between Black Power advocates in the United States and their allies abroad, which often proved to be equally as promising as they were precarious. Not only did these studies go beyond the domestic framework of the previous decades, but they also went further than their Cold War predecessors, exploring not just foreign influence on Black Power thinkers but also histories of reciprocal transnational exchange.

Over the following two decades, transnationalism became a key topic of interest within the field. An especially noteworthy contribution was made by Nico Slate in his edited volume *Black Power Beyond Borders: The Global Dimensions of the Black Power Movement* (2012).[27] In contrast to many of his contemporaries, who framed Black Power as an American movement connected to the world, Slate aimed to completely redefine the movement as a transnational phenomenon. He wrote:

> What might appear to be separation within a strictly American context was, on the global stage, a effort at integration – whether within the colored world, the African Diaspora, or the Third World. (…) Although too often portrayed as a force of division and fracture, Black Power offered new forms of unity and collaboration – not just for African Americans but for a range of oppressed people throughout the world.[28]

Other authors' contributions to the volume fit within this frame too, sharing the histories of several long neglected Black Power groups outside the United States, including in Israel, India, and New Zealand.[29] Positioned into their own local contexts,

---

[26] Timothy B. Tyson, *Radio Free Dixie: Robert F. Williams & The Roots of Black Power* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999); Komozi Woodard, *A Nation within a Nation: Amiri Bakara (LeRoi Jones) & Black Power Politics* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999). Other examples of transnational Black Power publications from this period include Williams, 13-20, and Michael L. Clemons and Charles E. Jones, "Global Solidarity: The Black Panther Party in the International Arena," *New Political Science* 21.1 (1999): 177-203.

[27] Nico Slate, *Black Power Beyond Borders: The Global Dimensions of the Black Power Movement,* ed. Nico Slate (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

[28] Slate, 3-4, 5.

[29] Oz Frankel, "The Black Panthers of Israel and the Politics of the Radical Analogy," in *Black Power Beyond Borders: The Global Dimensions of the Black Power Movement,* ed. Nico Slate (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 81-106; Robbie Shilliam, "The Polynesian Panthers and the Black Power Gang: Surviving Racism and Colonialism

these studies demonstrated how Black Power was continuously "interpreted and reinterpreted to suit local causes and changing conditions throughout the world," which in turn influenced how African American activists understood their own positions as an oppressed people within the United States and beyond.[30]

Caribbean Black Power

As the transnational turn expanded scholars' understandings of Black Power, so did it pave the way for a renewed interest in its Caribbean histories. From the late 1960s to the early 1970s, the region around the Caribbean Sea had witnessed some of the largest Black Power uprisings outside North America. Inspired by prominent intellectuals such as Walter A. Rodney as well as earlier Black Caribbean thinkers, thousands of local activists embraced the movement, believing it was capable of addressing their deepest grievances and supporting their most ambitious goals. Black Power became especially popular in the Anglophone Caribbean, where local adherents of the movement organized massive uprisings, the most notorious of which were the 1968 Rodney Riots in Jamaica and the 1970 February Revolution in Trinidad and Tobago. Emerging from already existing tensions of the region, these protests shook up the Caribbean in considerable ways.

Scholars have been writing about Caribbean Black Power ever since the movement first took root in the region. Starting in the early 1970s, geographers and political scientists such as David Lowenthal and William R. Lux began to analyze why Black Power became popular when it did, placing its radical ideas into broader debates on race and representation in the Caribbean.[31] Their work set the tone for the remainder of the twentieth century, where scholars such as Paul Sutton and David G. Nicholls further examined the uprisings mentioned above, while others such as Horace G. Campbell, Brian Meeks, and Rupert C. Lewis began to position Black Power into a

in Aotearoa New Zealand," in *Black Power Beyond Borders: The Global Dimensions of the Black Power Movement,* ed. Nico Slate (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 107-126; Nico Slate, "The Dalit Panthers: Race, Caste, and Black Power in India," in *Black Power Beyond Borders: The Global Dimensions of the Black Power Movement,* ed. Nico Slate (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 127-143.

[30] Slate, 4.

[31] David Lowenthal, "Black Power in the Caribbean Context," *Economic Geography* 48.1 (1972), 116-134; William R. Lux, "Black Power in the Caribbean," *Journal of Black Studies* 3.2 (1972), 207-225.

longer tradition of Caribbean radicalism.[32] In doing so, they have provided critical insights into the different roots and manifestations of the movement, though their exclusively Caribbean frameworks were arguably just as isolating as those of their American counterparts. By framing the regional movement as uniquely Caribbean, they failed to recognize the continuous exchanges that had shaped the movement as a whole, interpreting Black Power in the United States and Caribbean as parallel rather than interlinked.

One of the first historians to embrace a more entangled approach to Caribbean Black Power was Anthony Bogues in "Black Power, Decolonization, and Caribbean Politics: Walter Rodney and the Politics of *Groundings with My Brothers* (2009).[33] While still treating Caribbean and American Black Power as separate entities, Bogues argues that "the moment of Black Power was a global one configured by rebellions in the United States, the Caribbean, and Africa, and the emergence of forms of black consciousness."[34] Focusing primarily on Jamaica, he places Black Power in the Caribbean in conversation with the Third World as well as Commonwealth Caribbean, explaining that the movement "named a moment of rupture, the clearing of a new space in which politics began with radical speech in a language that overturned all previous political normativity."[35] While Bogues's article serves as an excellent case study for transnational Black Power in Jamaica, however, its disproportionate focus on that one state does limit its applicability to the broader region, home to a wider variety of (post)colonial systems and political affiliations.

A more inclusive analysis of the regional movement was first assembled by Kate Quinn several years later, resulting in *Black Power in the Caribbean* (2014).[36]

---

[32] See for example Paul Sutton, "Black Power in Trinidad and Tobago: The 'Crisis' of 1970," *Journal of Commonwealth & Comparative Politics* 21.2 (1983), 115-113; David G. Nicholls, "East Indians and Black Power in Trinidad," in *Haiti in Caribbean Context* (London: Macmillan, 1985), 61-80; Horace Campbell, *Rasta and Resistance: From Marcus Garvey to Walter Rodney* (New Jersey: African World Press, 1985); Brian Meeks, *Radical Caribbean from Black Power to Abu Bakr* (Barbados: University of the West Indies Press, 1996; Rupert C. Lewis, *Walter Rodney's Intellectual and Political Thought* (Barbados: University of the West Indies Press, 1998).

[33] Anthony Bogues "Black Power, Decolonization, and Caribbean Politics: Walter Rodney and the Politics of Groundings with My Brothers," *boundary* 2 (2009), 127–147.

[34] Bogues, "Black Power, Decolonization, and Caribbean Politics," 131.

[35] Bogues, "Black Power, Decolonization, and Caribbean Politics," 146.

[36] Kate Quinn, *Black Power in the Caribbean* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2014).

Observing that Black Power scholarship had been dominated by North American histories, Quinn states that the aim of this volume is twofold: first, "to give greater prominence to one axis of the black Atlantic triangle" and, second, "to shed light on the different sources and directions of global Black Power."[37] To achieve this, the volume includes case studies from eight different Caribbean territories, all but one Anglophone.[38] Emphasizing that "Caribbean Black Power was not a singular ideology but a heterogeneous movement that encompassed a range of convergent and divergent political positions and concerns," each chapter pays attention to the specific settings in which Black Power groups emerged.[39] Building upon the earlier literature described above, the volume positions the movement's efforts in the region within a distinctly Caribbean tradition, demonstrating that the movement was not simply imported from the United States but had deep roots in Caribbean society. As such, it convincingly shows how local traditions and conditions informed Black Power efforts outside the United States which, in turn, has expanded understandings of what Black Power meant in different parts of the world. In making this point, however, it does seem to reinforce the idea that Black Power in the US and the Caribbean were separate movements, rather than two sides of the same coin.

One recent study that captures the interconnected nature of the movement more successfully is Quito J. Swan's *Pauulu's Diaspora: Black Internationalism and Environmental Justice* (2020).[40] In many ways grown out of his earlier *Black Power in Bermuda: The Struggle of Decolonization* (2009), Swan traces the activism of Bermudan Black Power activist Pauulu Kamarakafego (formerly Roosevelt Browne) across national borders, continents, and even oceans.[41] By following this story, the author provides a unique insight into the entanglements of the movement, placing

[37] Quinn, 8.

[38] These are Jamaica (two chapters), Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados, Guyana (two chapters), Antigua and Barbuda, Bermuda, and the US Virgin Islands. The only exceptions were the Netherlands Antilles and Suriname, which will be discussed later on.

[39] Quinn, 26.

[40] Quito Swan, *Pauulu's Diaspora: Black Internationalism and Environmental Justice* (Gainesville: UP of Florida, 2020).

[41] Quito J. Swan, *Black Power in Bermuda: The Struggle for Decolonization* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

Karamakafego in conversation with a diverse range of Black Power advocates in the Americas, Africa, Europe, and the Pacific. Through this analysis, he calls for an analytical framework that not only surpasses but also decentralizes the United States, arguing that "the movement must be globally contextualized to holistically grapple with and understand its collective challenges, international criminalization, and aborted transformative possibilities (…) world-wide."[42] By following along Karamakafego's "globe-trotting activism," Swan makes a convincing case for such an approach, showing just how interconnected Black activism was in this period.[43]

While Caribbean Black Power studies have thus moved towards more transnational methodologies, many of the questions that shaped the field initially are still being asked. One of the most critical is how Black Power was interpreted in a region where understandings of race were so fundamentally different than in the United States. In most of the Caribbean, race was determined by complexion, not by the so-called 'one drop rule' that categorized anyone of African ancestry in the United States as Black. Additionally, the region was home to a variety of ethnic groups, many of whom experienced the same kinds of oppression as Afro-Caribbeans, including the descendants of indentured laborers from India and Southeast Asia.[44] Many scholars of the movement have engaged with this diversity through the work of Rodney, who defined Caribbean Black Power as the struggle of the Black masses against the political and cultural domination of imperialism, "which is historically white racist," and adopted a broad definition of Blackness that included non-White Caribbeans of all ethnicities.[45] Most, though not all Caribbean Black Power groups followed a similar line of thinking. As Quinn has argued, such an understanding of the movement clearly set Caribbean thinkers apart from their US counterparts.

Another question that has been central to the field is the relation between Black Power and decolonization. Despite varying degrees of autonomy and imperial ties across the Caribbean, all territories had been home to at least some level of

[42] Swan, *Pauulu's Diaspora*, 17.

[43] Swan, *Pauulu's Diaspora*, 20.

[44] A detailed discussion of these questions can be found in Quinn, 25-46.

[45] Walter Rodney, *The Groundings with my Brothers* (London: Bogle-L'Ouverture, 1969), 28.

anticolonial resistance over the twentieth century. Examining how Black Power fits into this longer history, multiple generations of scholars have argued that there were fundamental connections between the two. In some instances, they have even argued that Black Power became so deeply intertwined with decolonization that the two ended up being indistinguishable from each other, focusing in particular on two types of territories: those which had recently become independent and those which were still under direct colonial rule.

Without question, most have concentrated on the former. Looking at newly sovereign states like Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago, which had gained independence from Britain in 1962, historians such as Bogues and Quinn have argued that Black Power "represented the drive for a rupture between the colonial past and the *then* present of the independence movement."[46] The need for such a rupture had emerged from growing disappointment with the results of constitutional decolonization, which had granted the islands full autonomy but had failed to address the colonial legacies that persisted in any meaningful way. Black Power, in this context, became "a response to the failures of the existing political system to deliver substantive change and fulfill the expectations raised by the processes of decolonization and independence."[47] In a way, the Black Power movement promised to overcome those colonial remnants by standing up for the Black masses. As Bogues has explained, this made Black Power a "political banner under which segments of the society felt that full decolonization could be achieved. They demanded a radical break with colonial power."[48] Or, as Richard Drayton has framed it in his study of Barbados, Black Power came to form a bridge between primary decolonization – that is, the pursuit of constitutional independence, and secondary decolonization – that is, complete rejection of colonial systems and legacies.[49]

---

[46] Bogues, "Black Power, Decolonization, and Caribbean Politics," 132.

[47] Quote by Quinn, 32. Similar arguments are made in Plummer, *In Search of Power*, 11-12; Anthony Bogues, "Black Power, Decolonization, and Caribbean Politics," 130; Swan, *Black Power in Bermuda*, 5-6.

[48] Anthony Bogues, "The *Abeng* Newspaper and the Radical Politics of Postcolonial Blackness," in *Black Power in the Caribbean*, ed. Kate Quinn (Gainesville: UP of Florida, 2014), 89.

[49] Richard Drayton, "Secondary Decolonization: The Black Power Movement in Barbados, c. 1970," in *Black Power in the Caribbean*, ed. Kate Quinn (Gainesville: UP of Florida, 2014), 118-119.

In those territories that had not yet won their independence, Black Power and decolonization were even more intertwined. Writing about Antigua and Barbuda, the Virgin Islands, and Bermuda, several scholars have shown how independence from Britain and the United States became a key objective for Black Power activists.[50] In the case of Bermuda, some have even gone as far as to argue that Black Power itself was a form of decolonization.[51] In trying to avert the situation described above, where political independence had failed to accomplish tangible social, cultural, and economic change, Black Power presented an alternative path to liberation, simultaneously reaching for primary and secondary decolonization. This point was first made by Swan in *Black Power in Bermuda*, where he argues that in Bermuda "Black Power and anticolonialism were intricately connected. Indeed, a major aim of the Black Power Movement in Bermuda was political independence from Britain."[52] Yet, as he explains later on, it was not just political independence that motivated local activists to join the movement. It also "encouraged Black activists to embrace more international identities as opposed to narrow perceptions of nationalism."[53]

This idea was further explored by geographer Ben Gowland in "Narratives of Resistance and Decolonial Futures in the Politics of the Bermudian Black Power Movement" (2021), where he argues that Black Power became popular precisely because it offered an alternative to the traditional nationalist model. He writes:

> Independence (…) was envisioned in this Black Power imaginary as specifically *divergent* from the form taken in the post-colonial West Indies (…). This position generated a consistent focus on building transnational solidarities and operating in an internationalist framework with the understanding that national sovereignty alone was inadequate.[54]

---

[50] Paget Henry, "Black Power in the Political Thought of Antigua and Barbuda," in *Black Power in the Caribbean*, ed. Kate Quinn (Gainesville: UP of Florida, 2014), 184; Derick Hendricks, "Youth Responses to Discriminatory Practices: The Free Beach Movement, 1970-1975," in *Black Power in the Caribbean*, ed. Kate Quinn (Gainesville: UP of Florida, 2014), 224; Swan, *Black Power in Bermuda*, xxiii;

[51] Swan, *Black Power in Bermuda*, xxiii; Ben Gowland, "Narratives of Resistance and Decolonial Futures in the Politics of the Bermudian Black Power Movement," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 46 (2021): 866-881.

[52] Swan, *Black Power in Bermuda*, 1.

[53] Swan, *Black Power in Bermuda*, 5.

[54] Gowland, 870.

In other words, the movement offered a type of independence that centered transnational connections rather than self-reliance. As such, Gowland argues that Black Power, in this context, can be classified as an 'alternative decolonial future', providing a third option after imperialism and nationalism in the making of a postcolonial world.[55]

Since the 1970s, scholars have thus provided some useful models for analyzing Black Power in a number of environments. They have shown how the movement manifested itself in different settings and how it gained different meanings in that process. This has complicated and advanced the narrative of the movement, which can no longer be seen as an exclusively African American project. At the same time, the disproportionate focus on the English-speaking world, particularly the United States and Anglophone Caribbean, has left other parts of the world, including the French, Hispanic, and Dutch Caribbean, excluded from the narrative. Studies of Black Power in these areas could not only diversify understandings of Black Power in different geographical areas, but also in different political systems. The Dutch Caribbean, for example, were neither independent like Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago nor under direct colonial rule like Bermuda, but somewhere in between.

The Dutch Atlantic from Slavery to Autonomy

To determine what Black Power meant in this setting, it is imperative to take a step back and look at the Dutch Caribbean in the broader context of the Dutch Atlantic. The term Dutch Atlantic is used here to refer to the region connecting the Netherlands, Suriname, and the former Netherlands Antilles, which in turn bridged the islands of Aruba, Curaçao, Bonaire, St. Martin, St. Eustatius, and Saba. This was a region joined not by geographical proximity, but by political and cultural ties, grounded in a long history of Dutch colonialism. Important to note is that the term Dutch Atlantic is not

[55] Gowland, 869. Similar perspectives on Black Power also existed in the Pacific, as shown by Robbie Shilliam in *The Black Pacific: Anti-Colonial Struggles and Oceanic Connections* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015) and Tracey Banivanua Mar in *Decolonisation and the Pacific: Indigenous Globalisation and the Ends of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2016). Shilliam writes that, in this context, "Black Power expressed a communal demand for self-liberation that did not ask for the permission of the oppressor to be pursued," 47. Likewise, Banuvanua Mar argues that Black Power was one of several "subtle expressions of decolonization that expanded beyond the territorial confines of colonial and national borders" in Pacific revolutionary circles, offering activists "a new militant tone that was seeking other forms of decolonisation, independence and autonomy with a new and explicit race consciousness" (4, 186).

commonly used in relation to the twentieth century, despite being conventional in studies of the early modern period, especially in relation to transatlantic slavery and imperial expansionism.[56] It is used intentionally here to engage with the legacies of precisely these historical developments, which continue to shape the constituents of the region to this day. In doing so, this dissertation takes inspiration from both Kwame Nimako and Glenn Willemsen's *The Dutch Atlantic: Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation* (2011), which lays out the legacies of slavery and colonialism in the region, and Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (1993), which has theorized how these legacies created an interconnected Black heritage in the Atlantic more broadly, despite his analysis being limited to the Anglophone parts of the region.[57]

Though the Dutch Atlantic thus provides an important framework for this study, the intention of this dissertation is not to portray the Dutch Atlantic as a natural or homogenous region. Indeed, the constituents that made up the region in this period were separated by thousands of miles and spread over three different continents, connecting Europe to South America and the Caribbean Sea. Each of these have been shaped by distinct natural environments, historical processes, cultural traditions, demographic patterns, and so on, with the Netherlands Antilles further divisible into six unique islands. This dissertation does not intend to undermine this diversity by speaking of a 'Dutch Atlantic'. Rather, it serves to establish a foundation for analysis in which Black activism can be understood as counteractive to the constituents' shared history of Dutch exploration, settlement, enslavement, and exploitation, which bound the Caribbean territories to the Kingdom of the Netherlands. As Nimako and Willemsen have argued, this makes the Dutch Atlantic a place of parallel histories and intertwined belongings, where people "share the same space but have different experiences and memories."[58] Use of the term Dutch Atlantic thus does not suggest

[56] See for example Gert Oostindie and Jessica Roitman, *Dutch Atlantic Connections, 1680-1800: Linking Empires, Bridging Borders* (Leiden: Brill, 2014); Piet Emmer and Wim Klooster, "The Dutch Atlantic, 1600-1800: Expansion Without Empire," *Itinerario* 23.2 (1999): 48-69.

[57] Kwame Nimako and Glenn Willemsen, *The Dutch Atlantic: Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation* (London: Pluto Press, 2011); Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic* (1993). Another important study on these legacies is Allison Blakely, *Blacks in the Dutch World: The Evolution of Racial Imagery in a Modern Society* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1993).

[58] Nimako and Willemsen, 4.

that considerations of particular territories, islands, cities, and even neighborhoods, are irrelevant, as will be clarified later.

The history of Dutch colonialism in the Caribbean can be traced back as far as the sixteenth century, when representatives of the Dutch Republic first established trading posts and, later, permanent settlements in the West Indies and along the South American coast. Though Dutch presence in the Americas was never quite comparable to that of other European powers, especially Spain and Britain, its territory was widespread, including a variety of settlements in the Caribbean Sea and the Guianas. Depending on a range of factors, different settlements had different purposes, with the Antillean economies centered around commerce and trade, while colonial administrations in South America focused on the production of agricultural products and the extraction of natural resources. In both cases, the Dutch depended heavily on the forced labor of enslaved Africans for their profits and prestige. Additionally, the Netherlands played a significant role in the triangular trade, with companies such as the West India Company (WIC) transporting at least half a million enslaved Africans across the Atlantic.[59] In fact, the Dutch were so invested in slavery that the government did not abolish it until 1863, though even thereafter some were forced to keep working for their masters for another ten years as compensation for their 'lost property'.

After slavery was abolished, Dutch colonialism continued and, in some aspects, even intensified. Slavery itself was replaced with new forms of exploitation, such as the indentured labor system in Suriname, which brought thousands of workers from British India and the Dutch East Indies to Surinamese plantations to work under harsh conditions. In the meantime, new corporations from the Netherlands and the United States settled in the Caribbean, with industrial companies such as Royal Dutch Shell becoming powerful employers in places like Curaçao. Government institutions, too, underwent significant reforms, many of which aimed to strengthen rather than loosen Caribbean ties to the metropole. Believing that the formerly enslaved had to be 'civilized' to become good citizens, authorities imposed on them a culture of Dutch superiority, crystallizing the colonial hierarchy in both territories. This changed little when colonial administrations gained more responsibility through administrative

[59] For an in depth study of Dutch involvement in the transatlantic slave trade, see Johannes Postma, *The Dutch in the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1600–1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995).

reforms, as these commonly only benefitted local elites. Many of these elites descended from Dutch, Jewish, and other European settlers and had studied in the Netherlands, leading them to be more loyal to the Dutch than to the Caribbean communities in their direct environments.[60]

The result of this colonial project was a profoundly racialized empire, where privilege was distributed unevenly across different communities. As a former plantation colony, Suriname for the most part consisted of people of African and Indian descent. Those of African descent were divided into two main groups: 'Creoles', who predominantly lived in urban areas, and Maroons, whose ancestors had escaped slavery and had settled in the interior.[61] Combined, these groups made up nearly half of the population (at least on paper), alongside an equally large group of Indo-Surinamers and smaller Javanese, Chinese, and Indigenous communities, making Suriname one of the most ethnically diverse territories in the Caribbean.[62] Yet, while Dutch migration to the colony had decreased since the eighteenth century and had nearly disappeared by the late nineteenth century, the country was still ruled by a small colonial elite, consisting of Dutch officials and light-skinned Creoles, used strategically to keep the colonial order in place. Until the mid-twentieth century, other ethnic groups were excluded from any positions of power.

The situation was different in the Netherlands Antilles, where Dutch and Dutch-descended communities had long lived alongside and, to a limited extent, with the African population. With few other ethnic groups present, racial hierarchies were

[60] For an overview of Dutch Caribbean history in the colonial period, see Gert Oostindie, *Paradise Overseas: The Dutch Caribbean: Colonialism and its Transatlantic Legacies* (Oxford: Macmillan Education, 2005). Relevant publications on this period for individual territories include René Römer, *Un Pueblo na Kaminda: Een Sociologisch Historische Studie van de Curaçaose Samenleving* (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 1979); Rose Mary Allen, *Di Ki Manera? A Social History of Afro-Curaçaoans, 1863-1917* (Amsterdam: SWP, 2007); Leo Dalhuisen, Ronald Donk, Rosemarijn Hoefte, and Frans Steegh, eds., *Geschiedenis van de Antillen: Aruba, Bonaire, Curaçao, Saba, Sint Eustatius, Sint Maarten* (Zutphen: Walburg Press, 1997); Lila Gobardhan-Rambocus, Maurits S. Hassankhan, and Jerry L. Egger, *De Erfenis van de Slavernij* (Paramaribo: Anton de Kom University, 1995); Rosemarijn Hoefte, *Suriname in the Long Twentieth Century: Domination, Contestation, Globalization* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

[61] Here, the intention is not to oversimplify 'Creole' and 'Maroon' identities. As suggested by the term itself, Creole heritage was very widespread and often included African, European, Jewish, and Indigenous ancestry from many different places. Likewise, it needs to be acknowledged that different Maroon nations existed within and beyond Surinamese borders with diverse histories and cultures, the largest ones of which are the Saamaka and Ndyuka. This text, too, must thus be read merely as an initial introduction to the topic.

[62] Edward Dew, *The Difficult Flowering of Surinam: Ethnicity and Politics in a Plural Society* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1978), 5. It is likely that these numbers were incorrect as some of these numbers, especially for the Maroons, depended on rough estimates.

almost entirely determined by skin tone, with the lightest citizens placed at the top of the social ladder and the darkest placed at the bottom. In between was a spectrum of 'coloreds' or 'mulattoes', whose complexions and somatic features strongly influenced their social standing. Unlike in the United States, only the darkest members of Antillean society were seen as such. Within this so-called pigmentocracy, "where there are so many racial gradations you can simply not see the wood for the trees," those with the lightest complexions enjoyed the most privilege. This was reflected in Antillean politics, economies, and arts, but could also be seen in everyday sayings such as 'drecha koló' ('improving the color' of the family line with lighter-skinned partners) and 'pretu mahos' (calling someone 'ugly black').[63] This shows how deeply ingrained the idea of White superiority became even among the Black communities of the Caribbean, which helped to keep colonial hierarchies firmly in place.

That is not to say that opposition to colonialism did not exist in the Dutch Atlantic. From the moment the Dutch first settled in the Caribbean, they were met with resistance from a range of different peoples. In the first two centuries, such resistance was shaped primarily by slave uprisings and marronage, which allowed freedom fighters such as Tula in Curaçao, Boni and Benti Basiton in Suriname, and One-Tété Lohkay on St. Martin to resist European aggression and exploitation by reclaiming their own bodies.[64] After the abolition of slavery, new forms of resistance emerged. The late nineteenth century saw numerous protests from the newly arrived indentured workers on Surinamese plantations, including that of Indian-born activist Janey Tetary on plantation Zorg en Hoop.[65] By the early twentieth century, Surinamers and Antilleans also began to embrace more ideological forms of anticolonialism. Until this point, most resistance been targeted at colonial authorities, rather than 'colonialism' as an idea. This changed with the campaigns for Black consciousness by Surinamese reverend Carel Paulus Rier and Curaçaoan author Willem E. Kroon, but

[63] Valdemar Marcha, Paul Verweel, and Jacqueline Werkman, *Kleur Bekennen: Idealisering en Ontkenning van de Eigen Huidskleur* (Amsterdam: Carib Publishing, 2012), 103.

[64] Artwell Cain, *Tula: De Slavenopstand van 1795 op Curaçao* (Amsterdam: NiNsee, 2009); Frank Dragtenstein, *Alles voor Vrede: De Brieven van Boston Brand Tussen 1757 en 1763* (Amsterdam: NiNsee, 2009); Alex van Stipriaan, "Marrons in Vergelijking," in *Kunst van Overleven: Marroncultuur uit Suriname*, ed. Alex van Stipriaan and Thomas Polimé (Amsterdam: KIT Publishers, 2009).

[65] Radjinder Bhagwanbali, *Tetary, de Koppige: Het Verzet van Hindoestanen Tegen het Indentured Labour System in Suriname, 1873-1916* (Den Haag: Amrit, 2011).

even more with the explicitly anticolonial campaigns of later revolutionaries such as Medardo de Marchena, Otto Huiswoud, and Anton de Kom.[66] Their work often overlapped with the mass labor protests of the 1930s, led by charismatic unionists such as Louis Doedel, who organized in both Curaçao and Suriname.[67]

Every single one of these activists was in some way connected to struggles for freedom and equality elsewhere in the Americas. As Frank Dragtenstein has shown, for example, Maroon leader Benti Basiton had lived in Jamaica before coming to Suriname and he used his knowledge of the Jamaican peace treaties of 1739-40 to negotiate independence for the local Maroons with the Dutch governor.[68] Likewise, M.F. Abbenhuis has shared that Surinamese reverend Rier studied in the United States in the early twentieth century and was inspired by the ideas of Booker T. Washington to create a new sense of pride among Afro-Surinamers.[69] Several decades later, Aart G. Broek has written, Curaçaoan activist De Marchena became inspired by the ideas of Marcus Garvey during a trip to the United States and used these to shape his opposition to the colonial authorities in the Netherlands Antilles.[70] Without question, however, the most famous example is that of Surinamese organizer Otto Huiswoud, who moved to New York in the early twentieth century and became the first Black member of the Communist Party of America. By the time Huiswoud moved to the Netherlands in the 1940s, Peter Meel has underscored, he had developed an immense international network and brought young Caribbean revolutionaries in the metropole in touch with famous African American thinkers such as W.E.B. DuBois, Richard Wright, and Langston Hughes, and introduced them to the ideology of the Francophone *négritude* movement.[71]

---

[66] M.F. Abbenhuis, "Carel Paulus Rier, 1863 – 1917," *in Emancipatie 1863 – 1963: Biografieën* (Paramaribo: Surinaamse Historische Kring, 1964), 124-137; Aart G. Broek, *De Kleur van mijn Eiland: Ideologie en Schrijven in het Papiaments sinds 1963* (Leiden: KITLV Uitgeverij, 2006), 72-74; Peter Meel, "Anton de Kom and the Formative Phase of Surinamese Decolonization," *New West Indian Guide* 83.3-4 (2009): 249-280.

[67] Hoefte, *Suriname in the Long Twentieth Century*, 72-75.

[68] Dragtenstein, 42-43, 66;

[69] Abbenhuis, 130.

[70] Broek, *De Kleur van mijn Eiland,* 77-78.

[71] Peter Meel, *Tussen Autonomie en Onafhankelijkheid: Nederlands-Surinaamse Betrekkingen 1954-1961* (Leiden: KITLV Uitgeverij, 1999), 196.

Though the ideas of Caribbean movements such as Garveyism and *négritude* thus circulated in the Dutch Atlantic, neither seems to have gained a strong following in the region. Likewise, few of the activists mentioned above ever managed to get popular movements off the ground themselves. The reason for this was not that their ideas were unpopular among Surinamese or Antillean communities, but that colonial authorities were quick to silence anyone who criticized them, eventually incarcerating, exiling, or even killing most of those mentioned above.[72] Perhaps the most telling example is that of Doedel, who was forced into a psychiatric hospital after challenging Governor Johannes C. Kielstra in 1937 and was not released until 1979, years after Suriname had become independent. Such practices prevented some of the most talented organizers from mobilizing on a large scale. As a result, neither Suriname nor the Netherlands Antilles developed the kind of radical traditions that existed elsewhere in the Americas. Only more moderate approaches to racial equality and colonial reform were tolerated, such as the one by Dr. Moises da Costa Gomez, who in the 1930s and 1940s campaigned not for full independence but for a horizontal structure in which the colonies would become more autonomous.[73] His was the dream that would end up becoming a reality.

In 1942, following increasing pressure from the international community amidst World War II, Queen Wilhelmina of the Netherlands announced colonial reform for the entire Dutch empire. After Indonesia declared its independence in 1945 and the Dutch finally accepted defeat in 1949, only the country's Caribbean territories remained. In collaboration with numerous Surinamese and Antillean representatives, the promised colonial reform took effect in 1954 through the Charter for the Kingdom of the Netherlands, which laid the basis for a new constitutional order. For the first time in history, the Netherlands, Suriname, and the Netherlands Antilles were recognized as equal partners in the Dutch realm. All three were granted their own governments, which received the power to decide over any domestic affairs. The main issues they could not control were defense, foreign relations, and citizenship, which were considered Kingdom affairs. With this structure in place, only the Kingdom of the

[72] See the sources referenced above, as well as Margo Groenewoud, "Decolonization, Otherness, and the Neglect of the Dutch Caribbean in Caribbean Studies," *Small Axe* 25.1 (2021): 102-115.

[73] Groenewoud, 109-110.

Netherlands was theoretically a sovereign state to which the Netherlands, just as much as the Netherlands Antilles and Suriname, was subjected.[74]

Unfortunately, the Charter did not bring as much change as many had hoped. Most of the hierarchies that had been carved out by centuries of colonialism stayed firmly in place. Generally speaking, the White and light-skinned elites that had been in charge during the colonial era continued to control politics, economies, and cultural institutions, leaving Black majorities without power, wealth, and freedom of expression, as many Afro-Caribbean traditions, such as *tambú* dance in Curaçao and *Winti* religion in Suriname, were taboo or even criminalized. It also became clear that the constitutional reforms of the Charter changed imperial relations less than expected, mostly because there was little distinction between the role of the Netherlands as a constituent country and the Kingdom as an overarching body. The Dutch government continued to make decisions on issues that were technically labeled Kingdom affairs and when issues were passed on to the Kingdom, they were handled by a ministerial council in which Dutch representatives far outnumbered their Surinamese and Antillean counterparts, who were represented by only one Minister Plenipotentiary per constituent. Dutch officials furthermore came to represent the Kingdom in prominent international organizations like the United Nations, and while the Netherlands could oversee Suriname and the Netherlands Antilles on their compliance with international law, the Caribbean territories could not do so in reverse.[75] As Ryçond Santos do Nascimento has argued in *Het Koninkrijk Ontsluierd* (2016), all of this meant that the Caribbean were "not only *de facto* but also *de jure* subordinate to both the Netherlands and the people of the Netherlands," despite the Charter's central principles of equality and mutual support.[76]

---

[74] For an English translation of the Charter, see Leonard F.M. Besselink, *Kingdom of the Netherlands: Charter and Constitution* (Nijmegen: Ars Aequi Libri, 2004), 7. For an overview of this history, see also Gert Oostindie, "Black Power, Popular Revolt, and Decolonization in the Dutch Caribbean," in *Black Power in the Caribbean*, ed. Kate Quinn (Gainesville: UP of Florida, 2014), 239-241, and Oostindie, *Paradise Overseas,* 80-110.

[75] For a more detailed overview of how Dutch power continued through the 1954 Charter, see Ryçond Santos do Nascimento, *Het Koninkrijk Ontsluierd* (Apeldoorn: Maklu-Uitgevers, 2016) and Lisenne Delgado, "Being Human and Having Rights: Human Rights Education and Racism at the United Nations and in Curaçao," Ph.D. Dissertation (Utrecht University, 2021), 112-119.

[76] Santos do Nascimento, 305.

What the Charter did do was spark a new wave of nationalism across the Caribbean parts of the Kingdom. Now that Suriname and the Netherlands Antilles were seen as autonomous, local intellectuals and artists began trying to define what exactly the essence of their individual countries was. What made Suriname or the Netherlands Antilles unique? What was Surinamese or Antillean culture? Who was truly Surinamese or Antillean? What did a Surinamer or Antillean look like? All of these questions, by extension, also aimed to define what was *not* Surinamese or Antillean, who did *not* belong, and what a true citizen did *not* look like. While these questions were mainly intended to separate the Caribbean constituents from the Netherlands, they were complicated by topics such as race, migration, and language, each of which held significant value within their societies. In the Netherlands Antilles, such questions were even further complicated by the diversity of the individual islands that made up the new country, leading not only to questions of national but also of island-based identities, as each island had its own culture and traditions. This struggle became most visible in Aruba, where a separatist movement aimed to gain independence not from the Kingdom but from the Netherlands Antilles, which had historically centered around Curaçao.[77]

Initially, many believed the solution to these questions could be found in creolization, arguing that the cultures of existing ethnic groups had to be combined into an inclusive Caribbean fabric where all were represented.[78] Soon, however, it became clear that such an approach was unable to truly distance Suriname and the Netherlands Antilles from the legacies of Dutch colonialism, as centuries of European involvement and indoctrination had left such a prominent mark on their societies. It also did not help that many in favor of creolization continued to use Dutch as a lingua franca, even though both territories were home to a myriad of creole languages, the most prominent being Sranan Tongo and Papiamentu. As a result, both constituents saw the rise of new movements that instead prioritized the heritage of Afro-Caribbean communities in the region, as was previously shown by Peter Meel and Edwin K.

[77] Luc Alofs and Leontine Merkies, *Ken ta Arubiano? Sociale Integratie en Natievorming op Aruba, 1924 – 2001* (Oranjestad: VAD/De Wit Stores, 2001); Michael Orlando Sharpe, "Race, Color, and Nationalism in Aruban and Curaçaoan Political Identities," *Dutch Racism*, eds. Philomena Essed and Isabel Hoving (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 117-131.

[78] Broek, *De Kleur van Mijn Eiland,* 139-142.

Marshall in the case of Suriname and René A. Römer and Aart G. Broek in the case of the Netherlands Antilles.[79] These movements argued that enslaved Africans had played such fundamental roles in the development of the Caribbean that their legacies had to lie at the foundation of any new nation-building efforts. Only by prioritizing this heritage could they truly find their own paths, away from the colonizer.

In Suriname, such Afrocentric nationalism was first popularized by cultural association Wie Eegie Sanie ('Our Own Things'), which was first established in 1951 by a group of Surinamese students in the Netherlands and from 1954 gained a significant following in Suriname itself. Its Antillean counterpart was the literary movement *di-nos-e-ta* ('this is ours'), which became popular in Curaçao in the 1970s.[80] This movement overlapped with similar discussions on who were 'real' Curaçaoans or *Yunan di Kòrsou* ('Children of Curaçao') and who were not, with many arguing that only the descendants of locally enslaved Africans could be seen as such, excluding those of European descent who settled on the island in the early colonial period, but also Black migrants from other parts of the Caribbean who had arrived over the course of the twentieth century.[81] On the surface, both Wie Eegie Sanie and *di-nos-e-ta* were cultural movements, concerned with producing literature, arts, and other forms of expression that celebrated the unique heritage of Afro-Caribbeans and their ancestors. On a deeper level, however, these movements were profoundly political. As Meel has argued in relation to Suriname, the cultural activities of Wie Eegie Sanie served to create a new sense of consciousness and pride without which "political liberation (…) would be doomed to fail."[82] Or as Broek has stated in the case of *di-nos-e-ta*, the

[79] See Meel, *Tussen Autonomie en Onafhankelijkheid*, 187-198; Edwin K. Marshall, *Ontstaan en Ontwikkeling van het Surinaams Nationalisme: Natievorming als Opgave* (Utrecht: Eburon Uitgeverij, 2003), 84-85; René A. Römer, "Het 'Wij' van de Curacaoenaar," *Kristòf*, 1.2 (1974): 49–60; Broek, *De Kleur van Mijn Eiland*. For an English translation of Broek, see Aard G. Broek, *The Colour of My Island: Ideology and Writing in Papiamentu (Aruba, Bonaire & Curaçao); A Birds-Eye View* (Haarlem: In De Knipscheer, 2009).

[80] This is the name Broek uses for the Afrocentric movement, though it does not necessarily seem like this (or any other) name was used by the movement itself at the time. It is used here in line with Broek's theorization of the movement in *De Kleur van Mijn Eiland*.

[81] Römer, "Het 'Wij' van de Curaçoënaar"; Edward Dew, "The Dutch Caribbean: Studies in the Fragmentation of a Political Culture," in *Modern Political Culture in the Caribbean*, eds. Holger Henke and Fred Reno (Mona: UP of the West Indies, 2003), 385-386; Oostindie, Paradise Overseas, 59-60; Sharpe, 119.

[82] Meel, *Tussen Autonomie en Onafhankelijkheid*, 193.

intention of the "revolutionary drama" of the movement "was to serve the cause of independence."[83]

As the names of both of these movements suggest, their rhetoric was essentially one of ownership, used to create a dichotomy between the colonial and the authentic or, as Surinamese nationalist Julius G.A. 'Papa' Koenders phrased it, between the 'artificial' and the 'natural'.[84] Both categories were deeply racial, with the colonial being White or European and the authentic being Black or African. In this dichotomy, little room was left for other groups in the territories, such as the Mestizo communities of Aruba or the Indian communities of Suriname. Interestingly, there was also little regard for the question of indigeneity, which made more sense in the Netherlands Antilles, where Amerindian communities had been removed or had merged with other groups, than in Suriname, where Amerindian communities still existed. As a result of this racial rhetoric, the nationalist movements tended to be somewhat exclusionist. While some acknowledged the problematic nature of this framing, it was generally accepted as it served a clear purpose in the decolonial project. After all, the language of authenticity to prove to the colonizer and to the local population itself that their "own qualities guaranteed a sufficient enough basis to achieve independence truly and successfully," as argued by Broek.[85]

A New Feeling of Unity

So how does the rise of Black Power activism in the Dutch Atlantic in the same period fit into these broader debates on nationalism and authenticity? Unfortunately, existing literature on the topic does not provide an answer to this question. In fact, few scholars have looked at the history of Black Power in the Dutch Atlantic at all. In the case of the Netherlands, scholarship on Black Power is next to non-existent.[86] For the overseas territories, the only publication dedicated to the topic is Gert Oostindie's

[83] Broek, *The Colour of My Island*, 53.

[84] Meel, *Tussen Autonomie en Onafhankelijkheid,* 191.

[85] Broek, *De Kleur van Mijn Eiland,* 191.

[86] One reference to Black Power in the Netherlands is made by Ulbe Bosma in "Why is there No Post-Colonial Debate in the Netherlands?" in *Post-Colonial Immigrants and Identity Formations in the Netherlands*, ed. Ulbe Bosma (Amsterdam: Amsterdam UP, 2012), 205. Bosma briefly mentions that Black Power rhetoric was popular among different Moluccan, Antillean, and Surinamese protest movements, but does not elaborate.

"Black Power, Popular Revolt, and Decolonization in the Dutch Caribbean," published in Quinn's aforementioned *Black Power in the Caribbean* (2013).[87] Here, Oostindie lays out the history of Dutch decolonization from the 1954 Charter to the dissolution of the Netherlands Antilles in 2010. In his analysis, he primarily focuses on the Curaçaoan uprising of 30 May 1969, when thousands of Black workers took to the streets of Willemstad to protest against political, economic, and social inequality on the island. Keeping up with the broader theme of the volume, Oostindie explains that the uprising, also known as Trinta di Mei, was in part driven by "ideals of Afro-Caribbean liberation," but rightfully states that it was not a Black Power protest by itself, even though many observers believed it to be.[88] In making this argument, the author discredits two rumors that fed into this myth: first, that Black Power advocate Benjamin S. Fox had been involved in the uprising, and second, that foreign Black Power activists had instigated the protest.[89] Remarkably enough, however, the largest part of Oostindie's chapter does not actually discuss the Black Power movement. Though the author briefly acknowledges the popularity of Afrocentrism on the island, it contains little analysis of those Black Power efforts that did exist in the Netherlands Antilles, nor does he discuss the existence of Black Power activism in Suriname.

Though Oostindie was the first to dedicate an entire publication to Black Power in the Dutch Caribbean, this chapter can be positioned into a longer historiography of Trinta di Mei. Ever since the uprising took place, social scientists and historians alike have addressed the disproven theory that it was a Black Power protest, though never spending more than a few sentences on such rumors.[90] While they have been right to conclude that Trinta di Mei was no Black Power initiative, however, it is worth noting

[87] Oostindie, "Black Power."

[88] Oostindie, "Black Power," 239.

[89] Oostindie, "Black Power," 248, 250.

[90] Dalhuisen, 136; Gert Oostindie and Inge Klinkers, *Knellende Koninkrijksverbanden: Het Nederlandse Dekolonisatiebeleid in de Caraïben 1940-2000* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam UP, 2001), 293; Rosemarijn Hoefte, "Internationale Reacties op de Revolte en het Nederlandse Ingrijpen," in *Dromen en Littekens: Dertig Jaar na de Curaçaose Revolte,* eds. Gert Oostindie (Amsterdam: Amsterdam UP, 1999), 151; René A. Römer, *De Curaçaose Samenleving Voor en Na 30 Mei 1969* (Willemstad: Dovale Associates Inc., 1995), 24; Rose Mary Allen, "The Trinta di Mei Labor Revolt and Its Aftermath: Anticipating a Just and Equitable Curaçaoan Nation," in *Equaliberty in the Dutch Caribbean: Ways of Being Non/Sovereign* (New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 2022), 69-84; Emma van Meyeren, ""Kwantu Dia Mas Prome Ku un Revolusjon?" On Political Newspaper Vitó (1966-1971) and Curaçaoan Resistance against Dutch Colonialism." M.A. Dissertation, University of Amsterdam, 2017, 28.

that none of them have supported these conclusions with extensive archival research, resulting in little nuance and numerous errors in the narrative.[91] Perhaps the only scholars who have examined the relation between Black Power and Trinta di Mei more closely were William A. Anderson and Russell R. Dynes in *Social Movements, Violence, and Change: The May Movement in Curaçao* (1975). Published several years after the uprising took place, Anderson and Dynes dedicated three pages to the Black Power question, drawing ideological parallels between Curaçaoan nationalism and the movement.[92] More recently, such connections have also been studied by Chelsea Schields in "Insurgent Intimacies: Sex, Socialism, and Black Power in the Dutch Atlantic" (2020), which examines how radical newspapers in the 1960s used the ideas of the Black Power movement to challenge traditional sexual discourse in the Netherlands Antilles and its diaspora. Unlike her predecessors, who paid little attention to Antilleans' own roles in these efforts, Schields also recognizes the agency of local Black Power sympathizers, even if only in reference to the topic of sexuality.[93]

Surinamese historiography follows a similar pattern. Here, too, those who have addressed Black Power have done so only in passing. In their analyses of contemporary Surinamese politics, scholars Edward M. Dew, Michiel van Kempen, Edwin K. Marshall, and Hans Ramsoedh have mentioned the existence of the local Black Power organization led by journalist Cyriel R. Karg.[94] In all of these publications, Black Power is positioned within a broader wave of Afrocentrism, which emerged with the popularization of Wie Eegie Sanie and has often been interpreted as a counterreaction to the growing power of Indo-Surinamers in the post-war period. Similar to the Antillean case, however, no author has spent more than a paragraph on

---

[91] An example is Dalhuisen et al., which argues there were no expressions of Black Power in Curaçao with the exception of "some articles by the American journalist Benjamin Fox," 136. In reality, Fox was neither American nor a journalist, and his activism went further than "some articles," as this dissertation will show.

[92] William A. Anderson and Russell R. Dynes, *Social Movements, Violence, and Change: The May Movement in Curaçao* (Columbus, Ohio State UP, 1975), 10-13, 145.

[93] Chelsea Schields, "Insurgent Intimacies: Sex, Socialism, and Black Power in the Dutch Atlantic," in *Radical History Review* 136 (2020), 98-110.

[94] Edward M. Dew, *The Difficult Flowering of Surinam: Ethnicity and Politics in a Plural Society* (Dordrecht: Springer Science and Business Media, 1978), 161, 208; Michiel van Kempen, "De Geschreven Literatuur van 1923 tot 1975," in *Een Geschiedenis van de Surinaamse Literatuur*, vol. 4 (Paramaribo: Okopipi, 2002), 234; Marshall, 99; Hans Ramsoedh, *Surinaams Onbehagen: Een Sociale en Politieke Geschiedenis van Suriname, 1865-2015* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2017), 115-116.

the Black Power movement, drawing heavily from a handful of newspaper articles and leaving out any close reading of the organization's ideas. As in the case of the Netherlands Antilles, this has led to various misunderstandings of their intentions, as well as a repeated reproduction of errors.[95]

Unfortunately, the absence of information on this topic is not unique to the study of the Dutch Caribbean. This is the case in the historiography of transnational Black Power as well. In substantial reference works on the movement, such as the *Black Power Encyclopedia* (2018) and UNESCO's *General History of the Caribbean* (2004), Surinamese and Antillean activists are only mentioned in passing, often as part of larger listings of Black Power protests outside the United States.[96] Remarkable here is that all authors seem to depend on two specific primary sources: the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) memorandum "Black Radicalism in the Caribbean – Another Look" (1970) and its later "Interrelationship of Black Power Organizations in the Western Hemisphere" (1972), which briefly mention the Dutch territories.[97] While these documents succeed at placing local Black Power efforts in conversation with the overarching movement, they also contain a various inaccuracies that have since been reproduced by scholars who consulted them.[98] The only historian who has looked beyond the CIA reports is Swan in his aforementioned *Pauulu's Diaspora*, where he

[95] Errors include incorrect dates for the founding of the Black Power organization and the differentiation between Black Power Suriname and Afro-Sranan, when in reality this was one organization that changed its name. See Van Kempen, 235; Swan, *Pauulu's Diaspora,* 138; Ramsoedh, 115-116.

[96] Quito J. Swan, "Black Power Abroad," in *Black Power Encyclopedia: From "Black is Beautiful" to Urban Uprisings,* ed. Akinyele Umoja, Karin L. Stanford, and Jasmin A. Young (Santa Barbara: Greenwood, 2018), 149; Swan, *Pauulu's Diaspora,* 141-142; James Millette, "Decolonization, Populist Movements, and New Nations, 1945-70," in *General History of the Caribbean: The Caribbean in the Twentieth Century* (London: UNESCO, 2004), 217-221; Tony Martin, "African and Indian Consciousness," in *General History of the Caribbean: The Caribbean in the Twentieth Century* (London: UNESCO, 2004), 254-255.

[97] Central Intelligence Agency, "Black Radicalism in the Caribbean – Another Look," Intelligence Memorandum, 12 June 1970, doc. nr. CIA-RDP85T00875R001100090030-4, CREST Database, accessed via Internet Archive, https://archive.org/details/CIA-RDP85T00875R001100090030-4; Central Intelligence Agency, "Interrelationship of Black Power Organizations in the Western Hemisphere," Intelligence Evaluation Committee, January 4, 1972, 28, Department of Justice, US Declassified Documents Online, accessed via Roosevelt Institute for American Studies, Middelburg, the Netherlands.

[98] In both the Curaçaoan and Surinamese context, these mistakes concern the emergence of local froups. In the case of Curaçao, it claims the leaders of Trinta di Mei established the Antillean Black Power organization, which the second chapter will show is false. It also claims the Surinamese Black Power organization was established after the example of the Republic of New Africa (RNA) in the United States, which the fourth chapter will also disprove.

discusses Black Power in both parts of the Dutch Caribbean, though not without reproducing some of those same errors.[99]

Current literature on the Black Power in the Dutch Atlantic thus leaves much room for investigation. The first two sections of this introduction have shown that in Black Power studies, the United States and the Anglophone Caribbean largely overshadow the movement's presence in other parts of the world. The third and fourth sections have suggested that in Dutch Caribbean history, Black Power activism remains understudied. This dissertation aims to start filling in these gaps by providing a first analysis of the motives and campaigns of local Black Power activists, as specified by the research question on page six. In support of this question, it aims to answer a number of sub-questions. Who were the most prominent Black Power advocates in the Dutch Atlantic? How were they connected to the transnational Black Power movement? How did Black Power activists legitimize the need for Black Power in their local environments? How did the colonial context of the Dutch Caribbean inform the interpretation and reception of Black Power? What position did Black Power activists occupy within broader anticolonial movements? And how successful were Black Power activists in the Dutch Atlantic at reaching their goals? Together, these questions will help to answer the why and how of Black Power in the Dutch Atlantic.

An important starting point in answering these questions if determining what should be categorized as Black Power activism and what should not. It is undeniable that there was an interest in the movement in the Netherlands, Suriname, and the Netherlands Antilles between the mid-1960s and mid-1970s. For one, newspapers and other media outlets kept a close eye on the movement's activities in the United States and Caribbean, often going into detail to keep the Kingdom's citizens up-to-date. Likewise, Black Power catchphrases such as 'Black is Beautiful' caught on everywhere, inspiring Black people to wear natural hairstyles, celebrate their African features, and embrace African-inspired fashion. Intellectually, too, Black Power made a powerful entry into the Dutch Atlantic imagination. Dutch books on the movement, including Ton Regtien's interview with Stokely Carmichael *Black Power en de Derde Wereld: Een Interview met Stokely Carmichael* (1968) and the translation of Carmichael's *Black*

[99] Swan, *Pauulu's Diaspora,* 141-142, 138, 178.

Power: The Politics of Liberation (1969), sold thousands of copies, making them some of the most widely read books in the revolutionary genre.

But of course not every sign of interest in Black Power should be interpreted as actual participation in the movement. Nor should any form of antiracist activism be classified as such. After all, the region itself already had a long history of Black in this period. To avoid the risk of misidentifying any such protest as Black Power, this dissertation will concentrate on the efforts of four grassroots groups that explicitly identified with the movement: the Black Panthers of Curaçao (BPC), Antillean Black Power (ABP), the Dutch Black Panther Solidarity Committee (BPSC), and Black Power Suriname (BPS), which later changed its name to Afro-Sranan.[100] As their names suggest, each of these groups was created with the purpose of bringing Black Power to the Dutch Atlantic and openly associated with the movement.[101] Building on Black Power's ideology of self-determination, self-defense, and self-respect, they carved out unique paths towards Black freedom.

In comparing these groups, this dissertation argues that while the approaches of these Black Power groups (the 'how') differed, their goals (the 'why') were strikingly consistent. Though each group associated with a different branch of the movement, adopted a different ideology, and used different methods of resistance, they all had one important thing in common: they all joined the Black Power movement because they believed it could help them challenge the continuing power of the Netherlands in the Dutch Caribbean. Much like the Anglophone Caribbean groups discussed previously, they were convinced by the movement's promise of a new Black unity more powerful than any empire in the world. Whether through ideological solidarity or through full-fledged alliances, all believed the movement provided them with the support they needed to win their independence.

---

[100] One additional organization existed that used the symbolism of the movement: the Democratisch Jongeren Front (Democratic Youth Front) in Suriname, which had adopted the logo of the Black Panther Party as its own. Archival research made clear, however, that the organization explicitly distanced itself from the BPP, stating that its intention was "not to imitate the Black Panthers in America." As such, it was not included in this project. See Democratisch Jongeren Front, Verslag van het Oprichtingscongres van het Democratisch Jongeren Front," Paramaribo, July 28, 1974, BRO 2800/14, International Institute for Social History, Amsterdam, the Netherlands.

[101] Some of these names deviate from those originally used by the organizations. Although the Black Panthers of Curaçao and the Black Panther Solidarity Committee used these names themselves, the Antillean and Surinamese organizations were both commonly referred to as Black Power or Black Power organization. To be able to distinguish between the two, this dissertation refers to them as Antillean Black Power and Black Power Suriname. The choice for Antillean rather than Curaçaoan Black Power will be explained in chapter two.

It was imperative to them that this new support network would be built upon the already existing framework of the African diaspora, which bound Black communities together through a sense of rootedness that predated colonialism. Pointing out similarities between themselves and those of African descent elsewhere, the organizations consistently described Black Power as a space of shared ancestry, using a language of kinship and brotherhood. Beyond that, they understood the African diaspora as an arena of shared struggle, connecting those who had suffered under colonialism in different imperial spaces. In a way, then, joining the Black Power movement was seen as a literal act of de-colonization, removing any ties to the metropole and restoring (what they imagined to be) their pre-colonial state of being. As such, it was more than anticolonialism, or opposition to colonialism, alone.

This is very similar to what scholars have previously argued for other parts of the Caribbean, as outlined in section two. Much like in the case of Bermuda, as noted by Swan and Gowland, Antillean and Surinamese activists used the movement to call for primary decolonization, seeking full constitutional independence. Even more so, they used Black Power to promote secondary decolonization, as activists in the newly sovereign Anglophone Caribbean had done, calling for the end of racial elitism in all facets of society. Combining the two made sense in the context of the Kingdom because this allowed local activists to navigate the status of the Netherlands Antilles and Suriname as neither fully independent nor completely subordinate. In line with Gowland's theorization of Black Power as an 'alternative decolonial future', this dissertation will refer to such understandings of the movement as Decolonial Black Power, referring to a specific model of Black Power where the ending both formal and informal colonialism constituted the main objective for allegiance.

Although it is important to understand Black Power in the Dutch Atlantic as part of this transnational project, it is equally as important to understand it in relation to more local pursuits of independence. Like the Afrocentric nationalists discussed in section three, the Black Power groups believed the new structure of the Kingdom was unsatisfactory and believed that only complete distance from the Dutch could break the chains of colonialism. They also agreed that the Netherlands Antilles and Suriname were historically Black countries and therefore belonged to the descendants of enslaved Africans, celebrating Afro-Caribbean heritage, glorifying Black heroes, and promoting the use of creole languages and practices. Not only did the Black Power

groups overlap with these movements ideologically, but they also occupied the same political and social spaces. Whether the Black Power groups originated from these movements, emerged in the same environments, or collaborated with them, there is no denying that much overlap existed between Afrocentric nationalism and Black Power.

What set the Black Power groups apart from these nationalist movements, however, was their internationalist vision on decolonization. In contrast to both Wie Eegie Sanie and *di-nos-e-ta*, who looked inward in search of something that was distinctly their own, the Black Power groups looked outward in search of a new sense of belonging, based on the movement's global network of support. To them, the key to freedom was not self-reliance, in transnational solidarity and belonging. Though this dichotomy was not trenchant, as many nationalists sympathized with foreign liberation movements and drew inspiration from them, and all Black Power activists were also in favor of national independence, the international question did mark a notable difference in their respective visions for the future.[102]

Research Methods and Structure

Acknowledging that Black Power was a globally entangled and heterogeneous movement, this history is studied using a transnational research method, drawing especially from practices in transnational activism studies.[103] Central to this method is identifying the continuous interaction between local, national, regional, and global forces, all of which shape the circulations of actors, ideas, practices, and objects across political geographies. To fully understand such activism in the right context, it is just as important to consider the global processes that motivate actors as it is to

[102] For connections between Wie Eegie Sanie and foreign movements, see Meel, *Tussen Autonomie en Onafhankelijkheid*, 196; Marshall, 68. Meel shows that Wie Eegie Sanie drew significant inspiration from foreign Black authors, artists, and movements as well, mentioning Richard Wright, James Baldwin, and W.E.B. DuBois as examples. The intention here is not to argue that these groups were isolated from the world; they most certainly were not. Rather, the point is that they chose self-reliance as their model for nationalism. In fact, Wie Eegie Sanie leader Bruma explicitly rejected internationalism as a model for national liberation. See Meel, 201.

[103] Steven Vertovec, "Conceiving and Researching Transnationalism," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 22.2 (1999), 447-462; "AHR Conversation: On Transnational History," *The American Historical Review* 111.5 (2006):1440-1463; Stefan Berger and Holger Nehring, *The History of Social Movements in Global Perspective: A Survey* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017); Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1998); Donatella Della Porta and Sidney Tarrow, *Transnational Protest and Global Activism: People, Passions, and Power* (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005).

understand the local environments in which they organize. After all, local conditions play a fundamental role in shaping recipients' frames of reference, thus informing how transnational ideas, practices, and objects are interpreted and reciprocated. In relation to this dissertation, this means studying the transnational flows that allowed Black Power to travel to and from the Dutch Atlantic, but also the particular contexts of cities like Willemstad, Amsterdam, and Paramaribo, of the island of Curaçao, and national developments in the Netherlands Antilles, Suriname, and the Netherlands, all of which the shaped different expressions of Black Power in the Dutch Atlantic.

To identify these transnational exchanges and different layers, this dissertation builds upon archival materials from nearly twenty archives and databases located in Curaçao, Suriname, the Netherlands, the United States, and online. It was no easy task to bring these together. As the history of Black Power in the Dutch Atlantic has previously been of little interest to historians, few archives have categorized the documents of Black Power advocates and organizations accordingly. The only notable exception is the International Institute for Social History (IISH) in Amsterdam, which holds a number of collections related to specific Black Power groups. For all other information, this study depends on information found by combing through related collections, as well as two private archives. These collections, containing both published and unpublished documents, were written in Dutch, English, and Papiamentu. Most of them have never been cited before.

Generally speaking, the sources used in this study can be divided into three categories. The first consists of documents created by Black Power advocates themselves, including underground newspapers, pamphlets, correspondence, and posters. These sources lay at the heart of this project as they provide the best insight into the ideas and motivations of the movement's most outspoken advocates, unaffected by external interpretation or bias. Key institutions that hold materials from the different groups are the Mongui Maduro Library in Willemstad, the IISH in Amsterdam, and the Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies (Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde, KITLV) at Leiden University. In terms of individual activists, only the personal archive of Curaçaoan Black Panther advocate Stanley C. Brown was archived and is available at the National Archives of Curaçao. Personal papers of Dutch Black Panther advocate Lily van den

Bergh and Surinamese Black Power leader Cyriel R. Karg were accessed through their families in Amsterdam and Paramaribo.

The second category of sources consist of media coverage, including news reports, interviews, and professional photo collections. Much like the first category, these provide useful information on the ideas and activities of local Black Power advocates, often confirming or complementing what Black Power activists themselves had already written. Perhaps more importantly, these sources provide unique insights into how Black Power activism was perceived by those outside of the movement, as the judgments of journalists typically shine through their writings. Also worth mentioning is that many Black Power advocates themselves made clever use of the media in their work. In some cases, organization leaders were journalists themselves and wrote about their activism in newspapers, while others gave press conferences or let themselves be interviewed. Particularly helpful in locating these sources were Delpher, which is the online newspaper database of the Royal Library of the Netherlands (Koninklijke Bibliotheek, KB), and the National Archives of Suriname.

The third category consists of government documents from around the Atlantic, mostly involving diplomatic correspondence between embassies, consulates, and state departments. These have proven to be helpful in finding information on activists' personal backgrounds, their transnational contacts, and, above all, their participation in Black Power activism abroad. Whereas the first category presents the perspectives of Black Power advocates themselves and the second reflects those of a more general audience, these documents are valuable because they present diplomatic perspectives on the movement. They show how the movement was assessed as a threat to (inter)national security and economic interests, not only by local governments but also by American officials based in the Caribbean, though cross-referencing of different archives does suggest that their documents contain relatively high numbers of errors, as will be discussed in the different chapters. The collections of the Dutch National Archives, the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) in the United States, and Gale's US Declassified Documents Online, accessed via the Roosevelt Institute for American Studies (RIAS) in Middelburg, were particularly useful for this purpose.

While these archives allow for a rich study of Black Power activism in the Dutch Atlantic, gaps in the archives also create some significant limitations in this

dissertation. Perhaps most important is the absence of materials from the islands of Aruba, Bonaire, S. Martin, Saba, and St. Eustatius. Though there was every intention of including these islands in this study, there was little indication that the movement was active on these islands in the consulted archives. Additionally, the archives are limited in that they often miss important perspectives from and information on the activists involved. As a result, this dissertation focuses disproportionately on the ideological leaders of these organizations. This means Black Power activism sometimes comes across as a one-man show, even though hundreds of others – including women – were also involved. Where possible, these individuals are identified, but for the most part the silences of the archives have allowed for little leeway.

Ideally, both of these limitations could have been resolved by including oral history in this project, but unfortunately such possibilities were scarce. First, many of the people who were involved in this history had already passed away by the time the research for this dissertation began. Several others passed away during the project, before there was a chance to speak to them. Second, opportunities for interviewing were limited because of the Covid-19 pandemic, which coincided fully with this project and led to cancellations on a number of interviews and severe travel restrictions, both in the Netherlands and internationally. This, paired with limited funding and difficulties to get in touch with some of the intended interviewees, left little room for such meetings. In the end, only one interview was conducted with the son of the Surinamese Black Power leader in Paramaribo over the summer of 2022. Other interviews that are used were conducted earlier, including those by Gert Oostindie (1998/1999), available on minidisc at Leiden University, and those published by journalist Miep Diekmann in *Een Doekje voor het Bloeden* (1970).[104] The topic of Black Power comes up in both of these collections.

To structure the information found in the archives, each chapter of this dissertation focuses on one Black Power group as an individual case study. The order of the chapters is based on chronology and geographical location, starting with the earliest groups in the Netherlands Antilles and followed by later ones in the Netherlands and Suriname. Although this approach comes with some restrictions, not

[104] Gert Oostindie and Inge Klinkers, Collectie 30 Mei 1969 (KITLV), UBL474, Special Collections, Leiden University, Leiden, the Netherlands. Edited versions of these interviews were later published in Gert Oostindie, *Curaçao, 30 Mei 1969: Verhalen over de Revolte* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam UP, 1999). Miep Diekmann, *Een Doekje voor het Bloeden* (The Hague: Leopold, 1970).

least of which lie in connecting and comparing these groups, this structure allows the Black Power groups to be studied in their local environments, thereby diminishing the risk of overgeneralizing their intentions and impact. Each of the chapters aims to answer the sub-questions mentioned in the previous section, discussing who the key actors in these groups were, how they were connected to the transnational movement, how they legitimated the need for Black Power, how they engaged with colonialism, how they interacted with other movements, and how successful they were. An interesting pattern that will become visible is that each group was more involved in the transnational movement than the last, starting with a group that was connected to the movement by imitation only and ending with an organization that was fully immersed in its global network.

Chapter one covers the history of the Black Panthers of Curaçao (BPC), which was established in 1968 and lasted until at least 1970. Formed by teacher and writer Stanley C. Brown, the Black Panthers of Curaçao formed a sub-group in the anticolonial movement centered around the journal *Vitó*. This chapter shows that the BPC adopted the name, symbolism, and revolutionary nationalist ideology of the Black Panther Party to create a new racial discourse in Curaçao and to position the revolutionary movement on the island into a broader network of Black resistance, arguing that such a network was essential to the destruction of global White power. Brown explored these ideas through the column "Black Panthers na Korsow" ("Black Panthers in Curaçao") and at the Gomez Square meetings in Willemstad. While the BPC itself remained small and obscure, these activities did allow Brown to bring a new racial awareness to the local labor movement. When the Curaçaoan uprising of 1969 broke out, clear echoes of the Black Panthers could be heard on the streets.

Chapter two continues where the first chapter leaves off, starting in the aftermath of Trinta di Mei. In exploring how the uprising paved the way for local Black Power activism on the island, it follows the story of activist Benjamin S. Fox, who lived in New York when the uprising took place and returned to his birthplace that very day to establish the Antillean Black Power (ABP) organization. While living in New York, Fox had become sympathetic to the American branch of the movement and had developed into a strong advocate of cultural empowerment. In contrast to Brown, Fox fostered an ideology of cultural nationalism, stressing that Afro-Antilleans could never stand up to the Dutch unless they liberated themselves from the White gaze. To

achieve this, the ABP set up a campaign for cultural awareness, focusing on historical education, the revival of African traditions, and the institutionalization of Papiamentu. Even more so, Fox and his followers promoted a sense of African identity, intended to create a feeling of solidarity between Afro-Antilleans and their diasporic kin. Though the organization gained prominence in the anticolonial movement on Curaçao, internal conflicts led Fox to abandon his campaign, leaving only a cultural trace.

Chapter three crosses the Atlantic to the Netherlands, where in the fall of 1969 a group of young White men set up a committee in solidarity with the Black Panther Party. Under the leadership of journalist Peter Schumacher, this Black Panther Solidarity Committee (BPSC) was established in collaboration with a European-wide network that aimed to support the African American party through education, fundraising, and political protest. This transatlantic support system was managed by the Black Panthers themselves, putting the Dutch committee in direct contact with notable American activists such as Kathleen Cleaver and Elbert 'Big Man' Howard. In order to support the Black Panthers and challenge Dutch and American imperialism in the Dutch context, the BPSC collaborated with a range of Caribbean action groups, as well as several organizations within the Dutch New Left, among which was the Freedom School. Together, these groups used their connection to the BPP to challenge American imperialism in Europe and Dutch colonialism in the Caribbean and beyond, embracing the latter's revolutionary nationalism like the BPC had done.

The final chapter returns to the Caribbean and looks at the group that arose last but existed the longest: Black Power Suriname (BPS). Established in the summer of 1970 by journalist Cyriel R. Karg and Surinamese-American travel agent Arnold E. Nieuwendam, this organization aimed to create a new sense of Black unity within and beyond Suriname to liberate the country from Dutch influences. Convinced that economic interests were the main reason why the Dutch held on to their South American territory, the BPS embraced a Black capitalist approach to empowerment, promoting international Black trade and commerce as the solution to (neo)colonialism. Along the way, Karg managed to build a transnational network much larger than any of his predecessors', connecting Surinamese activists to the Congress of African Peoples (CAP), the Nation of Islam (NOI), and the Republic of New Afrika (RNA) in the United States. Following the examples of these organizations, the BPS

changed its direction from Black Power to Pan-Africanism after only a few months, continuing under the name Afro-Sranan until at least 1973.

Together, these Black Power organizations carved out a new space for Black internationalism in the Dutch Atlantic. Though they were active for only a brief period of time and represented but a small fraction of the anticolonial struggle in the Kingdom of the Netherlands, their affiliations with the Black Power movement allowed them to introduce an alternative vision for decolonization to the region. One might argue that the marginality of these groups makes their story irrelevant, but such a perspective would undermine their significance in the global pursuit of equality, autonomy, and belonging in the twentieth century, connecting local Black Power advocates to thousands of revolutionaries around the world and giving them the feeling that they were part of an important historical moment. Or, as Diekmann phrased it:

> It feels so unrealistic – not to say obtuse – to disregard the pursuit of the black man in the Antilles for unity and interconnection as nothing but 'the incitement of a handful of rebellious elements' (…). The number of followers does not matter, what matters is the thought behind it. Even the smallest of groups is important because it belongs to a fight that goes beyond national concerns.[105]

By highlighting their story, this dissertation makes three notable contributions to the literature. First, it expands the study of transnational Black Power into new spaces, broadening understandings of what Black Power activism looked like in different parts of the world. In doing so, it shows that Black Power did not only appeal to Anglophone communities, but also branched out into other imperial realms, in this case that of the Dutch. Second, it challenges the work of scholars who have portrayed US and Caribbean Black Power as separate movements, showing that in the case of the Dutch Caribbean the two were deeply intertwined. Indeed, Black Power activists in Suriname and the Netherlands Antilles were more interested in the US than they were in the (former) British West Indies. Finally, this dissertation complicates the narrative of anticolonialism in the Dutch Atlantic, showing that the independence movements of Suriname and the Netherlands Antilles in the post-1954 era were more diverse than is often presumed. It shows that not all who wished to decolonize turned to a nationalist language of ownership and authenticity, as some explored alternative futures.

[105] Diekmann, 101.

Chapter 1:
""Black Panther Types on the Streets and Byways":
The Black Panthers of Curaçao, *Vitó*, and the Making of an Anticolonial Movement

On 30 November 1968, radical Curaçaoan journal *Vitó* released the latest issue of its bi-weekly publication. As always, the journal was filled with critical articles, containing among other things an analysis of the upcoming elections in neighboring Venezuela, an anticolonial critique of the approaching Sinterklaas holiday, a promotional piece for the local Union of Domestic Workers, and an advertisement for an erotic film screening at the Airport Cinema in the island's capital city of Willemstad. Though this was nothing out of the ordinary for *Vitó*, there was one article unlike anything it had published before, titled "Black Panthers na Korsow" ("Black Panthers in Curaçao").[106] In typical *Vitó* style, the column was separated from the rest of the page by a thick black frame and headed with a boldfaced title. What made it truly stand out, however, were the eye-catching illustrations placed right above and underneath the column: two black panthers, one leaping forward with its tail curled up, its spiky claws extended while gazing straight ahead, the other sleek-figured, prowling sidewards with its tail and ears down while preparing to attack. They were images that many around the world would have recognized: they were symbols of the Black Panther Party (BPP), one of the most notorious organizations in the Black Power movement.[107]

In the column, *Vitó* announced that on 26 November 1968 a new organization had been founded on the island: the Black Panthers of Curaçao (BPC).[108] Modeled "after the example of the Black Panther movement in America," the organization was – according to the author – the initiative of a group of local teenagers frustrated with

[106] "Black Panthers na Korsow," *Vitó*, November 30, 1968, 3. All editions of *Vitó* referred to in this dissertation were accessed through the Mongui Maduro Library in Willemstad, Curaçao.

[107] The Black Panther symbol had first been introduced by the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) for the Lowndes County Freedom Organization (LCFO) – also known as the 'original Black Panther Party' – in Alabama in 1965, after which it spread around the United States and was adopted by Black Panther parties (plural) elsewhere, including the one by Huey Newton and Bobby Seale. For more information, see Donna Murch, "When the Panther Travels: Race and the Southern Diaspora in the History of the BPP, 1964-1972," in *Black Power Beyond Borders,* ed. Nico Slate (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 57-78.

[108] The name of the organization is not translated to English for the purpose of this dissertation: the organization itself adopted an English name.

recent displays of police brutality on Curaçao and neighboring Bonaire.[109] The immediate cause had been an incident two weeks earlier where a Dutch policeman's dog had bitten two Curaçaoan children. Infuriated, the teenagers had decided to take matters into their own hands. They believed it was time to set up a collective system of self-defense against the "continuing abuse" of island's authorities and set up a program of surveillance and responsive action to protect their communities, making it their mission "to monitor the actions of the police in Curaçao (…) and to take measures when necessary."[110] And when it came to the use of violence, the author added, they were "willing to go just as far as the government is."[111]

In reality, the BPC was not established by a group of teenagers but by *Vitó*'s own editor-in-chief Stanley C. Brown, who also worked as a teacher in Willemstad. For several years, Brown had been using the journal to criticize the many systems of oppression that existed on the island, for which he drew inspiration from a number of foreign revolutionary thinkers and movements. As the name, symbolism, and mission of his new organization suggested, Brown felt especially inspired by the African American Black Panther Party, founded by Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale in Oakland, California, in 1966. Though the BPP had started as a community-based group for armed self-defense, its bold actions and media strategies had enabled it to grow from a local initiative into a massive organization with chapters in sixty-eight American cities and a network that spread its paper, *The Black Panther*, to nearly every corner of the United States.[112] Though the BPP was part of the broader Black Power movement, with its central principles of self-determination, self-defense, and self-respect, the Panthers developed a particular ideology of revolutionary nationalism, which combined Black nationalism with Marxism and Third Worldism.[113] With these

[109] "Black Panthers na Korsow," November 30, 3.

[110] "Black Panthers na Korsow," November 30, 3.

[111] "Black Panthers na Korsow," November 30, 3.

[112] For a detailed overview of the Black Panther Party's history and activities, see Joshua Bloom and Waldo E. Martin, Jr., *Black Against Empire: The History and Politics of the Black Panther Party* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013).

[113] Huey P. Newton, *To Die for the People: The Writings of Huey P. Newton* (New York: Random House, 1972), 20; Sean L. Malloy, *Out of Oakland: Black Panther Party Internationalism During the Cold War* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2017), 6; Bloom and Martin, 12; Pinkney, 5.

ideas, the party was considered such a threat that the director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) J. Edgar Hoover would eventually identify the Black Panthers as "without question, the greatest threat to the internal security of the country."[114]

Brown was not the only activist outside the United States to take inspiration from the Black Panther Party. Over the late 1960s and early 1970s, Panther-inspired groups began to spring up all over the world, ranging from the Black Panther Movement in England to the Black Panthers of Israel, the Dalit Panthers in India, and the Polynesian Panther Party in New Zealand.[115] According to Michael L. Clemons and Charles E. Jones, who first navigated the international networks of the BPP, these "global emulators mirrored the goals, ideological orientation, and tactics of the party," often adjusting them to suit local circumstances in the process.[116] While this was thus not uncommon, it does seem like Brown was one of the first to establish such a group. Preceded only by the British Black Panther Movement, founded in 1967, the Black Panthers of Curaçao appears to have been the first of its kind outside the Anglophone world and the first in the Caribbean, predating even the much better-known Black Beret Cadre in Bermuda, established in the following year.[117] Yet, Brown's group has never been included in the historical narrative.

In line with the overarching research questions of this dissertation, this chapter examines why the Black Panthers of Curaçao was founded and how its members used the model of the Black Panther Party to address local grievances. It shows that the BPC never grew into a self-contained organization, but became a subdivision of the broader *Vitó* movement. Based on an analysis of the ideas, activities, and impact of the group, it argues that Brown and others associated with the Black Panthers because this enabled them to position the anticolonial struggle of their tiny Caribbean island into a

[114] Bloom and Martin, 2-3; Malloy, 109.

[115] Clemons and Jones, 181-186; Anne-Marie Angelo, "The Black Panthers in London, 1967-1972: A Diasporic Struggle Navigates the Black Atlantic," *Radical History Review* 103 (Winter 2009): 17-35; Frankel, 81-106; Shilliam, 107-126; Slate, 127-143.

[116] Clemons and Jones, 183.

[117] For an overview of these organizations with the years founded, see Clemons and Jones, 182. For more information on the Black Beret Cadre, see Swan, *Black Power in Bermuda.* Just as the Curaçaoan organization has never been acknowledged before, however, it is possible there were other, perhaps even earlier, Black Panther organizations that have not yet received any attention. This statement here is based only on the information that is available at the time this dissertation is written.

more global revolutionary framework, which they then used to encourage Curaçaoans to fight for their independence. While BPC leader Brown did not wish for the original Black Panthers to become involved in the local revolution, he did believe it was important for Curaçaoans to become part of their transnational network and collaborate with other Black communities that faced similar issues to strengthen their cause.

This chapter furthermore argues that *Vitó* appropriated the recognizable and popular Black Panther 'brand' because it allowed its editors to create a new space for racial discourse in Curaçao, using the revolutionary nationalism of the African American organization to understand the role of race in the broader colonial system. This hit the nail right on the head for many of the Black Curaçaoan workers who read the journal, and was quite novel to them as taboos around racism had long prevented Curaçaoans from engaging with such theories, even though racism was so deeply rooted in their society. By inspiring these workers to think more critically about the intersections between racism, capitalism, and colonialism, then, the Black Panthers of Curaçao would come to play an indirect role in Trinta di Mei, the largest uprising in the history of the Netherlands Antilles, albeit small.

To support these arguments, this chapter is divided into five sections. The first introduces the sociopolitical milieu of Curaçao leading up to the late 1960s and discusses the anticolonial movement that arose to tackle some of its most pertinent issues. The second section introduces *Vitó* and its editor-in-chief, Stanley Brown, who played an important role in providing the ideological backbone for this movement. The third section positions the rise of the Black Panthers of Curaçao into the *Vitó* movement, explaining how Brown established the organization and how it developed over time. The fourth section discusses the ideas of the Black Panthers of Curaçao, demonstrating how Brown and his colleagues used the Black Panther 'brand' to address racial inequality on the island in new ways. The final section explores how these ideas echoed in Trinta di Mei some months after, ultimately telling the story of a seemingly failed Black Power initiative with an unexpectedly lasting influence.

Curaçao in Crisis

To understand the rise of Black Panther activism in Curaçao, it is necessary to start this chapter with some information on the position of the island in the

Netherlands Antilles and the broader Dutch Atlantic. As explained in the introduction to this dissertation, the island of Curaçao was part of the Netherlands Antilles, established as a country in 1948 and as a constituent within the broader order of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in 1954. The country consisted of six islands in the Caribbean Sea, grouping together Aruba, Curaçao, Bonaire, St. Martin, St. Eustatius, and Saba. The first three, known colloquially as the 'ABC islands', are located just off the Venezuelan coast in the Leeward Antilles. First settled by the Spanish and later conquered by the Dutch, the ABC islands used to hold a key position in the transatlantic slave trade, though their arid climate prevented them from developing into profitable plantation colonies.[118] Instead, their economies revolved around trade and commerce, complemented by salt mining, fishing, and some agriculture. In the early twentieth century, both Aruba and Curaçao became key sites for oil refining, conducted by US-owned Lago (Standard Oil) and Dutch-owned Shell respectively. While the ABC islands' official language was Dutch, the most commonly spoken language was Papiamentu, a creole language based primarily on Spanish and Portuguese.

The other three islands, often referred to as the SSS islands, are located in the Windward Islands, a few hundred miles east of Puerto Rico and in close proximity to the (former) British colonies of Anguilla and St. Kitts and Nevis. With their more humid climates, colonialism on these islands involved more plantation slavery, complimented by salt production, fishing, and trade.[119] Despite St. Martin's division into a Dutch and French part, the islands' proximity to the British West Indies and the historical presence of an Anglophone community led to English being the formal language there.[120] Though grouped together as one, the islands within the Netherlands Antilles thus had their own unique histories and cultures, and even within the 'ABC' and 'SSS' divisions were by no means homogenous. Or, as Römer has argued, the Netherlands Antilles was "a legal construction, with no foundation in the social reality."[121]

[118] Dalhuisen, 80.

[119] Dalhuisen, 80.

[120] Oostindie, *Paradise Overseas*, 62.

[121] Römer, "Het "Wij" van de Curacaoenaar," 49.

Ever since the seventeenth century, Curaçao had lain at the center of the Antillean colonies. With a surface area of 444 square kilometers, or 171 square miles, and an estimated population of 150,000 (1970), Curaçao was not only the largest but also the most populous of the islands. Due to its strategic position between North and South America, located only 65 kilometers, or 40 miles, off the Venezuelan coast, Europeans saw it as an ideal basis for international trade, military defense, and colonial administration. The island was in fact so central to Dutch efforts in the region that all Antillean islands were collectively referred to as 'Curaçao and Dependencies' until well into the twentieth century. And even after the colonies were transformed into a Kingdom constituent, Curaçao kept its central position, with its only city, Willemstad, becoming the capital of the Netherlands Antilles and the home to its government, which took seat at Fort Amsterdam, the former headquarters of the Dutch West India Company.

Although the establishment of the Netherlands Antilles as a Kingdom constituent had come with universal suffrage, the government of the islands, as well as the individual island councils, continued to be dominated by White, light-skinned, and Jewish elites. By far the most influential actor in this political landscape was the Democratic Party (Democratische Partij, DP), which had been established by a group of White Protestants in 1944. In the first two decades, the DP was led by Efraïn Jonckheer, who also served as prime minister of the Netherlands Antilles until 1968. When he transferred to The Hague to take up the prominent position of Minister Plenipotentiary, representing the country at the level of the Kingdom, his position was taken up by another politician from the same party, Ciro D. Kroon. Though the power of the DP was relatively stable throughout the mid-twentieth century, it was continuously challenged by the National People's Party (Partido Nashonal di Pueblo, PNP), founded by Dr. Moises Da Costa Gomez in 1948 and, after his passing in 1966, led by Juancho Evertsz. While the Catholic PNP was more popular among the Afro-Antillean population than the Protestant DP, politics were generally seen as an elitist affair on the islands, creating a large gap between the electorate and its representatives.[122]

[122] Dalhuisen, 96-97; 133; Dew, "The Dutch Caribbean," 385-386; Anderson and Dynes, 50-52.

Economic power had historically been in the hands of these same elites, though the rapid upsurge of the local oil industry in the early twentieth century had impacted their position. When oil was found in Venezuela in the 1910s, American and Dutch oil companies Standard Oil and Shell started using the harbors of Aruba and Curaçao to transport newly found Venezuelan oil abroad. When fears arose about the political stability of Venezuela, the companies decided to relocate to the islands and built significant refineries in San Nicolas (the Lago refinery and the Eagle refinery) and Willemstad (the Isla refinery), both of which grew even further when the demand for oil rose exponentially during World War II. These economic shifts transformed the islands completely. The oil industry brought much wealth to both Aruba and Curaçao, making them some of the wealthiest places in the region. This prosperity renewed Dutch interest in the Antilles, too, which had diminished since the abolition of slavery several decades earlier. Politically, the oil boom required new infrastructures, both physical and administrative. It also led to a massive wave of migration, both from the Netherlands and from different areas in the Western Hemisphere. Dutch and American workers moved to the islands to take up managerial and technical positions at the companies. Many of the lower-paying jobs were taken up by Black workers from around the Caribbean, including Suriname. To the dissatisfaction of the Afro-Curaçaoan population, these migrants received preferential treatment over the local workforce. They themselves got little of the prosperity the oil industry brought to their islands.[123]

In the 1960s, Afro-Curaçaoans workers' increasing frustrations with the continuing political power of the local elites, the persisting involvement of the Dutch, and the unequal distribution of wealth led to an upsurge of protest. It became clear that the promises of upward social mobility made by the 1954 Charter and the oil industry did not benefit them – even though they constituted 90 percent of the island's total population. When they were also the first to lose their jobs *en masse* once the oil industry stagnated, leading to some 20 percent unemployment by the mid-1960s, many started to criticize the way their island was governed. Realizing that there was a historical connection between enslavement, poverty, and racial exclusion at different

[123] Sharpe, 120-121; Oostindie, "Black Power," 242; Dalhuisen, 81-84; Broek, *De Kleur van Mijn Eiland,* 192-193; Anderson and Dynes, 33-38.

levels of society, more and more Curaçaoans began to call for a complete decolonization of their island.[124]

The rise of this anticolonial movement coincided with growing discussions about national identity and belonging, which had emerged after the Netherlands Antilles had become autonomous but had also been stimulated by the growing presence of migrants on the island. To distinguish those who had arrived during the oil boom from those who were 'native' to the island – that is, those whose ancestors had lived there for several generations – Curaçaoans came to refer to themselves as *Yunan di Korsow* or 'Children of Curaçao'.[125] This term was, by itself, not uncontested. While the descendants of Dutch Protestant and Jewish settlers considered themselves to be included in this category, as they had lived on the island for hundreds of years, the descendants of enslaved Africans argued that only they were the true heirs of the island, referring to themselves as "nos *bon* yu di Korsoù" or "we the *real* children of Curaçao."[126] Race, in this context, became deeply intertwined with discourse on authenticity, as did language and religion, with Catholicism being the faith of the Black masses and Protestantism seen as a Dutch religion. Though these discussions took part largely in the cultural sphere, as Aart G. Broek has demonstrated in *The Colour of My Island* (2009), they also trickled down into political debates, raising questions of political representation and political interests.[127]

Over the course of the 1960s, such Afrocentric nationalist rhetoric could mostly be found among two groups. The first consisted of a range of labor unions that campaigned for better working conditions and equal treatment across the Curaçaoan workforce, including those at the refinery, the docks, and the government. Black workers had first become organized in the 1930s, when a number of radical unionizers

---

[124] Oostindie, "Black Power," 242-244; Oostindie, *Het Paradijs Overzee,* 161; Broek, *De Kleur van Mijn Eiland,* 193.

[125] Native, in this sense, is not synonymous with indigeneity, but based on the (false) assumption made in the early movement in assuming that African slaves formed the first communities in the countries.

[126] Römer, "Het "Wij" van de Curacaoenaar," 53; Oostindie, *Paradise Overseas,* 59-60, 127; Sharpe, 119; Broek, *De Kleur van Mijn Eiland,* 210-213; Dew, "The Dutch Caribbean," 385-386; Anderson and Dynes, 48. Römer explains that 'bon' in this context translates not to 'good' in a moral sense, but as meaning "for the full 100%," 53.

[127] Broek, *The Colour of my Island.* See also Broek, *De Kleur van Mijn Eiland*, for the more detailed Dutch version of this book.

had introduced new structures for protest on the island.[128] Though most of this leadership had come from migrant workers, many of whom came from the Anglophone Caribbean or Suriname, Curaçaoan involvement in the unions increased rapidly in the 1960s, raising membership from 48 percent in 1957 to 85 percent by 1970.[129] Over this period, scholars William A. Anderson and Russell R. Dynes have argued, unionism became a central platform for political participation among the island's Black workers, used to address those issues that political representatives failed to pay sufficient attention to.[130] Some unions played a larger role in this than others, including the General Dock Workers Union (Algemene Havenunie, AHU) and the Christian trade union, led by the priest Amado Römer, who had begun to preach a 'theology of revolution'.[131] By the mid-1960s, these unions organized strikes on an almost weekly basis, with hundreds to thousands of workers calling for better working conditions and equal opportunities.

The second group among whom revolutionary ideas were on the rise consisted of young Curaçaoans who had recently returned to the island after studying in the Netherlands. Shortly after the new Kingdom structure had come into place, the Antillean government and island councils had decided to set up new scholarship programs to send talented students to schools and universities in the metropole. The idea of this program was that young Antilleans from different backgrounds, not just the elite, could learn new skills in the Netherlands, which they could use for the benefit of their home country once they returned. Though this led to a higher percentage of educated Curaçaoans, it also had some notable side effects for the government itself. While in the Netherlands, many Antillean students had become involved in the radical student movements that swept over Europe at the time. These student movements, as part of the larger New Left, encouraged students to challenge authority and familiarized them with revolutionary ideologies, not least of which were Marxism and Third Worldism. Despite living at the heart of the empire, Antillean students learned

[128] Groenewoud, 104; Dew, "The Dutch Caribbean," 386.

[129] Dew, 386; Anderson and Dynes, 36-37.

[130] Anderson and Dynes, 52-53.

[131] Anderson and Dynes, 60-61.

to use these ideologies to make sense of many problems they had faced in their own Caribbean societies. And when they returned to their islands, they were eager to start acting upon them.[132]

The Rise of an Anticolonial Movement

One of the products of these ideological exchanges was journal *Vitó*, introduced at the beginning of this chapter. Translating to 'plantation overseer' in Papiamentu, the journal was first published in 1964 by a group of recent college graduates who wanted to create an independent space where they could criticize the position of the Netherlands Antilles in the Kingdom and provide political commentary on recent affairs and developments in the country. Its intellectual baseline was comparable to that of many groups in the New Left, consisting of a combination of anticolonialism, anticapitalism, and a general opposition to the oppression of marginalized groups, including women, sex workers, and gay men. In challenging these different systems, the journal's authors were not afraid to point fingers at prominent members of the Curaçaoan community, including businessmen, artists, and prominent policemen. Most heavily criticized of all was Prime Minister Jonckheer of the DP, who was seen as the personification of everything that was wrong on the island. As Anderson and Dynes have described it, *Vitó* "took to task those forces in Curacao identified responsible for the political and economic exploitation of the masses," as well as anyone else they considered to be "allied with Dutch neo-colonial interests."[133] The latter included the United States, too, whose growing power in the Caribbean *Vitó* saw as a threat to the autonomy of the Netherlands Antilles.

Initially, the journal was published by a group of students who had already published a similar journal in the Netherlands, named *Kambio.* This journal, as Chelsea Schields has argued, was known as an "excessively ideological paper" whose "romantic Marxism" had been criticized even by others on the left.[134] Under the leadership of lawyer Erich Zielinski, the first editions of *Vitó* largely followed in those same

[132] Anderson and Dynes, 62; Römer, 21; Broek, *De Kleur van Mijn Eiland*, 193; Oostindie, "Black Power," 248; Schields, 100; Groenewoud, 108-109; Dalhuisen, 135-136.

[133] Anderson and Dynes, 63.

[134] Schields, 100.

footsteps, presenting highly intellectual concepts and complicated analytical frameworks to bring its revolutionary message across. Although this helped the young authors gain a small audience with the educated middle and upper classes of the island, it created much distance between the journal and the people it so passionately defended. It also did not help that the journal was published in Dutch, while the majority of Curaçaoans had trouble understanding the language. This changed when Zielinski resigned in 1967 and handed over his position to Stanley C. Brown, who would bring *Vitó* to the forefront of the Antillean anticolonial movement.

Brown was born in Willemstad, Curaçao, on 6 October 1938 to a White mother from St. Martin and a Black father from St. Lucia, though he was raised in part by his paternal grandmother, who had been born in St. Eustatius and was a committed Garveyite.[135] The eldest of four brothers, Brown grew up in a Black working class neighborhood near the Shell refinery, where his father worked as a security guard.[136] After finishing school in the mid-1950s, he received a scholarship from the island council to study in the Netherlands. He left for Dongen, a village in the province of Brabant, where he pursued a degree in education at a small Catholic college.[137] During his time in the Netherlands, Brown developed a strong interest in both Marxism and Third Worldism, "reading Confucius, Lenin and all of those other books that were forbidden by the college."[138] When he returned to Curaçao in 1961 to take up a position at the Peter Stuyvesant College in Willemstad, he took many of these ideas with him into the classroom, hoping to inspire a new generation of Caribbeans to fight against the system.[139] "I wanted to make the equality I had gotten to know in Europe a reality

[135] Stanley Brown, interview by Gert Oostindie, 12 March 1998, Collectie 30 Mei 1969 (KITLV), UBL474, Microdisc 50, Special Collections, Leiden University, Leiden, the Netherlands.

[136] Stanley C. Brown, "Stanley Brown's Think Tank," webpage accessed via *The Way Back Machine*, https://web.archive.org/web/20120630220319/http://www.stanleybrownthinkank.org:80/; Brown, interview by Oostindie.

[137] "De Weg van een Verontwaardigd Christen," *Amigoe*, May 31, 1986, 8.

[138] Elizabeth de Montsouris, "Activist Stanley Brown Kiest voor Optie C," *Amigoe*, November 16, 1993, 13; American Consul Curaçao, *Collection of Biographic Information on Potential Leaders*, June 14, 1968, page 1, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1967-69, Box 2364, Pol 6 NETH ANT, General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD, United States.

[139] Montsouris, 13; "De Weg van een Verontwaardigd Christen," 8; Brown in *Curaçao, 30 Mei 1969*, 13-14.

on Curaçao," he would later reflect.[140] Controversially, the young teacher moved back into his childhood home in Groot Kwartier despite having obtained a college degree and a relatively high-earning job, making him part of the island's small middle class. This was even more controversial because Brown was very light-skinned and generally passed as White, while the neighborhood was – in his words – a "black ghetto."[141] To Brown, however, this was the perfect place to build a revolution.[142]

Together with fellow editors Angel Salsbach, Lies Salsbach, Emmy Henriquez, and Yellie Alkema, a Dutch social worker employed by the Reformed Church on the island, Brown turned *Vitó* into a truly radical platform. To open up the journal to a broader audience and to demonstrate their dedication to decolonization, the new editors began publishing the journal in Papiamentu. They also altered its visual appeal, introducing bold and flashy typefaces, highlighting provocative quotes, and using elicit illustrations to grasp their audience's attention. Perhaps the most significant change they made, however, was to start immersing themselves into the local labor movement, increasingly calling out employers for their unfair policies and speaking out in support of ongoing strikes by the island's many different unions, some of which the members of *Vitó* themselves also began to participate in.[143] Their ties to the workers grew especially strong when Brown befriended Wilson 'Papa' Godett and Amador Nita of the General Dock Workers Union (Algemene Haven Unie, AHU), considered some of the most charismatic leaders of the labor movement.[144]

These strategies proved to be highly effective. By the end of 1968, just over a year after Brown had taken over, *Vitó* had reached an average circulation of 12,000 and was distributed by eighty-five different sellers in the Dutch Caribbean and the Netherlands. To support this distribution, Brown would later reflect, the editors had trained some twenty young Curaçaoan men "ideologically and militarily" to travel around the island on mopeds and spread *Vitó*'s revolutionary message, selling

[140] Brown in *Curaçao, 30 Mei 1969*, 22.

[141] Brown in *Curaçao, 30 Mei 1969*, 13.

[142] Brown in *Curaçao, 30 Mei 1969*, 13-14; Interview with Brown in Diekmann, 32.

[143] Anderson and Dynes, 64-65; Broek, *De Kleur van Mijn Eiland,* 196-197; Oostindie, "Black Power," 244; Schields, 100.

[144] Anderson and Dynes, 65; Oostindie, *Curaçao, 30 Mei 1969*, 15.

thousands of editions along the way, all while "getting paid more than the average worker."[145] In doing so, to use the words of Anderson and Dynes, *Vitó* "became the chief communication link between the radical intellectuals and the labor movement."[146] Its reputation as such even surpassed the borders of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, as Brown sent regular updates and editions of *Vitó* to publishers in Cuba, North America, and throughout Europe, where similar groups were eager to hear about anticolonialism in the Caribbean. In exchange, the Antillean radicals received materials from like-minded activists elsewhere in the world, which were then distributed among the readers of *Vitó*.[147]

Over the late 1960s, *Vitó* became so popular that its editors also began organizing their own political protests, most of which took place at the Gomez Square in Punda, the historical city center of Willemstad.[148] Initially, the main intention of these protests was to demonstrate against the political decisions and, in typical sixties style, aggravate the government. Each week, Brown explained to Gert Oostindie in a 1998 interview, *Vitó* would set up a detailed scheme for their protest. Their strategy was to create a balance between serious political resistance and playful actions that would cause a stir and get the attention of the authorities. He explained:

> One week we would push hard, we would scream revolution, rioting, fire. The following week we would do something fun. We were highly influenced by the Provos.[149] We would come up with pranks for everyone. When members of the DP, all of them machos, showed up to fight us, we would take the homosexual route. We would provoke the DP members by setting up different groups of little boys who would go around squeezing their butts, and they would freak out. Those were the

[145] Brown, interview by Oostindie. A shortened version of this interview can be found in Oostindie, *Curaçao, 30 Mei 1969*, 12-22. See also Peter Verton, *Politieke Dynamiek en Dekolonisatie; De Nederlandse Antillen tussen Autonomie en Onafhankelijkheid* (Alphen aan den Rijn: Samson, 1977), as cited in Broek, *De Kleur van Mijn Eiland,* 196-197; Schields, 100.

[146] Anderson and Dynes, 64.

[147] Letters to and from Stanley Brown about these exchanges can be found in *Vito-Artikelen, Archief, 1969-1971, N.B. Correspondentie e.a*., Microfilm Collection Stanley C. Brown, Box 3, Section 121, Archivo Nashonal, Willemstad, Curaçao. Brown confirms this in his interview with Oostindie.

[148] Gert Oostindie, "Woedend Vuur," in *Dromen en Littekens: Dertig Jaar na de Curaçaose Revolte, 30 Mei 1969*, ed. Gert Oostindie (Amsterdam: Amsterdam UP, 1999), 18; Diekmann, 21-22.

[149] The Provos, or Provo Movement, was a Dutch anarchist New Left group famous for their clever yet provocative methods of protest.

> kinds of things we did. That is why there was always great tension around the Gomez Square.[150]

Though their protest was thus by no means violent, the Gomez Square meetings did cause quite the stir on the conservative island. "As innocent as these things may have seemed in West European and North American milieus," Römer would later write, "they brought the local citizens and authorities, who were not used to as much, into an absolute state of shock."[151] Each Saturday, these protests drew some two to three thousand Curaçaoans to the square.[152]

As the journal itself became more popular among the local labor movement, however, *Vitó*'s protests also became more serious and substantive. In collaboration with local union leaders, *Vitó* began to work towards more labor-oriented protest, calling for better political representation and workers' rights, frequently joining the unions in their demonstrations on site.[153] By the end of the decade, these actions helped *Vitó* transform from a mere intellectual platform into a movement in its own right, referred to by its leaders as the Revolutionary Guard Vitó.[154]

The Black Panthers of Curaçao

It was in this same period that Brown began to experiment with new revolutionary theories to strengthen his own work. As mentioned previously, Brown had set up an extensive network connecting *Vitó* and a number of publishers elsewhere, who sent him foreign revolutionary writings in exchange for his own. This was quite tricky to do. As Brown and Henriquez once wrote to fellow Black Panther supporters in the Netherlands, who will be discussed in Chapter 3, the Antillean

---

[150] Brown in *Curaçao, 30 Mei 1969*, 14.

[151] *30 Mei 1969: Rapport van de Commissie tot Onderzoek van de Achtergronden en Oorzaken van de Onlusten welke op 30 Mei 1969 op Curaçao Hebben Plaatsgehad* (Oranjestad: Verenigde Antilliaanse Drukkerijen, 1970), 55.

[152] Brown in *Curaçao, 30 Mei 1969*, 15.

[153] Brown in *Curaçao, 30 Mei 1969*, 15.

[154] American Consul Curaçao, *Post Riot Threats Against Dutch Residents of the Antilles*, June 22, 1969, page 3, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1967-1969, Box 2364, Pol 19 NETH ANT, General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD, United States; "Open Brief van de Revolutionaire Garde Vitó aan P. van de Hoeven, H.L. Braam en J. Gomes e.a., 12 Juni 1969," Collectie 30 Mei 1969 (KITLV), UBL474, identifier 71, Special Collections, Leiden University, Leiden, the Netherlands.

government regularly intercepted materials coming in from abroad, especially when they were sent by radical organizations.[155] Yet, while setting up his network, Brown had managed to get in touch with the Black Panther Party, which agreed to send him several editions of *The Black Panther*, first published in 1967.[156] The contents of the BPP newspaper matched Brown's own ideas almost flawlessly. Like Brown, the Panthers promoted a combined ideology of anti-imperialism and anticapitalism, referred to by the latter as revolutionary nationalism. Like Brown, the Panthers drew inspiration from prominent Third World revolutionaries such as Fidel Castro, Che Guevara, and Mao Zedong.[157]

In the Black Panther Party, Brown saw an opportunity to create a more permanent space for antiracist discourse in *Vitó*. Until that point, discussions of race had been surprisingly absent from the journal. For the most part, criticism of White elites had been framed in terms of nationality, in the case of the Dutch, or religion, in the case of local Whites. Criticism of the Dutch had generally taken place through the journal's writings on the so-called 'Macamba'. Though some argue that Macamba is a neutral Papiamentu term for Dutch people, *Vitó* defined the Macamba only as the kind of Dutch person who came to the island with a colonial attitude. As one anonymous *Vitó* author wrote:

> We have nothing against the Dutchman. We are glad when he comes around to help out, except for the macamba. THE MACAMBA (…) can be recognized by his mentality: vacation, retirement, more money, penny-pinching, discounts, returning to the Netherlands as soon as possible, going DUTCH.[158]

When it came to local White elites, *Vitó* used a different terminology. As was common in Curaçao at the time, these were commonly referred to by their religious affiliation,

---

[155] Solidariteitscomité Black Panther Party, *Black Panther Nieuwsbulletin*, April 1970, 3, ZK 72913 (1970), International Institute for Social History, Amsterdam, the Netherlands.

[156] Brown has stated multiple times that he was in direct contact with Eldridge Cleaver, as well as the Black Power movement in Trinidad, but thus far there are no archival records to support either of these claims. See Brown, interview by Oostindie; Montsouris, 13; "De Weg van een Verontwaardigd Christen," 8.

[157] Brown in *Curaçao, 30 Mei 1969*, 16; Schields, 98-100. For references to these thinkers in *Vitó*, see for example: "Mi Bishita na Cuba," *Vitó*, March 22, 1969, 2; ""Che" Guevara," *Vitó*, December 19, 1970, 2; "Un Marxista a Gana Elekshon na Chili," *Vitó*, September 12, 1970, 2.

[158] ""Statuut voor Stilstand": Sta Tuut," *Vitó*, year 1, number 5, n.d., 2. The term 'going Dutch' was written in English here.

with Antilleans of Dutch descent described as Protestants and Jewish Antilleans being referred to as Jews. Though it would have been clear to any reader that these words were used to clarify a person's racial identity, the actual language of race remained absent from *Vitó*'s pages, as the topic was so deeply taboo on the island.

The first time the journal wrote more openly on the topic of race was in 1967, leading up to the Sinterklaas holiday on December 5. During this holiday, Sinterklaas (Saint Nicholas), a stately White bishop with a long silver beard, arrived in Willemstad on a steamboat to hand out presents and treats to children. He did so together with his servant, known as Zwarte Piet (Black Pete). As per Dutch tradition, Zwarte Piet was dressed in a Moorish costume and had on a full head of blackface, complete with bright red lipstick, afro wig, and golden earrings. Zwarte Piet was a jovial character, acting dumb and clumsy, but always happy to serve his master. Brown began to challenge the blackface tradition in his very first edition as *Vitó* editor-in-chief. Depicting Zwarte Piet with chains on his feet, he argued that the caricature was insulting because it was "the personification of all of the poor qualities of the negro."[159] Each of the following years, *Vitó* started publishing more extensive critiques of the colonial tradition, now accompanied by an illustration of Sinterklaas hanging on the gallows. The journal described the holiday as a deeply racist institution designed to teach children that the Black man, "who would not read, write, or speak," was inferior to the White man, who was saintly and caring. As such, the journal urged to either abolish the holiday altogether, or switch things up by making Sinterklaas Black and Zwarte Piet White, which it considered the perfect act of decolonization.[160] But of course the annual discussion of Zwarte Piet did not leave enough space to discuss the important position of race in the colonial system.

This was where the Black Panther model became useful, though Brown had to be incredibly careful if he wanted to publish this kind of criticism. Having first been arrested for his activism in 1967, he was aware that the Curaçaoan security services

[159] Cover and "De Sint," *Vitó,* year 2, number 7, n.d., 1, 12.

[160] "San'Ni-Cola-As 1968," *Vitó*, November 17, 1968, 3; "San'Ni-Cola-As 1968 no. II," *Vitó*, November 23, 1968, 3; ""San Ni-Kola-As 1968 no. III," *Vitó*, November 30, 1968, 2; "Sinterklaar I Zwarte Piet," *Vitó*, December 6, 1969, 2; "Zwarte Piet, e Homber Pretu Pendew," *Vitó*, October 24, 1970, 2; "Vito y Sanicolas," *Vitó*, December 19, 1970, 2.

read everything he published.[161] In fact, it was not rare for government representatives to approach him to discuss his most recent work.[162] Speaking so openly about racism when this was such a taboo would have surely gotten him into trouble. To avoid this, Brown decided to start writing "Black Panthers na Korsow" completely anonymously, presenting the Black Panthers of Curaçao as an organization separate from *Vitó*. He used a variety of tricks to distance himself from the Panther group. In his first column, as described at the beginning of this chapter, Brown wrote that the BPC had been established by "a group of youths between the ages of fourteen and nineteen."[163] In that same column, he added separate comments by *Vitó* to address some of the issues raised by the 'youths'. After the Black Panther piece called for armed self-defense, the journal pretended to warn the BPC "not to make the mistake that youths in other countries have made by thinking that the police is our enemy: [they] are not our enemy, but the system is."[164] In a later article, Brown would create a similar distance between *Vitó* and the BPC by stating that the journal welcomed their column only because the island did "not have a free press, where minority groups can express themselves."[165] According to Brown, these strategies were successful. "They often approached me to find out who was behind this," he shared later, "but nobody suspected it was me, with my white skin and blue eyes."[166] Brown believed this anonymity enabled *Vitó* to publish its antiracist ideas more freely.[167]

---

[161] Brown, interview by Oostindie. This was also confirmed by Wim Statius Muller, head of national security, in his interview with the Trinta di Mei investigation committee. "Statius Muller, Hoofd Veiligheidsdienst N.A.," Collectie 30 Mei 1969 (KITLV), UBL474, identifier 16, Special Collections, Leiden University, Leiden, the Netherlands.

[162] Brown, interview by Oostindie.

[163] "Black Panthers na Korsow," November 30, 3

[164] "Black Panthers na Korsow," November 30, 3

[165] "Black Panthers na Korsow," *Vitó*, December 7, 1968, 3.

[166] Brown, interview by Oostindie. Worth noting is that references to Brown and the BPC in other sources suggest that many were, in fact, aware of Brown's leadership of the group. See Otto Kuijk, "Rapport van een Razernij," *De Telegraaf*, June 1, 1969, 5; "Proces Tegen Redacteur van "Vito"," *Limburgsch Dagblad,* July 22, 1969, 4; Gerard Habraken, "Voor Black Power Ligt op Curaçao Groot Veld Braak," *Limburgsch Dagblad*, March 12, 1970, 4. The US Consul General was also aware of Brown's leadership over the organization. American Embassy The Hague to Secretary of State, Telegram, *Neth Reaction to Events in Curacao*, 4 June 1969, page 3, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1967-1969, Box 2364, Pol 19 NETH ANT, General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD, United States.

[167] Brown, interview with Oostindie.

Over the following four months, "Black Panthers na Korsow" became a returning column in *Vitó*. Using the same Black Panther name, symbolism, and rhetoric as before, the column appeared every other week on page three of the journal, making it one of the best recognizable and most popular items in the journal. Content wise, each column focused on a recent event or development in Curaçaoan society and addressed this through a racial lens, highlighting how these event showed patterns of racial discrimination on the island or proposing new models for Black emancipation. The column was published over a period of four months, starting in November 1968 and ending by March 1969. To fully appreciate the significance of the Black Panthers of Curaçao, the next section provides a close reading of the column's contents.

Behind the scenes, the Black Panthers of Curaçao also began to grow as a group. Besides Brown, fellow *Vitó* editors Henriquez and Salsbach decided to join the BPC, helping Brown in doing the research and developing the ideas for the column.[168] Perhaps even more importantly, the BPC gained a small but notable following among those already involved in the 'Revolutionary Guard'. Wearing costumes inspired by the African American party, including berets and leather jackets, an unknown number of Black teenagers started participating in the weekly Gomez Square protests under the Black Panther banner, engaging fellow *Vitó* readers and spectators alike in advanced discussions about racial inequality.[169] Though they may not have been involved in the BPC from the start, as *Vitó* had claimed, they certainly began to give a face to the group on the streets. Though Brown continued to write the column, the on-the-ground coordination of the group was taken up by different members of the BPC, though unfortunately it seems there is no record of who any of these young Black Panther supporters were. What does become clear is that they came to form a notable part of the *Vitó* movement, forming a recognizable subsection within its larger structure.[170]

---

[168] Solidariteitscomité Black Panther Party, April 1970, 3; Brown, interview with Oostindie.

[169] American Consul Curaçao, *Report of Commission to Investigate Causes of May 30th, 1969 Riots on Curaçao*, October 6, 1970, 3-4, Political & Defense, 1970-1973s, Box 2499, Pol 19 NETH ANT, General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD, United States. A similar suggestion is made by Anderson and Dynes, 11.

[170] Diekmann, 23; "Statius Muller, hoofd Veiligheidsdienst N.A."; American Consul Curaçao, *Report of Commission to Investigate Causes of May 30th,* 3-4.

Under the ideological leadership of Brown, they brought the ideas of the Panthers to the heart of Afro-Curaçaoan resistance.

A New Racial Discourse

To understand what drew these young men and women to the BPC, it is necessary to dive deeper into the column Brown and his colleagues wrote in *Vitó.* Important to note up front is that the BPC never seems to have shared a clear statement on its ideological conviction. Instead, the organization wrote a bi-weekly column that discussed recent affairs on the island and showed the importance of race in Curaçaoan society and beyond. A close reading of these columns helps to explain not only how the Curaçaoan Panthers interpreted the revolutionary nationalism of the BPP, but also how they legitimized the Black Panther model in the context of their island. For the most part, the column revolved around race.

The main form of racial discrimination highlighted in "Black Panthers na Korsow" was the legacy of slavery on the island. This was visible, Brown argued, in two main areas: labor conditions and policing. To illustrate how these fit into the longer history of Black exploitation on the island, he wrote a critical article on the port office at the heart of Willemstad, where dock workers, shipping businesses, and government officials worked together in maritime transport and maintenance. "We all know the office at the Ruyterkade," the BPC foreman wrote, "yet none of us know the bitter story[:] the colonial abuse, the discrimination, the slave system that reigns over the port office now in 1968."[171] Describing recent events where a Black man from Bonaire had gone missing and the authorities only agreed to start searching after their employees had gone on strike, the BPC leader argued that the situation at the office was inhumane and no different from the way Curaçaoan workers were treated during slavery or prior to the introduction of the Charter. Even the kinds of jobs that were available for Black employees at the port office had not changed since abolition, he argued. The descendants of slaves were still "serving and cleaning and sweeping" as well as "going up and down the high seas day and night (…) in small dangerous flatboats," allowing 'mener macamba' – the Dutch master – to continue exploiting and

[171] "Havenkantoor," *Vitó*, December 14, 1968, 2.

abusing Black workers, just as the 'polis macamba' – the Dutch police – continued to assault them in the streets.[172]

To free themselves from these legacies, Brown argued further, Afro-Curaçaoans had to overthrow not only the Antillean and Dutch elites that so clearly disregarded them, but also had to liberate themselves from the colonial gaze that continued to dominate mainstream perspectives on Curaçaoan identity. Focusing especially on literature, arts, and cultural heritage, "Black Panthers na Korsow" proposed two models for cultural decolonization. One of these was discussed in the report the BPC published on a literary roundtable discussion organized by the Cultural Center of Curaçao (CCC) at the Hilton Hotel on 25 January 1969.[173] While Brown criticized many different aspects of the event, his main concern was with the fact that all authors who were present spoke Dutch to accommodate the large number of Dutch guests in their midst, including those who normally wrote in Papiamentu. One of these was author and poet Guillermo Rosario who, in the Curaçaoan Panther's opinion "should have proposed as an Antillean author, who writes in Papiamentu, to speak in Papiamentu (…) instead of playing 'Zwarte Piet' with his broken and ridiculous Dutch next to the 'White Sinterklaas' that dominated the conversation completely."[174] In Brown's opinion, this was an act of colonial submission, nourished by the common idea that Papiamentu was inferior to Dutch and therefore less respectable (a remarkable accusation considering Rosario is generally acknowledged for his early dedication to Papiamentu authorship).[175]

To break away from this "inferiority complex," the BPC foreman continued, Afro-Curaçaoans had to distance themselves from the culture of the colonizer. To achieve this, he spoke about leaving behind the mentality of the 'old negro' in exchange

[172] "Havenkantoor," 2; "Black Panthers na Korsow," November 30, 3.

[173] "Black Panthers na Korsow," *Vitó*, February 1, 1969, 2. For details on the latter event itself, see also "Eerste "Teach-In" op Curacao voor Herhaling Vatbaar," *Amigoe di Curaçao,* January 27, 1969, 3.

[174] "Black Panthers na Korsow," February 1, 2. In this context, the Panthers used 'Black Pete' as a kind of synonym for 'Uncle Tom' in the US, which African American radicals often used to accuse others of being too subservient or obedient to Whites. Other articles in *Vitó* show that the American term 'Uncle Tom' was also regularly used by Curaçaoan radicals. See "Vota Demokraat," *Vitó,* year 3, number 2, n.d., 4; "Problemanan den Partido Demokraat," *Vitó*, January 25, 1969, 1; "Partido Democratico, *Vitó*, May 31, 1969, 3 ; "Paula y Su Identidad," *Vitó*, December 6, 1969, 1; "Konose Bo Enemigu," *Vitó*, December 20, 1969, 3.

[175] In *De Kleur van Mijn Eiland*, Broek positions Rosario in the broader *di-nos-e-ta* movement, arguing that his *Mi Nigrita-Papyamentu* (1971) was "one of the earliest manifestations of the *di-nos-e-ta* ideal," 211.

for that of the 'new negro', in line with the ideas of African American scholar Alain Locke.[176] Interestingly, the difference between these had been discussed by the Black Panther Party in its newspaper only two months prior, shortly before the Black Panthers of Curaçao were established, making it likely that Brown had read about it in *The Black Panther*.[177] Putting this model into practice, Brown argued that Rosario's behavior at the CCC event was exemplary of "the mentality of [the] old negro."[178] In line with Locke's argument that the 'old negro' lived in the shadows of slavery, Brown argued that such a person could be recognized by his continuous submission to the wishes of the White man ("saying "yes sir, no sir""), his continuous need for White support ("asking "white man help me""), and by his "blaming the whites for his misery, while staying in the same place without working or fighting for his rights."[179] Instead, the Black Panthers of Curaçao pushed readers to embrace the mindset of the 'new negro', writing:

> Black Panther believes that:
> - The new negro will fight for his rights. (…)
> - The new negro does not accept white charity.
> - The new negro does not ask to get pity from them either.
> - The new negro does not make an effort to get accepted by white people the way Rosario has, while looking ridiculous because his Dutch is bad.[180]

The first step towards this new mentality, Brown argued, was to start accepting that "black is beautiful" (using the phrase in English) and to stop accepting colonial discrimination in their own society.[181]

In another edition of the "Black Panthers na Korsow" column, Brown published an interview with Guinean dancer Italo Zambo of *Les Ballets Africains*, which

[176] For the original anthology, see Alain Locke, *The New Negro: An Interpretation* (New York : A. and C. Boni, 1925).

[177] "The New Negro T.V. Stereotype," *The Black Panther,* October 26, 1968, 5.

[178] "Black Panthers na Korsow," February 1, 2.

[179] "Black Panthers na Korsow," February 1, 2.

[180] "Black Panthers na Korsow," February 1, 2.

[181] "Black Panthers na Korsow," February 1, 2.

performed on the island that winter.[182] Here, the BPC offered a second model for thinking about race. This model was based entirely off of Pan-Africanism, which was gaining popularity at rapid speed within the Black Power movement at the time. In his interview, Zambo argued that the difference was not between the old and new negro but rather between the 'negro' and the 'African'. Observing that the deepfelt legacies of slavery in Curaçao positioned locals in the former category, the artist explained that "a negro is a black person who does not know the value of his 'blackness'. On the contrary, he is ashamed of his color (…) and acts like someone with chains around [his] neck."[183] This was a stark contrast to what Zambo described as the African. "We Africans, always will stay a free people. We are proud of our black color, because we know its value," he explained.[184] Africans, in this context, did not refer to a nationality, but to an attitude, which could be embraced by anyone in the African diaspora, giving the example of Black Power activists in the United States as proof that the 'negro' mentality could be abandoned. If Curaçaoans wanted to follow the same path, the column suggested, they had to learn to appreciate their value "because the whole world is changing and is seeing that black is better."[185]

Though both of these models for Black consciousness revolved around different terminologies, their core message was the same: if Afro-Curaçaoans wanted to free themselves from Dutch colonialism, they had to embrace a new racial mindset. And in both cases, this mindset was deeply rooted in the already existing framework of the African diaspora. In support of the term 'new negro', the Black Panther group argued that the term 'negro' provided Black Curaçaoans with an ethnic identity that they shared with millions of others around the world.[186] The term 'African' in the Pan-African model served the same purpose. "Do not forget that you and I are each other's family," Zambo reminded the readers of the Black Panther column. He continued:

---

[182] "Black Panthers na Korsow," *Vitó,* December 21, 1968, 3; "Arthur Mitchell's Wrong Step or 'Pas des Blancs'," *RUKU: Algemeen Cultureel Maandblad voor de Nederlandse Antillen* 2.2 (May 1970), 33-34.

[183] "Black Panthers na Korsow," December 21, 3. In the original text, the term 'blackness' is written in English.

[184] "Black Panthers na Korsow," December 21, 3.

[185] "Black Panthers na Korsow," December 21, 3.

[186] "Black Panthers na Korsow," February 1, 2.

> We are cousins, almost brothers. Your people were exported from Africa. My birthland. We are brothers because together we have suffered the same abuse and exploitation of white people. Now it is time to change our behavior and our actions, which is how we will confront the whites. But we will no longer kneel. The time has come for us to end it once and for all.[187]

The realization that Curaçaoans shared their fate with other Black peoples in the world was of utmost importance to the BPC, which saw transnational Black solidarity as a fundamental step towards decolonization.

To illustrate the need for such solidarity, the Curaçaoan Panthers repeatedly positioned the Afro-Curaçaoan struggle against colonialism within a much broader framework of Black resistance, placing themselves in close proximity to the Black Power movement in Jamaica, the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa, the long tradition of Black radicalism in the United States, and the anticolonial struggle on the African continent. "Globally we have seen that the black race has led bloody revolts against the abuse of the white race and their ancestors," Brown wrote in one of the final Black Panther columns. "But here on Curaçao, despite all of the discrimination and exploitation of the white bosses of Curaçao (the Jonckheer, Winkel, Isa families) black people have still not used armed force, fire etc. against the propaganda of the white man."[188] The only way to change this was to look outward and take inspiration from the other Black revolutions of the world. "All white countries have united and protected each other," the Black Panther column stated in reference to both colonialism and apartheid. "It is time for us to also unite and defend each other."[189]

It thus becomes clear that the BPC very intentionally used the model of the Black Panther Party to address the specific manifestations of racism in its direct environment. Brown, and possibly other authors, legitimized the need for Decolonial Black Power on the island by showing how colonialism, racism, and capitalism intersected on a daily basis, whether this was through the legacies of slavery (in the case of the dock workers), the general disregard for the Black population's heritage (in the case of the CCC roundtable), or the colonial mentality of even the most prominent

[187] "Black Panthers na Korsow," December 21, 3.

[188] "Black Panthers na Korsow," 25 January, 3.

[189] "Black Panthers na Korsow," December 21, 3.

Afro-Curaçaoans in the community (in discussions on the 'old negro' and 'new negro', or the 'negro' and the 'African'). By explaining how these same forms of oppression existed elsewhere in the world too, even inviting foreign activists like Zambo to speak directly to its readers, the BPC suggested that Curaçaoans had to catch up with the rest of the Black world if they wanted to uplift themselves and their people from the deep-rooted oppression on the island.

However, while the "Black Panthers na Korsow" column became one of the most popular in the journal, the final article of the BPC was already published in the spring of 1969. It is not clear why this was the case. According to Brown, the column was such a success that he wanted to start publishing a completely separate Black Panther paper, which would allow him to develop these ideas and grow his organization even further.[190] Instead, it seems like he decided to incorporate the ideas of the Black Panther group into the general content of *Vitó*, making race a more common theme in other parts of the journal. If anything, this was a sign that "Black Panthers na Korsow" had been popular enough to convince Brown and the other editors that issues relating to race could be addressed freely without hiding behind an anonymous column. What happened to the BPC after the removal of the column remains somewhat unclear. Brown continued to draw inspiration from the Black Panther Party for his writings in *Vitó*. Likewise, the group of Black Panther supporters that had emerged within the movement still gathered at the Gomez Square meetings on Saturdays, which they continued to do until at least 1970. Both will be discussed in further detail in the next chapter. Even more so, the ideas of the Curaçaoan Panthers lived on in the minds of the thousands of *Vitó* readers who had read the column religiously. The impact of this would become clear when many of these readers joined the largest protest in the history of the Netherlands Antilles only a few weeks later.

Impact on Trinta di Mei

Much has been written on the uprising that took place in Curaçao on 30 May 1969, popularly referred to as Trinta di Mei. As mentioned in the first section of this chapter, the 1960s had seen the rise of increasing resistance against the persistent power of Dutch and White Antillean elites on the island. With the labor movement

[190] Brown, interview with Oostindie.

increasingly gaining traction, conflicts over workers rights were becoming more frequent, supported in part by the solidarity of the *Vitó* movement. As time went by, it became clear to the workers that the newly autonomous government of the Netherlands Antilles was not prepared to stand up for them against the powerful Dutch companies that carried much of the responsibility for these problems.[191] After years of organizing through legal channels, with little to no results, the situation escalated when a strike at the Isla Refinery triggered thousands of laborers to rise up against their employers and, ultimately, everything they believed to be wrong with Curaçaoan society.

That morning, two large protests were being held at different sites in Willemstad: one at the refinery, organized by the Curaçao Federation of Labor (CFW) for construction workers at Wescar, a subcontractor for Shell, and another in the harbor, organized by previously mentioned dock workers' unionists Godett and Nita. Together with Brown and other members of *Vitó*, the dock workers decided to make their way to the refinery to express their solidarity with the construction workers. Here, Godett proposed to march all the way to Fort Amsterdam in the center of Willemstad to confront the government, which he held accountable for failing to support the Black workers of the island. The group grew along the way, picking up hundreds of other laborers, unemployed men, teenagers, and other supporters who marched toward the center. As frustration turned into rage, the crowd started attacking vehicles, breaking windows, starting fires, and stealing from the stores on the high street. The more people (and alcohol) became involved, the more Godett, Nita, and Brown lost control of the crowd, while the police became ever more aggressive towards them. Before they were able to reach the Fort, Godett was shot and carried off to hospital by the other leaders. Several others were left wounded or even killed. When the police proved to be incapable of stopping the masses, hundreds of Dutch marines were tasked with ending the uprising.[192] By the end of the day, the city was in ruins, and one thing was clear: these people no longer wanted to wait for slow-but-steady improvement. They wanted a revolution.

[191] Oostindie, "Black Power," 245.

[192] An overview of these events was published in *30 Mei 1969: Rapport van de Commissie*, and reproduced and expanded in Wessels, 41-78. An English version can be found in Anderson and Dynes, 69-78.

As many studies of the uprising have pointed out, strong anticolonial and racial sentiments on Trinta di Mei. Though the uprising had started as a labor conflict, at least a section of the crowd used the opportunity to protest against the Macamba and White elites of the island. Initially, the crowd moved between businesses to confront the Dutch and other White managers they held responsible for the discriminatory practices of the companies.[193] As the crowd made its way downtown, they also began assaulting White passers-by, sometimes even destroying their vehicles and demanding them to get out to attack them.[194] Some have suggested that local Whites who could prove their Antillean identity were spared, but Brown himself denied that this was the case, stating that any White person was seen as the enemy that day.[195] When the protesters began robbing and destroying buildings in the city center, they targeted only those they knew to be Dutch or White-owned.[196] While this happened, the phrase "Mata e macambanan!" ("Death to the macambas!") was shouted many times over.[197]

As soon as the uprising was over, many began to wonder if there was any connection between Trinta di Mei and the Black Power movement. Severely underestimating the impact of *Vitó*'s own writings, Antillean authorities, foreign diplomats, and (inter)national security services assumed that the anti-White sentiments of the protesters had been forced upon them by some outside force.[198] Rumors even suggested that the protest had been directly instigated by "communist-inspired black power organizations in the United States," likely referring to the Black

[193] Anderson and Dynes, 131.

[194] Anderson and Dynes, 74, 132.

[195] Anderson and Dynes, 131-132; Brown, interview by Oostindie.

[196] Anderson and Dynes, 78.

[197] "Rapporten van W.C.A. van Kappel, Commissaris van Politie, Uitgebracht op 2 en 11 Juni aan de Minister van Justitie, Curaçao, over de Gebeurtenissen op 30 mei," Collectie 30 Mei 1969 (KITLV), UBL474, identifier 51, Special Collections, Leiden University, Leiden, the Netherlands; *30 Mei 1969: Rapport van de Commissie*, 74.

[198] Anderson and Dynes, 125-126. In his interview with Oostindie, Prime Minister Kroon specifically mentioned that his biggest regret was underestimating the treat of *Vitó* and the Gomez Square meetings during his time in office. Kroon, interview by Gert Oostindie, 14 October 1998, Collectie 30 Mei 1969 (KITLV), UBL474, Microdisc 57, Special Collections, Leiden University, Leiden, the Netherlands

Panther Party.[199] They were well aware of the movement's growing popularity in the Caribbean and saw similarities between Trinta di Mei and the many Black Power uprisings that had taken place in the region in previous years.[200] Besides, since racism was such a taboo topic, it was easier to accuse African American radicals of instigating an antiracist protest in Curaçao than it was to acknowledge that similar problems existed in their own country and, therefore, may have been criticized by their own citizens. The government-appointed 30 May Investigation Committee would eventually conclude that it "could not find any indication (…) that the occurrences on May 30 were instigated by foreign interferences or by the Black Power organizations" and that "in spite of the racial problems which are clearly evident in the Caribbean area, the racial element did not play a predominant role on May 30."[201]

Not everyone agreed, even after the committee had shared its conclusions. According to one Dutch journalist, White Curaçaoans especially had seen the conflict as a racial attack.[202] American Consul General Harry M. Lofton, too, shared that several White Antilleans had confided in him with these kinds of statements. After the Committee released its report, Lofton composed a detailed note for his superiors in which he accused the local government of 'whitewashing' the facts. In explaining the dissatisfaction with the Committee conclusions about Black Power, he reported:

> This statement appears to give a blanket rebuttal to facts which have been evident since the riots and reportedly were evident during and before the riots. Responsible merchants, prominent businessmen and

[199] Quote from American Consul Curaçao, *Report of Commission to Investigate Causes of May 30th, 1969 Riots on Curaçao*, 6 October 1970, page 4, Political & Defense, 1970-1973s, Box 2499, Pol 19 NETH ANT, General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD, United States. Other sources referring to potential interference by the Black Panthers are American Consulate Curaçao to Secretary of State, Telegram, 5 September 1969, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1967-1969, Box 2364, Pol 19 NETH ANT, General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD, United States; Thomas L. Hughes to Secretary of State, Intelligence Note, *Netherlands Antilles: Riots Lead to Dissolution of Parliament and Call for New Elections*, 4 June 1969, page 3, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1967-1969, Box 2364, Pol 19 NETH ANT, General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD, United States; Rosemarijn Hoefte, "Internationale Reacties op de Revolte en het Nederlandse Ingrijpen," in *Dromen & Littekens*, 151.

[200] "Statius Muller, Hoofd Veiligheidsdienst N.A."; Anderson and Dynes, 139; *30 Mei 1969: Rapport van de Commissie*, 174.

[201] *30 Mei 1969: Rapport van de Commissie*, 174. Translation from American Consul Curaçao, *Report of Commission to Investigate Causes of May 30th,* 7.

[202] M.L. Snijders, "Wonden van Dertig Mei Zijn Nog Niet Geheeld," *Leeuwarder Courant*, 20 April 1970, 5.

> other private citizens [both white and black], have expressly stated to me that the Commission either (1) did not summon knowledgeable persons as witnesses to its hearings, or (2) in arriving at its conclusions avoided or ignored certain testimony because of local political sensitivity and expediency.[203]

According to the diplomat, some Curaçaoans were even blaming his country for the riot, as it had allowed extremists to travel abroad and indoctrinate young Antilleans, noting that his acquaintances "are concerned that recently there have been more American hippie and Black Panther types on the streets and byways and circulating among the youth."[204] In the end, however, the committee seemed to be right: no proof was ever found to confirm the claims that American Black Power activists had been directly involved in Trinta di Mei.

This does not have to mean, of course, that the Black Power movement did not influence the uprising at all. As this chapter has shown, *Vitó* editor-in-chief Stanley Brown – who is still seen as the ideological leader of Trinta di Mei to this day – was deeply inspired by the movement and familiarized thousands of his followers, whether through *Vitó* or through the Gomez Square meet-ups, with the ideas of its most notorious organization, the Black Panther Party. Knowing that the majority of protesters involved in Trinta di Mei were somehow connected to *Vitó*, it would not be presumptuous to assume that these ideas had left a mark on their understanding of racial inequality, which could have had some impact on their protest. To say that the movement had no influence at all on the uprising only because rumors of direct interference were refuted, as suggested by those scholars cited in the introduction, may, therefore, be too constrained. Maybe these "Black Panther types on the streets and byways" were not imported but, indeed, home-grown.

Realistically, it is difficult to determine what role the Black Panther model truly played in the events of that day. But that was also not the purpose of this chapter. The history of the Black Panthers of Curaçao is significant for more reasons than Trinta di Mei alone. Rather than focusing on the uprising itself, which has often been seen as a turning point in racial awareness in Curaçao, this chapter has shed light on a campaign

[203] American Consul Curaçao, *Report of Commission to Investigate Causes of May 30th*, 2.

[204] American Consul Curaçao, *Report of Commission to Investigate Causes of May 30th, 1969 Riots on Curaçao*, 3.

for racial awareness that emerged before that moment, exploring how ideas on racial equality made their way to the island through *Vitó*'s revolutionary movement. Even if Trinta di Mei had never happened, this transnational exchange would have been worth investigating because it broadens our understanding of what motivated certain communities to try and make a change in their own environments. Why did Brown and other Curaçaoans feel it was necessary to bring the Black Power movement to Curaçao? And why, in particular, did they choose to do so by adopting the model of the Black Panther Party?

As this chapter has shown, the answer to these questions is twofold. On a local level, the answer lies in the applicability of the Black Panthers' revolutionary nationalism to the Curaçaoan context. The ideology of the African American organization corresponded to *Vitó*'s pre-existing ideas about colonialism and capitalism. What the Black Panther model added to their intellectual model was the critical approach to racism as a third component to that equation. Although Brown and others had already understood race to be deeply intertwined with these systems, structural racism had not yet been acknowledged to the same extent as colonialism and capitalism had. What the revolutionary nationalism of the Black Panther Party offered them was thus a new framework for racial discourse that complemented, rather than replaced, their already existing beliefs.

On a transnational level, their affiliation with the Black Panther Party furthermore allowed these Afro-Curaçaoan activists to position their anticolonial struggle within a much more global network of resistance. By proudly carrying the name and symbols of the notorious African American organization, the BPC was able to show Curaçaoan activists that their work on the tiny Caribbean island did not stand in isolation but was part of a worldwide operation for decolonization. While there is little evidence that the BPC ever established contact with the Black Panthers or that the latter was even aware of its existence, their writings clearly illustrate that the Curaçaoan group positioned itself within the same radical tradition as the African American freedom struggle, Jamaican Black Power, South African anti-apartheid, and African anticolonialism, and believed it was necessary for these movements to "unite and defend each other" if they wanted to destroy the disproportionate power of the West. As Brown himself would later put it: "Our revolution did not depend on any

foreign government, (…) but we did fight for the liberation of Martin Luther King, Eldridge Cleaver, and Malcolm X. Those were our leaders!"[205]

These ideas became immensely popular among the young protesters at the Gomez Square, but also the labor movement with which the 'Revolutionary Guard' had become entangled.[206] Beyond *Vitó*, however, the Black Panthers of Curaçao did not reach much of an audience. There are a number of possible explanations for this. One was that the BPC's discussion of racism was simply too radical, as centuries of taboos around race had created severe limitations to public discourse on the topic. Another possible explanation is that Brown's own role in the organization undermined its potential, as he was himself "whiter than a recently imported macamba from Holland," as one Dutch journalist wrote in 1969.[207] To Curaçaoans, who understood race as a spectrum and did not believe Brown's ancestry made him Black by definition, his call for racial empowerment was confusing; impossible, even, to those authorities that were unable to imagine that Brown himself could have been behind the BPC. While this may have created some misunderstanding among the Curaçaoan elites, however, Brown was sure his complexion never stood between him and the Black masses, "who came to identify me with blackness so much that nobody ever saw me as white."[208]

[205] Brown, interview by Oostindie.

[206] Brown discusses its popularity within the labor movement in "Black Power," *Vitó,* August 20, 1970, 3. This will be discussed in further detail in the next chapter.

[207] Habraken, 4.

[208] Brown, interview by Oostindie.

Chapter 2:
"We Believe in Loving Our Black Brothers"
Antillean Black Power in the Aftermath of Trinta di Mei

News about the 30 May uprising spread quickly within the Dutch Atlantic and its diaspora. The protesters had not even yet reached the center of Willemstad when a young Black activist in New York heard about the political unrest in his birthplace on the radio. Eager to join his people in their fight against the colonial status quo, he booked the first available flight to Curaçao, found his son a place to stay, and informed his employer that he needed to take time off to take care of some "personal problems."[209] The young man had expected a revolution in his country for years and had repeatedly assured friends and family that "when my people need me man, I'll be there."[210] When the opportunity presented itself, he was ready to live up to that promise. He quickly packed his bags and made his way to the airport, arriving just in time to catch the last flight of the day. Right before his plane took off, Fox sent Prime Minister Ciro Kroon a telegram announcing his arrival on the island that night. It simply stated: "I'm Benjamin Fox. I'm coming to Curaçao."[211]

Kroon had already known Fox for several years when he received that telegram. The 29-year-old had been working as a systems analyst in the United States and had reached out to Kroon in the past because he wanted to start using his expertise to contribute to the technological advancement of his own country. During his earlier trips to Curaçao, he had met with the Antillean politician to discuss the possibility of setting up a service bureau for computers in Willemstad. In their conversations, however, he had not only expressed his professional intentions but also his ideological plans: to bring Black Power to the Netherlands Antilles. At the time, Fox later attested, the Kroon had "thought it was all a big joke."[212] But when Fox's telegram arrived at

[209] "Entrevista ku Benjamin Fox – Black Power," *Vitó*, October 25, 1969, 3; "B.S. Fox: "Nahr Gaf Advies Niet in Beroep te Gaan," *Amigoe di Curaçao,* September 30, 1969, 3; Diekmann, 109.

[210] Quote from "Entrevista ku Benjamin Fox," 3; "Benjamin Fox Bestudeert Onderdrukkingssysteem," *Amigoe di Curaçao*, May 23, 1970, 4; Diekmann, 96.

[211] Quote from Ewald Ong-a-Kwie, interview by Gert Oostindie, *Curaçao, 30 Mei 1969: Verhalen over de Revolte* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam UP, 1999), 91; "B.S. Fox," 3; "Entrevista ku Benjamin Fox," 3; Diekmann, 108.

[212] Diekmann, 102-103.

Fort Amsterdam in the midst of the uprising, Kroon must have changed his mind. While thousands of Black Curaçaoans were out in the streets declaring their hate for the island's White elites, the politician suddenly became aware of the threat Fox's ideas posed. He immediately informed his security services about the young man's arrival and ordered the head of security at the Aruban airport (where the plane would be landing because of the uprising) to wait for him.[213]

As soon as Fox's plane landed in Oranjestad, he was taken into custody and interrogated about his reasons for returning to Curaçao that day. During his conversations with the local police, which lasted over five hours, the officers made it clear that they suspected the Black Power activist of having "stirred up the revolt" from afar.[214] Fox assured them that he had only gone to Curaçao to check up on his family at home, to make sure they were unharmed. When the officers failed to find any evidence of his involvement, they had to let him go. The following day, he took the first possible flight to Willemstad, joining a number of prominent Aruban politicians who needed to get to the Antillean capital, including Minister of Education Ernesto O. Petronia, whom Fox had also met during one of his earlier travels.[215] When the plane landed, the immigration police tried again, headed by the Chief of Security himself. This time, they did not even wait until he got off the plane: they stopped the aircraft in the middle of the landing strip, boarded the plane, walked straight up to Fox, and took him in.[216] "They surprised me with a great welcoming committee: twenty police officers! To get me off that plane!" the young activist later recalled.[217] Fox again declared that he had not been involved in the uprising. After another four-hour interrogation, he was once again released. His luggage was returned to him, but the money he had brought with him was missing. Fox refused to take back his suitcases

[213] "B.S. Fox," 3.

[214] Diekmann, 108.

[215] "E.O. Petronia, Minister van Onderwijs, Minister-President, 1969-1971," Collectie 30 Mei 1969 (KITLV), UBL474, identifier 7, Special Collections, Leiden University, Leiden, the Netherlands.

[216] Diekmann, 108; "E.O. Petronia, Minister van Onderwijs, Minister-President, 1969-1971"; "Rapporten van W.C.A. van Kappel, Commissaris van Politie, Uitgebracht op 2 en 11 Juni aan de Minister van Justitie, Curaçao, over de Gebeurtenissen op 30 mei," Collectie 30 Mei 1969 (KITLV), UBL474, identifier 51, Special Collections, Leiden University, Leiden, the Netherlands.

[217] Diekmann, 108.

without his cash and left empty-handed. That same night, he was arrested for sedition at the Hilton Hotel, despite the authorities' lack of evidence.[218]

Rumors about Fox's role in the uprising circulated widely in the weeks following 30 May. Some suspected that he had been "the 'master-brain' behind the revolt," commissioned by some American Black Power organization to start a riot in Curaçao, or that he had strategically indoctrinated *Vitó* editor Stanley Brown to do the job for him.[219] In the midst of all the unclarity about the sudden outburst of protest, these theories did not only spread around the island but also reached international audiences in the Caribbean, in the United States, and throughout Europe.[220] These news reports were highly speculative and showed that nobody was quite sure about his exact identity or affiliation. Meanwhile, the Curaçaoan police department tried to find incriminating evidence that would confirm their suspicions but were unable to find anything substantial enough to support his arrest. They even told Fox that they would drop the case if he told them "exactly who set Curaçao on fire" or if he left the island within twenty-four hours, but the young activist declined.[221] To their delight, however, they did discover that Fox had failed to pay one of his hotel bills from a visit in the previous year. Although this did not support their charges of sedition, it did allow them to keep Fox for fraud instead.[222] The court sentenced him to four months in prison, a disproportionately severe charge for this kind of offense at the time.[223] "Of

[218] "Rapporten van W.C.A. van Kappel, Commissaris van Politie"; "B.S. Fox," 3; "Entrevista ku Benjamin Fox," 3; Diekmann, 108; "E Proseso di Benjamin Fox," *RUKU: Algemeen Cultureel Maandblad voor de Nederlandse Antillen* 2.2 (May 1970), 38. All editions of *RUKU* were consulted at the Special Collections of Leiden University, Leiden, the Netherlands.

[219] Anderson and Dynes, 12; Diekmann, 108; Thomas L. Hughes to Secretary of State, 3; "B.S. Fox," 3; "Benjamin Fox Bestudeert Onderdrukkingssysteem," 4.

[220] Hoefte, 151.

[221] Diekmann, 108.

[222] Fox claimed that he had not paid his bills on purpose because of the discrimination he had witnessed during his stay. He provided over twenty different documents to demonstrate his financial stability to support his claims, but when he presented them to the public prosecutor, he allegedly told Fox: "Even I could do that," suggesting that Fox had forged them. Journal *Ruku* later published some of these documents, which included bank statements, paychecks, and a telegram from his employer, and argued that the court made no efforts at all to check their validity, leading them to the conclusion that "the public prosecutor has, as is always the case with prejudiced people, wanted to see nothing which spoke favorably of Fox." See "E Proseso di Benjamin Fox," 44.

[223] "B.S. Fox," 3; "Entrevista ku Benjamin Fox," 3; "E Proseso di Benjamin Fox," 38-45; Diekmann, 108-109.

course I know that I never really did time for fraud," Fox later reflected. "I did time for my ideas, my opinion."[224] The Police Commissioner would later confirm this, admitting that Fox was arrested only because of the threat he posed.[225]

Scholars who have written about Fox in the past have always done so in relation to his suspected involvement in the 30 May uprising and have rightfully concluded that he had not played an active role in the events of that day.[226] Likewise, those who have shown an interest in Black Power in the Netherlands Antilles have always done so only in relation to 30 May, predominantly to question whether or not the uprising itself was an expression of Black Power. To this, too, the answer has been resoundingly negative.[227] Quite surprisingly, however, none of these scholars have paid much attention to Fox's later campaign for Black Power in the Netherlands Antilles, which emerged not prior to but after the uprising. Following his release from Koraal Specht in September 1969, Fox established the Antillean Black Power (ABP) organization, which would be active for approximately a year and far surpassed the earlier Black Panthers of Curaçao in both its popularity and visibility. Rather than asking if 30 May itself was an act of Black Power, then, it would be much more constructive to ask how the 30 May uprising gave rise to Black Power in the Netherlands Antilles. Answering this question would also get to the core of why and how Fox established the ABP.

By looking at the background, ideology, activism, and connections of the Antillean Black Power organization, this chapter argues that the momentum and anticolonial networks of the 30 May movement allowed Fox to bring a new sense of cultural nationalism to the Netherlands Antilles. This cultural nationalism was centered not around the idea of an Afro-Antillean, but of a diasporic African identity, drawing from local as well as global Black traditions and cultures. Building on his Black Power training in the United States, Fox argued that cultural awareness held the key to Black liberation, as those of African descent could never effectively resist White oppression if they did not believe they were worth fighting for, and to get to that level

[224] Diekmann, 109.

[225] "Statius Muller, hoofd Veiligheidsdienst N.A."

[226] Oostindie, "Black Power," 250; Oostindie, "Woedend Vuur," 19; Marius Wessels, "Logboek van een Revolte van Vuur," in *Dromen en Littekens: Dertig Jaar na de Curaçaose Revolte, 30 Mei 1969*, ed. Gert Oostindie (Amsterdam: Amsterdam UP, 1999), 69; Hoefte, 151; Anderson and Dynes, 12.

[227] Anderson and Dynes, 145; Oostindie, "Black Power," 248.

of self-respect, they had to decolonize their sense of self and their ways of thinking. This made the Antillean Black Power organization unique in comparison to all other Black Power groups in the Dutch Atlantic, including the Black Panthers of Curaçao, whose revolutionary nationalism prioritized political and social action over cultural pride – though they did acknowledge its importance. The organization was also different from its predecessor in that it was established by someone who had been involved in the Black Power movement in the United States rather than just adopting its framework for its own activism.

This chapter is divided into five sections, each of which explores a different aspect of the Antillean Black Power organization. The first section introduces Fox as an actor, explaining where the young activist came from and how he had become involved in the Black Power movement in the United States. The second and third sections explore how this background informed Fox's understanding of Black Power and how he put these ideas into practice in the Netherlands Antilles. The fourth section analyzes Antillean Black Power's relations to the nationalist movement of Curaçao, which at that point consisted predominantly of *Vitó* and the Workers' Liberation Front (Frente Obrero Liberashon, FOL). Finally, the chapter discusses the demise of Fox's organization, explaining how internal conflicts in the movement, predominantly between Brown and Fox, led the Black Power leader to withdraw from the revolutionary scene, which ended up creating a significant schism in the island's anticolonial movement.

An Antillean in New York

Benjamin S. Fox was born to a Trinidadian father and a Curaçaoan mother in Valentijn, Curaçao, on 3 April 1941. After his parents got divorced in 1948, his father migrated to the United States while Fox stayed on the island with his mother.[228] In his younger years, Fox studied at the St. Thomascollege in Otro Banda, a Catholic all-boys school run by European friars.[229] When he was fifteen years old, he was sent to the Netherlands to complete his secondary education at a prestigious school in Huis ter

[228] Diekmann, 94. Dates confirmed through Marriage certificate, Benjamin Ricford Fox and Lucia Marina Martis, June 18, 1938, Burgerlijke Standregister, certificate no. 86, Archivo Nashonal, Willemestad, Curaçao.

[229] Diekmann, 94-95. More information on the St. Thomascollege can be found in Norbert Hendrikse, "St. Thomascollege, een Monument," *Antilliaans Dagblad,* July 14, 2009.

Heide, near the city of Utrecht. In an interview with Dutch author Miep Diekmann in *Een Doekje voor het Bloeden* (1970), Fox stated that his move away from Curaçao had been incredibly difficult, but equally as enlightening. He explained that his relocation from the Caribbean colony to the metropole made him painfully aware of the colonial and racial problems in the Netherlands Antilles. At the St. Thomascollege, he was taught that the White man was superior, like "a god, who I had to bow down for, and who I had to agree with till death."[230] But when he arrived in the Netherlands, he realized that this sense of superiority was completely self-imposed. Disillusioned with the racial status quo, Fox recollected he spent his schoolyears rebelling against any White authority he encountered. When he graduated in 1959, the dean decided to send him to his father in New York, "where they could get [him] under control."[231]

Despite his reluctance to move across the world again, Fox's reunion with his father would end up being absolutely essential to his intellectual development. After settling in New York ten years earlier, his father had become active in the Black cultural scene of the city, where he had gained a sense of racial pride that he had never known in Trinidad or Curaçao. When his 18-year-old son came to live with him, he encouraged him to do the same. As Fox himself described it, his father gave him "the powerful, moral stimulation to immerse [him]self into Negro culture."[232] Considering the Black cultural revival in this period, there probably could not have been a better time to embark on such a journey. In the early 1960s, Fox started his bachelor's in Systems Analysis and Computer Science at Hunter College.[233] Like many other American universities in this period, students at Hunter were deeply involved in the Civil Rights movement and were actively demanding their institution to become more diverse and inclusive, though it is unclear if Fox was involved in any of this.[234] In his

[230] Diekmann, 95.

[231] "E Proseso di Benjamin Fox," 41; Diekmann, 94.

[232] Diekmann, 97.

[233] "E Proseso di Benjamin Fox," 41.

[234] For more information on antiracist activism at Hunter in this period, see Charles Tien, "The American College Experience: A View from the City University of New York, Hunter College," in *Higher Education and Equality of Opportunity: Cross-National Perspectives*, eds. Fred Lazin, Matt Evans, and N. Jayaram (Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2010), 90-91; Manning Marable, "Black Studies and the Racial Mountain," in *Souls: Critical Journal of Black Politics & Culture* 2.3 (2009), 24.

spare time, Fox also started to explore Black life in New York and began to read up on African American history and culture. By the time he graduated, he was so deeply immersed in the movement that he believed his awareness had even surpassed that of his father. "He has remained a Negro," Fox told Diekmann, "while I have become Black. That is a big difference."[235]

The most significant turning point in Fox's journey was his alleged friendship with actor P. Jay Sidney – "or even better, 'God', as we call him in the States."[236] Sidney had been one of the few Black Americans on screen since the earliest days of television and had famously led a "one-man crusade to get African Americans fair representation in television programs *and* commercials," as historian Donald Bogle has described it.[237] Alongside comedian Dick Gregory and actors Sidney Poitier and Ossie Davis, Sidney had testified about racial inequality in the television industry before the House Committee on Labor and Education in 1962, exposing a "discrimination that is almost all-pervading, that is calculated and continuing."[238] Fox claimed he first met Sidney in the streets of Manhattan during one of his protests against the advertising of the Lever Brothers in the early sixties. He was fascinated by the actor's protest and, after some initial conversations, decided to join his struggle.

As they developed an intimate friendship – one that Fox described as "like father and son" – Fox became actively involved in a number of projects that Sidney had been working on. One of these, which Fox referred to as the 'Black Forum', was a grassroots initiative that encouraged New Yorkers to boycott local businesses that discriminated against Black customers. Over time, they also set up an educational program where they taught Black communities in the city about racial oppression and how to resist it in everyday life. Fox was active in the organization for at least two

---

[235] Diekmann, 97.

[236] Diekmann, 98. In Fox's interview with Diekman, P. Jay Sidney is misspelled as 'P.G. Sidney'.

[237] Donald Bogle, *Primetime Blues: African Americans on Network Television* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2001), 288; Kathleen A. Tarr, "Bias and the Business of Show Employment Discrimination in the "Entertainment" Industry," *University of Stanford Law Review* 51 (October 2016): 8; Kathleen Fearn-Banks, *The A to Z of African American Television* (Plymouth: Scarecrow Press, 2006), 493.

[238] P. Jay Sidney as quoted in Emily Nussbaum, "American Intouchable: The Actor Who Fought to Integrate Early TV," *The New Yorker,* December 7, 2015. More details on their testimonies can be found in Mary Ann Watson, *The Expanding Vista: American Television in the Kennedy Years* (Durham: Duke UP, 1994), 98-99.

years.[239] Sidney, himself a seasoned activist, mentored Fox this entire time and encouraged him to use the frustrations that he had held since his teenage years for a greater purpose. "[P. Jay] taught me to stand on my own two legs, to walk straight ahead. He taught me to stop crying on the shoulders of others," Fox later recalled.[240] Unfortunately, it is difficult to confirm how much of this story was true, as there were many Black Power groups who used the name Black Forum in New York and none of them point directly to Fox. Considering the nature and abundance of such projects, however, it is likely that Fox would have been involved in something like this.

At the same time that Fox started to become active in the city's Black Power movement, he also began to return to Curaçao on a regular basis. After his first visit to his mother in Buena Vista in 1964, he began traveling to the island multiple times a year, building an extensive network along the way. By 1967, the young activist started to seriously consider moving back home, despite his recent marriage to an American woman and the birth of his first son. It was also around this time that Fox started discussing the possibility of setting up a computer service in the Netherlands Antilles with Ciro Kroon, as discussed in the introduction to this chapter. As he would later state, this was as much a personal choice as a professional one, because he "wanted [his] own people to know, to understand [that] those boys, those who we send abroad, they damn well want to come back, want to help."[241] Upon his return to New York after his meeting with Kroon, he established two businesses in preparation of his future career on the island: the Curaçao Data Company and the Curaçao Travel Bureau, both of which he registered at his apartment in Queens.[242]

It was also during his 1967 visit that Fox first met *Vitó* editor-in-chief Stanley Brown, who would establish the Black Panthers of Curaçao in the following year. The two had a number of things in common. Fox and Brown were from similar Curaçaoan neighborhoods, where they had grown up in bilingual families, as both of their fathers were from the British West Indies. Both of them had left the island to study abroad,

---

[239] "Fox Gaat Blad over Black Power uitgeven," *Amigoe di Curaçao*, October 16, 1969, 3; Diekmann, 98; "B.S. Fox," 3.

[240] Diekmann, 98-99.

[241] Diekmann, 103.

[242] "B.S. Fox," 3.

which had shaped both of their views on Dutch colonialism. They also shared an interest in Black Power, though only Fox had been involved in the movement at the time. According to Fox, Brown and himself started to make plans for a Black revolution in the Antilles, but had to put their plans on the back burner whenever he returned to New York.[243] In between his visits to the island, Fox sent Brown and his colleagues at *Vitó* materials on the movement from the US, while Brown kept Fox up-to-date on the situation in Curaçao.[244] As Fox would later find out, national security services were already monitoring their exchanges at this time, listening to their conversations on the phone and sometimes even confiscating letters and other documents.[245] This, too, would be confirmed by the head of the Antillean security agency in reports to the 30 May investigation committee.[246]

Total Liberation for the Afro-Antillean

Fox's time in New York shaped much of his understanding of Black Power. As previously explained, Black Power meant different things to different people, depending not only on the individual but also on their environment. In the specific context of New York, Black Power was, in many ways, a continuation of an already flourishing tradition of Black nationalism. Since the early twentieth century, the city had been at the center of some of the most popular Black movements in the United States, including the Harlem Renaissance and the Garvey movement. Through the lingering influence of these movements and intergenerational memory, these movements still informed New Yorkers' thinking about racial progress and liberation. In particular, it was the emphasis on cultural pride and economic self-sufficiency in these movements that allowed Black Power organizations like the Nation of Islam (NOI) and the Black Arts Movement (BAM) to gain a large following in the city several

[243] "Entrevista ku Benjamin Fox," 3; Diekmann, 104.

[244] Letter from Stanley Brown to Benjamin S. Fox, n.d., *Vito-artikelen, Archief, 1969-1971, N.B. Correspondentie e.a.*, Microfilm Collectie Brown, Box 3, Section 121, Archivo Nashonal, Willemstad, Curaçao; "B.S. Fox," 3; Otto Kuijk, "Rapport van een Razernij," *De Telegraaf*, June 1, 1969, 5.

[245] "B.S. Fox," 3.

[246] "Statius Muller, Hoofd Veiligheidsdienst N.A." Important to note here is that Brown would deny knowing Fox prior to 1969 in his interview with Oostindie thirty years later. However, because numerous archival documents – including those in his own collection at the Archivo Nashonal – prove otherwise and corroborate Fox's story, this has been excluded from the narrative above.

decades later. Additionally, both the Harlem Renaissance and Garveyism had given the city's Black community an unparalleled diasporic consciousness, shaped by the movements' combined American and Caribbean roots and membership.[247]

Having spent several years in this community, Fox's vision for Black Power in Curaçao was strongly influenced by these ideas as well. In line with the basic principles of Black nationalism, the young activist believed that Black Power was first and foremost about self-determination, which allowed communities of African descent to "take care of [their] own businesses, of [their] own people." [248] A fervent reader of history, Fox believed that the lack of racial progress in the past had shown that Black people could depend only on themselves and, therefore, had to take their liberation into their own hands. The example he used to demonstrate this was that of the recent Civil Rights movement, which he respected but which methods he disagreed with. He explained:

> Something in my gut told me it was not right. You are not going to ask for your rights. If you are desperate and young, then you fight for your rights. (…) I cannot be hit on the cheek by some guy and then turn the other to him too. Because by then, he would have punched me to death. Then I am gone. I would be insane! But when he hits me, and I hit back hard enough, he will think twice before he hits me again. He will leave me alone, I will leave him alone. And then I do not have to beg [for my rights]. I just take what belongs to me.[249]

Reflecting on the previous decade, Fox was convinced that the strategies of the Civil Rights movement had led to a dead end. Although the movement had some legislative successes, Fox believed such reforms to be pointless as long as Black citizens were not seen as equals by the White authorities who ran the legal system. As long as those authorities had their personal prejudices, Black people would be at a disadvantage and had to stand up for themselves.[250]

---

[247] For a study of Caribbean leadership and participation in these movements, see Louis J. Parascandola, *Look For Me All Around You: Anglophone Caribbean Immigrants in the Harlem Renaissance* (Detroit: Wayne State UP, 2005).

[248] Diekmann, 101.

[249] Diekmann, 99-100.

[250] Diekmann, 99.

While complete Black self-determination was the ultimate goal for Fox, he also believed that Black people would not be able to truly stand up for themselves unless they had reached a certain level of self-respect. The role of the Black Power movement, he argued, was to provide diasporic Africans with the intellectual tools to decolonize their minds; that is, to rid them of the 'inferiority complexes' they had developed through centuries of European colonialism.[251] In line with the theories of anticolonial philosopher Franz Fanon, Fox believed that Black folks had to overcome these psychological barriers by familiarizing themselves with their ancestors, collective histories, and cultural heritage, which could help them build the self-respect they needed to rise up. Without self-respect, he believed Black people would depend too heavily on anger, which was unsustainable and could, therefore, not support a lasting revolution. Self-worth and dignity, on the other hand, were stable motivators and, as such, served as a precondition for freedom.[252] This kind of thinking connected the Antillean Black Power advocate to an ideological tradition of cultural nationalism, connecting him to prominent Black intellectuals like Marcus Garvey, Malcolm X, and Maulana Karenga – all of whom Fox expressed appreciation for.

Cultural awareness also served another purpose. Besides reconnecting diasporic Africans to their roots, it was also intended to reconnect them to each other. By creating a sense of rootedness and belonging, Fox and other cultural nationalists hoped to restore the ties between estranged Black communities that had been ripped apart by the transatlantic slave trade and colonial policies. "The whites have kept us divided," Fox stated in his interview with Diekmann. "That has been the genius work of the whites. What they always preached was: concur and divide! They have done an excellent job at that – damn well!" [253] This was not even unique to the African diaspora alone, he stated, but could be seen anywhere in the world:

> The white countries that have colonized Africa, Asia and South America have always had a politics of setting people of color up against each other. Why have the whites done that? Simply because while those who are black fight each other, while they do not confide in each other, while there is no union amongst people of color themselves, the whites can

[251] "Entrevista ku Benjamin Fox," 3; Diekmann, 105.

[252] "E Proseso di Benjamin Fox," 4; Diekmann, 100, 102.

[253] Diekmann, 101.

> continue to dominate and abuse those countries. Unity creates strength! Colonial whites also know this, and it is exactly what they want to prevent.[254]

Black Power provided an excellent solution to this, according to Fox, because its cultural platform allowed colonized communities to break through these divisive barriers. By convincing diasporic Africans that they were one family, they could conquer these colonial strategies and return to their (imagined) precolonial communities.

It was precisely this vision that convinced Fox to bring the movement home with him. "Black people are finally finding each other, we are finally finding a sense of unity, not just in the States, but around the entire world," he declared.[255] It was time for his people, who could benefit massively from these connections, to join in. In line with his cultural nationalist ideas, he wanted to use the movement to instill a deeper sense of awareness in Antilleans of African descent. He also wanted it to help his people recognize and challenge systems of oppression in their own society, and learn to understand them as part of a more global power structure.[256] Ultimately, he hoped these skills would prepare Black Antilleans for more structural change and could inspire them to take control over their land from the Dutch and the local White elite. While these goals were tied to political power, however, he wanted to start by building Black Power in the Antilles from the bottom up, taking the same grassroots approach that groups like the Black Forum had done in New York. Such an approach had proven to be "very effective" in his earlier efforts, he argued, and would ultimately lead to "TOTAL LIBERATION for the Afro-Antillean."[257]

In contrast to the Black Panthers of Curaçao, Fox aspired for his organization to become active in the entire territory of the Netherlands Antilles. Since all islands belonged to the Kingdom of the Netherlands and shared similar histories of African enslavement and Dutch colonialism, he believed that inter-Antillean collaboration would be vital to the success of the movement. This was by itself already ambitious, as

---

[254] "Black Power," *Vitó,* November 15, 1969, 1.

[255] Diekmann, 101.

[256] "Eskudo di Antiyas," *Vitó*, November 1, 1969, 3; "Entrevista ku Benjamin Fox," 3; Diekmann, 101.

[257] "B.S. Fox," 3; "Entrevista ku Benjamin Fox," 3.

few inhabitants actually identified as Antillean; it was much more common for them to associate with their specific islands. To Fox, this was one of the largest barriers that Antilleans had to overcome in order to achieve independence. If they wanted to be liberated, he argued, they first had to cooperate. "Why are you fighting against your own brothers?" he once asked a Curaçaoan audience. "Don't you see that you share the same battle[?] Don't you understand that [their] progress will be yours too?"[258] Despite this goal, he also understood that such unity could not be built out of thin air; Black Power first had to strengthen Black communities on their respective islands before it could spread across island shores.[259] As such, he decided to first concentrate on his own island: Curaçao.

The Antillean Black Power Organization

It took a while before Fox could get his Black Power campaign started after his return to Curaçao on that notorious 30 May. Even though rumors about his involvement had caused quite some commotion in the aftermath of the uprising, he had been unable to use that publicity to his advantage because of his arrest. After four months of incarceration in Koraal Sprecht (minus a successful one-day escape "out of protest against the ridiculousness of the whole system"), Fox was released from prison on 30 September 1969, exactly four months after his arrival.[260] And to the disappointment of the Antillean government, he was no longer planning to return to the United States. Both the hostility of the immigration police and the disproportionate prison sentence had been intended to discourage Fox from staying on the island. If anything, however, it had prompted him to stay in Curaçao indefinitely – not necessarily as a response to his unjust treatment, but because his time behind bars had caused him to lose his apartment, all of his belongings, and his job back in New York. Because he had initially only planned to spend a couple of days on the island, he had not made any appropriate arrangements back in the States.[261] Not that the young

[258] "E Lucha Kontra Nos Rumannan," 3.

[259] "Black Power," November 15, 1969, 1.

[260] "B.S. Fox," 3.

[261] "B.S. Fox," 3; Diekmann, 108-109.

activist seemed to mind. Now that there was little reason left for him to return, he could focus on what he had planned to do in Curaçao in the first place: form an Antillean Black Power organization.

In the weeks following his release, Fox began to build his new organization. As was common for Black Power organizations in the United States, he wrote a sixteen-point program which outlined his plans:

> 1. To teach the history of black people
> 2. To organize and maintain brotherhood
> 3. To demand rights for black people
> 4. To maintain our culture and identity
> 5. To educate our brothers as much as possible and within our black system
> 6. To teach the use of economic boycotts
> 7. To become independent of the structure of 'White Power' by using our economic power
> 8. To maintain and conserve our language 'Papiamentu' [and] demand that studies will be taught in our language
> 9. To teach our black brothers how to protect themselves when they get into trouble with white justice
> 10. To have dignity and respect for our siblings, above all our black sisters
> 11. To help obtain a strong representation of black people in the island council and parliament
> 12. We must give black people the capacity to overcome their feelings of being useless
> 13. We want black people to get preferential treatment when seeking work
> 14. We want to take a piece of the cake
> 15. [We] must have a basic income for all our black brothers
> 16. We must establish Black Power shops, kept by black people, for our brothers.[262]

These points can be grouped together into three main objectives: to create a sense of self-respect through awareness of Black history and culture, to become financially independent from the White-dominated economy, and to protect Afro-Antilleans' legal rights. Violence, Fox stressed, had no place in his organization, and should only be seen as a last resort in case "the whites ever obstruct our plans."[263]

[262] A full overview can be found in "Entrevista ku Benjamin Fox," 3.

[263] "Entrevista ku Benjamin Fox," 3.

Fox put these plans into action through three different routes: first, by reaching out to poor Black communities in the 'ghettos' of Willemstad, second, by writing a *Black Power* column in *Vitó*, and, third, by participating in the mass meetings at the Gomez Square on Saturdays. Unfortunately, very little was documented with regard to the first, though the ABP described community work as the cornerstone of his program.[264] This is not exceptional for grassroots activism, which tends to be highly informal. His work in *Vitó* and at the Gomez Square, on the other hand, left more traces. Initially, Fox had announced that he would start publishing a weekly Black Power newspaper that would "teach people with a dark skin color about themselves and to inspire them to honor one another."[265] Instead of publishing his own paper, however, Fox ended up joining forces with his contacts at *Vitó*, where he started publishing a *Black Power* column. Both parties profited from this deal: it allowed *Vitó* to further expand on its antiracist criticism, while it provided the ABP with a solid channel to reach its target audience.[266] In Fox's first appearance in the journal on 25 October 1969, the Black Power frontman – who by this point was well-known for his reputed involvement in 30 May – was introduced by the editor (likely Brown) as a prominent member of the Curaçaoan revolution, having served his time in prison along some of the most prominent members of the uprising. Stating that Fox's fight for Black Power was virtually the same as theirs, *Vitó* argued it was essential for his voice to be heard.[267]

And so it happened. Over the following months, Fox's *Black Power* column became an integral part of the journal, and his organization an integral part of the *Vitó* movement. In accordance with the abovementioned plans of the ABP, Fox frequently wrote about Black history and culture in the column, with recurring articles on Black heroes, the beauty of natural hair and African clothing, and the conservation of Afro-Antillean traditions, such as *tambú,* a traditional folk dance with West African origins that had long been forbidden by the Catholic church. Also frequent were stories of

[264] Entrevista ku Benjamin Fox," 3.

[265] ""Fox Gaat Blad over Black Power uitgeven," 3.

[266] "Black Power," *Vitó*, August 20, 1970, 3.

[267] "Entrevista ku Benjamin Fox," 3.

discriminatory practices at businesses on the island, including the Hilton Hotel, supermarket Vreugdenhil, and "all businesses that stimulate and promote the [Sinterklaas] holiday."[268] Fox urged his readers to boycott these businesses until they improved their employment policies, customer relations, and marketing campaigns. "The time has come especially here on Curaçao that we realize that 'black is not only beautiful', but that 'black is money' too," Fox wrote.[269] In contrast to the first two categories, the organization's campaign for legal rights was less visible in the *Black Power* column. The only exceptions were articles in which the author stressed that Black Power was not opposed to Whites as people, but to the privileges they received in the power structures that they had built for themselves. "All that we as Black Power in the Antilles and all around the world hate are the rights, the protection that whites get that we do not get, especially on our beautiful piece of rock where 90% of the people are black," he explained.[270] Elsewhere, he would share a similar sentiment, writing: "We do not hate whites. We hate the privileges that whites have. We hate the protection that they get in our community, a protection that we do not get."[271]

Around the same time that he started to publish in *Vitó*, Fox also started attending the weekly meetings at the Dr. Da Costa Gomez Square in Punda, where the Black Panthers of Curaçao also met. Fox first appeared on stage at the gatherings on 1 November 1969, several days after the Antillean Black Power organization was introduced in *Vitó*. It was a long-awaited moment for many of the attendees, who had been eager to hear from the 'American' Black Power leader since his arrival on the island but had been unable to meet him because of his incarceration. Even prominent public figures such as René Römer and Alejandro F. 'Jandi' Paula came to hear him speak.[272] They were not disappointed. Reflecting on Fox's performance, Römer and Paula stated that Fox was a "fascinating speaker" whose lectures were "nuanced and

[268] "San Nikolas ta Muriendo," *Vitó*, November 22, 1969, 3.

[269] "Black Is Not Only Beautiful," *Vitó*, February 12, 1970, 4.

[270] "Black Power," *Vitó*, November 22, 1969, 3.

[271] "Entrevista ku Benjamin Fox."

[272] Römer describes his experience in his interview while interviewing the head of the Antillean security agency as part of the 30 May investigations. See "Statius Muller, Hoofd Veiligheidsdienst N.A." Paula, who was also present, agrees with Römer's judgments of Fox's performance, suggesting that he was present as well.

factual" while also appealing to the painful experiences shared by nearly all Curaçaoans of African descent.[273] Following the success of his first Gomez Square performance, Fox decided to incorporate these gatherings into his weekly outreach. To him, the meetups provided the perfect opportunity to "fulfill our duty as good Curaçaoans by educating our black brothers."[274] Yet, he did not see this educational effort as a one-way street. Although the Gomez Square meetings allowed the organization to spread its message, Fox also wanted to use them to gather immediate feedback from the audience. This allowed him to gain insight into the concerns of the Curaçaoan population, which helped him shape the agenda of the ABP.[275]

Both the *Black Power* column in *Vitó* and Fox's participation in the weekly Gomez Square gatherings helped Fox to spread his message effectively. By the spring of 1970, the ABP had obtained a relatively secure place in the radical scene of the island. What had started as Fox's personal quest to introduce his people to the ideology of the transnational Black Power movement had now grown into a popular grassroots organization with a reasonable following. Although the media continued to portray Antillean Black Power as a one-man show with Fox at the center, the Black Power leader had – according to his own estimates – gathered a group of around one thousand like-minded Curaçaoans around him who supported his ideas and helped him to realize his plans.[276] Fox described these followers as 'intellectuals', most of them aged sixteen and forty and living in Willemstad, though he was hoping to extend his outreach to the 'kunuku', the rural Black communities in the countryside, in due time.[277] His followers were recognizable by their Black Power greetings, their afro

[273] "Statius Muller, Hoofd Veiligheidsdienst N.A."

[274] "Makamba, Keda Afó," *Vitó*, November 8, 1969, 4; Fox, "Black Power," November 22, 1969, 3.

[275] The dynamics of these discussions are described by Römer in "Statius Muller, Hoofd Veiligheidsdienst N.A." and by Diekmann, 23.

[276] Exact numbers were not registered because the organization did not keep a membership administration, as Fox believed that anyone who accepted the ideology of Black Power automatically became a member, as stated in "Black Power," November 22, 1969, 3. However, his estimates did roughly coincide with the attendance numbers of ABP activities, which ranged from several hundreds to two thousand. See "Laat Blanken Zelf Hun Zaak Regelen," *De Tijd*, February 9, 1970, 1; "Vandaag Beslissing Jonckheer," *De Stem op Zaterdag*, February 7, 1970, 28; "Benoeming Dr. Jonckheer op Losse Schroeven?" *Leeuwarder Courant*, February 2, 1970, 3; American Consul Curaçao, *Periodic Summary I*, 4.

[277] Diekmann, 105. 'Kunuku' historically refers to the small plantation communities in the rural areas of Curaçao, Aruba, and Bonaire. Today, these communities are still inhabited by the direct descendants of enslaved Africans and their villages are still referred to by that same term.

hair, and their daishikis, following the example of Fox himself.[278] He also explicitly stated that he had no intention of involving older generations, who he believed to be a lost cause. "I don't trust [them]," Fox shared with Diekmann. "They have already been so indoctrinated that there is no sign of contact between us."[279]

Claiming a Place in the Movement

Not unexpectedly, the Antillean Black Power organization shared many of its followers with *Vitó* and the recently established Workers' Liberation Front (Frente Obrero Liberashon, FOL). Formally called the 30th of May Workers' Liberation Front Party, the FOL was a political party established by Wilson Godett, Amador Nita, and Stanley Brown after Trinta di Mei. Having received thousands of votes in the national elections that year, all three had obtained a seat in the Antillean parliament.[280] By the fall of 1969, *Vitó* and the FOL had become practically indistinguishable, as both their leadership and membership overlapped. After the events of 30 May, *Vitó* had turned into an informal medium for the party, regularly discussing the FOL's political plans and opinions on the party's behalf. This was not out of the ordinary, since the journal had played a significant role in the uprising and its readership made up a significant chunk of the FOL's constituency. After his election into office, *Vitó* founder Brown had handed over the position of editor-in-chief to Henriquez while he took responsibility for the ideological direction of the FOL.[281] These connections blurred the lines between the two groups, leading to them being collectively referred to as the 30 May movement by scholars such as Anderson and Dynes. In the period at hand, the 30 May movement was the most influential anticolonial movement in Curaçao.

Fox stood in close proximity to these groups through his column in *Vitó* and his participation in the Gomez Square gatherings, where the ABP represented the second largest group after the *Vitó*/FOL crowd, recognizable by their caps with the words

---

[278] Anderson and Dynes, 12; "2x Claudette," *RUKU: Algemeen Cultureel Maandblad voor de Nederlandse Antillen* 2.2-3 (1970), 6, 19; "Brunilda Arduin," *RUKU: Algemeen Cultureel Maandblad voor de Nederlandse Antillen* 2.4 (1970), 1.

[279] Diekmann, 104.

[280] Anderson and Dynes, 104.

[281] Anderson and Dynes, 120.

'Black Power' written on them.[282] In an interview with Dutch journalists, Brown even joked that Fox, Henriquez, and himself had collectively gathered so much support from the Gomez Square crowds that they had become "the three most dangerous people of the Antilles."[283] Their shared spaces, similar ideologies, and mutual followers often made it difficult for outsiders to differentiate between the radical groups. Former prime minister and Democratic Party leader Ciro Kroon, for example, mockingly referred to the Gomez Square leaders as 'Stanley Fox'.[284] Others, like the American diplomats who were keeping an eye on the local movement, were having similar issues. In a letter to the Department of State, US Consul General John G. Oliver wrote that Fox's organization of "professional 'black Antilleans' [and] 'black power' advocates" was in part responsible for helping the FOL "aggressively assert(…) power and position in the Antilles."[285] Likewise, the CIA feared that Fox was using his connections to the party "to achiev[e] control of the government."[286] According to Fox himself, however, these kinds of claims could not be further from the truth. Although his organization campaigned for more Black representation in local government and decolonization, he personally had no intention of becoming involved in politics, as he had already stated many times over in his writings and speeches.[287] "Black Power (…)

[282] "Kabinet-Petronia is Zijn Volgzame Politie Kwijt," *Leeuwarder Courant*, January 28, 1970, 5; Diekmann, 23.

[283] Wim Kroese and Ron Govaars, "Stanley Brown de Castro van Curaçao," *De Telegraaf*, January 3, 1970, 5.

[284] "C. Kroon-Antwoord aan Black Power," 3; Diekmann, 111.

[285] American Consul Curaçao, *FY 1972 CASP*, December 23, 1969, page 3, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1967-1969, Box 2364, Pol 19 NETH ANT, General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD, United States.

[286] CIA, "Black Radicalism in the Caribbean – Another Look."

[287] Perhaps Fox's most successful protest was against the appointment of Efraïn Jonckheer as the country's new Governor. Fox led hundreds of Antilleans in his protest against Jonckheer's nomination and successfully encouraged the government in The Hague to retract their nomination. Similar protests were organized by Brown. The success of their actions caused quite a stir in Antillean politics, especially when the Democratic Party decided to organize a counterprotest. For more information, see "Telegrammen van Vito en Black Power," *Amigoe di Curaçao*, February 7, 1970, 3; "C. Kroon-Antwoord aan Black Power," *Amigoe di Curaçao*, February 9, 1970, 3; "Organisaties Willen Jonckheer Niet als Goeverneur," *De Vrije Stem*, February 8, 1970, 4; "Laat Blanken Zelf hun Zaak Regelen," 1; "Vandaag Beslissing Jonckheer," 28; Diekmann, 111.

works with everyday problems. We will vote for whoever is closest to us in [our] fight."[288]

But these outside observers misunderstood more than Black Power's political ambitions (or rather the lack thereof) alone; they also misjudged the uniformity of the anticolonial movement. Although *Vitó*, the FOL, and Black Power publicly underscored their alliances in the fight for Afro-Antillean liberation, their ideologies and methods had led to a number of internal conflicts. To those who were involved in the movement, these intellectual clashes were clearly visible, as discussions between the groups at the Gomez Square could be quite heated and last for hours.[289] Though many attendees participated in these debates, the majority of conflicts actually revolved around the groups' leaders: Fox and Brown. Fox, as this chapter shows, was an avid proponent of cultural nationalism and believed that a political revolution could only follow from gradual community activism. Although Brown had welcomed this message at first, the former Black Panther leader was growing increasingly dissatisfied with Fox's intellectual stances. In line with the revolutionary ideology of the Black Panther Party, he believed that anticapitalism was imperative to anti-racism and that both had to be resolved through revolutionary politics. He saw Fox's emphasis on racial pride and heritage as a distraction from the necessary structural change that he envisioned for the island. In a way, then, tensions between the Black Power groups of Curaçao mirrored those of the movement in the United States.

These intellectual differences understandably led to some confusion among their mutual followers, especially since the *Black Power* column had been introduced as a replacement for "Black Panthers na Korsow" and on the surface seemed to share the same goal. Fox decided to clarify the differences between the two in his column in December 1969. Repeating his earlier definition of Black Power, he stated that: "Black Power (…) arms people with dignity and respect. (…) We believe in loving our black brothers and protecting them all whenever [and] however."[290] In contrast, he described the Black Panther Party as an aggressive paramilitary organization that

[288] "Entrevista ku Benjamin Fox," 3.

[289] "Statius Muller, Hoofd Veiligheidsdienst N.A."

[290] "Black Power," *Vitó*, December 13, 1969, 3.

"knows no other way of speaking than with a revolver."[291] He also stated that the Black Panthers were anti-White and Black Power was not, while the Black Panther Party was actually one of the few radical African American organizations that *did* collaborate with White allies (in contrast to most Black Power organizations).[292] This piece led to a massive debate between Fox and the leaders of the Black Panthers of Curaçao at the next Gomez Square meeting.[293]

Fox's criticism of the Black Panthers did not at first have any consequences for his column in *Vitó.* His cultural nationalist ideas continued to be published and neither the journal nor its editors made any public statements to refute his work. Behind the scenes, however, the relationship between Fox and Brown became tense. Fox was confident that the Afro-Curaçaoan population needed self-confidence and self-determination more than anything else. Self-determination, in his view, also meant using the free market to their advantage. Angel Salsbach, who had been a *Vitó* editor for years, agreed. Henriquez, the other editor, absolutely did not. As she wrote to fellow Black Panther supporters in the Netherlands, Brown and herself believed it was much more pertinent to focus on "the fight of the laborer and the global revolution against capitalism."[294] Brown also accused the ABP of being discriminatory, interpreting its message of "black is beautiful, black is smart, [and] black is good" as reverse racism, despite having promoted the same message in the Black Panther column several months earlier.[295] Fox denied this and in turn accused Brown of only wanting to "publish in line with the Black Panthers because – in his words – 'Black Panther is trendy.'"[296] After several months of conflict, Fox decided that their

[291] "Black Power," December 13, 1969, 3; Diekmann, 23.

[292] "Black Power," December 13, 1969, 3. Fox was undeniably biased in his portrayal of the Panthers, which largely corresponded to the harmful framing of the party in mainstream media. It is unclear whether he purposely tried to reinforce this image to the advantage of Black Power or if he genuinely believed this depiction to be accurate. Brown believed the latter to be the case and, in retrospect, argued that Fox "only kn[ew] what was written in the papers." See Brown in *Curaçao, 30 Mei 1969*, 18.

[293] Diekmann, 23.

[294] Solidariteitscomité Black Panther Party, *Black Panther Nieuwsbulletin*, March 1970, International Institute for Social History, Amsterdam, the Netherlands, ZK 72913 (1970): 1-4.

[295] Brown in *Curaçao, 30 Mei 1969*, 18; Diekmann, 114; "Black Power," *Vitó,* August 20, 1970, 3.

[296] Diekmann, 114.

ideological differences on "the future social structure and evolution of the people of the [Netherlands Antilles]" were irreconcilable. He handed in his resignation to *Vitó* on 3 March 1970.[297]

Now that Fox had left *Vitó*, Brown was free to redirect the Black Power column however he preferred. In a public attack on Fox, he wrote:

> Black Power is a mentality, a state of mind, that has nothing to do with and has absolutely no relation to people's color. (…) Black Power is a fight against poverty, abuse and exploitation, be it white on black or black on black. (…) The fight of Black Power is principally against this rotten system, the economic system that allows abuse to be committed. And if in our white system a black person is synonymous for a poor person, then it is not strange that the fight in which black people demand their recognition is also a fight against poverty, misery and exploitation.[298]

Shifting the focus back from cultural nationalism to revolutionary nationalism, the Black Power column in the following edition of *Vitó* also reconsidered the differences between Black Power and the Black Panthers, contrasting Fox's earlier comparison of the two. Instead of offering his own perspective on the matter, however, *Vitó* published a translation of Black Panther leader Eldridge Cleaver's infamous open letter to Black Power leader Stokely Carmichael, in which he criticized the latter for his unwillingness to collaborate with White supporters and for his support of Black capitalism.[299] This letter was shared globally by allies of the Black Panthers who were dealing with similar local confusion about the differences between the Black Panthers and Carmichael's Black Power, including the Dutch Black Panther committee discussed in the next chapter.

Vitó's distribution of Cleaver's letter to Carmichael was not solely meant to pull the attention of its readership back to the Black Panthers, but also served as an

---

[297] Letter from Benjamin S. Fox to Vitó, March 3, 1970, *Vito-artikelen, Archief, 1969-1971, N.B. Correspondentie e.a.*, Microfilm Collectie Brown, Box 3, Section 121, Archivo Nashonal, Willemstad, Curaçao. This confirms what he told Diekmann later, sharing that he "broke things off" with Brown because of their ideological differences. Many years later, however, Brown would tell Oostindie that he "kicked him out of Vitó" after a personal conflict. While it is impossible to know exactly what went down, the narrative presented here follows the archive.

[298] "Black Power," *Vitó*, March 21, 1970, 3.

[299] "Black Panthers y Black Power," *Vitó*, April 4, 1970, 3. This letter was most likely translated from the Dutch translation, which was published by the Black Panther Solidarity Committee in their February 1970 newsletter and sent to *Vitó* in March 1970.

explanation of the ideological differences between Brown and Fox. By choosing to publish this specific text, Brown aligned his own stance (as presented in the previous issue of *Vitó*) to that of Cleaver, while likening Fox's vision on Black Power to that of Carmichael, though of course Fox would never receive the opportunity to respond to these allegations. The publication of this letter was followed by an official statement on Fox's departure from the paper several months later. "Fox's racism (…) did not correspond with our anti-capitalist way of thinking," the journal confirmed. "The socialist movement of black people let us know that we must choose between Fox's racist ideology or theirs. We chose to side with the socialist fight of the Black Panthers."[300] While this allowed Brown to shift focus back to anticapitalism, the attack on Fox also prompted Salsbach, as well as hundreds of their followers, to leave *Vitó*, leaving only himself and Henriquez on board.[301] Although the journal itself was published for another year, neither the Black Panthers nor Black Power were ever discussed again.

From Black Power to 'Self Power'

After Fox had distanced himself from *Vitó*, the ABP carried on as usual. The members of the organization still attended the Gomez Square gatherings, where Fox and his followers continued their educational program. Meanwhile, a special committee was established to gather funds for a campaign in the countryside, where Fox and his companions planned to drive around in a sound wagon to spread their ideas.[302] Together with Salsbach, Fox also spoke at the summer course of the Antillean Institute for Social Sciences in Willemstad, where they discussed the importance of historical education and mentality change.[303] On top of that, the ABP co-organized the 175th anniversary of the Curaçaoan Slave Revolt, joining *Vitó* and a number of youth organizations in declaring 1970 the Year of Tula and, consequently, the Year of Cultural Revolution.[304] Fox also joined the Advisory Board of the Tula Foundation,

[300] "Black Power," August 20, 1970, 3.

[301] Brown in *Curaçao, 30 Mei 1969*, 18.

[302] Diekmann, 105.

[303] "Zomercursus Sociale Wetenschappen 1970," *Amigoe di Curaçao*, January 10, 1970, 3.

[304] "Anja 1970, Anja di Tula," *Vitó,* March 14, 1970, 4.

which lobbied for the construction of a monument for the leaders of the uprising (which would eventually be established in 1998).[305]

Fox's work also expanded beyond the Caribbean. For the first time since his high school graduation eleven years earlier, the ABP leader traveled to the Netherlands. Although he made the trip for personal reasons, he wrote that he also wanted to use his time in the metropole to study "the system that is used to degrade us to second class citizens."[306] He received funding for his 'European mission' from the *Haagsche Courant* in exchange for an exclusive interview, in which he described the relationship between the Netherlands and its Caribbean territories as "dirty, very dirty" and denounced the Dutch government's support for South African apartheid as a form of global racism. Emphasizing his solidarity with its indigenous inhabitants, he asked: "What does the Netherlands do for my black brothers in South Africa, my brothers, who share the same ancestors as me, Benjamin Fox, the man who has a Dutch passport in his pocket?"[307] He raised similar issues elsewhere in the country, speaking about Black Power to students and young progressives in Leiden, Amsterdam, Groningen, and Tilburg.[308] As could be expected, his speaking engagements did alarm the Dutch security services – or so Fox himself attested. Sharing with a Dutch reporter that he was constantly tailed by security officers, he joked: "I now see these kinds of people as my personal bodyguards."[309]

In a way, Fox's tour through the Netherlands symbolized an important moment in his activism. He had been able to criticize the colonial system of the Kingdom at the heart of the problem, and was applauded for doing so by hundreds of Dutch citizens. At home, his work was lauded by a number of prominent Antilleans, including poet

---

[305] "Stichting: Voor Gebouw, Standbeeld en Bezinningspark," *Amigoe di Curaçao*, June 10, 1970, 9.

[306] "Benjamin Fox Bestudeert Onderdrukkingssysteem," 4; J. Kuijk, 11.

[307] "Benjamin Fox Bestudeert Onderdrukkingssysteem," 4.

[308] Letter from George Soliana to Stanley Brown, April 20, 1970, *Vito-artikelen, Archief, 1969-1971, N.B. Correspondentie e.a.*, Microfilm Collectie Brown, Box 3, Section 121, Archivo Nashonal, Willemstad, Curaçao; J. Kuijk, "Benjamin Fox, een Curaçaose Kabouter," *Trouw*, July 10, 1971, 11; "Zaak B.F. Uitgesteld," *Amigoe di Curaçao*, May 5, 1970, 3; "E Proseso di Benjamin Fox," 38.

[309] "Benjamin Fox Bestudeert Onderdrukkingssysteem," 4. Fox also shared that he was being followed by the security services of Curaçao in Wim Kroese and Ron Govaars, "Stanley Brown de Castro van Curaçao," *De Telegraaf*, January 3, 1970, 5.

Boeli van Leeuwen, Minister Leo Chance of the Windward Islands People's Movement, and a group of local bishops.[310] Yet, Fox himself was starting to grow tired of the hurdles along the way. His conflict with Brown had been part of this. But he also began to feel like the theatrics of the 30 May movement - particularly in the context of the Gomez Square meetings – were distracting Afro-Antilleans from the things that truly mattered, explaining:

> There was a lot of attention [for Black Power] from the people, they wanted to know what all of this was really about. I made sure that their interest was at least sparked. But it turned out that it had just become showbusiness to them, just a distraction. I am now starting to regret it. I find it too serious an issue to make a show out of it.[311]

On Saturdays, thousands of Afro-Antilleans turned up to listen to him and his companions. They cheered him on and celebrated his ideas. But they never truly committed to the organization. Fox personally attributed this to the wide diversity of revolutionary groups and organizations on the island, which continuously had to compete for the relatively small pool of radicals. Rather than finding a sense of unity in Black Power, different groups were taking ideas from the ABP and enriched their own platforms with them – rather than joining the Black Power movement themselves. This, of course, completely countered the ABP's intentions and caused new rifts in Curaçao's booming anticolonial scene.[312]

At the same time, Fox also encountered much resistance from those outside of the 30 May movement. For him, part of this had to do with Curaçaoans' rejection of the term 'Black'. In contrast to the United states, where racialization had historically been relatively black-and-white (both literally and figuratively), Antillean categories of race were more fluid. Many Antilleans of mixed heritage did not speak about race at all, but when they did would refer to themselves as 'Colored' or 'Brown' rather than 'Black'. Fox, whose thinking was heavily influenced by the racial discourse of the United States,

---

[310] "Wonden van Dertig Mei zijn nog niet Geheeld," *Leeuwarder Courant*, April 20, 1970, 5; Cover, *Amigoe di Curaçao*, January 5, 1970, 1; "Priesters Tegen Bisschoppen," *De Vrije Stem*, October 4, 1969, 2; "Demonstratie Tijdens Bisschoppensynode," *Leeuwarder Courant*, Oktober 2, 1969, 2; "Isolotto-rebellen in Actie Tegen Romeinse Synode," *Amigoe di Curaçao*, September 30, 1969, 8.

[311] Diekmann, 104. He expressed similar concerns in "Benjamin Fox Bestudeert Onderdrukkingssysteem," 4.

[312] Diekmann, 104.

feared that such color distinctions would prevent Afro-Antilleans from reaching racial solidarity. He clarified: "When we talk about the Black man, we do not talk about Brown, Middle Brown, or Dark Colored. We talk about the Afro-Antillean," meaning anyone with any African heritage.[313] He wanted Afro-Antilleans to understand that they had all suffered under the same systems of White superiority, regardless of the complexions of their skins, and that even the most privileged people of color would still benefit from a Black revolution.[314]

But it was not just the interpretation of Blackness that created a barrier. It was also the understanding of what was meant by 'power'. Fox himself was highly consistent in how he defined it. From his very first interview in *Vitó* in September 1969, he persistently explained power as the right to self-determination, built on full self-awareness and self-respect as a form of decolonization. In doing so, the ABP foreman distanced himself from revolutionary violence; self-love was revolutionary enough. Yet somehow this message never really got through to popular discourse on his organization. This was due in large part to the refusal of government officials and (inter)national media to let go of the idea that Black Power was fueled by hate. They often connected Fox's organization to Black Power disturbances in the United States and wider Caribbean and referred to his followers as 'troublemakers', 'rebels', and 'harmful agitators'.[315] Whether this came from a place of genuine concern or because they consciously tried to prevent it from gaining a more substantial following, this rhetoric created a taboo around Black Power, which made the average Afro-Antillean weary of the movement. This became a significant obstacle for Fox, who had trouble breaking through these preconceptions. "Basically, they are against me because they think I'm a hate mother," Fox explained. "[But] I don't see why I should then travel around the island to prove to them whether or not I'm a hate-mother. I don't have time to educate them; I only have the time to educate my own people and to rid them of that terrible inferiority complex."[316]

---

[313] "Pakiko Black Power," *Vitó,* January 24, 1970, 3.

[314] "E Lucha Kontra nos Rumannan," *Vitó,* November 1, 1969, 3.

[315] "Caribisch Gebied Word teen Enorme Vulkaan," *Leeuwarder Courant*, April 24, 1970, 4; "De Opstand op Trinidad Brand Slaat over naar Caribbean," *De Vrije Stem,* April 23, 1970, 1; "Kabinet-Petronia is Zijn Volgzame Politie Kwijt," 5; Diekmann, 101.

[316] Diekmann, 104.

In *RUKU*, an Antillean journal published in the Netherlands that openly supported Antillean Black Power, Curaçaoan author and linguist Frank Martinus Arion also offered another explanation for why he thought Black Power was not landing on the island. Arion believed the issue was a matter of translation, rather than a lack of understanding. In both Dutch and Papiamentu, power could be translated in two ways: 'macht' in Dutch or 'poder' in Papiamentu, and 'kracht' in Dutch or 'forza' in Papiamentu. The former referred to power in the sense of political control, influence, and domination, while the latter lay closer in meaning to strength, force, and courage. In reading about Black Power in the region, Arion had observed that much of Antillean resistance against the movement stemmed from their fear of the former; fear that Black people would want to overthrow the Antillean government to gain control over the islands. Instead, the editor argued, Black Power had to be interpreted along the lines of 'horsepower' and 'manpower', which indicated strength rather than authority. "After all, nobody can be against negro people powerfully dedicating themselves to society; which does not necessarily mean that they want to dominate," Arion concluded.[317]

At the same time, Fox was also receiving criticism from those closer to him on the political spectrum: nationalists. Just as Trinta di Mei had created a new space for Black radicalism on Curaçao, the uprising had boosted the nationalist movement that had emerged after the institution of the 1954 Charter. One of the movements that emerged from this boost was *di-nos-e-ta*, described in the introduction to this dissertation. Not unexpectedly, criticism from the nationalist movement primarily concerned Fox's internationalism. As his writings, speeches, and interviews showed, the Antillean Black Power leader almost routinely underscored his participation in the movement in the United States and his connections to activists in New York and beyond. Likewise, those who described Fox in interviews and reports regularly accentuated his American(ized) mannerisms and speech to build his credibility as an 'authentic' Black Power activist. To give an example, journalists frequently cited Fox in English, including Black Power concepts like "self-determination" and "Black is Beautiful" as well as more casual expressions like "hey man" and "God knows what,

[317] "Uncle-Tomisme Viert Hoogtij in het Caribisch Gebied," *RUKU: Algemeen Cultureel Maandblad voor de Nederlandse Antillen* 2.4 (1970), 3.

man."[318] Although these Americanisms were persuasive tools in convincing locals that Fox was a 'legitimate' Black Power activist, they also isolated him and his ideas from the already existing Antillean anticolonial scene. Arguing that Fox's ideas were derived from particular American experiences and standards, many of his critics rejected the local Black Power organization as import, sometimes even fearing that Black Power would bring a new version of American imperialism (that is, African American imperialism) to their country.[319]

Rejection of Black Power as a foreign movement was especially prevalent on the island of Aruba, where a nationalist movement not only fought for independence from the Netherlands but also from the Netherlands Antilles.[320] One of the most radical groups that worked towards this goal was the Commission for Aruban Separation (Comision Pro-Separacion Aruba). Its president, Holmo Henriquez, fiercely opposed any kind of 'imported' ideology, which included that of the Black Power movement. "Everyone who loves this piece of rock should keep their eyes wide open to the infiltration of these elements," he told fellow Arubans in his new year's message, warning them that their island might end up in foreign hands if they allowed these ideas to thrive at home.[321] Pointing the finger at Black Power in particular, Henriquez exclaimed:

> We want neither Black Power nor white Power. What we want is Arubian Power, Arubans who represent and govern Aruba – that is our pride, that is our responsibility and freedom, that is the inner worth of our people, that is our right and our wish, which everyone in the world must respect, including the central government [of the Netherlands Antilles] and including the Dutch government.[322]

---

[318] "Eskudo di Antiyas," 3; Pakiko Black Power," 3; "Pelea di Gai," *Vitó*, February 28, 1970, 3; "Entrevista ku Benjamin Fox," 3.

[319] *30 Mei 1969: Rapport van de Commissie*, 172; American Consul Curaçao, *FY 1973 CASP*, November 30, 1970, page 4-6, Subject Numeric Files, 1970-1973, Box 2499, Pol NETH-ANT-US, General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD, United States; Kuijk, "Rapport van een Razernij," 5; J. Kuijk, "Benjamin Fox, een Curaçaose Kabouter," *Trouw*, July 10, 1971, 11.

[320] For a history of Aruban nationalism, see Alofs and Merkies, *Ken ta Arubiano?*

[321] "Pro Separacion Wij Willen Arubian Power," Amigoe di Curaçao, January 8, 1970, 4.

[322] "Pro Separacion," 4. Parts of this quote are also shared in "Aruba Luidt Nieuwjaar in met Vuurwerk en Klokgelui," *Amigoe di Curaçao*, January 2, 1970, 5.

This sentiment was shared by other Arubans too, including those of the People's Electoral Movement (Movimiento Electoral di Pueblo, MEP).[323] While there was some support for Black Power on the island, as there were on the island of St. Martin, these attitudes overruled.[324] This must have been quite a disappointment to Fox, who had initially intended for the ABP to become active throughout the Netherlands Antilles but, in reality, never managed to find ground outside of Curaçao.

By the summer of 1970, Fox had had enough of the continuous sensationalization, misinterpretation, and criticism of the movement. Disillusioned with the possibilities of starting a Black revolution, he decided to leave Willemstad to settle in Boca Samí, a small fishing village three miles west of the capital. Here, he took over the chairmanship of the local community center, where he continued to organize Afrocentric cultural events but maintained a strict no-politics policy.[325] Instead of Black Power, Fox now preferred to speak of Self Power, which aimed "to make people conscious of their personal possibilities [by] teaching them to cut through societal and political apathy with pride and confidence."[326] In practice, his new ideology differed little from his former, except it now encouraged all groups in society – regardless of their race – to prioritize self-respect and self-determination. "The ultimate goal is a harmonious society, in which there are no more conflicts," he concluded.[327] How exactly Fox applied this new ideology to his work at the Boca Sami community center is unclear, as he disappeared from the public eye as soon as he left. He did stay in Curaçao, eventually starting a small business in black coral sales in the same tourism

[323] American Consul Curaçao, *Visit to Aruba During the Dutch Ambassadors' Conference*, January 25, 1971, page 2, Subject Numeric Files, 1970-1973, Box 2499, Pol 7 NETH-US, General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD, United States; "Op Aruba Geen Communisme of Black Power," *Amigoe di Curaçao*, May 15, 1975, 5.

[324] Aruban Black Power groups were mentioned in "Pro Separacion," 4, and "Tivoli-Juwelen Goed voor Eerste Prijzen," *Amigoe di Curaçao,* February 22, 1971, 5. The latter discusses a Black Power group that participated in the carnival parade in Oranjestad, where they had their own Black Power float and pan-African flags. Minor Black Power incidents in St. Martin are discussed in "Geruchten over Onlusten op St. Maarten," *Amigoe di Curaçao*, March 17, 1970, 1, and "Incident bij Receptie voor Gouverneur," *Amigoe di Curaçao*, October 30, 1970, 3.

[325] J. Kuijk, 11; "Bonte Avond bc Boca Sami," *Amigoe di Curaçao*, November 18, 1970, 3; "Absoluut Geen Politiek in Buurtcentrum-Werk," *Amigoe di Curaçao,* December 1, 1970, 9. Fox's explicit distancing from politics is also mentioned in Oostindie, In *Curaçao, 30 Mei 1969*, 8.

[326] Kuijk, 11.

[327] Kuijk, 11; "Fox: Geen Black Power, Maar Self Power," *Amigoe di Curaçao*, July 24, 1971, 5.

industry that he had once fiercely opposed. [328] It seems he never moved back to the United States.

The introduction to this chapter posed the question how the 30 May uprising gave rise to Black Power in the Netherlands Antilles. Focusing on the activism of Fox and his Antillean Black Power organization, it has shown that the revolutionary networks responsible for the uprising played a significant role in facilitating his activism, while the anticolonial spirit awakened by Trinta di Mei strengthened its campaign for Black liberation. In fact, it is difficult to imagine what Antillean Black Power might have looked like without the uprising. While Fox had already been thinking about establishing a Black Power organization in Curaçao for several years, Trinta di Mei made clear that racial discrimination on the island could no longer be ignored and that Afro-Antilleans were willing to fight for their rights. It was the perfect time for Fox to return to the island and put his plans into action. As soon as he arrived, the leaders of the uprising welcomed him with open arms, granting him access to their spaces and promoting his ideas among their own following. Fox's ABP came to depend heavily on these platforms and networks, using *Vitó* as its main channel for communication and the Gomez Square for its outreach. In some ways, the Black Power organization could pick up right where the Black Panthers of Curaçao had left off, even if its ideas were slightly different.

The ABP's dependence on the 30 May movement would eventually prove to be both a blessing and a curse. While its connections to *Vitó* allowed the organization to grow into the second largest group in the island's anticolonial movement within months after Fox's arrival, they also left the group without any solid foundation after Fox's falling out with Brown. Without a place to share his ideas, and frustrated with the constant drama and miscommunication in the movement, Fox soon abandoned his organization. Perhaps unexpectedly, their falling out also proved to be catastrophic for the 30 May movement itself, as Black Power had become an essential part of its platform. As Brown explained later, the clash "led to a massive rupture in the movement," as many of their mutual followers decided to take Fox's side.[329] The

[328] "De Recreatie op Curaçao is Exclusief," *De Waarheid*, October 11, 1975, 4.

[329] Brown in *Curaçao, 30 Mei 1969*, 18.

movement was further weakened when Brown left the FOL several months later over another ideological conflict.[330] In a way, then, the fall of Antillean Black Power symbolized the beginning of the end of the 30 May movement – though of course more factors and developments played a role in its demise.

The conflict between Brown and Fox is particularly interesting in the context of this dissertation, as it shows the variety of Black Power activism that could exist even on one small island. Although the 'why' was the same for the BPC and the ABP, with both being motivated by the promise of a new Black belonging, the 'how' was so radically different that it became impossible for them to work towards this goal together. This shows that understandings of Black Power did not only depend on the local environment in which these kinds of groups emerged, but also with the personal convictions, transnational connections, and opportunities of their respective leaders. For Brown, who had already been sympathetic to Marxism before he learned about the Black Power movement, it was a logical choice to adopt the revolutionary nationalism of the Black Panther Party. For Fox, who learned about the movement while living in New York, where Black resistance was deeply rooted in cultural nationalism, it made more sense to prioritize the revolution of the mind. Black Power in Curaçao thus confirms what Quinn has written previously about the heterogeneity of Caribbean Black Power.[331]

Many who have studied the 30 May uprising and broader anticolonial movement have reflected on the positive effects it had on racial discourse and acceptance in Curaçao. Already in 1975, for example, William A. Anderson and Russell R. Dynes wrote:

> The May Movement was widely interpreted in Curacao as a significant achievement or victory for the black masses. As a result, some persons acquired a new sense of racial identity and pride. Persons who previously had been hesitant about discussing their African ancestry publicly took note of it after May 30. For some Antilleans who had not previously participated in the May Movement, the reference to their racial affinity with those who had was their way of belatedly joining the movement.[332]

[330] Anderson and Dynes, 120.

[331] Quinn, 26, as discussed on page 15.

[332] Anderson and Dynes, 114.

Similar things are written by Oostindie in his chapter on Black Power. "Where Dutch, or Western culture in general, had been regarded as normative," he writes, "Curaçaoan culture now lost the stigma of interiority."[333] Dalhuisen et. al. even speak of a cultural 'renaissance' after the uprising, as "the feeling of self-worth among the black and colored population increased drastically after the 30th of May."[334]

Looking at the history presented in this chapter, however, it seems unfair to ascribe these developments to the 30 May movement without acknowledging Fox's role in it. Though Afro-Curaçaoan heritage had already made a comeback in the previous years, it was Fox's campaign for Black Power that truly boosted the call for cultural awareness in the period after the uprising, thanks in part to the attention he got for his reputed role in the uprising. Through his writings in *Vitó*, Fox encouraged thousands of readers to embrace their African heritage and identity, promoting not only Afro-Curaçaoan but also 'African' culture. Surely he was not the only one to talk about these things, but by teaching Curaçaoans about African history and heritage, promoting Black beauty, and introducing them to fashions like the daishiki, he did make an undeniable contribution to cultural debates of the island.

While the ABP never managed to bring 'total liberation' to the Afro-Antillean population, it thus does seem like the Black Power leader left a lasting mark on the anticolonial movement and, beyond that, even mainstream culture. As one woman later told Oostindie, the ideas Black Power brought over from the United States were revolutionary to an entire generation of Black women, who "started appreciating themselves like they never had before."[335] Over the course of only one year, the ABP helped them to break through some of the most persistent legacies of Dutch colonialism, making a notable contribution to the decolonization of Antillean culture. According to Anderson and Dynes, such an accomplishment, in combination with the political achievements of the FOL, "would have made black power movements in the United States and elsewhere somewhat envious."[336]

---

[333] Oostindie, "Black Power," 256; "Woedend Vuur," 28-29.

[334] Dalhuisen, 143.

[335] This person was anonymized for privacy reasons. The interview is part of the Collectie 30 Mei 1969 (KITLV), UBL474, Special Collections, Leiden University, Leiden, the Netherlands.

[336] Anderson and Dynes, 145.

Chapter 3:
"The Best Place to Help the Panthers is at Home":
Black Panther Solidarity in the Cold War Netherlands

Early in the evening of 16 January 1970, hundreds of people made their way through the streets of Amsterdam to attend a special event at the monumental Moses and Aaron Church. When the final guests arrived at the venue, it was overcrowded. The wooden benches of the church were packed, forcing numerous visitors to take their places on the stairs to the pulpit. Dozens of others stood in the entranceway or leaned against the back walls. The baroque altar of the church, normally displaying an array of biblical statues, marble pillars, oil paintings, was hidden behind a large white screen and a banner with the words: "BLACK PANTHER PARTY – ALL POWER TO THE PEOPLE – DE MACHT AAN HET VOLK," accompanied by an illustration of a clenched black fist.[337] That evening, the church hosted the very first event of the *Solidariteitscomité met de Black Panthers*, or Black Panther Solidarity Committee (BPSC), which had been established several weeks earlier to raise support for the Black Panther Party in the Netherlands.

To kick-start their campaign, the committee had invited a speaker who knew the organization inside out: Elbert 'Big Man' Howard. Big Man was a veteran member of the Black Panther Party, having joined founders Bobby Seale and Huey P. Newton as one of their first recruits in Oakland, California, in 1966. Since then, he had filled a number of key roles in the organization, serving as both Deputy Minister of Information in Eldridge Cleaver's absence and as editor of *The Black Panther*.[338] Big Man turned out to be an ideal representative for the party that night. He appeared on stage in iconic Black Panther fashion, wearing a leather jacket with sunglasses and a round afro haircut, living up to the crowd's idea of what a Black radical was supposed

[337] Rob Mierenet, "Albert Howard Hield Lezing over "Black Panther" Beweging in USA in Mozes en Aaronkerk A'dam," January 16, 1970, Photo Collection, col. nr. 2.24.01.05, inv. nrs. 923-1651 to 923-1660, Nationaal Archief, The Hague, Netherlands. "De Macht aan het Volk" is a direct translation of All Power to the People. All translations in this article are the author's own.

[338] Curtis J. Austin, *Up Against the Wall: Violence in the Making and Unmaking of the Black Panther Party* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2006), 40-43; Bloom and Martin, 264; Donna J. Murch, *Living for the City: Migration, Education, and the Rise of the Black Panther Party in Oakland, California* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2010), 139.

to look like. He also proved to be an excellent orator. In a passionate yet carefully constructed speech, Big Man laid out the revolutionary nationalist ideology of his party, explaining how the Black Panthers fought racism, capitalism and imperialism all at the same time. Aware that many of these themes were popular among European activists, too, he invited the audience to join him and his comrades in fighting these systems globally. "We are prepared to collaborate with oppressed people wherever they are in the world," he firmly stated. "Because in the end we are all doing the same thing."[339]

By the time Big Man had reached the Netherlands, he had already traveled to Japan and Scandinavia to spread a similar message.[340] His tour was part of a broader effort by the Panthers to expand their network of revolutionary activists, liberation movements, and even politicians who could help them challenge the growing power of the United States in the midst of the Cold War. As one of the most oppressed groups in American society, the Black radicals believed they had a critical role to play in global resistance against their government, arguing that they were in a unique position to fight its imperialist project from within.[341] To strengthen their position, fugitive party members Eldridge and Kathleen Cleaver had started building an international section for the Black Panther Party in Algiers, the capital city of Algeria, in the summer of 1969. From there, the Cleavers managed to form coalitions with some of America's fiercest ideological opponents, including communist leaders Fidel Castro, Pham Van Dong, and Kim Il-Sung.[342] At the same time, they helped the Panthers build an extensive solidarity network in Europe, which has received much less attention in the historiography than their other transnational relations.

Representatives of the BPP had first made an appearance in Europe in the spring of 1969. Even before the Cleavers had settled on the Mediterranean coast,

---

[339] Martin Ruyter, "Ze Kunnen de Revolutie Niet Doden," *De Volkskrant,* January 16, 1970, 11, and Jelte Rep, "Big Man: 'Zwarte Panters Laten Zich Niet Vernietigen'," *Trouw*, January 17, 1970, 7.

[340] Elbert "Big Man" Howard, *Panther on the Prowl* (self-published, 2002), 34-52; Elbert Howard, interview by David P. Cline in Santa Rosa, California, 30 June 2016, filmed by John Melville Bishop*, U.S. Civil Rights History Project,* Library of Congress, accessed via https://www.loc.gov/item/2016655436/, 01:18:30-01:19:38.

[341] Bloom and Martin, 66-73; Malloy, 117; Clemons and Jones, 190; Williams, "American Exported Black Nationalism," 16; Stephen Shames and Bobby Seale, *Power to the People: The World of the Black Panthers* (New York: Abrams, 2016), 43, 182.

[342] Malloy, 127, 165-66, 191.

Chairman Bobby Seale and Minister of Education Raymond 'Masai' Hewitt had gone on a tour through Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Denmark to raise support for their campaign to free co-founder Newton from prison and to see if there was any interest in their work across the Atlantic.[343] Their tour had been organized by Jamaican activist Connie Matthews, who worked for UNESCO in Copenhagen, and Leonard W. 'Skip' Malone, an American journalist living in the same city. Both had previously been involved in the Scandinavian Solidarity Committee for Third World Peoples' Liberation Struggle (SSCTWP) and had later established the Danish Solidarity Committee Black Liberation (SCBL).[344] As they traveled across northern Europe, Seale and Hewitt left behind a number of committees which promised to keep raising support for them after they were gone. Upon returning to the United States, Seale and Hewitt rewarded Matthews for her help in organizing the tour by appointing her as the official International Coordinator of the BPP, authorizing her to develop this newly formed support network into a strong system of fundraising, education, and political pressure.[345] Under Matthews, with support of the Cleavers in Algiers, the Scandinavian committees gained several hundred followers and the network quickly expanded southwards, taking root in West-Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, France, and Italy as well.[346]

While it was quite unique for an organization to establish its own solidarity network like this, this type of activism was not altogether uncommon in Europe. Characterized by the countercultural spirit of the sixties, hundreds of student movements and action groups had begun to mobilize in support of the so-called 'Third World' through solidarity committees and other kinds of campaigns. According to historian Kim Christiaens, this type of activism was popular because it "contrasted the status quo and *ennui* in Europe with the whirlwind of changes and challenges in

[343] Bloom and Martin, 107-11; Malloy, 120-22; Clemons and Jones, 187.

[344] David Hilliard and Bobby Seale, "The Black Panther Party Authorizes Leadership in Scandinavia," *The Black Panther*, 4 May 1969, 10; Robyn C. Spencer, *The Revolution Has Come: Black Power, Gender, and the Black Panther Party in Oakland* (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2016), 118.

[345] Bloom and Martin, 313; Hilliard and Seale, 10; House Committee on Internal Security, *The Black Panther Party, Its Origin and Development as Reflected in Its Official Weekly Newspaper, the Black Panther* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Service, 1970), 67-68.

[346] Clemons and Jones, 197; Spencer, 103. The British Black Panther Movement is not included in this list because it was established independently from the Black Panther Party. See Angelo.

countries emerging out of the ruins of colonial empires and defying the stalemate of the Cold War."[347] While on the surface this type of activism was characterized by a kind of romanticization of liberation movements in the non-Western world, it was also fundamentally critical of political developments at home. After all, for European activists to side with the 'Third World' from the heart of the 'First World' was to challenge not just their own governments' foreign policies, but also the growing influence of the United States and international organizations like the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) around the world. In fact, as some have previously argued, anti-Americanism even became a defining characteristic of European solidarity activism in this period.[348] Such sentiments had a significant impact on regional Black Panther solidarity as well.

Although multiple scholars have alluded to the wide reach of the Black Panthers in Europe, however, they have only provided in-depth analyses of their solidarity committees in West-Germany and, to a lesser extent, Scandinavia.[349] Research on Black Panther solidarity in the other countries and on the collective efforts, strategies, and operations of the overarching European network remains absent. This chapter aims to fill part of this gap in the literature by exploring the brief yet turbulent history of the Black Panther Solidarity Committee in the Netherlands, which was active from

[347] Kim Christiaens, "Europe at the Crossroads of Three Worlds: Alternative Histories and Connections of European Solidarity with the Third World, 1950s-80s," *European Review of History: Revue Européenne d'Histoire* 24.6 (2017): 933.

[348] Christiaens, "Europe at the Crossroads," 945; Kim Christiaens, John Nieuwenhuis, and Charel Roemer, *International Solidarity in the Low Countries during the Twentieth Century: New Perspectives and Themes* (Berlin: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2020), 7-8; Konrad J. Kuhn, "Liberation Struggle and Humanitarian Aid: International Solidarity Movements and the "Third World" in the 1960s," in *The Third World in the Global 1960s*, eds. Samantha Christiansen and Zachary A. Scarlett (New York: Berghahn Books, 2013): 69-85; Robert Gildea, James Mark, and Niek Pas, "European Radicals and the 'Third World': Imagined Solidarities and Radical Networks, 1958-73," *Cultural and Social History* 8.4 (2011): 449-71.

[349] According to Kathleen Cleaver, these were "the most dynamic and the best organized" of all the committees (as cited in Clemons and Jones, 198), which could explain why these receive more attention in the literature. The only mention of the other national solidarity committees appears in the same article. For studies of Black Panther solidarity in Scandinavia, from the perspective of the Black Panther Party, see Bloom and Martin, 313-314; Malloy, 125. There appear to be no studies of the Scandinavian committees from the Scandinavian perspective (at least not in English). On Black Panther solidarity in Germany, see Klimke, 120; Britta Waldschmidt-Nelson, ""We Shall Overcome": The Impact of the African American Freedom Struggle on Race Relations and Social Protest in Germany after World War II," in *The Transatlantic Sixties: Europe and the United States in the Counterculture Decade*, eds. Grzegorz Kosc, Clara Juncker, Sharon Monteith, and Britta Waldschmidt-Nelson (New York: Columbia UP, 2013), 83; Maria Höhn, "The Black Panther Solidarity Committees and the Voice of the Lumpen," in *German Studies Review* 31.1 (February 2008): 136-137.

December 1969 to April 1970, and the Freedom School, which continued its work until December 1970. It examines why activists in the Netherlands believed it was necessary to support the Black Panther Party and how this was informed by the specific environment in which they were active. Taking into consideration the political landscape of Cold War Europe, as well as the colonial context of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, it argues that the BPSC formed an alliance with the BPP because it offered them a framework to simultaneously challenge American imperialism in Europe and their own colonial legacies in the Caribbean and beyond.

In many ways, the BPSC forms an outlier in this dissertation as a whole. Not only is it the sole non-Caribbean organization, but it is also the only organization that did not emulate Black Power. Rather, it was created in support of the movement. Both of these deviations can be explained by the racial identity of the activists who formed the organization, all of whom were White and Dutch. While the members of the committee did believe the ideas of the BPP were relevant to Dutch society and collaborated with Surinamese and Antillean activists to promote the revolutionary nationalist ideology of the Panthers among Black communities, they recognized that their own identity limited their activism to the realm of solidarity. Furthermore, the BPSC was the first group with direct connections to the Black Power movement in the United States, unlike the BPC, which merely imitated it, and the ABP, which was tied to the movement only by its founder.

This chapter is divided into four sections. The first provides an overview of the early history of the Black Panther Solidarity Committee, discussing who were involved, how they legitimized the need for Black Panther solidarity in the Netherlands, and what they did to support the party from afar. The second and third sections discuss the establishment of the Grand Committee for Black Panther Solidarity, which was set up to bring together Black Panther supporters from Antillean and Surinamese action groups and the New Left.[350] While this Grand Committee helped the BPSC grow exponentially, it also paved the way for major internal conflicts on protest methods and violence. The final section shows how this conflict led to a schism in the solidarity movement which, ultimately, forced the BPSC to hand over its

[350] New Left here is not a translation of the 'Nieuw Links' group that arose from the Dutch Labor Party in the same period, but rather refers to the broader leftist movement of western Europe and North America in the 1960s and 1970s.

activities to the more militant Freedom School. Together, these sections demonstrate the successes as well as limitations of Black Panther solidarity in an interracial, transatlantic context.

The Black Panther Solidarity Committee

The first official Black Panther committee in the Netherlands, the Black Panther Solidarity Committee, was established on 15 December 1969 in Hilversum. The founder of the committee was Peter Schumacher, a young journalist who had come into contact with the party when he had traveled to the United States earlier that year. Based on what he had seen and heard, Schumacher was highly impressed with the Panthers, believing them to be "the first revolutionary party in America to fight for a radical social revolution."[351] Eager to support the party upon his return to the Netherlands, Schumacher began to explore the possibility of gathering support for the Panthers at home.[352] He reached out to the European solidarity network, which sent two fellow Black Panther enthusiasts to the country: Leif Aingsmose, chairman of the Danish solidarity committee, and Bill Caldwell, chairman of the Swedish solidarity committee and coordinator of the European distribution of *The Black Panther*. Both stayed in the Netherlands for several weeks to assist Schumacher in setting up a local committee, sharing their experiences, providing him with the necessary knowledge and tools, and connecting him to their extensive transnational network of Black Panther supporters. It was also Aingsmose and Caldwell who arranged for Big Man to visit Amsterdam that January.[353]

In the meantime, Schumacher selected the first members of the founding committee. Initially, the BPSC consisted of journalist Jelte Rep, who worked for daily

---

[351] Solidariteitscomité Black Panther Party, *Black Panther Nieuwsbulletin*, January 1970, 3, ZK 72913 (1970), International Institute for Social History, Amsterdam, the Netherlands; "Ik Dacht: Dit Wordt te Gek," *Leeuwarder Courant,* 24 January 24, 1970, 41.

[352] Peter Schumacher, "Zwarte Panters Vogelvrij," *De Groene Amsterdammer*, December 20, 1969, 1; Solidariteitscomité Black Panthers, January 1970, 3; "Ik Dacht: Dit Wordt te Gek," *Leeuwarder Courant,* January 24, 1970, 41.

[353] "Black Panther in het Universiteitstheater," *Het Parool,* January 5, 1970, 4; "Panters," January 13, 1970, 9; Haaster, "Harde Politieke Aanpak," 4; Hanneke Meerum Terwogt, "'Big Man' Howard Spreekt, Vanavond," *Het Parool*, January 16, 1970, 9; "Albert Howard komt Spreken in Amsterdam," *Het Vrije Volk,* January 14, 1970, 4; "'Black Panther' Bill Caldwell en Provo-Raadslid Roel van Duyn naar Groningen," *Nieuwsblad van het Noorden*, February 4, 1970, 11.

newspaper *Trouw* as 'America expert', film director At van Praag, who specialized in countercultural documentaries, and publisher Rob van Gennep, whose publishing house was known around the Netherlands for its leftist literature. Much like Schumacher himself, all were young white men who had learned about the Panthers through their work in the media. Even before the BPSC could get its work started, however, the composition of the committee already changed. Despite their initial enthusiasm, both Rep and Van Praag left the committee within weeks of its founding, listing rather ambiguous reasons for their resignation.[354] They were replaced by two young women: Lily van den Bergh and Anja Meulenbelt. Van den Bergh was a former actress and television host who had recently started working as a freelance journalist, writing for prominent magazines and newspapers like *De Groene Amsterdammer* and *Vrij Nederland.* As recently as 1969, she had traveled to California to interview Masai Hewitt and Elaine Brown on the ideas and programs of the Panthers.[355] For Meulenbelt, who would play a prominent role in the Dutch feminist movement and became a Socialist Party member later in life, the committee was one of her first activist experiences.[356]

Under the guidance of Caldwell and Aingsmose, the newly established BPSC began formulating its plans. This was no easy task. On the surface, the members of the committee understood that, as a solidarity group, their main purpose was to gather support for the Black Panthers in the Netherlands by raising awareness, collecting donations, and organizing solidarity protests. "From the very start, the Panthers have stated that white support is welcome, but that the Panthers themselves will decide how the black revolution will be realized," Schumacher clarified in a piece for *De Groene Amsterdammer*.[357] On a deeper level, however, the committee also believed that solidarity went beyond mere moral support. True solidarity also meant "fighting

[354] Schumacher, "Zwarte Panters Vogelvrij," 1; "Ik Dacht: Dit Wordt te Gek," 41.

[355] Lily van den Bergh, "Bloemen, Drugs, Naaktheid en Anarchie zijn Geen Adequaat Antwoord op Onderdrukking," *Vrij Nederland*, January 1970, 5.

[356] These are the names of committee members listed in the BPSC newsletters. However, Meulenbelt later also mentions a Marcel, likely referring to Surinamese student Marcel Kross, and someone named Hannah, who according to Meulenbelt was Bill Caldwell's girlfriend and "did most of the work behind the scenes, virtually unnoticed." See *De Schaamte Voorbij: Een Persoonlijke Geschiedenis* (Amsterdam: Van Gennep, 1976), 109-10.

[357] Peter Schumacher, "Zwarte Panters Vogelvrij," 1.

against racism and imperialism on all fronts here."[358] While the members of the committee acknowledged that there was no place for them in the United States, they did believe the BPSC could help them by challenging their shared enemies in their own society. "Why would we let black people in America, who have the courage to sacrifice themselves (…) do all the hard work?" the committee asked in its opening statement, while "we, here in Europe, can help the Black Panthers (…) by starting a fight against economic pressure at home and by opposing the exploitation of our colonies."[359] Ultimately, the Dutch activists hoped they could help pave the way for an International Panther Party that could fight imperialism all around the world.

Although the committee thus had significant ambitions, its program initially focused only on its first goals: to educate the public about the Black Panther Party, to collect financial support for its programs, and to advance its causes through political protest. After all, as the committee argued, "real solidarity can only be given once one knows what it's all about."[360] The educational element of their program was the most extensive and consisted of two main components: writing and lecturing. The first mostly took place in the BPSC's monthly newsletter, which became a medium for committee updates and Black Panther news. Using the Panthers' own writings as their source, the committee wanted to provide an alternative view on recent events involving the party, such as the FBI's assassination of Fred Hampton in Chicago and the murder of suspected FBI informant Alex Rackley in New Haven. Although Dutch media had covered these events widely, the BPSC believed that the American sources used by Dutch journalists – which they referred to as "Hoover's reports" – were untrustworthy.[361] In addition to news items, the publication also contained translations of some of the party's core texts, such as the Ten Point Program ('What We Want, What We Believe') and its membership rules, as well as updates on the work of the solidarity committee in the Netherlands. The newsletter was distributed to

[358] Solidariteitscomité Black Panthers, February 1970, 1; "'Big Man' Howard Spreekt, Vanavond," 9.

[359] Solidariteitscomité Black Panthers, January 1970, 2.

[360] Solidariteitscomité Black Panthers, February 1970, 1.

[361] Rob van Gennep, "Rob van Gennep Over," *Het Vrije Volk,* January 10, 1970, 19.

subscribers, but could also be bought at a selected number of bookstores around the country and at lectures and events organized by the committee.

Each of these newsletters also contained a reading list with books on the Black Panther Party, the Black Power movement, and African American history in general. Some of these books were written or published by members of the committee, such as Peter Schumacher's *Eldridge Cleaver: Een Zwarte Panter in Amerika* (1969), Ton Regtien's *Black Power en de Derde Wereld: Een Interview met Stokely Carmichael* (1968), and the Dutch translation of Stokely Carmichael's *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation* (1969). Other books on the list were written by members of the party itself, such as Eldridge Cleaver's *Soul on Ice* (1968) and his *Post-Prison Writings and Speeches* (1969), or by other Black radicals, such as Malcolm X and Alex Haley's *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (1965) and Franz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961). The lists were constructed by Van Gennep, who sold all of these books and the BPSC newsletter at his shop in Amsterdam, though the committee mentioned they were also available at other "progressive bookstores" in the Netherlands.[362]

Besides their own newsletter, members of the BPSC also wrote about the Panthers in a number of newspapers and magazines. The most detailed of these was founding member Jelte Rep's six-part series on the Black Panthers in newspaper *Trouw*. In this series, he discussed the living conditions in African American neighborhoods, the police violence they encountered, how the Black Panthers were trying to combat this, and what the BPSC did to support this.[363] In less detail, fellow committee member Van Gennep wrote about the BPP and BPSC in his personal column for socialist newspaper *Het Vrije Volk*.[364] Other members wrote about their activities on a freelance basis. Both Schumacher and Van den Bergh, for example, submitted pieces on the party to *De Groene Amsterdammer* and *Vrij Nederland*, both of which were major left-leaning journals. Through these articles, Schumacher and Van den

[362] Solidariteitscomité Black Panthers, January 1970, 7, 9; February 1970, 8; March 1970, 2; April 1970, 2.

[363] Jelte Rep, "Toenemende Solidariteit in de Ghetto's," *Trouw*, February 21, 1970, 9; "Gewapende Negers Verbijsteren Blanke Politiemannen," *Trouw*, February 24, 1970, 7; "'Ik Zal Vermoord Worden,' Zegt Huey P. Newton," *Trouw*, February 25, 1970, 7; "Eldridge Cleaver Komt Diep Onder de Indruk van Nieuwe Negerpartij," *Trouw,* February 26, 1970, 7; "Politie Zet op Keiharde Wijze de Aanval in," *Trouw*, February 27, 1970, 7; "FBI Werkt met Zwarte Spionnen," *Trouw*, February 28, 1970, 13.

[364] Van Gennep, 19.

Bergh hoped to convince "those whites freed of racial delusions" to join their committee or make donations.[365] Some of these works were spread around the Dutch Atlantic, also reaching the Caribbean through personal networks and republishing the information in journals like *RUKU.*[366]

The second part of their educational program consisted of a series of lectures organized in collaboration with various student organizations, cultural institutions, and political pressure groups around the Netherlands. These lectures took place in large cities like Amsterdam, Rotterdam, and The Hague, but also in student cities like Leiden, Tilburg, and Nijmegen, and in towns with large leftist communities like Groningen, Assen, and Deventer. At its height, the committee organized two or three of these lectures a week. Each was slightly different, though most of them followed a similar format. First, one of the committee members would start off with a short introduction to the ideology and programs of the Black Panther Party. Sometimes, this lecture was not given by a committee member but by a special guest, such as Caldwell. After this lecture followed a short documentary film on the BPP or on racial inequality in the US in general. Afterwards, there would be room for an interactive activity, which could be a discussion, brainstorming session, or even the drafting of a policy proposal. Once the audience had gained a basic understanding of the work and relevance of the Black Panthers for Europe, the committee invited its audience to sign up for one of their solidarity protests, to subscribe to their newsletter, or to make a donation to the party.[367]

After all, the information provided by the BPSC was not only intended to be educational, but also to stimulate the collection of financial aid for the Panthers. As the previous paragraphs suggest, the committee's most steady sources of income were the profits from their newsletter, payments for articles in major papers, money raised at events, and gifts by individual donors. On top of that, the BPSC gathered money by selling *The Black Panther,* which they received from Caldwell in Stockholm and

[365] Schumacher, "Zwarte Panters Vogelvrij," 1; Van den Bergh, 5.

[366] Letter to Stanley Brown, The Hague, March 19, 1970, Vito-artikelen, Archief, 1969-1971, N.B. Correspondentie e.a., Archivo Nashonal, Willemstad, Curaçao; "Leefwijze van de Panters," *RUKU: Algemeen Cultureel Maandblad voor de Nederlandse Antillen* 2.4 (1970), 10.

[367] Meulenbelt, 109; Vrijheidsschool, *Vrijheidspers Informatiekrant*; Solidariteitscomité Black Panther Party, April 1970, 3; Terwogt, 9.

distributed to booksellers nationwide. When the distribution of *The Black Panther* faltered because shipments from the United States were disrupted, it was replaced by a new information bulletin written by the Cleavers for their European allies.[368] Although none of the BPSC's financial records were archived, one of its newsletters states that it had raised approximately 2000 fl. (Dutch guilders) in the first month, of which 800 fl. had been collected at the event with Big Man and 1200 fl. had been gifted by individual donors. Half of this money was used to cover the committee's own expenses, including the materials for the newsletter and costs of communication, while the other half was transferred to the national headquarters of the Black Panther Party in Oakland. The money was meant to fund legal assistance for prosecuted members, social projects, and training programs, such as the Free Breakfast Program and the Liberation Schools.[369] Big Man later wrote that most European aid was spent on legal support for prosecuted Panther leaders.[370]

Besides teaching and fundraising, the BPSC also showed its support for the Panthers through demonstrations. The purpose of these demonstrations was to pressure American diplomats, Dutch government officials, and even large businesses like American Express into denouncing the persecution of the Black Panthers in the United States. Two protests in the spring of 1970 are especially noteworthy. The first took place on 2 March, after the committee had gotten word from the European network about plans for a continent-wide uprising against the prosecution of Bobby Seale in the trial of the Chicago 8 and in New Haven. Even though they had only learned about these plans several days before the chosen date, the committee was determined to join the operation and side with their comrades in Paris, Frankfurt, Copenhagen, Oslo, and Stockholm. Despite the last-minute organization, some 150 people joined their march, starting at Beursplein in the city center of Amsterdam and ending at the highly secured US Consulate at Museumplein.[371] Along the way, the Black Panther supporters paused for short sit-ins, obstructing trams and causing delays throughout

[368] Vrijheidsschool, "Aan de Abonnes van de Black Panther Krant," Private Archive Lily van den Bergh.

[369] Schumacher, "Zwarte Panters Vogelvrij," 1; Solidariteitscomité, February 1970, 2.

[370] Howard, *Panther on the Prowl*, 52.

[371] Solidariteitscomité, March 1970, 1; "Demonstraties tegen Chicago-Proces," *Algemeen Handelsblad,* March 3, 1970, 2; "Politie Belet Afgifte Brief aan Consul Ver. Staten," *Het Parool,* March 3, 1970, 5.

the city. Once the group arrived at the Consulate, they presented a letter in which they requested the Consul General to inform the American government of their discontent with "the way in which ever more people in the[ir] country are tried and judged based on made-up facts."[372] They furthermore used the letter to accuse the US of becoming a police state where "fascist tendencies" were steadily increasing. According to an eye-witness, the entrance to the Consulate was protected by fourteen police officers, some of whom tried to obstruct the delivery of the letter.[373] Meanwhile, the young crowd held up countless banners and signs, holding up images of Bobby Seale and making statements like "Bobby Seale Moet Vrij" ("Free Bobby Seale"), "Alle Macht aan het Volk" ("All Power to the People"), and "Nixon in de Cel" ("Imprison Nixon").[374]

The BPSC organized an even larger protest on 24 April, which the committee had declared a national day for Black Panther support. Similar to their previous protest, this demonstration was set up to call for Seale's release, as they believed him to be "yet another victim of the American capitalist government's systematic campaign to extinguish all active members of the Black Panther Party."[375] Because it would be too much work for the five-person committee to prepare a nationwide event of this size by themselves, they decided to delegate the arrangements of protests outside of Amsterdam to a number of local task forces.[376] Located in at least twelve cities, and led by separate groups of Black Panther supporters, these subcommittees were authorized to set up their own protests using the promotional and educational materials of the national Black Panther committee. In the weeks leading up to the national event, the committee supplied them with posters, pamphlets, ideas for slogans, buttons, and newsletters from their central office, which was now based in

[372] Solidariteitscomité, March 1970, 1.

[373] "Politie Belet Afgifte Brief aan Consul Ver. Staten," 5; Solidariteitscomité, March 1970, 1. The committee later suggested that they had managed to slip it into his mailbox, but it is unclear if the Consul General ever received it or forwarded their message.

[374] "Demonstraties tegen Chicago-Proces," 2; "Politie Belet Afgifte Brief aan Consul Ver. Staten," 5.

[375] "Stop Moord op de Black Panthers," 1970, International Institute for Social History, Amsterdam, the Netherlands, Poster, 48x35 cm, BG D11/49 (1970).

[376] These cities included The Hague, Eindhoven, Haarlem, Hengelo, IJmuiden, Groningen, Baarn, Arnhem, Nijmegen, Rotterdam, Utrecht, and Zeist. The committee also encouraged readers in other places to sign up for the National Black Panther Day, but it is unclear if they did.

Amsterdam.[377] In the capital, the BPSC itself set up an information fair at Leidseplein, followed by a night of performances and short films at the Moses and Aaron Church. At the end of the day, the protesters gathered for another demonstration at the Consulate. An estimated six hundred people attended the performances at the church, of whom four hundred later made their way to Museumplein.[378] They carried signs and banners that depicted the iconic image of a black panther and, once again, the slogan "All Power to the People! Alle Macht aan het Volk!"[379] The widespread support for the Panthers that day showed just how far the BPSC had come in under four months' time, making the Dutch movement for Black Panther support one of the largest and fastest-growing in western Europe.

Caribbean Involvement and Alliances

From the moment the BPSC first announced its plans, activists around the Netherlands were drawn to its ideas, and requests for collaborations simply started pouring in. As the mass attendance of Big Man's lecture and later BPSC protests indicated, there was a tremendous interest in the party, especially among Caribbean students and other revolutionaries in the Dutch New Left. When the committee informed International Coordinator Matthews about the widespread support for the Panthers during her visit to Amsterdam in early 1970, she advised Schumacher to establish a Grand Committee of Black Panther Solidarity that could operate as an umbrella network for all Dutch organizations and individuals who wished to support the party. As the country's official Black Panther committee, the BPSC would serve as the head of this network and coordinate its activities with Matthews to ensure that

[377] Solidariteitscomité, April 1970, 5; "Vier Arrestaties bij Betoging," *De Telegraaf,* March 23, 1970, 5.

[378] "Black Panther Demonstratie in Amsterdam," *Algemeen Handelsblad,* April 25, 1970, 2; "Bobby Seale Moet Vrij," *De Tijd,* April 24, 1970, 9; "Black Panther Films," *Trouw*, April 24, 1970, 9; "Film-Actie," *De Volkskrant,* April 24, 1970, 17; "Ongeveer 400 Sympathisanten Black Panther demonstreerden," *Het Parool*, April 25, 1970, 5; "Black Panther-Dag in Amsterdam," *De Groene Amsterdammer,* April 25, 1970, 4; "Vrijdag: Dag van de 'Zwarte Panters'," *Trouw,* April 21, 1970, 4; "Stop Moord op de Black Panthers"; Vrijheidsschool, "Black Panthers Vrijheidsschool," April 1970, Poster, 50x35 cm, BG D49/814 (1970), International Institute for Social History, Amsterdam, the Netherlands.

[379] Koen Wessing, Photograph, April 24, 1970, BG B23/492 (1970), International Institute for Social History, Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

they matched the party's expectations.[380] Within a matter of weeks, the group grew from a mere five-person committee to a full-fledged movement that included over ten organizations and hundreds of followers.

One section of the Grand Committee consisted of Caribbean student organizations and interest groups: the Surinamese Student Union (*Surinaamse Studentenunie*, SSU), the Antillean Action Group (*Antilliaanse Aktiegroep*, AAG), and the Surinam Revolutionary People's Front (*Revolutionair Volksfront Suriname*, RVS).[381] Most of these became involved with the BPSC in January 1970, when the committee had invited them to discuss the relevance of Black Panther ideology for Black communities in the Netherlands and to explore how it could extend its solidarity to Antillean and Surinamese groups with similar goals as the BPP.[382] In discussing this decision with a journalist from *Het Parool,* the committee explained that Dutch people often read about African American resistance without realizing that Black people in the Netherlands "for a large part encounter the same problems in their interactions with whites as negroes in America."[383] Whether through the 'internal colonialism' of African Americans in the United States or through Dutch colonialism in the Caribbean, both of their problems were caused by the same root problem: imperialism.

According to Swedish committee leader Caldwell, who had taken part in this session, the BPSC's initial meeting with the Caribbean groups had been so successful that the groups decided to partner up. Over the following months, members of the SSU, AAG, and RVS attended many of the committee's events, participated in their demonstrations, and helped them organize events in their own communities and neighborhoods. From Meulenbelt's reflections on these collaborations in her autobiographical *De Schaamte Voorbij* (1976), it seems like the BPSC did not take their involvement in the solidarity movement lightly. In demonstrations, Antillean and Surinamese groups were encouraged to march up front, moving ahead of the white

[380] Solidariteitscomité, Invitation to Grand Committee Meeting, March 18, 1970, Private Archive Lily van den Bergh.

[381] Solidariteitscomité, Invitation to Grand Committee Meeting.

[382] Terwogt, 9; "Panters," January 13, 1970, 9.

[383] "Panters," January 13, 1970, 9.

crowds.[384] Their voices were amplified in other activities too, such as the lectures given by the BPSC all over the country. "I [gave] lectures, sometimes together with Marcel from Suriname," Meulenbelt wrote, likely referring to Marcel Kross, a Surinamese student who was highly involved in the committee. "After my lecture on America, he would share how we are complicit in what is happening in Suriname."[385] This suggests that, while the issue of racism in the Netherlands was not central to the BPSC, the committee believed that the African American and Afro-Caribbean freedom struggles were deeply interconnected, if not the same.

Collaborations between the BPSC and its Caribbean partners were not limited to the work of the solidarity movement alone. In its writings, the BPSC also promoted and supported the anticolonial protests of Antillean and Surinamese groups outside of its own platform. One example was a protest in De Pijp, a neighborhood in Amsterdam which was home to a large community of Caribbean migrants. On 28 March 1970, some thirty Surinamers, Antilleans, and other "representatives of the Third World" came together near the famous Albert Cuyp Market to stand up against "the colonialism, the oppression and the exploitation of non-white Americans by white settlers."[386] Waving around Black Panther flags and signs, the protesters called for an immediate end to the persecution of the Black Panthers and the withdrawal of police forces from African American neighborhoods. Though the BPSC had not played any role in the organization of the event, their public support for it shows how much they valued these kinds of efforts, even if they took place outside of their own program. "The participating organizations hope to organize more of these manifestations in the future," the BPSC wrote, before adding: "We hope more Surinamers will join the next one."[387]

On one occasion, the committee even decided to support its Caribbean partners financially with money that was intended for the BPP. On 1 June 1969, one day after the Trinta di Mei uprising in Curaçao, some seven hundred protesters from around the

[384] Meulenbelt, 110.

[385] Meulenbelt, 109.

[386] Solidariteitscomité, April 1970, 3; "In Amsterdam: Betoging Tegen Kolonialisme," *Het Vrije Volk,* March 27, 1970, 27.

[387] Solidariteitscomité, April 1970, 3.

Netherlands had gathered at the Antillenhuis in The Hague (home of the cabinet of the Minister Plenipotentiary of the Netherlands Antilles) to protest against the way the Dutch government had intervened in the uprising and to denounce Dutch colonialism in general. While mostly peaceful, the protest escalated when a small number of protesters smashed some of the windows of the Antillenhuis, which started a wave of violent altercations between the police and the demonstrators. By the end of the night, seventeen activists had been arrested for use of violence, even though many witnesses would later testify that it was the police who had started the violence and not the other way around.[388] After a long wait, eight of the arrestees were prosecuted in February and March 1970. Leading up to the trial, several large Antillean and Surinamese organizations expressed concerns that the case served as "an attempt at intimidating the Antillean and Surinamese community in the Netherlands" to stop them from criticizing the Kingdom.[389] During the trial, defendants made similar arguments, contending that the police had prevented them from "practicing their fundamental civil rights to freedom of expression" because they were "scared that our protest against the problems in the Antilles will be heard by the Dutch."[390] They did not manage to convince the judge, who found four of the defendants guilty and charged them with 100 fl. fines.[391]

One of the defendants in the Antillenhuis trial was Lucien L. Lafour, who was suspected of having hit an officer on the head with a stick. Lafour, who also went by his 'Muslim name' Brada X, was half Surinamese and had been a public supporter of the Black Power movement for several years.[392] Knowing that his speech would be

[388] Rudi F. Kross, "Het Proces," *De Vrije Stem,* March 26, 1970, 1; "Politie Provoceerde het Geweld," *De Waarheid,* February 13, 1970, 2.

[389] Quote from "Surinaamse Organisaties Protesteren Tegen Proces," *De Waarheid*, February 11, 1970, 2.

[390] "Kritiek op Proces na Demonstratie voor Antillenhuis," *De Volkskrant*, February 12, 1970; "Rechtbank: Begrip voor Rellen Antillenhuis," *Trouw*, February 13, 1970, 3; "Berechting Rellen bij Antillenhuis," *Het Vrije Volk,* February 12, 1970, 9; "Äntillianen Protesteren Fel," *Het Parool*, February 13, 1970, 5;

[391] Letter to Stanley Brown, The Hague, March 19, 1970, Vito-artikelen, Archief, 1969-1971, N.B. Correspondentie e.a., Archivo Nashonal, Willemstad, Curaçao; "Officier Eist Geldboetes in Antillenhuis-Proces," *De Volkskrant,* February 13, 1970, 6; "Verdachten Ontkennen in Antillenhuis-Proces," *Limburgsch Dagblad,* 13 February 1970, 4.

[392] Hans Stevens, "Vroeger Konden We Woningen Bouwen: Waarom Nú Niet?" *De Tijd*, March 27, 1970, 9; Lucien Lafour, "Deep South," *Trouw*, May 22, 1970, 11; Lafour, Speech.

heard by a full courthouse and a range of journalists, he used the opportunity to speak not only to the allegations made against him but also to make a political statement on colonialism and racial inequality. In the first half of his address, Lafour drew the attention of his listeners to the racial biases of the judicial system, the police officers at the Antillenhuis, and the Dutch marines whose actions on 30 May had sparked their protest. "Charged with collective assault. You wonder if this isn't a mistake, a typing error, because isn't this what the 600 marines should be charged with, who are busy keeping the people of Curaçaoa enslaved?" he asked the court, referring to the Dutch marines who were sent to shut down the protests.[393] In the second half of his speech, he shifted his focus to the need for Black resilience in resisting colonial oppression. Drawing stark comparisons between the Antillenhuis protesters, the leaders of Trinta di Mei (Godett and Brown), anticolonial fighters elsewhere (Lumumba and Fanon), and prominent Black Power activists in the United States (Malcolm X, Eldridge Cleaver, Huey Newton, Bobby Seale, and H. Rap Brown), Lafour warned the court that "it would be madness to think blacks can be stopped. (…) Blacks will persist."[394]

The BPSC, which had followed the trial closely, was highly impressed with the rhetoric of the defendants and decided to start an additional fundraising campaign to help the Antillenhuis protesters pay their fines. While these protesters had not been directly involved in their efforts to support the Black Panthers, the committee believed both parties fought the same anticolonial battle and were therefore equally deserving of its solidarity.[395] On top of that, Lafour himself joined the BPSC, where he became responsible for the communication between the committee and its Antillean and Surinamese partners.[396] Already in its earliest days, the BPSC had announced that they were "working on the addition of a Surinamer," which they considered to be "no unimportant participant in this kind of committee."[397] In his speech to the court, Lafour had proven to be the perfect candidate for this position. Over the following

[393] Lucien Lafour, Speech, Private Archive Lily van den Bergh.

[394] Lafour, Speech.

[395] Solidariteitscomité, March 1970, 4; Letter to Stanley Brown, The Hague, March 19, 1970, Archivo Nashonal, Willemstad, Curaçao, Vito-artikelen, Archief, 1969-1971, N.B. Correspondentie e.a.

[396] Solidariteitscomité, March 1970, 1; April 1970, 15.

[397] "Panters," January 13, 1970, 9.

months, he would help the committee improve its interracial collaborations, helping the BPSC progress towards its goal to "fight against (…) the exploitation of our colonies."[398]

While the BPSC strongly valued these interracial collaborations, they were by no means perfect. Although the white Black Panther supporters could be considered ahead of their time in that they understood their role within the movement as somewhat passive, it was clear that they struggled to fully translate the Panthers' antiracist rhetoric into the Dutch context. On paper, the committee repeatedly spoke out against structural and institutional racism, but in practice the topic was often overpowered by their interest in imperialism and capitalism. This was certainly the case when members discussed racism in the Dutch empire. In fact, early interviews show that most of the committee's initial efforts to tackle Dutch racism came from Caldwell rather than Schumacher or the other members of the Dutch BPSC.[399] It was also clear, at least in the beginning, that the solidarity committee upheld an exoticized, even glamorized image of the Black Panthers, which sometimes projected the BPP as little more than a media hype.[400] One clear example of this was a deeply problematic statement by BPSC member Van den Bergh, who argued that Big Man's lecture had been well-attended because seeing an African American in real life was "like seeing a wild animal at Artis," referring to the local zoo.[401] Such statements created a distance between the BPP and the Dutch public and contradicted the BPSC's commitment to inclusivity, as it gave the impression that Black activism was foreign to the Netherlands, when in reality there was a long history of Black resistance not just in the Caribbean but also in the metropole, as discussed in the introduction. Besides, Van den Bergh's statement showed how deeply unaware the BPSC was of the painful history of

[398] Solidariteitscomité, January 1970, 1.

[399] See for example the BPSC's interview with Terwogt, where Caldwell intervened when Schumacher kept talking exclusively about the Black freedom struggle in the United States. Himself an African American, Caldwell interrupted Schumacher to ensure that he would also mention racial inequality in the Netherlands and stated that "things will happen here, too."

[400] Malloy has argued that this was also the case elsewhere in Europe, see 125-26.

[401] "Panters," January 13, 1970, 9.

racism in the Netherlands, which included a long tradition of eugenics, human zoos, and dehumanization.[402]

Position in the New Left

Besides alliances with these Antillean and Surinamese organizations, the BPSC also collaborated with a variety of groups in the Dutch New Left, including Cineclub Amsterdam, the Freedom School, the Netherlands Students' Bureau for International Cooperation (NESBIC), the Red Youth (*Rode Jeugd*), and the United Support Groups of the NFL (*Verenigde Steungroepen aan het FNL*).[403] While all of these organizations had different agendas and platforms, with some being communist and others more interested in Third World solidarity, they were united in one critical aspect: their opposition to American imperialism. Although the Dutch government maintained close diplomatic ties with the US and was, according to historian Rob Kroes, even considered "NATO's most faithful ally" in the region, years of American interference in Europe and violence in Vietnam had made Dutch youths critical of the superpower.[404] Or, as student activist Pieter Hildering phrased it in a letter to the Panthers at the time: "this country, as well as (…) the rest of the pig-tortured world, has just had enough of the dirty deals [Americans] think they're making."[405] In this context, the BPSC was seen as a welcome addition to the countercultural scene, as it provided Dutch radicals with a direct link to what they believed to be "the only group in the United States that is able to transform their country."[406]

---

[402] For the history and legacies of Dutch racism, see Philomena Essed and Isabel Hoving, *Dutch Racism* (Leiden: Brill, 2014); Gloria Wekker, *White Innocence: Paradoxes of Colonialism and Race* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016).

[403] Solidariteitscomité, Invitation to Grand Committee Meeting; Solidariteitscomité, April 1970, 1; Netherlands Students' Bureau for International Cooperation (NESBIC), *NESBIC Bulletin*, March 1970, ZO 31245, International Institute for Social History, Amsterdam, the Netherlands; Black Panther Demonstratie," 2; "Ongeveer 400 Sympathisanten Black Panther demonstreerden," 5; "Black Panther-Dag in Amsterdam," 4.

[404] Rob Kroes, "The Great Satan versus the Evil Empire: Anti-Americanism in the Netherlands," in Anti-Americanism in Europe, eds. Rob Kroes and Maarten van Rossum (Amsterdam: Free University Press, 1986), 42-43.

[405] Pieter Hildering, "Letter From Holland," *The Black Panther,* February 7, 1970, 12.

[406] "Vrijheidsschool," *De Telegraaf,* 10 March 1970, 9; "Cineclub organiseert Vrijheidsschool," *De Volkskrant* February 7, 1970, 11; "Vrijheidsschool Gaat Acties Voeren," *Algemeen Handelsblad*, February 7, 1970, 2.

Of all the groups that collaborated with the BPSC under the umbrella of the Grand Committee, two stood out in particular: Cineclub Amsterdam and the Freedom School. Cineclub, which was established by filmmaker At van Praag in 1966, was an Amsterdam-based film production and distribution company that specialized in the acquisition, creation, and screening of documentary films on global liberation movements. The organization's main purpose was to use film "as a means to create consciousness, as a 'weapon in the fight' that did not prioritize anyone's individual career or personal success."[407] By the turn of the decade, Cineclub had drawn approximately 2500 members and screened its films multiple times a week.[408] The company first became involved with the BPSC in the fall of 1969, when Van Praag was invited to join the founding committee. Although the Cineclub director did not stay in the committee for long (for reasons unknown), his company remained highly involved in its work. Starting with the opening event with Big Man, Cineclub supplied the BPSC with an array of relevant slide shows and documentary films, which included a recorded interview with Bobby Seale, Agnès Varda's *Black Panthers* (1968), and Santiago Álvarez's *Now* (1965).[409] As mentioned previously, these films played an important role in the educational program of the BPSC, as they were shown at nearly every lecture they gave.

In February 1970, Cineclub and several other action groups formed a new organization which they called the Freedom School. At first, the Freedom School was established as an educational initiative to teach Dutch students and educators about the oppression and liberation of the Third World. During its first event, which was described as a 'discussion week', some 150 participants got together to debate issues related to non-Western school curriculums, discriminatory admissions policies at Dutch universities, and what students and educational staff could do to challenge these practices. Every session was concluded with a Cineclub film about a foreign liberation

[407] "Geschiedenis," *Cineclub Vrijheidsfilms*, https://cineclubvrijheidsfilms.nl/geschiedenis; J. P. G. van Laarhoven, ""PAN": Nederlandse Film Als Socialistisch Wapen," M.A. Dissertation (Utrecht University, 2013), 88-89.

[408] Van Laarhoven, 88.

[409] An overview of the films in Cineclub's collection can be found in the inventory of Cineclub Vrijheidsfilms (Amsterdam), "Collectie Beeld- en Geluidmateriaal Cineclub Vrijheidsfilms," COLL00544, International Institute for Social History, Amsterdam, the Netherlands.

movement, including those in China, Argentina, Vietnam, France, and the United States.[410] While this discussion week was a success, however, the educational side of the Freedom School would not last long. Within a matter of weeks, the Freedom School transformed from an educational platform to a loose-knit network of radical student protest.

Despite the broad range of topics discussed at the initial Freedom School discussions, the new organization was particularly interested in one revolution: that of the Black Panthers. During their first get-together in February, many of the participants had come to the conclusion that American imperialism posed the number one threat to global freedom, as it was responsible for "the oppression of all black people, the exploitation of the third world, the war in Vietnam, [and] the political and economic domination of Europe."[411] Together with its parent organization Cineclub, the student organization began organizing regular demonstrations for the party. The largest of these took place on March 14, following a Black Panther-themed week at the Freedom School. Hundreds of students gathered at the US Consulate to call for the release of Bobby Seale and to denounce the reluctance of the Dutch government to guarantee protection to Eldridge Cleaver, who had been invited to attend the event but had to cancel when the Dutch government – "which clearly dances to the tune of the USA" – threatened to extradite him.[412] Other Freedom School protests took place at the Krasnapolsky Hotel in Amsterdam, where the group disturbed a televised election night to condemn the Dutch government's membership of NATO, and at Leidseplein, after one of their Black Panther information fairs had been disturbed by the police. The latter ended with several Freedom School members setting their banners on fire and getting arrested on charges of arson.[413]

---

[410] "Vrijheidsschool Gaat Acties Voeren," *Algemeen Handelsblad*, February 7, 1970, 2; "Cineclub Organiseert Vrijheidsschool," *De Volkskrant,* February 7, 1970, 11; "'Vrijheidsschool' Bereidt Acties Voor," *Trouw*, February 10, 1970, 5

[411] "Vrijheidsschool," *De Telegraaf,* March 10, 1970, 9.

[412] Vrijheidsschool, "Eldridge Cleaver Mocht Niet naar Nederland Komen," *Vrijheidspers Informatiekrant*, n.p., Amsterdam, 1970 (2), ZK 37945 (1971?):3, International Institute for Social History, Amsterdam, the Netherlands; "Betoging voor Vrijlating," 3; "Politie Jaagt Demonstranten Weg bij VS-Consulaat," *Het Parool*, March 16, 1970, 5; "Kans dat Cleaver Komt Erg Gering," *Trouw,* March 10, 1970, 1.

[413] "Een Maf Avondje Verkiezingen," *De Telegraaf,* March 19, 1970, 13; "Geen Aardverschuiving: Winst D'66 Valt Tegen," *Trouw*, March 19, 1970, 3; "Samkalden had Zeer Rumoerige Verkiezingsavond," *Algemeen Handelsblad*, March 19, 1970, 9; "Vier Arrestaties bij Betoging," 5; "Onrust in A'dam bij Betoging Zwarte Panters,"

Cineclub and the Freedom School became, with the exception of the Black Panther Solidarity Committee, the most well-known organizations in the Dutch Black Panther solidarity movement. While their priorities and approaches were different, most of the groups' activities were organized in collaboration with the other members of the Grand Committee. After all, each of them had something distinct and valuable to offer. The BPSC, which consisted primarily of journalists, was most knowledgeable on the history, ideology, and political programs of the party. Their newsletters and lectures provided Dutch Black Panther enthusiasts with essential information and updates on the party. Cineclub was able to make the BPSC's message come alive by delivering an inspiring and insightful visual representation of this information. Once the crowd had been fired up, the Freedom School played into their energy and led them onto the streets, sometimes mobilizing as many as four hundred students and young professionals at once. By March 1970, collaboration within the Grand Committee had become so close that "one could hardly speak of separate organizations anymore," as a report from the Dutch security agency stated.[414] Together, these groups transformed Black Panther solidarity in the Netherlands from a single committee into a movement spanning hundreds of activists and multiple organizations.

Conflicts and Decline

Unfortunately, the vast growth of the solidarity movement did not occur without any complications, many of them emerging from these very same collaborations. Though the Grand Committee may have seemed like a well-oiled machine to outsiders, the diversity of parties involved also made things quite difficult. At its best, the Dutch solidarity movement was a loose-knit network of individuals and semi-organized pressure groups that came together to defend the party's campaigns and ideology. At its worst, however, the movement was a chaotic and disorganized web of young activists who were never quite sure what the Black Panthers expected of them and who had many different views on what their allyship was supposed to

Turbantia, March 23, 1970, 7; "Demonstratie voor Zwarte Panters Liep Uit op Verkeerschaos," *Leeuwarder Courant,* March 23, 1970, 10.

[414] "Notitie Betreffende Solidariteitsdemonstratie met Zuid-Molukkers, Amsterdam, 28 November 1970," *Inzagedossier Molukse Zaken*, 03 Activiteiten van Zuid-Molukkers na het Bezoek van President Soeharto September 1970, accessed via Inlingtingendiensten.nl, https://inlichtingendiensten.nl/groepen/molukken.

look like. This led to a number of internal disagreements, especially between the BPSC and the Freedom School, most prominent of which concerned their preferred methods of resistance.[415] In a number of their protests, members of the Freedom School had resorted to minor forms of violence, such as smashing windows, throwing stones at police officers, and throwing firecrackers at politicians.[416] At their own events, they had also set banners and portraits of President Nixon on fire and had painted Black Panther slogans on the walls of public buildings.[417]

The BPSC, by this point regarded as the 'old guard' of the solidarity movement, strongly disapproved. The actions of the Freedom School were, in the committee's view, too reckless, and created confusion within the movement, distracting outsiders from the important message they tried to convey. While the BPSC emphasized that it was not against political protest per se, it believed any resistance coming from the movement "would have to proceed in a completely disciplined manner, in accordance with the traditions of the American Black Panthers themselves."[418] The 'new guard' of the movement, under the leadership of Cineclub director At van Praag, labeled the stance of the BPSC as elitist and pushed for a more militant form of protest.[419] They believed that these kinds of disturbances were useful tools in getting their message across and that they gave those they targeted, like the US consulate, a deeper sense of urgency to act. Even more aggressive resistance was not out of the question, as they were convinced that "protest without violence is simply no longer possible in today's society."[420] Plus, they added, "the Panthers say that the best place to help them is at home," meaning they also had to use BPP tactics to fight oppression in their local environment.[421]

---

[415] "Panthers," April 24, 1970, 19.

[416] "Gevechten bij Amerikaans Consulaat," *Algemeen Dagblad,* March 16, 1970, 3; "Politie Jaagt Demonstranten Weg bij VS-Consulaat," 55; "Ongeveer 400 Sympathisanten Black Panther demonstreerden," 5; "Een Maf Avondje Verkiezingen," *De Telegraaf,* March 19, 1970, 13.

[417] Vrijheidsschool, "Straatakties, Plakken, Kalken, Krantverkoop, We Gaan Door, Doe Mee!" *Vrijheidspers Informatiekrant*, n.p.; Vrijheidsschool, "Stop Murdering Black Panthers!!!!!," Private Archive Lily van den Bergh.

[418] "Panthers," April 24, 1970, 19.

[419] Meulenbelt, 110.

[420] "Ongeveer 400 Sympathisanten Black Panther demonstreerden," 5.

[421] Letter to the Editor of Het Parool.

Although the groups were able to work around their differences for a while, tensions became increasingly unmanageable and needed to be resolved. Eventually, this happened not at one of their regular meetings in Amsterdam, but at the official BPP Solidarity Committees' Conference in Frankfurt on 18 and 19 April 1970. This conference was organized by Matthews, who had invited some four hundred delegates from different parts of Europe "to coordinate and learn from our common struggle."[422] Besides the formal solidarity committees, the International Coordinator invited anyone who wished to organize in support of the Black Panther Party to attend. Writing about the conference in the International News section of *The Black Panther*, Matthews explained that she aimed to draw the committees' focus towards "the brutal attempt of the racist fascist power structure of the United States to annihilate the Black Panther Party."[423] She wanted to construct a plan of action to address this issue from across the Atlantic. By the end of the conference, the European solidarity network had agreed on the following points of action: (1) to "intensify our support [through] our coordinated attack on U.S. Imperialism in our own countries," (2) to "organize mass actions in solidarity with the Black Panther Party and against the fascist repression in the U.S. (…) directed to the working masses and oppressed peoples of our countries," (3) to "condemn the repression and harassment of the Party's representatives in various European countries," and (4) to "demand that all European countries give free travel papers" to Eldridge Cleaver.[424]

These new resolutions indicated a rather profound transformation in the European solidarity network. Exactly one year after Seale and Hewitt had authorized Matthews to set up a network for education and fundraising, the International Coordinator announced a new approach to solidarity that was much more proactive and politically engaged than originally intended. This worked to the advantage of the Freedom School and Cineclub, whose hands-on approach to solidarity was closer to Matthews' view than to Seale and Hewitt's original one. Hearing these resolutions at

[422] Connie Matthews, "B.P.P. Solidarity Committee's Conference," *The Black Panther*, May 9, 1970, 15; House Committee on Internal Security, *The Black Panther Party*, 68-69; "Europese Steun voor Zwarte Panters," *Amigoe di Curaçao,* April 21, 1970, 4.

[423] Matthews, 15.

[424] Matthews, 15.

the conference, Van Praag's delegation decided that this was the perfect time to settle their disagreements with the BPSC once and for all. They requested to present their case to the European convention, after which they proposed to take a collective vote on the issue. This vote would decide whether the Dutch solidarity movement would continue with Schumacher's "protest through education" or if they would follow the more proactive path of the 'new guard'. Schumacher and Kross, who represented the BPSC at the convention, strongly opposed Van Praag's proposition, as they had come to Frankfurt in much smaller numbers than the Freedom School and therefore had fewer votes of their own.[425] Despite the objections of the BPSC, the other European delegates agreed to accept the motion and take a vote on the issue. In the end, extra votes for the BPSC would not have made a difference: the European committees largely voted in favor of Van Praag and decided that the BPSC had to be dissolved. Effective immediately, the committee had to hand over its activities to the Freedom School, which now became the official Dutch Black Panther solidarity committee – albeit under its own name.[426]

The fate of the Black Panther movement in the Netherlands was thus not determined by internal differences within the Dutch New Left alone, but also by the changing attitudes of the European solidarity network writ large. While this same network had mentored the founders of the BPSC and helped them establish an educational program only four months earlier, recent developments within the Black Panther Party itself had convinced Matthews and her followers that education and fundraising were no longer enough: it was time to take more radical action. To the original Black Panther committee, this new form of solidarity was unacceptable. Although Matthews encouraged them to join the Freedom School in their ongoing efforts, all – with the exception of Lily van den Bergh, who had already sided with the Freedom School in the preceding months – left the movement upon their return to the Netherlands. "All we have to do now is to wait for the windows of consulates and

[425] 'Panthers," April 24, 1970, 19; Meulenbelt, 110.

[426] Vrijheidsschool, Letter tot he Editor; "Black Panthers-Comité Uit Elkaar," *Het Vrije Volk,* April 24, 1970, 5; "Panthers," April 24, 1970, 19; "Nederlandse comité Panthers ontbonden," *Trouw*, April 27, 1970, 3; Frits N. Eisenloeffel, "Wereld Drie," *Algemeen Handelsblad*, May 23, 1970, 28; "Black Panther-Dag in Amsterdam," 4; Meulenbelt, 110.

embassies to be smashed," a bitter Schumacher shared in *de Volkskrant*, before sarcastically adding, "an unusually powerful argument."[427]

With the 'moderate figures' of the BPSC (as the Dutch security agency described them) gone, the local solidarity movement grew increasingly more fanatic.[428] Now that they no longer had to take the wishes of the BPSC into account, members of the Freedom School were free to express their solidarity as they pleased. Now under the leadership of Van den Bergh, the group continued to organize lectures with film screenings, fundraisers, and small-scale protests over the summer of 1970.[429] They also started publishing their own newspaper, the *Freedom Press Information Paper*.[430] This paper was slightly more detailed than that of the BPSC, though its content was almost identical. The main difference with the former was its visual appeal. Whereas the BPSC's newsletter had been written on a typewriter and was completely free of images, the *Freedom Press* paper was filled with Emory Douglas's iconic Black Panther art, portraits of Black Panther activists, pictures of previous solidarity protests, and countless political slogans. Copies of the paper were handed out at lectures and protests, of which there were only a couple after the Frankfurt conference.[431]

Several months after taking control of the Black Panther solidarity movement, the Freedom School also became involved in the highly controversial case of the Wassenaar 33. This case revolved around a group of South Moluccan activists who had forced their way into the residence of the Indonesian Ambassador on 31 August 1970, one day before President Suharto's state visit to the Netherlands. The purpose of their protest was to demand a meeting between Suharto and Johan Manusama, President of the unrecognized Republic of South Malaku (RMS). While the ambassador escaped the scene, a security officer was killed by protesters.[432] The actions of the Wassenaar 33

[427] "Panthers," April 24, 1970, 19.

[428] "Notitie Betreffende Solidariteitsdemonstratie met Zuid-Molukkers, Amsterdam, 28 November 1970."

[429] Vrijheidsschool, "Vrijheidsschoolactie," *Vrijheidspers Informatiekrant*; Vrijheidsschool, "Steunfonds voor Vrijlating Black Panthers," *Vrijheidspers Informatiekrant.*

[430] Originally called the *Vrijheidspers Informatiekrant.*

[431] Meulenbelt, 110.

[432] Peter Bootsma, *De Molukse Acties: Treinkapingen en Gijzelingen 1970-1978* (Amsterdam: Boom, 2015), 33-50; Fridus Steijlen, "Actie Wassenaar 1970 – Een Wake Up Call," *Moluks Historisch Museum,* https://www.museum-maluku.nl/actie-wassenaar-1970-een-wake-up-call/.

immediately caught the interest of the Freedom School. The Black Panther supporters saw many similarities between these anticolonial 'Heroes of Wassenaar' and the Black Panther Party, both of whom they considered to be key players in the liberation of the Third World.[433] On 28 November 1970, the Freedom School and the Moluccan activists got together for a massive demonstration in Amsterdam where hundreds of activists rose up in support of the Moluccan and African American liberation movements. Protesters carried banners with slogans such as "Viva R.M.S. en Black Panthers" ("Viva R.M.S. and Black Panthers") and "Politieke Gevangenen Vrij!" ("Free Political Prisoners!"), referring to the Wassenaar 33 as well as the countless Black Panthers in the US.[434] Although the crowd left several trams, cars, and buildings damaged, the protest proceeded without any police interference.[435] The day was concluded with a meeting at Paradiso, where Cineclub screened a Black Panther movie and two British Black Panther advocates, who had been invited through the European network, addressed the crowd.[436]

Despite the large numbers of activists attending this protest, however, it seems the Freedom School soon lost interest in the party. After their collaboration with the Moluccans in November 1970, which had already been their first Black Panther activity in months, they did not organize any further protests for the BPP. Instead, they decided to focus on more local community activism in Amsterdam, especially in working class neighborhoods such as the Jordaan and De Pijp. Soon, they disappeared from the public eye completely. Its parent organization Cineclub did continue to screen Black Panther movies, but ceased to make an effort outside of its regular screenings.

---

[433] "Groep Linkse Jongeren op de Bres voor Zuidmolukkers," *Trouw*, October 20, 1970, 1; "Bondgenootschap," *De Volkskrant,* October 22, 1970, 13; "At van Praag: Actie in Wassenaar gaf ons Geweldige Shock," *Trouw,* October 30, 1970, 9; "Vrijheidsschool: Op de Bres voor Scholieren en Zuidmolukkers," *Tubantia,* October 30, 1970, 27.

[434] "Z.-Molukkers Hielden Huis in de Hoofdstad," *De Telegraaf,* November 30, 1970, 3.

[435] "Zuidmolukkers op Oorlogspad," *De Tijd,* November 30, 1970, 1; "Net Geen Geweld bij Demonstratie voor Z.-Molukken," *NRC Handelsblad,* November 30, 1970, 2; "Trams en Auto's Beschadigd bij Demonstratie van Zuidmolukkers," *Leeuwarder Courant,* November 30, 1970, 4; "Zuidmolukkers in Actie voor 'Helden van Wassenaar'," *Tubantia*, November 30, 1970, 7; "Onrustige Betoging van Jonge Zuidmolukkers," *NRC Handelsblad,* November 30, 1970, 3.

[436] It is unclear which British Black Panther advocates spoke at the event. According to Dutch intelligence officers, both Michael X and Kathleen Cleaver were supposed to be there, but neither seems to have been present.

The decline of Black Panther solidarity in the Netherlands did not stand in isolation but reflected on much deeper disparities within the BPP itself. As Cleaver was growing his network in Europe, his colleagues at home were starting to worry that the global ambitions of the International Section were alienating the party from its African American base. While Cleaver was convinced that Black America could only be liberated once the US government lost its superpower status, the Oakland-based Panthers increasingly felt that his diplomatic efforts distracted the party from its commitments at home. Of all Cleaver's comrades, founder and chairman Huey Newton proved to be his fiercest opponent. Several months after his release from prison in 1970, the party's founder decided to stir the BPP back into the direction of community service. In his perspective, tackling child hunger, building medical facilities, and ending police brutality in poor Black communities were much more beneficial to the survival of his people than "waiting for a revolution that might never come or depending on international allies thousands of miles away."[437] This sentiment was shared by Chief of Staff David Hilliard, who believed that the revolutionary ideals of the International Section were unrealistic. "When we begin our attack who's going to join us?" Hilliard wrote in his autobiography. "Party comrades will jump off the moon if Huey tells them to. Our allies won't."[438]

The FBI cleverly played into the question of transnational alliances in its efforts to sabotage the Panthers. In its forged correspondence between the party's headquarters in Oakland and the International Section in Algiers, the bureau repeatedly suggested to Newton that Cleaver was undermining his authority, while implying to Cleaver that Newton did not respect his work abroad. As historian Robyn C. Spencer has shown, Matthews inadvertently played an important role in these strategies. Following her successful work for the party in Europe, the International Coordinator had spent some time in the United States, where she had become more involved in the Oakland chapter of the party, working closely with Newton. "Now a close associate of both Cleaver and Newton," Spencer writes, "she was used by the FBI in their plan to "create doubts" about people close to Cleaver."[439] By the time the

[437] Malloy, 174.

[438] David Hilliard and Lewis Cole, *This Side of Glory: The Autobiography of David Hilliard and the Story of the Black Panther Party* (New York: Lawrence Hill Books, 2001), 284, as cited in Bloom and Martin, 358.

[439] Spencer, 104.

Panthers realized how the bureau had used Matthews to foster internal hostilities, the damage had already been done, as Newton expelled both Matthews and Cleaver from the party in 1971.

When all of this took place, it was already clear that the European solidarity network had chosen his side in the dispute. Over the spring of 1971, many former Black Panther supporters laid down their Black Panther work and instead joined Eldridge and Kathleen's new organization, the Revolutionary People's Communications Network (RPCN). Though short-lived, the RPCN came to rely heavily on the Cleavers' contacts in France and West-Germany, but also involved Van den Bergh, who had built close friendships with both Matthews and Kathleen Cleaver over the preceding years. Between 1970 and 1972, the former BPSC and Freedom School leader regularly traveled back and forth between the Netherlands and Algeria to supply the International Section with money, technical equipment, and other materials.[440] She was even staying with the Cleavers during Eldridge's formal expulsion on live television and later traveled to the US to distribute a videotaped interview with him in an effort to persuade members of the BPP to join the RPCN.[441] Van den Bergh, as well as several other European activists, continued to stay in touch with the Cleavers until Eldridge went underground in Paris in 1972 and abandoned his pursuit of a revolution for good.

Despite the short-lived success of the Dutch and broader Black Panther solidarity network, its history provides some critical insights into the transnational efforts of the Black Power movement, also in the context of the Dutch Atlantic. Though ultimately destroyed by disagreements on the need for violence, the fact that Schumacher and his partners managed to bring together hundreds of activists from

[440] Kathleen Cleaver, Daily Reports, 22 February 1971 - 4 April 1971, Daily Reports, by Kathleen Cleaver, Communications Secretary 1970, 1971, Carton 5, Folder 46, International Section Subseries, Black Panther Party series, Eldridge Cleaver Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley; Paul J. Magnarella, *Black Panther in Exile: The Pete O'Neal Story* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2021), 111.

[441] Peter Sachs Collopy, "The Revolution Will Be Videotaped: Making a Technology of Consciousness in the Long 1960s," Ph.D. Dissertation (University of Pennsylvania, 2015), 280-289; Lily van den Bergh, "Ondergang of Vernieuwing van een Revolutionaire Partij?" *De Groene*, May 22, 1971, 3; Correspondence between Lily van den Bergh and Kathleen Cleaver, November 8, 1971, July 18, 1972, Van den Bergh, Lily, Carton 5, Folder 33, International Section subseries, Black Panther Party series, Cleaver Papers; Videofreex, "CBS—Lily and Cleaver Tapes," 5 March 1971, Video, 00:23:36, Video Data Ban, https://www.vdb.org/collection/browser-artist-list/cbs-lily-and-cleaver-tapes.

around the Kingdom within a matter of months to offer their support to the BPP was quite remarkable by itself. Perhaps even more notable, however, was its ability to create an alliance between the Black Power movement, the Dutch New Left, and Dutch Caribbean radicals. This triangular alliance allowed activists in the Netherlands to directly support the African American freedom struggle from afar, based on the Black revolutionaries' own vision for transnational interracial solidarity. This was quite unique both in the context of the Black Power movement, where any kind of White involvement was typically rejected, and in the context of the European solidarity landscape, where support groups rarely had any contact with the organizations and movements they supported, much less operated under their supervision. Of fundamental importance to this was the Panthers' self-proclaimed status as a vanguard in the global revolution against imperialism, racism, and capitalism, which the BPSC gladly accepted.

At the same time, the solidarity movement provided Dutch, Caribbean, and – to some extent – Moluccan activists with new ways to challenge issues in their own societies. While the BPSC's platform was predominantly intended to convince the Dutch public that the BPP was worth defending, this also enabled them to introduce local activists to new revolutionary models, most of which were centered around the Panthers' ideology of revolutionary nationalism. One critical issue that was addressed by the BPSC and its allies in the New Left was the increasing power of the United States in Cold War Europe. Especially intellectually, the BPSC stressed the importance of supporting the Black Panthers in their opposition to American imperialism and underlined the many atrocities committed by the US government against its own citizens, thus undermining its reputation as the leader of the 'Free World'. Similar messages were conveyed at the many protests organized by the committee and its partners, which often took place at the US consulate in Amsterdam and involved slogans and banners that explicitly targeted American authorities such as President Nixon and the FBI.

That is not to say that the Black Panther advocates pointed the finger at the United States exclusively. As the collaborative efforts between the BPSC and its Antillean and Surinamese partners show, it also motivated Dutch activists to endorse a more self-critical approach to imperialism and encouraged Antillean and Surinamese in the Netherlands to join the Black Panthers in their quest for global Black liberation.

Taking a deeply transnational approach to revolutionary activism, the committee believed it was essential that oppressed communities around the world joined the Black Panther Party, especially those who shared the same experiences as the Panthers. To motivate this kind of cross-border collaboration, the committee created an intellectual and political space where Antilleans and Surinamers could familiarize themselves with the ideology of the party and where they could connect to activists from different Black communities in the United States, Jamaica, England, and Sweden. In other words, the BPSC provided a bridge between the anticolonial efforts of Dutch Caribbean communities in the Netherlands and the transnational Black Power movement.

Chapter 4:
"As Black Nationalists, We See Things Internationally":
Black Power Suriname on the Road to Independence

Early in the evening of 10 July 1970, over a hundred Surinamers of African descent made their ways through the streets of Paramaribo to the Laat en Dadel Street, located just south of the capital's center. The street was located in the former district of Frimangron, translating to "free people's land" in the creole language of Sranan Tongo, which had been inhabited by the city's free Black population in the eighteenth century and had since grown into a bustling working-class neighborhood.[442] At the heart of the neighborhood lay Wie na Wie, a small association that had been established by contractor Jozef W. 'Sep' Tam a little over a decade earlier. Under the motto "if you don't respect yourself, nobody else can," Wie na Wie encouraged the community to embrace and celebrate their Afro-Surinamese heritage by organizing a wealth of cultural activities, including traditional ceremonies, musical performances, and other arts.[443] On this particular night, however, the association opened its doors for a different kind of event: Suriname's first Black Power gathering.

Hosted by longtime Wie na Wie members Cyriel R. Karg and Arnold E. Nieuwendam, the purpose of this gathering was to discuss how the growing Black Power movement could help Afro-Surinamers navigate their positions as a racialized people in their South American homeland, the Dutch empire, and the world at large. Over the course of several hours, the two moderated a dynamic debate on racial identity, political representation, and national independence. In doing so, they drew heavily from the ideas of the transnational movement, exploring how the experiences and struggles of Afro-Surinamers related to those of diasporic Africans elsewhere.[444] "After

---

[442] For more information on the history of Frimangron, see Karwan Fatah-Black, *Eigendomsstrijd: De Geschiedenis van Slavernij en Emancipatie in Suriname* (Amsterdam: Ambo Anthos, 2018).

[443] John Jansen van Galen, *Kapotte Plantage: Een Hollander in Suriname* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Contact, 1995), 93-94; Marshall, 100; Meel, *Tussen Autonomie en Onafhankelijkheid,* 235n155; "Weer een Buurthuis," *Het Nieuws,* December 7, 1959, 2; "Wie na Wie Emancipatieshow," *De Vrije Stem*, June 18, 1970, 3; "Wie na Wie Receptieert," *De Vrije Stem,* December 11, 1979, 9.

[444] American Consul Paramaribo, "Marxist-Leninist Newspaper Started in Paramaribo; Black Power Organization Formed in Paramaribo," July 23, 1970, p. 2, Subject Numeric Files, 1970-1973, Political and Defense, Box 2605, Pol SUR, General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD, United States; "Ingekomen Nota van J.G. Koenders, Hoofd van de Sectie 2 van de Troepenmacht in Suriname over de Black Power-Beweging in Suriname," December 19, 1970, p. 2, collection nr. 2.10.26, inventory nr. 2919, Nationaal Archief, The Hague, Netherlands; "Black Power Geen Kans van Slagen in Suriname," *De West*, July 15, 1970, 2; "Geen Zwarte Macht Wel Totale Kracht," *Suriname*, July 15, 1970, 1; "Black-Power-Organisatie in

a thorough study of our society," Karg later reflected, "we came to the conclusion that there is not only a place for Black Power in Suriname, but that there is in fact an urgent need for it."[445] That same night, the hosts of the event announced the launch of a new organization: Black Power Suriname (BPS).

While Surinamers had long been aware of the Black Power movement and had occasionally expressed their sympathies with it, Karg and Nieuwendam were the first to set up an initiative like this at home.[446] It was no coincidence that they decided to do so at this particular moment in time. In the preceding months, Black Power had gained enormous momentum in the southeastern Caribbean. In the Spring of 1970, the newly independent state of Trinidad and Tobago, located some 500 miles from Suriname, had been hit by a series of conflicts between Black Power activists and the government of Prime Minister Eric Williams. The leading cause of the February Revolution, as it came to be called, was a strong dissatisfaction with the continuing control of European and American businesses over the islands' economies despite political power now being in the hands of a Black government.[447] Regional interest in the movement grew even further when Black Power frontman Stokely Carmichael visited Guyana, a direct neighbor of Suriname, that following May. Carmichael had originally planned an extensive speaking tour of the Caribbean, but had found himself banned from several of his destinations, including his native Trinidad. Angered in part by these measures, Carmichael gave a series of highly controversial speeches, pushing for revolutionary violence and forcefully rejecting the ideas that Black Power could be

Suriname in de Maak," *Trouw*, July 17, 1970, 5; "Ook in Suriname Black Power?" *Het Vrije Volk*, July 17, 1970, 1; "Black Power in Oprichting in Suriname?" *Nederlands Dagblad*, July 18, 1970, 4; Karg, "Black Power," 1.

[445] Cyriel R. Karg, "Black Power," *De Vrije Stem,* July 27, 1970, 1.

[446] One notable example of earlier Surinamese interest in the movement can be found in a series of interviews with Stokely Carmichael in newspaper *Suriname*, conducted by student H. Louis Burleson and author Leo Ferrier at the 1969 Pan-African Cultural Festival in Algeria. See Michiel van Kempen, 234; H.L. Burleson, "Een Heel Continent Maakt Zich Vrij," *Suriname,* August 1, 1969, 1; "Blij Met Culturele Explosie," *Suriname,* January 7, 1970, 2; "Causerie Burleson Kommunique PNR," *De Vrije Stem,* October 8, 1970, 4; Rien Robijns, "Louis Burleson: Na Dertien Jaar Terug Naar Suriname," *Het Vrije Volk,* September 6, 1975, 17.

[447] For more information on the February Revolution, see for example Brinsley Samaroo, "The February Revolution (1970) as a Catalyst for Change in Trinidad and Tobago," in *Black Power in the Caribbean,* ed. Kate Quinn (UP of Florida, 2014), 97; Jerome Teelucksingh, "The Black Power Movement in Trinidad and Tobago," *Black Diaspora Review* 4.1 (2014): 157-186, Selwyn D. Ryan and Taimoon Stewart, *The Black Power Revolution of 1970: A Retrospective* (St. Augustine: I.S.E.R., 1995).

inclusive to any members not of African descent.[448] Both the February Revolution and Carmichael's statements raised debates about the movement in the region, including in Suriname.[449]

But the rise of Black Power in Suriname was not tied to these regional developments alone. Local issues also played a preeminent role. First was the increasing racial tension between Afro-Surinamers ('Creoles') and Indo-Surinamers ('Hindostanis') in nearly all facets of society, as will be explained later. Second was the recent emergence of the nationalist movement, which had an overwhelmingly Afro-Surinamese following. The driving force behind this movement was cultural association Wie Eegie Sanie, which had been established in 1951 by a number of Surinamese students in the Netherlands and had since made its way home. Under the leadership of lawyer Eduard J. 'Eddy' Bruma, Wie Eegie Sanie grew into a significant movement with copious subsections, think tanks, and split-offs. In fact, as scholars Peter Meel and Edwin Marshall have illustrated, nearly all nationalist efforts in Suriname in this period could be traced back to Wie Eegie Sanie, whether through their leadership, membership, or ideology.[450] The most prominent organizations to emerge from this movement were the Nationalist Movement of Suriname (Nationalistische Beweging Suriname, NBS) and the Nationalist Republican Party (Partij Nationalistische Republiek, PNR), also led by Bruma.[451]

Black Power Suriname, in many ways, emerged from the same environment. Wie na Wie, which hosted Karg and Nieuwendam's first Black Power event, had been one of the many organizations that had been founded after the example of Wie Eegie Sanie. More importantly, Karg, who took up leadership over the organization, was a close friend of Bruma's and had been an active member of his party since 1967. A committed anticolonialist, Karg believed the PNR had a critical role to play in securing independence for the country. Yet, while Karg supported Bruma wholeheartedly, he

---

[448] Swan, *Pauulu's Diaspora*, 145-167; Quinn, "Black Power in Caribbean Context," *Black Power in the Caribbean,* 43-44; Slate, 1.

[449] See for example "De Opstand op Trinidad: Brand Slaat Over Naar Caribbean," *De Vrije Stem,* April 23, 1970, 1; "Trinidad: Black Power Demonstraties van Studenten," 1970, collection nr. 2.05.313, inventory nr. 2420, Nationaal Archief, The Hague, Netherlands; "Ingekomen Nota van J.G. Koenders," 1.

[450] Meel, *Tussen Autonomie en Onafhankelijkheid*, 207-216; Marshall, 83-147.

[451] Meel, *Tussen Autonomie en Onafhankelijkheid*, 216; Marshall, 144-145.

developed his own ideas on what Surinamese independence had to look like. Rather than pursuing self-reliance, Karg believed it was more sustainable for Surinamers to seek out new forms of connectivity, replacing their ties to the Kingdom with ties to a network of support that would act in their best interest. He found this in the Black Power movement.

Positioning Black Power Suriname into the larger framework of this dissertation, this chapter examines why the BPS believed it was important to seek independence through the Black Power movement and how it attempted to achieve this. For the most part, the Surinamese organization can be seen as a continuation of the Black Power groups that had already arisen in Curaçao and the Netherlands. Like these other groups, the BPS took its inspiration primarily from the United States, using specific groups in the North American movement as an example. Like the other groups, the BPS was also actively involved in the local anticolonial movement, placing them in the same spaces as some of Suriname's best-known nationalists. And like the other groups, Black Power Suriname believed that finding global Black unity was absolutely vital to the decolonization of the Dutch Caribbean, thus embracing the doctrine of Decolonial Black Power explained earlier.

Yet, Black Power Suriname also deviated from Antillean and Dutch Black Power in notable ways. First was its ideology, which was a combination of Black capitalism and cultural nationalism. Karg and his associates believed that colonialism was driven by financial interests, as shown by the history of slavery, the exploitation of natural resources, and more recent commercial projects by Western companies. While the Black Panther groups had sought to challenge this through a Marxist model, the leaders of the BPS argued that Black communities needed not to destroy the capitalist system, but use it to their own advantage. In line with the ideas of other Black capitalists in the movement, Karg insisted that Black liberation would only be possible through financial stability, which could be acquired by reclaiming land and trading its natural resources on an independent Black market. This idea was built upon the preconception that money was power, as prosperity would make any ties to or aid from the West obsolete, both in its current form and in the independent future. This mentality shaped much of the BPS's program, which included the promotion of Black-owned businesses, inviting foreign Black investors to Suriname, and signing some trade agreements with foreign Black Power organizations for mutual support.

Additionally, the BPS adopted a similar kind of cultural nationalism as Fox's Antillean Black Power organization, encouraging Afro-Surinamers to reclaim their African identities to give them an improved sense of self-worth.

Besides its unique approach to Black liberation, the BPS also distinguished itself from the other organizations by the extent of its participation in the transnational Black Power movement. Unlike the BPC and ABP, which considered themselves part of the movement but hardly managed to surpass their own shores, Black Power Suriname direct relationships with like-minded revolutionaries in the United States, the Caribbean, and beyond. And while the Black Panther Solidarity Committee in the Netherlands had reached a similar level of involvement through the Black Panthers' revolutionary network, Black Power Suriname was able to participate as an independent, self-contained Black Power organization. This network not only allowed Karg and others to pick up new ideas about racial advancement, but also enabled him to place Afro-Surinamese independence on the global Black Power agenda.

To illustrate how Black Power Suriname used these connections to contribute to local debates on decolonization, this chapter is divided into five sections. The first discusses the early lives of both Karg and Nieuwendam, moving from Paramaribo to New York and back again, exploring how the two first came into contact with the Black Power movement. The second section examines the founding of the BPS in the broader context of Surinamese society, explaining how Karg tried to legitimize the need for Black Power in the country and the difficulties he encountered along the way. The third and fourth sections explore the organization's shift from Black Power to Pan-Africanism, put into motion by Karg's attendance of the Congress of African Peoples in Atlanta, Georgia, in September 1970. Following this congress, Black Power Suriname changed its name to Afro-Sranan to emphasize the importance of creating a diaspora consciousness. The final section concentrates on the organization's attempts to set up mutual exchanges with like-minded groups abroad, including the Louisiana-based Republic of New Afrika (RNA), the Nation of Islam (NOI), and the Guyanese African Society for Cultural Relations with Independent Africa (ASCRIA). Though these collaborations were important in giving local Black Power advocates a sense of connection and belonging, their ultimate impact was limited. The final section of the chapter discusses why this was the case, covering both the painful realities of transnational activism and the criticism of the BPS's international visions.

From the Heart of New York to the Streets of Paramaribo

To fully understand how Black Power Suriname came into being, it is important to look at the personal histories of both its initiators. Cyriel R. Karg was born on 26 October 1925 in Commewijne to police inspector Lucien T. Karg and Margaretha C. Karg-Thijssen.[452] While Karg grew up in a respected catholic family, he dropped out of school at the age of sixteen. After briefly working for the government, he joined the Dutch Marines, who had started to recruit heavily in Suriname at the beginning of World War II. He served for several years, first at the Parera base in Curaçao and later across the Atlantic, which enabled him to see much of the world along the way.[453] When his ship made a stop in Baltimore after the end of the war, Karg and many of his Surinamese friends decided to leave the Marines and settle in the United States.[454] Among them was also Karg's childhood friend Arnold E. Nieuwendam, born in Paramaribo on 14 December 1924. Unlike Karg, Nieuwendam joined the Dutch Merchant Marines at the beginning of the war, who often traveled alongside the marines to supply them with food and other goods. [455]

Upon arriving in Baltimore, both Karg and Nieuwendam decided to make their way to New York, where a small community of Surinamese Americans already settled over the years. While in the city, Karg took it upon himself to finish school, after which he enrolled in law school.[456] Two years into his degree, he decided to change his major and moved to Chicago to pursue a degree in Radio Broadcasting, Management, and Journalism at Illinois State University, though he returned to New York as soon as he

---

[452] Cyriel Karg*, Regering van de Media* (Paramaribo: Familie, n.v., 1977), cover.

[453] "Curriculum Vitae van Cyriel R. Karg," c. 1983, Private Archive Family Karg; Lucien Karg, interview by author, August 29, 2022, Paramaribo, Suriname.

[454] For an overview of Surinamese migration to the United States, see Astrid Runs, "Surinamese Immigrants in the United States of America: A Quest for Identity?" M.A, Dissertation (University of Amsterdam, 2006).

[455] Obituary Arnold E. Nieuwendam, *Dignity Memorial,* June 6, 2017, accessed via https://www.dignitymemorial.com/obituaries/brandon-fl/arnold-nieuwendam-7438531; American Consul Paramaribo, "Marxist-Leninist Newspaper," 2.

[456] Accounts of where exactly Karg went to college vary. On his curriculum vitae from the 1980s, he mentions Hunter College (the same as Benjamin Fox), but on the cover of his 1977 book *Regering van de Media*, he mentions New York University. Unfortunately I have not been able to confirm Karg's enrollment in either university.

graduated in the early 1950s.[457] Nieuwendam had remained in the city and took up employment at the US office of KLM Royal Dutch Airways, at different times working as a tour guide, communications operator, and customer service representative [458]

Like many other Caribbean migrants in New York, both Karg and Nieuwendam were highly involved in the Black scene of the city, which not only connected them to African Americans but also other communities of African descent. It was here that the two first became acquainted with the Black Freedom movement that was starting to take shape in the postwar period. Although it is not quite clear how Nieuwendam became involved in the movement, Karg became a member of the Brooklyn branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the largest civil rights organization in the United States at the time, only a year after his arrival. [459] As a law student, he likely volunteered as a legal assistant, helping out with small civil rights lawsuits and local projects. His interest in the movement grew even further when he began working as a journalist after returning in the early 1950s. Fresh out of college, Karg started writing for popular African American journals such as *Ebony* and the *Amsterdam News*, the city's oldest Black newspaper. [460] To work for these journals while the movement was starting to take shape must have been quite the experience for the young Surinamer, who now got the opportunity to talk to some of the most prominent and respected Black activists in the city.

In the same period, Karg and Nieuwendam both became involved in the Surinam-American League (SAL), a New York-based organization that aimed to keep Surinamese migrants in the United States connected to their homeland. The main goals of the SAL were to conserve Surinamese culture and heritage in their community, to support Surinamers who wished to come to the United States, and to financially support social and cultural projects at home. The SAL maintained a particularly strong connection to Wie na Wie, mentioned at the start of this chapter, and was often

[457] "Curriculum Vitae van Cyriel R. Karg"; Karg, *Regering van de Media*, cover; Lucien Karg, "Laatste der Mohicanen naar Eeuwige Jachtvelden," special edition of *De Vrije Stem*, May 9, 2015, 8, accessed via https://docplayer.nl/10409044-A-charming-rebel-has-passed.html.

[458] Obituary Arnold E. Nieuwendam; American Consul Paramaribo, "Marxist-Leninist Newspaper," 2.

[459] CIA, "Interrelationship of Black Power Organizations in the Western Hemisphere, 28; "Curriculum Vitae van Cyriel R. Karg." It is not clear how long Karg remained active in the NAACP.

[460] Karg, *Regering van de Media,* cover.

referred to as the 'American branch' of the association.[461] With the new influx of migrants to the city in the 1940s, Karg had become chairman of the SAL, though his position would eventually be taken over by Nieuwendam, who remained in charge until the end of the century. His career at KLM made him the perfect man for the job, as he, as well as many of his KLM colleagues, could easily fly back and forth between New York and Paramaribo.[462] This way, Nieuwendam was able to keep the Surinamese community in the United States up to date on important political, cultural, and economic developments in their country of origin, which was somewhat rare for migrant communities at the time. Nieuwendam eventually became a US citizen and stayed in the country for the rest of his life.

Things went quite differently for Karg. In 1952, when his career as a journalist was just starting to take off, Karg met Marita V. Kleine, a young Surinamese teacher who was staying with her aunt in New York after finishing her education in the Netherlands. Kleine, an unapologetic nationalist, persuaded Karg to return to Suriname in exchange for her hand in marriage. While Karg had never had any intention of remigrating, he accepted. In 1953, the young journalist returned, building a new career in media and advertising, at different times working as a reporter, editor, radio host, and television broadcaster.[463] His degree in modern media placed him into an almost unique position in Surinamese society, which also helped him secure several political positions alongside his day job. In the mid-1960s, Karg briefly worked as Assistant Head of Publicity and Information of the moderate National Party of Suriname (Nationale Partij Suriname, NPS), of which he had been a member since 1953. Disappointed with the leadership of Prime Minister Johan A. 'Jopie' Pengel, he left the party for Bruma's PNR in 1967. Here, he took up a position as Head of

[461] "Nieuw Bestuur S.A.L.I.," *De Vrije Stem*, February 26, 1974, 2; "Delegatie Spreekt met Kopstukken in de VSA," *Het Nieuws,* April 19, 1960, 1; "Excursie van Surinamers uit New York," *Nieuw Suriname*, February 13, 1961, 4; "Amerikaanse Surinamers 14 Dagen "Naar Huis","*Amigoe di Curaçao,* February 17, 1961, 7; "The Surinam American League," *De Vrije Stem,* January 3, 1974, 3.

[462] Obituary of Arnold E. Nieuwendam; American Consul Paramaribo, "Marxist-Leninist Newspaper," 2; "Drs. E. Kleinmoedig," *Amigoe di Curaçao*, 2 December 1974, 4; "Nieuw Bestuur S.A.L.I.," *De Vrije Stem*, 26 February 1974, 2; "S.A.L. Bezorgd over Toestand in Suriname," *De Vrije Stem*, 9 June 1975, 1.

[463] "Curriculum Vitae van Cyriel R. Karg."

Information and Press, in which he remained until 1977, when the party lost its seats in parliament.[464]

Despite returning to Suriname, Karg continued to travel to New York on a regular basis for work, social events, and political congresses.[465] This allowed him to keep in touch with old friends, to stay involved in the SAL, and to keep up with recent developments in the Black Freedom movement. It was during one of these travels that Karg became acquainted with the Black Power movement, of which Nieuwendam had become a fervent supporter. The two decided to start their organization when Karg was in New York in the summer of 1969.[466] What they envisioned was a truly transnational organization. Karg would lead the Surinamese group on the ground, while Nieuwendam would maintain its connections to the movement in the United States. Upon his return to Paramaribo, Karg set up a committee with himself as chairman, Wie na Wie president Tam as secretary, and Cilvion A. 'Sik' Heymans, a local businessman who had also lived in the United States, as treasurer.[467] When Nieuwendam arrived in Suriname for the opening event of the BPS in July 1970, they were all ready to go. Unfortunately, Nieuwendam would never even get the chance to become more involved in the organization. Once the Surinamese government heard of his involvement in the movement and the BPS, they decided to blacklist him and informed the US Consulate that he would be denied any future admittance into his country of birth.[468] He would not return to Suriname until several years later.

---

[464] Karg*, Regering van de Media*, cover; Karg, "Laatste der Mohicanen," 8; Stuart Menckeberg, "De Tijdschriftpers in de Roerige Jaren Zeventig," in *K'ranti: De Surinaamse Pers, 1774-2008*, ed. Alex van Stipriaan (Amsterdam: KIT Publishers, 2008), 146.

[465] "Curriculum Vitae van Cyriel R. Karg"; "Marxist-Leninist Newspaper," 2.

[466] "Marxist-Leninist Newspaper," 2.

[467] For information on Heymans, see "Centro N.V. Opgericht," *De Vrije Stem,* February 28, 1974, 5; "Sik Heymans van Winkel Centro," *De Vrije Stem,* April 13, 1974, 5; "Afro-Sranan Vraagt: Peace and Power to the People," De Vrije Stem, December 11, 1970, 3; "Afro-Sranan Telegrafeert Burnham," *Suriname: Koloniaal Nieuws- en Advertentieblad*, March 4, 1971, 2.

[468] American Consul Paramaribo, "Marxist-Leninist Newspaper," 2.

Legitimizing Black Power in a Multiracial Society

As excited as the new members of the BPS were to get started, it soon became clear that getting their organization off the ground would be no easy task. From the moment Karg and Nieuwendam hosted the event at Wie na Wie, they were met with confusion, skepticism, and resistance. Some Surinamers genuinely did not understand what the men meant by Black Power, while others could not see its relevance in the Surinamese context or even outright rejected it because the media had long depicted the movement as militant and aggressive.[469] What complicated things further was that Black Power arrived in Suriname at a time when racial tensions were already at an all-time high. To understand the history of the organization, it is thus important to pay some attention to the social and political environment in which the BPS was founded.

As mentioned in the introduction to this dissertation, Suriname was a former plantation colony of the Netherlands with one of the most diverse populations in the Caribbean. Similar to some of the former British colonies in the region, including neighboring Guyana, a long history of transatlantic slavery and indentured labor had created two dominant groups in Suriname: those of African descent, locally referred to as 'Creoles' and 'Maroons', and those of Indian descent, locally referred to as 'Hindustanis' or, to separate the ethnic from the religious group, 'Hindostanis'. Each of these groups made up some forty percent of the total population, with smaller groups of Javanese, Chinese, Indigenous and others filling the gap.[470] Covered for the most part by rainforest, most of the country's population lived along the Atlantic coast in the north, especially in and around the capital city of Paramaribo and along the Commewijne, Suriname, and Marowijne rivers, with the Maroon communities in the interior forming a notable exception. In this period, only few Maroons lived in or around Paramaribo, so the word 'Afro-Surinamers' will mostly refer to those locally classified as 'Creoles'.

[469] "Black Power Geen Kans van Slagen in Suriname," 2; "Geen Zwarte Macht Wel Totale Kracht, 1; "Black-Power-Organisatie in Suriname in de Maak," 5; "Ook in Suriname Black Power?" 1; "Black Power in Oprichting in Suriname?" 4.

[470] Dew, *The Difficult Flowering of Surinam*, 5. It is important to note that the numbers for Maroons in this source were very likely incorrect, as many Maroon nations lived in secluded communities in the interior and census takers had difficulty estimating how large these communities were.

Since the arrival of the first Indian contract workers in the late nineteenth century, Afro- and Indo-Surinamers had for the most part occupied different spaces in society. The Afro-Surinamese population had left the plantations *en masse* after the abolition of slavery in 1863 and had centered around the city of Paramaribo, where they worked in public services, commerce, and trade. By contrast, Indo-Surinamers had replaced the Afro-Surinamese workforce on the plantations and moved into the more peripheral districts of Commewijne, Nickerie, and Saramacca.[471] In the mid-twentieth century, this started to change. After a long period of uneven population growth, the Indo-Surinamese population had caught up with the Afro-Surinamese, now constituting a slightly larger percentage of the population.[472] As a result, and because opportunities in rural areas were limited, many Indo-Surinamese families moved to the capital. Here, they started working in industries traditionally dominated by Afro-Surinamers, becoming especially successful in trade and commerce, stimulating significant upward mobility. For many working-class Afro-Surinamers, who had seen their own employment opportunities fall after the war, seeing the newcomers' wealth led to much frustration.[473]

Their frustration grew even further when political power began to shift as well. Much like the rest of Surinamese society, politics had long been organized along racial lines. Since the first general elections of 1949, parliament had been in the hands of the previously mentioned National Party of Suriname (Nationale Partij Suriname, NPS), an Afro-Surinamese party. The Indo-Surinamese counterpart to the NPS was the United Hindu Party (Verenigde Hindostaanse Partij, VHP), led by Jagernath Lachmon.[474] While NPS chairman Pengel and VHP leader Lachmon had formed a relatively successful coalition of 'brotherhood' in 1958, mutual allegations of racial favoritism and corruption had ended a hopeful era of interracial collaboration in 1967.[475] Power

[471] Dew, *The Difficult Flowering of Surinam,* 13-16.

[472] Dew, *The Difficult Flowering of Surinam*, 5.

[473] Dew, *The Difficult Flowering of Surinam*, 16; Ramsoedh, 75-80.

[474] Dew, "The Dutch Caribbean," 375-376.

[475] Peter Meel, "Verbroederingspolitiek en Nationalisme," in *Bijdragen en Mededelingen Betreffende de Geschiedenis der Nederlanden* 109.4 (1994): 638-659; Dew, *The Difficult Flowering of Surinam*, 102-152; Ramsoedh, 92-99.

fell back into the hands of the NPS, but Pengel's victory proved to be short-lived when a series of strikes and repeated allegations of fraud and abuse of power led him to resign in 1969.[476] The elections that followed would go down as a major turning point in Surinamese politics. Support for the NPS reached an all-time low, with many leaving for other Afro-Surinamese parties like the PNR and the Progressive National Party (Progressieve Nationale Partij, PNP).[477] The downfall of the NPS, as well as Lachmon's successful campaign for Indo-Surinamese unity, secured the VHP a majority of the votes for the first time in history. This had a "catalytic impact on ethnic conflicts," historian Hans Ramsoedh writes in *Surinaams Onbehagen* (2017). "The Creole population became ever more agitated because, besides demographic and economic domination, they now also feared political [control] by the Hindustanis."[478]

It was by no means a coincidence that the BPS was founded in the midst of this, with its opening event taking place only a few months after the elections. In the weeks after this event, Karg took it upon himself to explain his motivations for forming the Black Power group in a series of articles for *De Vrije Stem*, a daily newspaper with a predominantly Afro-Surinamese readership. *De Vrije Stem* was familiar ground for the Black Power leader, who had written for the paper since it was founded in 1960, had served on its editorial committee, and was close friends with its editor-in-chief, Wilfred Lionarons, even though the two did not always see eye-to-eye.[479] Published between July and September 1970, these articles provide some detailed insights into the ideas of the Black Power advocate, though it is also worth noting that these were not always consistent, showing how difficult it could be to translate the concept of Black Power into different transnational spaces, and making it clear that the Karg's ideas about the questions he discussed were still being shaped in the early months of the BPS's existence.

Karg was not one to beat around the bush. In the first article he wrote on Black Power, he dove in head first to address the questions that had been on everyone's

[476] Dew, *The Difficult Flowering of Surinam*, 154-156; Ramsoedh, 112-113.

[477] Dew, *The Difficult Flowering of Surinam*, 158-159.

[478] Ramsoedh, 114.

[479] "Curriculum Vitae van Cyriel R. Karg;" Karg, "Laatste der Mohicanen," 8.

mind. "Why Black Power?" he wrote. "That is the question that has been asked many times over by the press, but also and *especially* by ourselves."[480] As many had expected, he immediately turned to the elections of 1969, explaining that its outcome had felt like a blow to the head for many members of his community. He explained:

> For many years we had been observing the immense suffering of Afro-Americans and Afros in regions that are typically described as colored countries where whites controlled the economy. (…) We consoled ourselves with the thought that such discrimination did not exist here. But a thorough examination of the results of the last held election have convinced us that we were only dreaming.[481]

To the leader of the BPS, the historical loss of the NPS confirmed what he had feared: that the Afro-Surinamer's "internal divisions had reduced him to a minority group, to a pariah[,] in a country that was built up through the strength of his forefathers, (…) while others take off with the cash and the riches of the land."[482] Reading these words in *De Vrije Stem*, many interpreted the rise of Black Power in Suriname as an attack on the Indo-Surinamese population, believing that Karg had established his organization in an attempt to "eliminate the Hindustanis."[483] This interpretation was later shared by scholars, too, who have argued that Surinamese Black Power advocates were motivated by "frustrations at the Hindustani ascension to power" and "Hindustani political domination."[484]

Karg himself, however, strongly disagreed. To him, Black Power – at least on a local level – was not about the destruction of Indo-Surinamese power but about the restoration of Afro-Surinamese unity. "Black Power has come to Suriname (…) because the black man is so hopelessly and helplessly self-conflicted," he wrote in his second Black Power article for *De Vrije Stem*. "We do not preach hatred, we merely fight for our rights; we do not preach polarization, we merely advocate for unity among the

---

[480] Karg, "Black Power," 1.

[481] Karg, "Black Power," 1. Similar statement on the elections of 1969 in Cyriel R. Karg, "Na Nengre de Kiri Nengre: Is het Koenoe, Hebi, of Gewoon een Minko?" *De Vrije Stem*, July 30, 1970, 2.

[482] Karg, "Na Nengre de Kiri Nengre," 2.

[483] As phrased by journalist Humphrey J. Keerveld in "Eenwording Natie in Gevaar door V.H.P. Racisme," *De Vrije Stem*, 21 July 1970, 3.

[484] Dew, *The Difficult Flowering of Surinam*, 161; Ramsoedh, 115-116.

Afro man in our own land and abroad; we do not preach anarchy but the fortification of the black man through a common purpose."[485] This applied not just to the 'Creoles', but all Surinamers of African descent, including the "members of the malatta-group" who often identified as White and the Maroons, fondly referred to as "our brothers from the interior."[486]

In some cases, Karg pushed his definition of Blackness even further. Whenever he wrote about Black Power on a global rather than a local level, he explained that the movement was not only about African empowerment but about the empowerment of the entire 'colored' world. He explained:

> Black Power is, as we and our brothers and sisters around the world see it, the fight of the majority of the world population against the White Power that has systematically placed us into a position of oppression and exploitation, sustained by colonialism and neo-colonialism.[487]

Blackness, in this context, was not limited to the African diaspora but included "anyone who is not white, or does not feel white."[488] To the confusion of many Surinamese readers, this also included "the Hindustani, the Javanese, the Chinese, etc. Even the white man who does not agree with white domination (…) could join if he wanted to."[489] And if these groups did not want to accept their Blackness, he suggested, all they had to do was look at other countries where their people lived and recognize that Whites over there treated those of Indian descent no better than their African neighbors, like in South Africa.[490] Here, anyone who was seen as 'colored' by White regimes was treated as Black and thus as inferior.[491] "Now the time has come," Karg

---

[485] Karg, "Na Nengre de Kiri Nengre," 2.

[486] "Poging tot Moord door Politie-Agent," *Uhuru*, February 1973, 2, Paramaribo, Suriname, ZK 37709 (1973:no.6-7), International Institute for Social History, Amsterdam, the Netherlands; Karg, "Na Nengre de Kiri Nengre," 2; Cyriel R. Karg, "Vrees voor het Onbekende Mag Geen Sta-in-de Weg Zijn. Wij Werken Naar de Eenheid maar dan op een Reële Basis," De Vrije Stem, July 31, 1970, 2.

[487] As cited from Uhuru in "Ingekomen Nota van J.G. Koenders," 3.

[488] Karg as cited in American Consul Paramaribo, "Marxist-Leninist Newspaper Started in Paramaribo," 2. See also "Black Power Geen Kans van Slagen in Suriname," 2.

[489] "In Suriname Geen Plaats voor Black Power-Beweging," *Amigoe*, July 17, 1970, 1.

[490] Karg, "Vrees voor het Onbekende," 2.

[491] "In Suriname Geen Plaats voor Black Power-Beweging," 1.

argued, "that we all come to realize that Suriname belongs to Surinamers, and that the world for the most part consists of black people."[492]

While the inclusion of Indo-Surinamers and other racial groups may seem contradictory to the very concept of Black Power, Karg's definition of Blackness was not unique at the time, and certainly not in the region. Only a year earlier, Guyanese historian and Black Power leader Walter A. Rodney had published *The Groundings with My Brothers* (1969), a collection of speeches he had given in previous years. In his chapter "Black Power – Its Relevance in the West Indies," Rodney explains that the inclusion of both Africans and Indians in the movement is vital because "power is denied them [both]."[493] The Guyanese Ratoon group held a similar view. Following the aforementioned speaking tour of Stokely Carmichael in Guyana, Ratoon member Clive Thomas had argued that especially in Guyana, Trinidad, and Suriname, the unique historical implications of slavery and indentured labor had created a need for "African-Indian solidarity at all and every stage in the struggle against imperialism and white racism."[494] Likewise, the Trinidadian National Joint Action Committee (NJAC), which had been involved in the February Revolution mentioned earlier, had made significant efforts to involve Indian protesters in their organization, even convincing the Society for the Propagation of Indian Culture (SPIC) to become involved in the movement too.[495] In none of these places, however, Black Power was ever able to mobilize a significant amount of Indians. According to historian Brinsley Samaroo, this was mostly because Indians were never able to see themselves as Black.[496]

Despite his optimism, Karg did realize that it would be difficult to overcome this racial schism. Using the same theory as Fox had done in the Netherlands Antilles, he blamed the Whites' "ancient system of divide and conquer" responsible for this.[497] Applying this theory to Suriname, the BPS foreman believed that the elections had only

[492] Karg, "Black Power," 1.

[493] Rodney, 24.

[494] Clive Thomas as cited in Swan, *Pauulu's Diaspora*, 161,

[495] Samaroo, 105.

[496] Ibid., 106.

[497] Karg, "Black Power," 1.

been won by the VHP because the Dutch had started to fear Pengel's powerful campaign for independence and therefore decided to "take power away from the Afro-Surinamer and lay it into the hands of the Surinamer of Hindustani descent."[498] That is not to say that Surinamers of color were devoid of responsibility in this situation, Karg proclaimed. To secure their own safety and wealth, a small selection of people of color had historically "placed themselves and their channels at the disposal of White Power."[499] Referring to these men as "henchmen of the whites," "the pawns of white power," and the classic "Uncle Toms," the Black Power foreman believed these people had been subjected to centuries of White indoctrination, designed by colonial powers to keep their overseas territories shielded from within. In times of slavery, these had been the enslaved men and women who betrayed anyone who planned to run away or rise up against their masters. Now, they were the privileged Afro- and Indo-Surinamese men and women who protected the status quo through their political parties, media outlets, or educational curriculums. "This is an old theorem of the whites, namely: "give some of those blackies the feeling they are 'white' and they will devour their own kind"," Karg explained.[500]

The reason the Whites had used these tactics in Suriname, Karg further argued, was to protect their own economic interests in the colony. While they had lost much of their political power with the installation of the 1954 Charter, the Dutch still owned most of the capital in the country, including some of the most influential businesses, industries, and banks. To protect their position, the Black Power foreman suggested, the colonizer had turned Surinamers of African and Indian descent against each other. For example, he believed they had "purposefully used some Hindustani names to pretend like economic power lies in the hands of the 'Hindustanis'," so that Afro-Surinamers would feel threatened by them and racial divisions would grow. And while they were busy fighting amongst each other, the Dutch could calmly continue to exploit the nation and its natural resources. [501] This kept Suriname poor, Karg wrote, because

[498] Karg, "Black Power," 1.

[499] Karg, "Black Power," 1.

[500] Karg, "Na Nengre de Kiri Nengre," 2.

[501] Karg, "Black Power," 1.

the Dutch never reinvested their profits into Surinamese society. Instead, they used their earnings to support White communities in the Netherlands and elsewhere in the world, including those in apartheid South Africa.[502] The money they did transfer, under the guise of development aid, was merely intended to hide their theft while simultaneously restoring some of their political influence.[503] From this perspective, the BPS alleged the only way for Surinamers to claim their freedom was to take charge of the economy, which would not only allow them to gain control over their own land, but also prevent the Dutch from using their profits to support racial oppression elsewhere. "We will not allow our treasured resources to be abused to provide foreign white workers with jobs or foreign white children with schools, when we are so desperately in need of those ourselves," Karg firmly stated.[504]

But before Surinamers could take the economy into their own hands, they had to overcome their internal divisions. And the only way to do so, according to the BPS leader, was to accept that they were all Black, regardless of skin tone or ethnic background. In his final piece in the *De Vrije Stem* series, he wrote:

> The problem is that all of you are merely looking at things through a local racial lens, while we of Black Power as black nationalists see things internationally. That is why we are able to preach Black Power without making it a racist attack on the 'Hindustani'. The minute you black whites get rid of that delusion of superiority installed through white indoctrination, you will see things as we do and the entire Surinamese community (with the exception of some whites) will be Black Power and act accordingly. (…) So free yourself from it and live! Because it is beautiful to be black, once you know what black means.[505]

At this early stage of Black Power activism, the Surinamese organization thus embraced a kind of political Blackness, based not on ethnicity but on how people of color were treated by White authorities around the world. To understand this, however, Karg repeatedly stated that people needed to see the bigger picture of racial oppression: they required a transnational vision.

---

[502] Karg, "Black Power," 1; Karg, "Na Nengre de Kiri Nengre," 2; Cyriel R. Karg, "Vrees voor het Onbekende," 2.

[503] Cyriel Karg, "Resolutions of the Surinam Delegates," *African Congress*, 123.

[504] Karg, "Black Power," 1.

[505] Karg, "Vrees voor het Onbekende Mag Geen Sta-in-de Weg Zijn," 1.

The Congress of African Peoples

This transnational vision was of immense importance to Karg, who had not only taken the inspiration for his organization from the United States but also wanted it to become a full participant in the broader Black Power movement. After all, as explained previously, he defined Black Power as a global movement that aimed for unity in the worldwide fight against White oppression. While he was trying to convince people at home of the importance of such cross-border solidarity, he had also begun to reach out to Black Power advocates abroad to strengthen the position of the BPS itself. His efforts were successful. Around the same time that Karg was setting up his organization in Suriname, he also found out – likely through Nieuwendam in New York – that Black Arts leader Amiri Baraka was organizing a gigantic Black Power conference in Atlanta, Georgia, that September. He reached out to Baraka and arranged for him and another member of the organization, Stanley Reemnet, to attend the conference and give a speech – though Reemnet would not play an active role in the latter.[506] On 28 August 1970, the two departed for New York to visit Nieuwendam and then went south.[507]

In many ways, this conference – the Congress of African Peoples – proved to be an ideal opportunity for the Surinamers to build their network and strengthen their connections to the Black Power movement, which had previously been limited to Karg's old community in New York. It connected the local organizers to some of the most renowned Black Power leaders of the time and, in turn, brought a new sense of awareness about Suriname and the Dutch empire to the broader movement. This

[506] Reemnet was also secretary of the General Union for Civil Servants (Algemene Bond Overheidspersoneel, ABO). Much like Karg himself, Reemnet was no stranger to the United States: several years earlier, he had attended the American Institute for Free Labor Development (AIFLD) in Washington, DC. This institute was established by the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) to support Latin American and Caribbean labor movements by training their leaders in the tactics of the American labor movement. See "Bond van Personeel bij de Hygienische Wasserij Opgericht," *De Vrije Stem,* April 24, 1969, 2. For more information on the AIFLD, see Martha F. Riche, "The American Institute for Free Labor Development: A Catalyst for Latin American Labor Through Union Leader Training and Social Projects Sponsorship," *Monthly Labor Review* 88.9 (September 1965): 1049-1055.

[507] American Consul Paramaribo, "Surinam Black Power Advocates Visit U.S.," September 2, 1970, p. 1, Subject Numeric Files, 1970-1973, Political and Defense, Box 2605, Pol SUR, General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD, United States; American Consul Paramaribo, "Surinam Police Report Correction in Name of Black Power Leader Visiting U.S.," September 2, 1970, p. 1, Subject Numeric Files, 1970-1973, Political and Defense, Box 2605, Pol SUR, General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD, United States; Intelligence Evaluation Committee, 49.

section will lay out the intentions and ideological backgrounds of the Congress of African Peoples, its proceedings during the Labor Day weekend of 1970, and Karg's role as a central spokesman for the typically neglected parts of the African diaspora in the 'Third World'. Speaking to Charlayne Hunter of *The New York Times*, Karg proclaimed that the convention was "the best thing that could happen to black people" in their fight against White people, who – reiterating his earlier message – had "used every trick in the book to keep us divided."[508] His participation in the conference would deeply challenge Karg's earlier definitions of Blackness and, with that, change the direction of Black Power in Suriname.

The Congress of African Peoples took place from 3 to 6 September 1970 at Morris Brown College, a historically Black liberal arts college in Atlanta. With none other than Baraka as its principal organizer, the Congress was seen as the fifth in a series of consecutive Black Power conferences that had taken place in the late 1960s.[509] The annual Black Power conference was originally supposed to be held in Barbados that year but had to be canceled when Barbadian Prime Minister Errol Barrow increased pressure on its organizing committee following the recent Black Power uprising in Trinidad and Carmichael's controversial speaking tour.[510] The intention of the failed Barbados conference had been to improve the "international strategies of the Black Power movement," stressing the importance of including any diasporic communities that had been historically underrepresented in the movement.[511] While the Barbados conference was canceled, this same sentiment was taken to Atlanta several months later. Much like its predecessors, the Congress of African Peoples had been organized in an attempt to bring together representatives from different corners of the diverse Black political landscape of the United States and Anglophone Caribbean.[512] Unlike the previous Black Power conferences, however, the

---

[508] Charlayne Hunter, "Third World Seeks Unity at Conference," *The New York Times*, September 6, 1970, 40.

[509] Swan, *Pauulu's Diaspora,* 166-168; Woodard, 162; Amiri Baraka, "Introduction," in *African Congress*, vii.

[510] Swan, *Pauulu's Diaspora,* 145-147.

[511] Swan, *Pauulu's Diaspora,* 148-149.

[512] Baraka, "Introduction," vii-viii; Pinkney, 132; Michael Simanga, "The Congress of African People (1970-1980): History and Memory of an Ideological Journey," Ph.D. Dissertation (Union Institute and University, 2008), 57-59; Swan, *Pauulu's Diaspora,* 169; Woodard, 162-163.

Congress aimed to go far beyond the confines of the English-speaking Americas and, just as crucially, beyond the limits of the Black Power movement itself. Organizing under the umbrella theme "From Black Power to Pan-Africanism," the Congress stood on the verge of a new phase in the Black liberation struggle of the twentieth century.[513]

Spread over the long Labor Day weekend, an estimated 2700 to 4000 people attended the Congress. According to Baraka, approximately 350 of them had traveled there from "African and Third World countries."[514] Among them were some of the most renowned members of the Civil Rights and Black Power movements, including religious leaders, famous artists, college professors, government officials, and prominent community organizers. To ensure the program of the Congress reflected and truly celebrated the diversity of these representatives, fifteen of the most notable attendees were invited to speak in the plenary session, among whom were Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) president Ralph Abernathy, Newark's first African American mayor Kenneth A. Gibson, Nation of Islam spokesman Louis Farrakhan, and – through a written letter delivered by student activist Howard Fuller – Kwame Ture. Many others got the opportunity to speak during smaller workouts hosted over the following three days.[515]

The ambitions of the Congress were equally as ideological as they were practical. At the very heart of the conference lay the aim to renew a sense of Pan-Africanism in the Black world that could transcend the fast-growing ruptures in the movement, many of which had been provoked by the FBI and similar organizations elsewhere. As Baraka spoke during his opening speech:

> The veil of controversy which is thrown over our movement by our enemies is only to hide the simplicity of what we intend! The Pan African movement encourages African people wherever they are in the world to understand that they are brothers and sisters, families, communities, nations, a race together, bred in common struggle, brought forth from, and a result of common history, and in the circulating combustible of our racial memory, we all strive for a common future; a people united,

[513] Swan, *Pauulu's Diaspora,* 167.

[514] *African Congress,* cover; Intelligence Evaluation Committee, 49; Swan, *Pauulu's Diaspora,* 181; Pinkney, 132; Simanga, 61; Woodard, 162; Hunter, 40.

[515] A full list of speakers and workshops at the Congress of African Peoples can be found in *African Congress*, xi-xiv. More on women's involvement in the conference can be found in Swan, *Pauulu's Diaspora,* 186.

> independent, basing our claim to national and international sovereignty upon a unified, independent mother Africa, whose freedom, then, would automatically raise the level of Africans' lives all over the planet.[516]

Using Maulana Karenga's concept of 'operational unity' (unity without uniformity), the organizer of the Congress explained that this Pan-African approach could bridge many of the differences across the diaspora and within the borders of the United States.[517] After all, everyone who was present at the conference did share one common goal: Black liberation.[518]

Of course Baraka's message of harmony and brotherhood was in no way new to the attendees of the Atlanta conference, as similar ambitions had been pursued since even the earliest days of the Black Power movement – as previous chapters in this dissertation have also shown. Baraka understood this and realized that the pursuit of unity would remain ambiguous unless the conference's delegates were actively engaged in the development of a new organizational structure based on "concrete plans [for] black institutions at the local, national, and international level."[519] Identifying 'Four Ends of Black Power' – namely self-determination, self-sufficiency, self-respect, and self-defense – the Congress hosted eleven workshops or 'Work Councils' that focused on different forms of racial resistance.[520] The themes of these workshops ranged from institutionalized forms of mobilization, such as politics, education, and law, to more grassroots methods, such as art and community work. Each workshop consisted of two to eight speakers, who connected the topic of the session to their experience in the field. Together with the participants, they searched for practical solutions and created proposals for new universal Black institutions that could resolve those issues on a structural basis.[521]

---

[516] Baraka, "Introduction," vii.

[517] Baraka, "Introduction," viii; Pinkney, 133; Swan, *Pauulu's Diaspora,* 169; Woodard, 164.

[518] *African Congress*, cover.

[519] Swan, *Pauulu's Diaspora,* 180-181.

[520] Amiri Baraka, "Ideological Statement of the Congress of African People," n.d., The Black Power Movement Part 1: Amiri Baraka from Black Arts to Black Radicalism, Reel 2, Series 5, University Publications of America, Bethesda, MD, accessed via Roosevelt Institute for American Studies, Middelburg, the Netherlands; Pinkney, 132; Swan, *Pauulu's Diaspora,* 169.

[521] Baraka, "Introduction," ix; Pinkney, 133; Swan, *Pauulu's Diaspora,* 180-181; Woodard, 162.

Karg had been invited to speak at the Political Liberation workshop that weekend, which was the largest and best-attended session of the entire conference. The workshop was first in line and consisted of eight speakers, six of whom were African American and two of whom came from the Caribbean: Karg and Dominican activist Roosevelt 'Rosie' Douglas, who had played a significant role in the Black Power protest at Sir George Williams University in Montreal, Canada, the previous year.[522] Coordinated by Baraka himself, the aim of the Political Liberation workshop was to create "a political institution that expresses and moves to fulfill the needs of Black people, wherever they are."[523] In an ideal situation, the coordinator argued, such an institution would take the shape of a nation, but because the reality of the diaspora did not yet allow for the creation of a Pan-African state, he lobbied for the establishment of a transnational political party: the World African Party.[524] In his opening statement, Baraka made a number of suggestions for the work such a party could do on local, regional, state, national, and international levels, all centered on four areas of political power: public office, community organizations, alliances and coalitions, and disruption.[525]

Not only was Karg part of this first panel, but he was also the first to take the stage after Baraka's statement. Speaking on behalf of the BPS, the Surinamese Black Power leader explained that he had been motivated to attend the Congress of African Peoples with one central goal in mind: "to warn the Black man that the whites by no means consider themselves beaten."[526] Taking the example of his home country, which he described as "one of the few Black nations that has no independence and is from the outside being governed by the white man," Karg concentrated on the need for global Black unity in three spheres: economics, politics, and communications.[527] In a critical speech to his audience, he asserted:

---

[522] The other speakers on the panel were Hannibal El-Mustafa Ahmed, the Council of the Congress of African Peoples in Philadelphia (no individual names provided), Hassan Olufu, Ayuko Babu, John Cashin, and Imari Abubakari Obadele. See *African Congress*, xi-xii.

[523] Amiri Baraka, "Coordinator's Statement," in *African Congress*, 115.

[524] Baraka, "Coordinator's Statement," 115.

[525] Baraka, "Coordinator's Statement," 115-122; Swan, *Pauulu's Diaspora,* 187; Pinkney, 132.

[526] Cyriel Karg, "Resolutions of the Surinam Delegates," *African Congress*, 123.

[527] Karg, "Resolutions," 123.

> It is against this, Black Brothers and Sisters, that we came here to warn you. While you in America, in Africa and in some other parts of the world are preparing for a fight to finish with the white man, your Black brothers in still other parts of the world – like for instance, South America, Latin America and the West Indies – have to look up to the white man even for food and education of [their] children. (…) They are still a prey to the white man who, being the vulture that he is, will not let [them] go.[528]

While Karg held the 'White man' responsible for creating this situation in the first place, he also laid some of the blame in the hands of Black communities that were better off, as they had not made any significant efforts to support their Third World kin. He urged his listeners to understand that the independence of Suriname and other colonized territories would be in their best interest, too, as it would weaken the global position of the Whites.

In the spirit of the Political Liberation workshop, Karg offered three resolutions that could improve transnational relations between different Black communities.[529] The first tied in with Karg's main topic of interest: economic exchange. In his speech, Karg identified the "dishonorable so-called development aid" of Europeans and Americans to Third World countries as one of the most significant forms of colonialism of their time.[530] As a solution to this problem, he appealed to his more affluent allies to start investing in these countries so that White financial support would become obsolete, which would help these countries decolonize further. "We prefer that in our country if there have to be foreign companies," he argued, "that this be Black capital and Black owned companies."[531] He proposed to construct an Economic Development Plan during the workshop that would be mutually rewarding to Black investors, who could make "a huge profit" from these investments, as well as the recipients, who would no longer depend on "the white man who never had the interest of the Black

[528] Karg, "Resolutions," 124.

[529] For reasons unknown, only Karg's first two resolutions were published in *African Congress*. A copy of the original speech in Karg's private family archive, however, shows that Karg had presented a third resolution. Because the rest of his speech was identical to the chapter in the book, the final resolution was likely left out by mistake rather than edited out on purpose. As Karg did include this final resolution at the conference, it is included in this chapter.

[530] Karg, "Resolutions," 124.

[531] Karg, "Resolutions," 124.

man at heart but only tried to exploit him."[532] Through this structure, Karg further motivated, "you are not only investing your dollar in a sound business but you are, at the same time, weakening your enemy – the white man – at the places where it hurts him the most."[533] He even went as far as to suggest that this Economic Development Plan could lead to Black control over the entire global economy "so that the Black peoples of the world will most benefit by this."[534]

Karg's second resolution was a response to Baraka's coordinating statement, which had concerned the establishment of a World African Party. In contrast to Baraka, Karg was of the opinion that political unity should operate in the form of an international council rather than a transnational political party. This council would consist of representatives from different Black nations, much like the Congress of African Peoples itself. Ideally, this council would provide a similar structure as the United Nations. According to Karg, the actual United Nations had failed its anticolonial promises many times over by supporting colonial member states that were "willfully withholding freedom from Black people who are eager for their freedom."[535] Among these was the Netherlands, which the Surinamese delegate believed had no intention of granting any independence to its colonies in accordance with the 1960 Declaration on Decolonization. He called for a global boycott of the Netherlands and other colonial powers and simultaneously urged the representatives of UN member states at the Congress to take a firmer stance against the oppressive policies of these states. If this was unsuccessful, Karg argued, the "Black powers of the world" should establish a Black United Nations. Such a Black presence on the global political stage would hurt "the cause of the white man" because it would put an incredible amount of diplomatic pressure on him by people who did not depend on his support. "This is what the white man fears the most!" he proclaimed.[536]

[532] Karg, "Resolutions," 123.

[533] Karg, "Resolutions," 124.

[534] Karg, "Resolutions," 125.

[535] Karg, "Resolutions," 125.

[536] Karg, "Resolutions," 123-124.

Karg's third and final resolution concerned the establishment of a transnational communications network, or rather, an independent Black press service.[537] Perhaps not unsurprisingly, considering his background in journalism and media, Karg believed communications to be "the strongest weapon in any fight," and especially in the "struggle of life and death against white oppression."[538] He criticized mainstream news outlets for gatekeeping the media and only sharing the information they deemed interesting or necessary for White people. Not only did this keep Black people ignorant about global politics, but it also prevented them from learning about and from each other and, consequently, from mobilizing across borders to overcome shared problems. He called for the Congress to start thinking about a basic system of communication that could enable such a dialogue "in order to get correct and true information to all of the Black people of the world so that they too can join in the fight against white oppression."[539]

After Karg's and the other six speeches, the interactive part of the Political Liberation workshop began. Here, the speakers and audience got together to find common ground, brainstorm different approaches to their shared objectives, and attempt to set up practical and feasible projects that could bring them closer to the ultimate goal of Black liberation. During this session, Karg joined the Sub-Committee on Alliances and Coalitions together with Douglas, Namibian activist Veive Mbaeve, and Imari Abubakari Obadele of the Republic of New Afrika (RNA).[540] Together, they came up with a substantial set of resolutions, ranging from the establishment of Karg's proposed communications network to the donation of combat materials to a number of liberation movements in continental Africa. It also included a boycott of "Holland and the rest of the colonial powers" that did not respect the Declaration on Decolonization.[541]

---

[537] "Speech and Resolutions of the Surinam Delegates to be Presented to the First Session of the Congress of African People by C. Karg from Surinam," Private Archive Family Karg, 5.

[538] Karg, "Resolutions," 122; "Speech and Resolutions of the Surinam Delegates," 5.

[539] "Speech and Resolutions of the Surinam Delegates," 5.

[540] Amiri Baraka, "Resolutions," 167.

[541] Baraka, "Resolutions," 170.

Yet, despite his passionate speech, active participation in the program, and immense enthusiasm for the convention's message of Black unity, Karg's impression of the Congress was not all favorable. According to historian Quito Swan, the Surinamese representative – as well as some other non-American attendees – felt like they had been standing in the shadows of the conference because it had "lacked the expected global pan-African focus and instead focused primarily on African American issues," particularly those from Newark and New Jersey, where Baraka himself was active.[542] While on paper the Congress had been concerned with Pan-Africanism as a "global expression of Black nationalism," the disproportionate representation of African American organizations and, as a logical consequence, the overwhelming focus on American systems and problems left many of the non-American delegates feeling marginalized.[543] Having received complaints from numerous participants from the Global South, Bermudan co-organizer Pauulu Kamarakafego (Roosevelt Brown) hosted an informal meeting on international collaboration at the end of the weekend. While it is unclear who exactly were present at the meeting, the delegates passed an additional set of resolutions meant to truly capture the Pan-African spirit of the convention.[544] According to Swan, Karg even lobbied for the next edition of the Congress to be held in Suriname, "remarking that if the government there gave them difficulties, they would "burn down their Goddamn capitol.""[545] Revitalized by this final session, Karg and Reemnet returned to the Caribbean, armed with a fresh set of rhetorical tools, an extended transnational network, and a reimagined future for their organization.

Transition to Pan-Africanism

As soon as Karg set foot on Surinamese soil again, he organized a press conference to discuss his takeaways from the Congress and to announce a new direction for his organization: Pan-Africanism. His time in Atlanta had convinced him

[542] Swan, *Pauulu's Diaspora,* 187-189; Intelligence Evaluation Committee, 49.

[543] Baraka, "Ideological Statement of the Congress of African People," 3.

[544] Swan, *Pauulu's Diaspora,* 189.

[545] Swan, *Pauulu's Diaspora*, 187.

that the struggle against racism required a deeper sense of diasporic solidarity and a much more practical approach than he had preached earlier. How exactly Karg defined Pan-Africanism at the press conference is unclear, but the BPS would later describe it as follows:

> We all know that the origins of the Black Race are found in Africa. Our ancestors were brought here as slaves from many different parts of the West Coast of Africa. We are the descendants of these slaves, which many refuse to understand. This is undoubtedly the result of many centuries of slavery and colonialism. (…) Pan-Africanism (…) refers to the personality, environment, nationalism and internationalism of the Black man. It teaches Negroes who they are, brings them together and underlines the purpose of the Black man. Slaves in Suriname were just as unfree as those in America of Jamaica. And we were even less so at a later stage, as colonized subjects.[546]

With that, Black Power Suriname completely diverged from the racial perspective that Karg had so passionately defended in his earlier writings for *De Vrije Stem*. Rather than embracing an inclusive definition of Blackness that surpassed ethnic boundaries, the Black Power leader now endorsed a heavily Afrocentric perspective on race. That is not to say that the organization became anti-Indian, at least not beyond the occasional statement that Afro-Surinamers needed to mobilize to restore balance. In fact, Karg argued that he found Lachmon's efforts to unite Indo-Surinamers "highly respectable" and served as a major source of inspiration for his organization because it showed what was possible through racial solidarity and awareness.[547] "It is the job of our organization," he even wrote, "to raise more consciousness among Afro-humans so that they can become as aware of their roots as Hindustanis are aware of theirs."[548]

To formalize this change, Karg changed the name of his organization from Black Power Suriname to Afro-Sranan, which translates to Afro-Surinamese in Sranan Tongo. This name would 'delocalize' the organization, he believed, and place a stronger emphasis on Afro-Surinamers' African heritage and identity.[549] To truly embrace the

[546] "Cedric Lashley Afro Sranan: Eenheid onder Negers Vereist," *De Vrije Stem*, September 17, 1972, 1.

[547] "Afro-Sranan Volgt VHP's Voorbeeld," *De Vrije Stem*, September 17, 1970, 4.

[548] See "Afro-Sranan in Business, Cyriel Karg as Promotor," *De Vrije Stem*, December 2, 1970, 1.

[549] "Black Power Krijgt Nieuwe Naam," 1; "Afro-Sranan Volgt VHP's Voorbeeld," *De Vrije Stem*, September 17, 1970, 4; "Ingekomen Nota van J.G. Koenders," 2.

Pan-African spirit of the movement, Karg himself also changed his own name. "After selling our ancestors to the plantation owners (…) we were re-named and this time after the white 'owners'," he explained, citing the speech made by NOI spokesman Louis Farrakhan at the Congress.[550] This was, again, part of the "art of Divide and Rule" used by European colonizers to "not allow us to see things eye to eye (…) because of economical *[sic]* reasons."[551] To free himself from this form of colonialism, he adopted the name Emiri Abubaekari, most likely inspired by Amiri Baraka (born LeRoi Jones) and Imari Abubakari Obadele (born Richard Bullock Henry) of the RNA, whom he had connected with during the Congress.

Both of their names, as well as many others in the movement, found their roots in Swahili, the preferred African language among Pan-Africanists in the Americas. Like many others, Karg decided on a name based on its meaning. Emiri, a variation of Amiri, meant 'prince' and was often adopted by those who considered themselves leaders. Abubaekari, more commonly spelled as Abubakari, referred to the legendary figure of Mansa Abu Bakr II, also known as Abubakari, a presumed former emperor of Mali. The legend of Abubakari said that he was the first African to travel to the 'New World' in the fourteenth century, many years before Columbus did.[552] As such, the name symbolized the connection between Africa and the Americas, as well as the inventiveness, braveness, and successes of African empires prior to European colonization. Unlike his friends, however, Karg never used his new name consistently and, for the most part, would only do so as a pseudonym whenever he wrote about Black Power-related issues.[553]

In the months following the Atlanta Congress, Afro-Sranan's central committee grew rapidly. Where it had consisted of only three members at the Black Power stage, it expanded to a total of seven after the transition to Pan-Africanism. Playing into the vocabulary of Black nationalism in the United States, each member was assigned a ministerial position. Chairman Karg became Minister President, former secretary Tam

[550] Cyriel Karg, "Let's Get Together," *Sonde Spikri*, October 1978, Private Archive Family Karg.

[551] Cyriel Karg, "Let's Get Together."

[552] Maulana Karenga, "For Imari Obadele: Free the Land, Liberate the People," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, November 2, 2010, 7.

[553] Lucien Karg, interview by author.

became Minister of Finance, and former treasurer Heymans became Minister of Public Relations. The first new addition to the board was theater producer Franklin D. 'Frank' Lafour, who became Afro-Sranan's Minister of Cultural Affairs. Born in the Netherlands, Lafour had moved to Suriname in 1969 to work for the Cultural Center of Suriname (CCS) and was known on both sides of the Atlantic for his deep appreciation of the American Black Arts Movement, inspiring him to perform a number of successful plays by Amiri Baraka in the late 1960s and early 1970s. He was also the brother of BPSC member Lucien Lafour, mentioned in the previous chapter.[554] Other new members were Minister of Information Mavis C. Treurniet, Minister of Foreign Affairs Paul Nieuwendam, and Minister of Economic Exchange Meyer (first name unknown), who lived in the United States. Other positions Afro-Sranan hoped to add in the future were Minister of Defense, Minister of Labor, and Minister of Women's Affairs, though it is unclear if these positions were ever filled. [555]

The Pan-African inspiration of the organization also shone through in Afro-Sranan's monthly journal *Uhuru*, named after the Swahili word for freedom, which was published from 1970 to 1973. The logo of the journal, covering the front page of each edition, portrayed two men reaching out to each other and holding hands, symbolizing their coming together. Written above them were the words *Uhuru* and *Vrijheid*, joining both men in their wish for freedom. Written in between the men were the words 'Black' (in English) and 'Afro-Sranan'. Underneath the logo were the contact details of the organization and its motto:

> We will appreciate our beauty and our culture,
> We will no longer be ashamed of ourselves and our people
> Because someone who is ashamed of themselves could never be free!!!!![556]

Its pages were filled with reports on current events, stories about local and international Black heroes, calls for action, and highly theoretical analyses of

[554] "Franklin D. Lafour," *Theater Encyclopedie*, accessed February 27, 2022, https://theaterencyclopedie.nl/wiki/Franklin_Lafour; Van Kempen, 299; Leslie Fredrik, "The Dutchman," *De Ware Tijd,* June 14, 1972, 5.

[555] "Ingekomen Nota van J.G. Koenders," 2. Paul Nieuwendam was the brother of BPS founder Arnold Nieuwendam.

[556] *Uhuru*, January 1973, 1; *Uhuru*, February 1973, 1.

Surinamese society, viewed through what its authors called a 'Black-Nationalist-Pan-Africanist' lens.[557] References to prominent Pan-African thinkers such as Kwame Nkrumah and Franz Fanon appeared on a regular basis, showing how Afro-Sranan positioned itself within the same intellectual tradition.[558] Especially in the beginning, Karg himself wrote most of the articles, while his wife Marita stenciled the paper and his teenage son Lucien made the illustrations.[559] The journal had a circulation of approximately two hundred, of which some fifty were sent to the SAL in New York.[560]

Uhuru also provides insight into the activities Afro-Sranan organized, at least in the later period, as only a few editions have been archived. In line with Karg's earlier writings in *De Vrije Stem*, the organization identified three central goals in its journal: (1) to obtain full independence, (2) to decolonize the Surinamese economy, and (3) to create a cultural revolution among those of African descent.[561] While the first goal lay at the heart of all Afro-Sranan's activities, there were few projects that targeted constitutional independence directly. Rather, the organization mainly focused on the second goal of self-sufficiency and the third goal of cultural consciousness. In pursuit of economic freedom, the organization focused on at least three projects. The first was the composition of a Black business network that encouraged members of the organization to buy exclusively from Afro-Surinamese entrepreneurs – particularly those owned by fellow members of Afro-Sranan. [562] On the final page of *Uhuru*, the organization published a list of businesses owned by "our people," which included supermarkets, gas stations, beauty salons, and clothing stores.[563]

---

[557] "Een Zwart-Nationalistische-Pan-Afrikanistische Analyse," *Uhuru*, January 1973, 2. Sadly, I was only able to locate two issues of the journal, namely those from January and February 1973. Other information that I found comes from "Ingekomen Nota van J.G. Koenders," which analyzed the journal's first few issues from 1970.

[558] *Uhuru*, January 1973, 1-4; *Uhuru*, February 1973, 1-4; "Ingekomen Nota van J.G. Koenders," 2.

[559] Lucien Karg, interview by author.

[560] Lucien Karg, interview by author.

[561] "Cedric Lashley Afro Sranan: 1; "Ingekomen Nota van J.G. Koenders," 2; *Uhuru,* January 1973, 1; *Uhuru,* February 1973, 1.

[562] "Afro Sranang," *De Ware Tijd*, September 18, 1970, 1; "Afro Sranan Wil Werkloosheid Bestrijden," *De Ware Tijd,* November 28, 1970, 1; "Karg Kondigt Werving Grote Zwarte Macht Aan," *De Ware Tijd*, September 16, 1970, 1; "Ingekomen Nota van J.G. Koenders," 3.

[563] *Uhuru*, January 1973, 4.

The organization presented even more ambitious business plans in December 1970. Focusing especially on financial independence from powerful European and American industries, Karg presented a plan that would replace "white economic domination" in Suriname with that of the global "Black establishment."[564] The main aim of this project was to convince wealthy African American entrepreneurs to invest in Surinamese companies, trade, and industrial projects through a 'joint ventures' scheme, where profits would be divided equally among foreign financiers and Afro-Surinamese entrepreneurs, who could then reinvest their earnings into Surinamese schools, hospitals, and infrastructure.[565] Using his network in the United States, Karg welcomed two potential investors from Wisconsin and Michigan that winter to discuss possibilities for a record manufacturing business and a canning factory.[566] Unfortunately, it seems none of these efforts ended up being successful, though they do further illustrate Karg's dedication to transnational economic collaboration.

On a more local scale, the organization also developed plans for a small-scale agricultural project intended to stimulate Black land ownership, reduce unemployment rates, and help local youths to "stay off the streets."[567] At first, Karg and his associates tried to gain ownership over some small patches of farmland outside Paramaribo, which they stated had originally belonged to free Black communities but had "bit by bit been taken away from the Creoles by the Hindus."[568] The men reached out to Minister of Infrastructure and Traffic Rudy Goossen of the PNP and Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries Ramsewak Shankar of the VHP, both of whom were quite enthusiastic about their plans to help unemployed youths build a career in agriculture. Instead of these farmlands, however, Afro-Sranan and the

[564] "Afro-Sranan in Business," 1.

[565] "Afro Sranan Wil Werkloosheid Bestrijden," 1; "Afro-Sranan in Business," 1; "Ingekomen Nota van J.G. Koenders," 3.

[566] "Afro Sranan Wil Werkloosheid Bestrijden," 1; "Afro-Sranan in Business," 1. Names that are mentioned in the press are Rita Wight, a record studio owner, and someone named as Russel Brouw, supposedly a Senator in Detroit. Unfortunately, the latter's name was likely misspelled and his position wrongly described, leaving him untraceable.

[567] "Afro-Sranan in Business, Cyriel Karg as Promotor," *De Vrije Stem*, December 2, 1970, 1; "Afro Sranan Wil Werkloosheid Bestrijden," 1.

[568] "Afro-Sranan in Business," 1.

ministers set their eyes on an alternative location: plantation Slootwijk in the Commewijne district. On the old sugar plantation, Afro-Sranan would be able to work some 125 acres of land and set up a confection factory and medical center, providing work for both men and women. Slootwijk was the ideal location for the community, allowing them to produce their own crops, catch fish, and ship their goods to Paramaribo to sell at the city's Central Market. The ministers even promised to fund the necessary medical training of twenty-six Afro-Sranan members to do their envisioned work effectively.[569] On 26 January 1971, Afro-Sranan and the ministers held a press conference to formally announce their plans. Again, however, it seems their plans were never realized, likely because the plantation was owned by the Dutch government.[570]

In this same period, as in later years, Afro-Sranan also organized a number of cultural events intended to revitalize Afro-Surinamers' "Egi Afro Koeltoeroe" or "Own African Culture."[571] Cultural awareness and education, according to the organization, were of utmost importance to the Pan-African revolution because diasporic Africans had to rediscover who they were and where they came from before they could understand their worth as an independent people. "Humans who neglect their culture lack the power to invent," the organization stated in *Uhuru*. "Cultural revival serves a positive goal, (…) it will help us find new ways of being. It will provide us with a new personal power."[572] Many of the events they organized to reach this level of consciousness were hosted at Wie na Wie, whose community center was freely available to Afro-Sranan. Here, the group hosted African-inspired dance acts and musical performances, familiarizing Afro-Surinamers with "the Afro-school [which] lets the public feel at one with what is, lives and always will be, namely our Afro-nature."[573] They also held fashion shows that promoted traditional West-African

[569] "Afro Sranan Wil Werkloosheid Bestrijden," 1; "Ministers Spraken op Afro-Bijeenkomst," *De Ware Tijd,* January 29, 1971, 1.

[570] The Dutch had bought the land in 1963 to accommodate a group of Indonesians who had been loyal to the Dutch in the Indonesian Independence War ('Toegoenezen'). They only lived there for a few years and departed for the Netherlands in 1967. See Marshall, 179-180.

[571] "Afro-Sranan in Business," 1.

[572] "Een Zwart-Nationalistische-Pan-Afrikanistische Analyse," *Uhuru*, January 1973, 2.

[573] Cyriel R. Karg, "Tjintjie," *De Vrije Stem*, September 21, 1970, 4; "Ingekomen Nota van J.G. Koenders," 3; "Prefoeroe Trad op the Moengo," *De Vrije Stem,* July 8, 1972, 6.

clothing, explaining that "only once [we] start dressing like Africans will people see [us] for the Africans we really are."[574] The highlight of Afro-Sranan's cultural program was going to be their Christmas 1970 Africa Show, where all of these cultural forms would come together. The organization had invited an African American show group of some twenty members to come to Suriname and perform a mix of modern and traditional African dance to "new black music" while dressed in "the latest Afro-fashion to popularize it in Suriname."[575] However, much like many of their other plans, it seems the show had to be canceled when neither Afro-Sranan nor the show group were able to pay for the necessary travel.[576]

On occasion, Afro-Sranan also became involved in political issues and discourse, even though it had explicitly positioned itself as a non-political organization. One example was a roundtable discussion that the organization hosted in December 1972 with representatives from several Afro-Surinamese parties. Their intention was to discuss how these parties could collaborate to grow a stronger sense of Black unity in Suriname and to bring some issues from the Afro-Surinamese community to their attention.[577] On other occasions, Afro-Sranan directly contacted the Surinamese government or specific political parties to express their concerns. In November 1970, for example, Afro-Sranan sent a long letter to parliament calling for the legalization of Winti, an Afro-Surinamese religion with deep roots in West African culture. Arguing that its prohibition posed a threat to universal freedom of religion and formed "a clear form of discrimination (…) based on ethnic background."[578] Similarly, they sent a letter to the Minister of Health to demand fair payment for

[574] "Cedric Lashley Afro Sranan," 1; "Ingekomen Nota van J.G. Koenders," 3.

[575] ""Afro-Sranan in Business," 1; "Afro Sranan Wil Werkloosheid Bestrijden," 1.

[576] "Ingekomen Nota van J.G. Koenders," 3, mentions that the organization was still trying to collect the necessary funding several weeks before the event was to take place. Since no sources mention anything about the show after Karg's announcement, it is likely that their performance had to be canceled.

[577] *Uhuru*, January 1973, 1; "Afro-Sranan Vraagt," 3. Members of Afro-Sranan also participated in similar roundtable conversations organized by other groups. See "Debat over Zwarte Mens en Zijn Problemen," *De Vrije Stem*, December 8, 1972.

[578] "Afro-Sranan," *Suriname*, November 3, 1970, 4.

medical personnel on their behalf, as these "incredibly hardworking and loyal servants to the state" had no time to stand up for themselves.[579]

Afro-Sranan also expressed solidarity with the Black teachers that had gone on strikes in October 1970, protesting against the – in their opinion – disproportionate appointments of Indo-Surinamese school directors by the VHP government.[580] One of the main leaders of these strikes was the dean of the General Secondary School (Algemene Middelbare School, AMS) Ronald R. Venetiaan. Venetiaan was a close friend of Karg's and a known associate of Afro-Sranan, though he never became a formal member.[581] Another active striker was vice-director Eric J. Lo Fo Wong of the Dahlberg School. Much like Venetiaan, Lo Fo Wong was known for his Black Power sympathies and was even accused of making the Teacher's Union into "an instrument of Afro-ideological activities."[582] While the October strikes were meant to target the government, historians have written that the protesters ended up "destroying Hindustani stores, molesting merchants, and attacking bus drivers who did not respond to the call for [their] strike."[583] Yet, while the media were eager to emphasize the relationship between Afro-Sranan and these anti-Indian actions, there is no evidence that the organization played an active role in them.

Liberation Beyond the State

While Afro-Sranan organized a range of activities at home, it also continued to invest in its transnational network. Most of his foreign relations came out of the Congress of African Peoples. For one, Karg stayed in touch with conference organizer

[579] "Afro-Sranan Vraagt Betere Salarisregeling voor Verplegend Personeel," *De Ware Tijd,* June 2, 1971, 10.

[580] Dew, *The Difficult Flowering of Surinam*, 163; Ramsoedh, 116; "Hanhaving Wet en Orde Noodzakelijk!" *De Vrije Stem*, October 21, 1970, 1.

[581] "Raciale Insinuaties door Bond van Leraren," *De Vrije Stem*, October, 12 1970, 1; Jansen van Galen, 130; "Ingekomen Nota van J.G. Koenders," 3. According to this third source, Venetiaan was also one of the founders of the Surinamese Socialist Union (Surinaamse Socialistische Unie, SSU) and had previously "attempted to make the Union into a Black Power movement," with the support of fellow Black Power-enthusiast and English teacher Wim Udenhout. Both Venetiaan and Udenhout would later serve as national leaders of Suriname. Udenhout served as the military-installed Prime Minister of Suriname from 1984 to 1986. He would later also become the country's ambassador to the United States. Venetiaan served three terms as President of the country, first from 1991 to 1996 and later from 2000 to 2010, making him the longest serving President in Surinamese history.

[582] "Onderwijs Moet op de Helling," *De Vrije Stem,* September 19, 1970, 1.

[583] Ramsoedh, 117.

Amiri Baraka, who sent him monthly packages with new publications, vinyl records, and African products to share with his organization.[584] With other participants of the Congress, Karg established even closer ties. The most important was with Imari Abubakari Obadele of the Republic of New Afrika, which aspired to construct a sovereign Black nation in the American South, including parts of South Carolina, Georgia, Mississippi, Alabama, and Louisiana.[585] Whilst in Atlanta, Karg and Obadele had bonded over their shared interest in economic self-sufficiency, land ownership, and cultural reclamation, and believed that diplomatic ties between their two organizations could lay the basis for a strong diplomatic network of aspiring independent Black nation states.[586] As the RNA wrote:

> Independence (…) would enable us to pursue economic development without interference. It would enable us to engage in world trade for our own benefit as a people, to align with and help (and be helped by) our brothers in the Caribbean, notably Guyana and Surinam.[587]

According to an FBI report, they had signed an agreement to formalize their mutual support at the end of the Congress, dated September 8.[588]

In November 1970, Karg traveled to the American Midwest to learn more about the RNA and to discuss further possibilities for their collaborations.[589] When he returned, he announced that the RNA and Afro-Sranan had extended their agreement, which contained the following points:

---

[584] Lucien Karg, interview by author. The archives of the Committee for Unified Newark (CUN) confirms that Karg regularly received information from Baraka. See Cheo Elimu to Imamu Amiri Baraka, Memorandum, Committee for Unified Newark, December 30, 1970, Series XVII: Komozi Woodard's Office Files, 1956-1986, Atlanta-Fulton Public Library, accessed via Archives Unbound, Gale Primary Sources.

[585] For an extensive history of the Republic of New Afrika, see Edward Onaci, *Free the Land: The Republic of New Afrika and the Pursuit of a Black Nation-State* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2020). See also Imari Abubakari Obadele, I, "Yes – An Independent Black Nation in Our Time, in This Place!" in *African Congress*, 157-166.

[586] "Karg Kondigt Werving Grote Zwarte Macht Aan," 1; "Afro-Sranan Volgt VHP's Voorbeeld," 4; "Afro Sranang," 1; Intelligence Evaluation Committee, 49; "Ingekomen Nota van J.G. Koenders," 3.

[587] Brother Imari, "Proposed Declaration of Economic Intent," San Francisco, October 24, 1970, as cited in Federal Bureau of Investigation, "Republic of New Africa (RNA)," San Francisco, November 23, 1970, p. 2, 157-9079, nr. 1127197-000, section 27. See also "Detroit Report of SA [Blank]," May 24, 1971, p. 116, 157-9079, nr. 1127197-000, section 40, Archives Unbound, Gale Primary Sources.

[588] "Detroit Report of SA [Blank]," 116.

[589] "Afro Sranan Wil Werkloosheid Bestrijden," 1;

1) The Republic of New Afrika, hereafter the Republic, and the Afro-Srana[n] Movement, hereafter the Movement, hereby declare to enter into an agreement to support each other during independent congregations and to defend each other's interests in every regard: i.e. politics, economics, culture and socially, in their own countries.
2) The Republic will help the Movement obtain a printing press.
3) The Movement will organize a performance of high quality by a theater group from the Republic in Suriname.
4) The Movement and the Republic will try to improve mutual trade relations and the Republic will support the Movement in her quest to obtain investments from Afro industries in Suriname.
5) The Movement and the Republic will regularly exchange news reports and cultural materials.
6) The Republic will appoint honorary consuls to Suriname based on proposals by the Movement.
7) Both agree to do anything possible to defend the interests of the Republic and Movement to reach their goals of full national independence and their people's freedom from slavery.[590]

While many of these points were taken up over the fall and winter of 1970, as the previous section has demonstrated, none of them were actually realized. The Africa show was organized but had to be canceled, as mentioned in the previous section, the investors who came to visit did not decide to invest, and the RNA's printing press never actually arrived. Karg did visit the RNA again in 1971 to speak about the need for Black unity across national borders, but neither Obadele nor any other prominent members of the RNA seem to have ever returned the favor.[591]

At the Congress of African Peoples, Karg also established contacts with the Nation of Islam (NOI), which he proclaimed had played a formative role in his understanding of Black oppression and liberation. [592] While it is unclear what exactly Afro-Sranan's connections to the NOI looked like, it appears Karg managed to settle two agreements with the Black Muslims. In search of a market for the goods he hoped to produce in his agricultural projects, Karg had reached out to NOI director Elijah Muhammad, who famously ran a multi-million dollar Black business network. While it

[590] "Ingekomen Nota van J.G. Koenders," 3. This text was likely taken directly from one of the first editions of *Uhuru*.

[591] "Curriculum Vitae van Cyriel R. Karg."

[592] Cyriel Karg, "Let's Get Together."

is unclear what exactly he requested, he received a letter from Muhammad in the summer of 1971 telling Karg he would buy "what ever you have in your Country that we can bargain for and use (…) in the States."[593] The NOI also offered Karg help with his plans to establish an Institute for African Sciences, where Afro-Surinamers could study Africa and the diaspora through a range of academic fields. The Black Muslims promised three scholarships for Surinamese girls to study at the NOI's University of Islam in Harlem, New York, to prepare them for teaching positions at this Surinamese Institute.[594] Much like many of the plans discussed previously, however, it remains unclear if these scholarships were ever used.

Afro-Sranan's connections to both the RNA and the NOI watered down when Karg laid down his leadership of the organization in the spring of 1972. As Head of Information and Press for the PNR, he had become increasingly occupied with the upcoming elections and was left with little time to focus on Afro-Sranan. He handed his position over to Cedric M. Lashley, the owner of an African shop in Paramaribo.[595] While most of the organization's activities continued as before, its transnational connections changed. Instead of the United States, Lashley focused on connecting Afro-Sranan to like-minded groups in the Caribbean. In 1972, Afro-Sranan joined the Committee for the Removal of Colonialism in the Caribbean (CRAC), which was founded in Guyana in 1972 and reportedly included members from Belize, Puerto Rico, French Guiana, Guyana, the US, and Africa.[596] The purpose of this committee was "to combat the presence of European and American colonialism in the Caribbean," and it was created by a number of Pan-African organizations in the region.[597] While no Afro-Sranan delegates had been able to attend its first meeting, Lashley's request to join the

[593] Letter from Elijah Muhammad to Cyriel Karg, August 4, 1971, Private Archive Family Karg. Several years later, in 1975, Karg would also visit Muhammad at the NOI headquarters in New York to persuade him to invest in Surinamese tourism post-independence. See "Curriculum Vitae van Cyriel R. Karg."

[594] "Ingekomen Nota van J.G. Koenders," 3; "Afro-Sranan in Business," 1; "Afro Sranan Wil Werkloosheid Bestrijden," 1.

[595] Lucien Karg, interview by author.

[596] "Cedric Lashley Afro Sranan," 1; "Afro Srenan Werkt Internationaal," *De Vrije Stem*, June 28, 1972, 2; "Het Was Afro-Sranang," *De Ware Tijd,* June 28, 1972, 4.

[597] "Resolutie Afro-Sranan in Guyana Aangenomen," *De Vrije Stem*, June 26, 1972; "Afro Srenan Werkt Internationaal," 2.

network was accepted, upon which CRAC announced that it "wholeheartedly support[ed] the battle of the Surinamese people against Dutch colonialism."[598] Based on the scarcity of archival and secondary materials on this committee, however, it is likely that CRAC itself never got off the ground to truly put these ideas into action.

Other efforts to keep Afro-Sranan connected to the Pan-African movement concerned the Sixth Pan-African Congress, to be held in Tanzania in June 1974, and a preparatory Caribbean conference in Guyana in December 1973, organized by Eusi Kwayana (Sidney King) of the African Society for Cultural Relations with Independent Africa (ASCRIA).[599] The purpose of this conference was to gather input from grassroots activists throughout the Caribbean region and discuss these with formal government officials, with the ultimate goal of putting forward a coherent agenda during the Congress in Tanzania.[600] Kwayana had invited Afro-Sranan to attend the preparatory conference, which included fellow representatives of the Bermudan Black Beret Cadre, the Barbadian People's Democratic Movement, the Antiguan Afro-Caribbean Liberation Movement, the Vincentian Organization for Black Cultural Awareness, and Trinidad and Tobago's Organization for Black Cultural Awareness.[601] Unfortunately for the Caribbean delegates, the Steering Committee of the Pan-African Congress in Tanzania decided that only delegations "sponsored by governments, those from ruling parties, liberation movement approved by the OAU [Organization of African Unity] (…), and parties not objectionable to the governments or states they came from" would be allowed to attend the conference.[602] This decision led to great disappointment

[598] "Afro Srenan Werkt Internationaal," 2.

[599] For more information on Eusi Kwayana and ASCRIA, see Kate Quinn, ""Sitting on a Volcano": Black Power in Burnham's Guyana," in *Black Power in the Caribbean,* ed. Kate Quinn (UP of Florida, 2014), 146-158; Nigel Westmaas, "An Organic Activist: Eusi Kwayana, Guyana, and Global Pan-Africanism," in *Black Power in the Caribbean,* ed. Kate Quinn (UP of Florida, 2014), 159-178.

[600] Swan, *Pauulu's Diaspora,* 212-213.

[601] "Afro Srana Doet Mee aan Pan-Afrikaanse Conferentie," De Vrije Stem, November 13, 1973, 4; Swan, *Pauulu's Diaspora,* 212-213. *De Vrije Stem* stated that Afro-Sranan was planning to attend this meeting and send three to five delegates, but it is not clear if they actually were able to.

[602] Swan, *Pauulu's Diaspora,* 213.

within the Caribbean region and ultimately prevented grassroots organizations like Afro-Sranan from attending.[603]

Despite Afro-Sranan's efforts to build meaningful coalitions with fellow Pan-African organizations abroad, most of their transnational initiatives did not last long. This was partly because of the transition of leadership within the organization but even more so due to the limited financial resources available to the members of Afro-Sranan. While travels to neighboring Guyana might have been possible, trips to the United States or, indeed, Africa were extremely expensive. Though no financial records of Afro-Sranan have remained available, a government report on the group stated that it took Karg and Reemnet several months to financially recover from their travels to Atlanta.[604] Publicly, the organization usually pointed to "certain circumstances" for its inability to attend events abroad, and it is assumable that a lack of funds was the most limiting.[605] Yet, these limitations never discouraged Afro-Sranan from underlining the importance of transnational Black solidarity. "Brothers and sisters all over the world are fighting by our side," Lashley proudly announced in *De Vrije Stem* on 28 June 1972. "Unite now, so that we can stand strong in our fight against colonialism in our beloved Suriname!"[606]

As Afro-Sranan celebrated the promise of global Black unification, however, its fiercest critics pointed towards this very same pursuit as the group's main pitfall. From the moment the BPS was founded until long after the organization's shift to Pan-Africanism, Surinamers from a range of different backgrounds castigated Afro-Sranan for its American-inspired rhetoric and, by extension, its transnational vision. What the activists had seen as an opportunity to find common ground with other diasporic Africans was interpreted by its opponents as "uncritical copycatting," "import of outlandish little theories," "sickly imitations," and "nothing but plain old aping."[607] To

[603] Letter from Ambassador S.D. Emanuels to Ministry to Foreign Affairs, "Afro Caribische Radicalen Niet Welkom op Pan Afrikaanse Congres te Tanzania," Port of Spain, June 10, 1974, Aangelegenheden Betreffende de Black Power Opstand en Activiteiten, inv. nr. 14617, Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken: Code-archief 1965-1974, 2.05.313, Nationaal Archief, The Hague, The Netherlands; Swan, *Pauulu's Diaspora,* 213-214.

[604] "Ingekomen Nota van J.G. Koenders," 3.

[605] "Afro Srenan Werkt Internationaal," 2.

[606] "Afro Srenan Werkt Internationaal," 2.

[607] "Geen Zwarte Macht Wel Totale Kracht," 1; "In Plaats van Black Power Gezond Surinamer Zijn," *Amigoe di Curaçao*, July 20, 1970, 1; "In Suriname Geen Plaats voor Black Power-Beweging," 1; "We Zijn er Tegen," 1; "Noot

them, there was no place for Black Power in Suriname because the movement had been created by African Americans to solve specific forms of oppression in the particular context of the United States.[608] One group of anonymous authors wrote:

> We can imagine that people might align with this [movement] in response to the oppression, humiliation and the frustration of coloreds in America. But in Suriname these conditions do not exist. We do not want to deny that discrimination exists or that there once was a time when the black Surinamer could not find a job, but that time is long gone. Therefore, there is no room for Black Power (…) in our country.[609]

Similar points were made about South Africa and Rhodesia, where apartheid ensured that Black citizens could not enjoy the same rights as Whites.[610] But in Suriname, they argued, "absolutely no single group is exploited or oppressed by another."[611]

Instead, these critics argued in support of a movement that was truly Surinamese at its core, designed by Surinamers to solve the unique problems of their own country. "Suriname does not need Black Power, but Total Power to solve its complicated issues," one of the organization's opponents urged.[612] This 'Total Power' had to include Surinamers from every racial group, including well-intending White farmers, missionaries, teachers, and investors who had settled in the country over time and had helped build Surinamese society.[613] Some even argued that Dutch businesses had an important role to play in such a movement, as Suriname "could not

---

Red. VS: Geen Plaats voor Black Power," 2; "De Creolen tot Ondergang Verdoemd?" *De Vrije Stem*, August 8, 1970, 2.

608 "We Zijn er Tegen," *De Vrije Stem,* July 27, 1970, 1; "Noot Red. VS: Geen Plaats voor Black Power," *De Vrije Stem,* July 31, 1970, 2; "Geen Zwarte Macht Wel Totale Kracht," 1; "In Suriname Geen Plaats voor Black Power-Beweging," 1; "Karg Schrijft en Spreekt Blank," *De Vrije Stem*, August 4, 1970, 4; "Afro Sranang," 1.

609 "Geen Zwarte Macht Wel Totale Kracht," 1.

610 "Open Brief aan "De Groep"," *De Vrije Stem*, September 15, 1969, 2.

611 "We Zijn er Tegen," 1.

612 "In Suriname Geen Plaats voor Black Power-Beweging," 1. Similar sentiments in: "Nodig: Eigen Identiteit, Geen Import," *De Ware Tijd,* September 16, 1970, 1.

613 "Open Brief aan "De Groep"," *De Vrije Stem*, September 15, 1969, 2; "In Suriname Geen Plaats voor Black Power-Beweging," 1; "Mamanten Tori," De Vrije Stem, July 20, 1970, 4; "We Zijn er Tegen," 1; "Noot Red. VS: Geen Plaats voor Black Power," 2; "Karg Schrijft en Spreekt Blank," 4.

manage to build itself up without the financial support of the Netherlands."[614] With regards to Total Power, one of Karg's own colleagues at *De Vrije Stem* wrote:

> Suriname is home to at least ten races and nationalities, who together shape Surinamese society. We must do anything we can to bring these descendants together into a close-knit nation and refrain from anything that will push our people apart. We need to grow together from white to black, anyone whose destiny is tied to this community. We must grow into a national unity. Black Power stands in the way of this growth. It brings it to a halt.[615]

One particularly outspoken critic of the organization was law student Ellin M.A. Robles, herself Afro-Surinamese, who, throughout a number of articles in *De Vrije Stem*, argued that Afro-Sranan was "intensely pathetic" for blaming global forces for discrimination without taking a critical look at themselves.[616] In a series of articles, she argued that discrimination against Black people in "America, Europe, and elsewhere in the world" was not unfair but in fact justified because of Black people's own "antisocial way of living," "vulgar behavior," and the "commitment of all crimes imaginable."[617] Instead of aiming for power, she suggested to Afro-Sranan, those who wanted to improve Black life should be "teaching negroes patriotism, a sense of responsibility, discipline and self-criticism."[618] Responding to the organization's arguments that Afro-Surinamers had to reclaim their African identity through art, music, and fashion, Robles pointed out that "an individual cannot be African unless he has an African nationality and participates in African society."[619] The only reason Afro-Sranan promoted African culture as their own, she continued, was because its members were "too lazy to pursue an interest" in their own heritage.[620]

---

[614] "In Suriname Geen Plaats voor Black Power-Beweging," 1.

[615] "We Zijn er Tegen," 1. Similar ideas about Black Power obstructing the development of Surinamese nation building were expressed in ; "Noot Red. VS: Geen Plaats voor Black Power," 2.

[616] Ellin Robles, "Wie heeft Schuld?" *De Vrije Stem*, November 28, 1972, 3.

[617] Robles, "Wie heeft Schuld?" 3.

[618] Robles, "Wie heeft Schuld?" 3.

[619] Ellin Robles, "Afro Sranan is Niet Reel," *De Vrije Stem*, November 24, 1972, 10.

[620] Robles, "Wie heeft Schuld?" 3.

By the time Robles published her criticism, however, the organization had already fallen into decline. While Lashley was still negotiating to send a Surinamese delegation to the Pan-African Congress the next year, it seems like the organization had mostly become inactive by this point, with its final activities taking place that same year. In contrast to the ABP or the BPSC, no public statements were made to announce the end of the organization, though it would not be hard to make an educated guess. In 1973, a political bloc of three Afro-Surinamese parties, supported by the Javanese Party for National Unity and Solidarity (Kerukunan Tulodo Pranatan Inggil, KTPI), had won the national elections, thus placing political power back into Afro-Surinamese hands. One of the victors was the PNR, for whose campaign Karg had left his position in Afro-Sranan. On 15 February 1974, only a few months after the election, the new government announced that it would be seeking independence from the Kingdom before the end of the following year. The Dutch were easily convinced, granting Suriname full autonomy by 25 November 1975. Two of Afro-Sranan's central goals, the restoration of Black unity and the independence of the country, seemed to have been reached, even if not by their doing.

From its founding in 1970 to its decline in 1973, the history of the BPS/Afro-Sranan was characterized by a continuous effort to connect the struggle for Surinamese independence to the much larger fight for Black Power around the world. Though the organization struggled to define Black Power in its own environment, there was no denying that the BPS helped some Surinamers better understand their position in the African diaspora and global struggle against imperialism. Under Karg's leadership, the organization turned to the United States, where it found common ground with some of the most influential groups in the movement. These shared Karg's ideas about decolonization and economic cooperation, and inspired him to take on a more Pan-Africanist ideology. Though these connections were lost when Karg left the organization in 1972, his successor Lashley managed to build new connections closer to home, in the Caribbean. Here, too, the Surinamese organization reached out to other Afrocentric groups, linking Afro-Sranan to ASCRIA and the 6PAC in Tanzania. Though such connections may seem marginal in the larger story of transnational Black Power, they had a profound influence on how Surinamese Black Power advocates envisioned their future.

Domestically, the BPS had mixed successes. For three years, the group organized many activities in and around Paramaribo. These activities ranged anywhere from community support to political lobbying, leading to collaborations even with government officials. In hindsight, however, the most impactful activities of the BPS were probably Karg and Lashley's writings in *De Vrije Stem* and other newspapers, which led to nationwide debates on racial unity, cooperation, and decolonization. As this chapter has shown, responses to their writings were deeply divided. On the one hand, Karg and Lashley's ideas led to quite a lot of criticism, accusing the Black Panther leaders of racial determinism, inauthenticity, and even obstructing the nationalist cause. At the same time, it is undeniable that their writings generated an interest in the Black Power movement, helping them gain a few hundred followers over the course of three years. Many of these followers were also involved in the broader anticolonial movement, which at one point even led to a discussion about the incorporation of Black Power into the formal ideology of the PNR, though this proposal was quickly denied.[621]

Though the Black Power organization was no longer around by the time Suriname gained independence, it is possible that the group's popularity had some influence on the process. At least, that is what sociologist Edward Dew has suggested in *The Difficult Flowering of Suriname* (1977), still considered one of the most detailed studies of the period to this day. Reflecting on the years leading up to independence, Dew argued that the "most obvious explanation" for the victory of the Afro-Surinamese bloc in the 1973 elections was that "the appeals for Creole solidarity (made earlier by the Black Power Organization …) had struck a responsive note, bringing this group together in a show of unity that was virtually unprecedented in Surinam's modern history."[622] Having received such widespread exposure in national newspapers and having even organized a roundtable with members of different political parties, Dew might have had a point. At the same time, it would be impossible to determine how much of the rhetoric of Black unity really came from the BPS, as other Afrocentric organizations like Wie Eegie Sanie had made similar calls decades earlier.

[621] "Negende PNR-Congres," *De Ware Tijd*, September 22, 1970, 3.

[622] Dew, *The Difficult Flowering of Surinam*, 173.

Regardless of the question whether Black Power Suriname influenced Surinamese independence or not, it is important to recognize the history of the BPS in the broader context of Surinamese anticolonialism. While Karg's organization was by no means the first to call for Black empowerment or self-determination in the country, it did introduce the moment to a new internationalist approach, bringing questions of transnational solidarity and unity to the fore.[623] Recognizing the existence of groups like the BPS in this era not only broadens our knowledge of Surinamese anticolonialism but also complicates it, showing that even within the pro-independence section of society there were divergent visions for a decolonial future. In that sense, nationalism and Black Power did not necessarily clash, but were complimentary. For Karg, connecting Suriname to the global network of the Black Power movement was a way to strengthen the pursuit of and preemptively safeguard independence. He became a Black Power advocate not in spite of but because of his dedication to the nationalist cause.

[623] As mentioned in the introduction, there is a longer history of Black internationalism in Suriname. This argument is made specifically with regard to the movement of the 1960s and 1970s.

Conclusion

From the late 1960s to the mid-1970s, the Black Power movement spread around the globe like wildfire, encouraging thousands of activists around the world to stand up against racial and colonial oppression in their own societies and beyond. Regardless of the specific geographical location, the radical rhetoric and symbolism of the movement provided marginalized communities with the ideological tools and transnational networks to challenge these systems simultaneously and cooperatively. The Black Power movement became especially popular within the African diaspora, consisting mostly of those whose ancestors had once been forcefully displaced from their continent and had since been treated like second-class citizens wherever they lived. To them, the movement offered a new feeling of belonging and purpose, convincing them that they did not have to fight their oppressors alone. At the same time, the movement left plenty of room for interpretation and adaptation, allowing it to maneuver easily across national borders, regions, continents, and even. This makes its history incredibly rich, with plenty of space left for inquiry.

Yet, as historian Nico Slate has argued in *Black Power Beyond Borders*, new studies of transnational Black Power should do more than simply "adding new characters to an old story" but should also offer new perspectives on what the movement has meant to different people in different places.[624] This dissertation has done both. At its very basis, it has introduced new actors, organizations, geographies, and languages to the study of the movement. It tells the story of four Black Power groups that were previously sidelined in the historiographical narrative or even overlooked completely. Not only does this dissertation expand the total list of Black Power organizations known within the field, but it also adds the Dutch Atlantic as a new space for Black Power research. Additionally, its analysis of the beliefs and activities of these groups has also offered new perspectives on what Black Power meant in the unique setting of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, where Suriname and the Netherlands Antilles were neither wholly independent nor under direct colonial rule.

[624] Slate, 1.

When the movement arrived in the Dutch world, Surinamers and Antilleans alike were still trying to figure out what it meant to be part of the newly structured Kingdom of the Netherlands. As explained, the 1954 Charter had provided both territories with more opportunities for self-governance but at the same time continued to limit their abilities to, for example, defend their own borders or represent themselves internationally. This left the Dutch Caribbean countries less autonomous than many of their Anglophone neighbors, who had obtained independence in the early 1960s and had started to establish themselves as sovereign states in the following years. At the same time, Surinamers and Antilleans learned from their neighbors that national independence did not automatically lead to fundamental change, as the remnants of colonialism continued to shape day-to-day life all around them. In this context, Black Power activism became synonymous with the quest for decolonization, as the movement's global fight against racism was seen as inherently connected to the global fight against imperialism.

Black Power as Decolonization

The first research question posed in this dissertation was why activists in the Dutch Atlantic believed it was important for them to align with the Black Power movement. This also corresponds to the sub-question of how they legitimized the need for Black Power in their individual contexts. Remarkably, the answer to this question was nearly the same for all of them. As the different case studies have shown, all of the groups examined saw the Black Power movement as a powerful ally that could help their majority Black countries decolonize and, once those efforts were successful, offer them a robust international support network to help them safeguard their independence. They believed, as both Benjamin Fox and Cyriel Karg stated repeatedly, that their countries had only continued to depend on the West because of the 'divide and conquer' strategies used by European and American governments to exploit them for their own benefit. To beat them at this game, the 'Black' world – which by itself was free to interpretation – had to overcome these divisive strategies and unite in the fight against White domination.

Although this perspective is similar to that of other Caribbean Black Power groups, particularly in Bermuda, it was unique in the context of the Dutch Atlantic. While nationalist movements such as Wie Eegie Sanie and *di-nos-e-ta* had also adopted

an Afrocentric approach to decolonization, they had not looked outwards but inwards to carve out a decolonial path, using a language of authenticity and exclusivity rather than connectedness and belonging. This difference existed because their goals were different: whereas the nationalist movements strove for complete independence from the Dutch through self-reliance, the Black Power movement strove for independence by replacing their ties to the Netherlands with new, or rather renewed, ties to the African diaspora. Without such a network, Black Power advocates feared their countries would be too vulnerable and would, therefore, fall prone to new forms of imperialism. In other words, they prioritized internationalism over nationalism.

Additionally, while their understanding of Black Power was similar to that of their Caribbean neighbors, surprisingly little contact seems to have existed between Black Power groups in the Dutch and Anglophone Caribbean. Although the efforts of the movement in nearby territories such as Jamaica, Guyana, and Trinidad and Tobago did not go unnoticed, all Black Power groups in the Dutch Atlantic first and foremost looked to the United States for inspiration, leadership, and solidarity. This challenges the common assumption that Caribbean Black Power was separate from Black Power in the United States, as laid out in the introduction. Although there are many connections between the Dutch and Anglophone Caribbean in terms of their ideas and timelines, African American activism seems to have held more of an appeal than that closer to home. Rather than understanding Caribbean and American Black Power as two separate movements, then, the history of Black Power in the Dutch Atlantic shows that the two were, in some areas, deeply interconnected.

It is likely that the Dutch Atlantic groups' interest in the United States was shaped by the personal backgrounds of their leaders, all of whom had studied in the West. Both BPC founder Stanley Brown and BPSC chairman Peter Schumacher had studied in the Netherlands in the late 1950s and early 1960s, when the New Left had just started to take shape in western Europe. The New Left had been shaped by continuous interactions between activists in the United States and Europe, where it had familiarized both men with the Black Freedom movement. ABP foreman Benjamin Fox and BPS leader Cyriel Karg, on the other hand, attended college in the United States, where both of them had become personally involved in that same movement. It was here that the young men encountered new forms of anticolonialism, which enabled them to make sense of their own experiences as racialized people (of course

with the exception of Schumacher) in countries dominated by colonial thought. Once they returned home, they used these tools to build new revolutionary networks, mobilizing hundreds if not thousands of teenagers, students, workers, and others in the fight against oppression.

The second research question asked how Black Power groups in the Dutch Atlantic participated in the movement. Here, the answer is much less consistent, as all four groups endorsed different strategies. The Black Panthers of Curaçao, who identified with the revolutionary nationalism of the Black Panther Party, addressed a relatively wide range of issues faced by Afro-Curaçaoans but ultimately believed these problems could only be challenged by overthrowing the colonial system in its entirety, including the capitalism they believed to lie at its basis. In trying to mobilize Black workers on the island, BPC founder Stanley Brown anonymously wrote a column in his journal *Vitó*, where he explained how race, colonialism, and capitalism intersected in the Curaçaoan context. The group also addressed these issues at the notorious Saturday meetings at the Gomez Square in Willemstad, allowing it to interact with the island's broader anticolonial movement. Though the BPC itself remained small and never called for any mass protest directly, echoes of its revolutionary nationalism could later be heard in the Trinda di Mei uprising of 1969.

Following this uprising, Curaçao became home to a second Black Power group: Antillean Black Power. While this group was active in the same spaces as the Curaçaoan Panthers and took over many of its supporters, its approach to racial equality was quite different. Based on the supposition that the colonial system was too powerful to face head-on, ABP leader Benjamin Fox proclaimed that Afro-Antilleans had to gain self-confidence if they wanted to be effective in their resistance, thus taking a cultural nationalist approach to decolonization. In doing so, he especially encouraged his followers to learn about and reconnect to their African roots, even to claim an African identity for themselves. Fox's ultimate aim was to give Afro-Antilleans a new feeling of pride, so that they could decolonize their minds and rid themselves of the 'inferiority complex' installed by centuries of Dutch indoctrination. Only once they realized what they were worth could they know what there was to fight for.

Located at the heart of the Dutch empire, the Black Panther Solidarity Committee had a completely different approach. Though it adopted the same revolutionary nationalist ideology of the Black Panthers of Curaçao, the BPSC – which

for the most part consisted of Dutch-born Whites – joined the movement from the sidelines. Here, Black Panther sympathizers Peter Schumacher, Lily van den Bergh, and others called for a global revolution against imperialism, which included Dutch colonialism in the Caribbean as well as American imperialism in Europe. This positioned the BPSC at the crossroads of three transnational movements: the Black Power movement, the local anticolonial movement, and the New Left, consisting of a variety of Marxist organizations and Third World support groups. These collaborative efforts allowed the BPSC to raise widespread support for Black Power activists through education, fundraising, and protest, with room for critical self-reflection and political awareness.

The final addition to the Black Power landscape of the Dutch Atlantic was Black Power Suriname, later Afro-Sranan, which adopted a combined ideology of Black capitalism and cultural nationalism. This group believed that the secret to decolonization lay in financial self-sufficiency, which had the potential to make any remaining ties to the West obsolete. In collaboration with Black capitalist groups in the United States, BPS leader Karg and others made plans to open up an international market for Black-owned businesses to trade within and across national borders, while they also explored the possibility of setting up agricultural programs and other employment opportunities within Surinamers. The BPS furthermore collaborated with the cultural association Wie na Wie to host events where Surinamers could familiarize themselves with their African heritage. The latter became Afro-Sranan's primary focus when leadership was taken over by Cedric Lashley, whose approach to decolonization was similar to Benjamin Fox's in that he believed cultural awareness to be a precondition for freedom.

Another notable difference between the groups lay in the types of connections they were able to build to the overarching Black Power movement, which seems to have evolved over time. The BPC was connected to the movement by imitation only, with no evidence of any direct contact between the Curaçaoan activists and the African American organization. Connections between the ABP and the broader movement were slightly closer, as Fox had had some ties to the movement in New York and had purposely brought his experiences and ideas from the United States to the Netherlands Antilles to build his organization. Yet the first group to maintain a direct connection to movement was the BPSC, which was established in collaboration with the Black

Panther Party and its European representatives. Not only were Black Power activists in the United States and elsewhere aware of this group, but they also visited the Netherlands to strengthen their ties to it. In the end, however, none would compare to the BPS, which was able to fully immerse itself into the transnational movement, speaking at one of the largest Black Power conferences of the time, corresponding with prominent movement leaders such as Amiri Baraka and Elijah Muhammad, and setting up agreements with renowned organizations such as the Republic of New Africa. This seems to be as close as any Black Power activists in the Dutch Atlantic came to embedding their own struggle in the broader movement.

Impact and Legacies

It is difficult to determine how much impact the Black Power movement really had on the decolonization in the Dutch Atlantic. Fifty years after its decline, it goes without saying that these groups never built the powerful global Black front they had dreamed of, nor were they able to break with colonialism in the way they had envisioned. Although Suriname did become independent in 1975, and the local Black Power organization may have had some influence on public discourse leading up to it, all other Dutch Caribbean territories have remained part of the Kingdom, albeit in a slightly different arrangement. As a constituent country, the Netherlands Antilles continued to exist until 2010, though Aruba already separated from it in 1986, becoming a constituent in its own right. Following a series of referendums on the other islands in the early 2000s, Curaçao and St. Martin also became constituents, while Bonaire, St. Eustatius, and Saba became 'special municipalities' of the Netherlands, now maintaining even closer ties to the metropole than they had before. To this day, the struggle for decolonization continues on the Antillean islands, albeit still in small numbers - perhaps even smaller than in the 1970s.

Yet it would be unfair to measure the success of the movement by its most ambitious goals only. While Black Power did not manage to create the kind of independence its followers had envisioned, there were other areas where it did leave a mark. Most striking was its role in the popularization of African culture in the region. Though nationalist movements across the Dutch Caribbean had already begun to revive Afro-Caribbean heritage, the Black Power period saw a notable shift towards more 'continental' African culture, including in places where no Black Power groups

seem to have been active, such as St. Martin and Aruba. By continuously educating their audience about African history and heritage, introducing them to daishikis and the Pan-African colors, and celebrating natural Black beauty, the movement helped encourage an entire generation of Afro-Caribbeans to explore and embrace their roots. The significance of such a cultural revival should not be underestimated. For centuries, Eurocentric ideals and trends had dictated Caribbean fashion and entertainment. In this context, 'Black is Beautiful' was a truly revolutionary message. To reclaim their Africanness was an unambiguous act of resistance against the cultural hierarchy that continued to exist even after 1954. From this perspective, the groups' ability to create a new sense of self could be seen as a decolonial success, as it replaced colonial expectations with (what they imagined to be) their pre-colonial identities.

Other successes can be found in the intellectual sphere. As the previous chapters have shown, Black Power groups inspired thousands of laborers, students, and other young radicals throughout the region to better understand racial oppression in both local and global contexts. For many, this was a significant eye-opener, as discussions about race had long been taboo in the region, especially in Curaçao and the Netherlands. Even when the Black Power movement itself went into decline and eventually disappeared, some of its ideas stayed. Some former Black Power activists would even take these with them into their political careers later in life, including Angel Salsbach, who served as a member of the Curaçaoan island council for Partido MAN in the 1980s and 1990s, Wim Udenhout and Ronald Venetiaan, who respectively became Surinamese Prime Minister in the 1980s and President in the 1990s and 2000s, and Anja Meulenbelt, who in the 2000s served as senator for the Dutch Socialist Party (SP) and is now a board member of political party BIJ1, the first political party to be led by a Black woman. Also known for her important role in the Dutch feminist movement, Meulenbelt has repeatedly stated that her participation in the BPSC laid the foundation for her later activism.[625]

Unfortunately for the Black Power advocates, however, their efforts were met with more criticism than support. Opponents came up with a variety of reasons why there was no place for Black Power in the Dutch context, which ultimately prevented the movement from rising beyond the grassroots. In the most conservative circles,

[625] See for example Anja Meulenbelt, "Tweede Golf – the Movie," Blogpost, http://www.anjameulenbelt.nl/weblog/ 2005/12/04/tweede-golf-persoonlijk/.

critics argued that Black Power was completely unnecessary because racial inequality did not exist in the Kingdom. The main evidence they used to support this argument was that many Surinamese and Antillean politicians were of African descent, which meant that Black power was already a reality. From that perspective, some even went as far as to argue that Black Power itself was a racist movement as it glorified Blackness in a society where racial hierarchy supposedly did not exist. Black Power sympathizers, in turn, tried to counter these arguments by explaining that these politicians (whom they referred to as 'Uncle Toms' or the local equivalent of 'Zwarte Piet') did not truly represent the Black population as they worked in the interest of the White establishment, though this argument failed to convince their opponents, to whom this only confirmed that Black Power advocates were making up problems that did not exist.

Others took more moderate stances. The majority of those who engaged in conversations about Black Power did acknowledge that racial discrimination was an issue, but did not see Black Power as a suitable solution. For them, this was because the movement was too radical. Although they seemed to appreciate certain Black Power ideas, as shown by the successes of the groups' cultural efforts, they rejected its more militant aims and methods. Others challenged Black Power because of its American origins. While they respected the movement's work in the United States, they believed that its American foundation made it unsuitable for the Dutch Caribbean or the Netherlands. After all, the United States, the Caribbean, and Europe had fundamentally different societies, each shaped by their own particular histories. To simply 'copy' the Black Power movement would be to undermine that difference. Instead, these critics wanted to combat Dutch racism in a way that was designed for their particular societies, based on the unique experiences of Surinamers and Antilleans, in line with the nationalism of Wie Eegie Sanie and *di-nos-e-ta*, as well as the rhetoric of *Yunan di Korsow*, which strictly rejected any elements that were not considered authentic. Interestingly, this response seems to have been common in the Anglophone Caribbean as well, as mentioned by Quinn.[626]

[626] Quinn, 38.

Looking back at this period, former Black Power leaders themselves have formed conflicting judgments of their work.[627] Following the conflict between the Black Panthers of Curaçao and Antillean Black Power in 1970, both Brown and Fox began to distance themselves from the movement. For Fox, as mentioned in chapter two, this decision was not so much about his belief in Black Power as it was about the way the anticolonial movement in Curaçao operated.[628] For Brown, who had watched this movement crumble after his falling out with Fox, Black Power became a scapegoat. Speaking to journalists and historians later in life, he would often blame Black Power, as well as other Afrocentric movements like *di-nos-e-ta*, for the failure of 'his' revolution, even though he himself had played a large role in building and facilitating these groups.[629] Karg would not distance himself from the movement, though he would later argue that the Dutch gave Suriname its independence too quickly, despite having been one of the leading proponents of immediate decolonization in the 1960s and 1970s.[630]

Overall, *A New Feeling of Unity* has made a number of contributions to the study of transnational Black Power and to the history of Black resistance in the Dutch Atlantic. Most significantly, it has provided the first detailed overview of the ways in which Surinamese, Antillean, and Dutch activists aligned themselves with the Black Power movement, whether through emulation, collaboration, or solidarity. In doing so, it has refuted earlier claims that there was no organized Black Power in this region, even if the groups studied here remained relatively marginal. It has argued that, as was the case elsewhere in the Caribbean, Black Power became a form of decolonization, intended to challenge the legacies of Dutch imperialism at their very core. By placing Black Power into this framework, this dissertation has not only underscored the important relationship between Black Power and decolonization, but has also

[627] Reflections on the effects of Black Power in Curaçao can be found in nearly every interview in Oostindie, *30 Mei 1969: Verhalen over de Revolte.*

[628] See chapter two and Oostindie, *Curaçao*, *30 Mei 1969,* 8.

[629] Brown in *Curaçao, 30 Mei 1969,* 22; Ger Jan Onrust, "De Zwarte Historische Dag: Reacties van de Antilliaanse Pers," in *Dromen en Littekens: Dertig Jaar na de Curaçaose Revolte,* eds. Gert Oostindie (Amsterdam: Amsterdam UP, 1999), 116.

[630] Linda Otter, "In Suriname is Ruimte voor 60 Miljoen Mensen," *Trouw,* June 3, 1992, 2.

contributed to the history of anticolonialism in the Dutch context, showing that the pursuit of independence was carried by multiple groups with different visions for the future and was thus by no means homogenous.

That said, much research remains to be done. An important area for expansion lies in the study of Black Power at a global level. With the addition of new places and spaces rises the need to reevaluate and reconsider what Black Power meant and what it represented at a macro level. Currently, disciplinary divides seem to separate those studying the movement in the United States, in the Caribbean, and elsewhere in the world. Though it is necessary to position local Black Power campaigns within these regional contexts, as confirmed by this dissertation as well, it would also be worth taking a moment of reflection to compare the different branches of the movement that have been studied in recent decades and attempt to find patterns among the different expressions of Black Power. How, for example, can the idea of decolonial Black Power in the Global South enrich interpretations of Black Power in the United States? And should we even separate the two, since the American movement also operated in a colonial society? Anyone attempting to answer such questions must cross the traditional boundaries of their disciplines and include places like the Dutch Atlantic.

There are also ways in which scholars may engage further with the topic of Black Power in the Dutch Atlantic itself. As pointed out previously, one of the main limitations of this dissertation lies within its geographical scope. Though the intention of this dissertation was to study Black Power in the entire Dutch Atlantic, none of the archival materials consulted for this project made any significant references to Black Power groups on the five Antillean islands beyond Curaçao. This does not necessarily mean that the movement did not exist there. As mentioned in the second chapter, some newspapers did allude to small Black Power protests in St. Martin and Aruba. Though no further references to these protests were found, future studies may be able to identify the activists behind these protests and tell their stories through new archival materials or other methods of inquiry, such as oral history. Such research could broaden or challenge the arguments of this dissertation, for example, because Aruba and the SSS islands have stronger historical ties to the United States and Anglophone Caribbean than Curaçao and Suriname.

But it is not in geographical inclusion alone that the study of Dutch Atlantic Black Power can expand. While the focus of this dissertation has been on overt Black

Power organizing, there are many other ways in which Dutch Atlantic activists, intellectuals, artists, and others have engaged with the movement. Though the organizations discussed here have served as useful and necessary case studies to construct a first narrative, it would be equally interesting to see how the movement influenced these societies in more subtle ways. Such research could look into the impact of the movement on broader discussions on race and racial identity, its effects on local fashion, style, and beauty standards, and forms of solidarity that did not include formal alignment with the movement. Perhaps most valuable would be a study of the movement's impact on literature, whether in Papiamentu, Sranan Tongo, Dutch, or any other language. Interesting case studies could be, for example, the impact of Black Power ideology on the work of Frank Martinus Arion, who clearly sympathized with the movement in *Ruku* and became a prominent voice in *di-nos-e-ta*, as mentioned by Broek.[631] Though he does not seem to have considered himself a Black Power activist, it may well be worth examining how the movement impacted his work and that of others like him.

Finally, much remains to be said about the legacies of Black Power activism within and beyond the Kingdom of the Netherlands, even leading up to the current moment. Over the past decades, numerous Black Power veterans, including Kathleen Cleaver, Emory Douglas, and Angela Davis, have visited the Netherlands, rekindling old relationships and forging new ones. Perhaps even more so, memories of the movement have been kept alive by the Amsterdam-based Black Archives, one of the most visible activist organizations in the Netherlands in the past decade. Through its social media channels, the Black Archives has made a real effort to underscore the historical foundations of contemporary antiracist activism, often calling attention to the lasting impact of the Black Power movement. At no other moment did this impact become so evident as in the summer of 2020, when tens of thousands of activists around the Netherlands rose up in support of the Black Lives Matter movement, raising their fists and echoing the words of Malcolm X, the Black Panthers, and many others. Even if a formal study of Black Power in the Dutch context did not exist at that time, there is no denying that activist communities have kept the memory of the movement alive, even to this day.

[631] Broek, *De Kleur van Mijn Eiland,* 211-212.

Bibliography

-

Archival Sources

Curaçao

Archivo Nashonal, Willemstad

Microfilm Collection Stanley C. Brown

Mongui Maduro Library, Willemstad

Vitó (Periodiek)

Suriname

Nationaal Archief, Paramaribo

Newspaper collection

Netherlands

International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam

BG D11/49

BG B23/492

BG D49/814

BRO 2800/14

ZK 72913

ZO 31245

ZK 37709

ZK 37945

Leiden University, Leiden

KIT Collection

LC 2516

KITLV

TS 63

UBL474

Nationaal Archief, The Hague

2.05.313

2.10.26

2.24.01.05

2.24.05.02

Roosevelt Institute for American Studies, Middelburg

Amiri Baraka from Black Arts to Black Radicalism

United States

Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

U.S. Civil Rights History Project

National Archives and Records Administration, College Park

RG 59

Other Archives

De Groene Amsterdammer, Company archive, Amsterdam, the Netherlands

Lily van den Bergh, Private archive, Amsterdam, the Netherlands.

Lucien Karg, Private archive, Paramaribo, Suriname.

-

Digital Sources

Databases

CREST / www.archive.org

Delpher / www.delpher.nl

Beeld en Geluid / www.beeldengeluid.nl

Gale Primary Sources

Archives Unbound

US Declassified Documents Online

Inlichtingendiensten / www.inlichtingendiensten.nl

Inzagedossier Molukse Zaken

Marxist Internet Archive / www.marxists.org

The Black Panther Newspaper Collection

Video Data Ban / https://www.vdb.org/

Videofreex Archive

Websites

Brown, Stanley C. "Stanley Brown's Think Tank." *The Way Back Machine.* https://web.archive.org/web/20120630220319/http://www.stanleybrownthinkank.org:80/.

Cineclub Vrijheidsfilms. "Geschiedenis." https://cineclubvrijheidsfilms.nl/geschiedenis

"Franklin D. Lafour." *Theater Encyclopedie*, https://www.theater-encyclopedie.nl/wiki/Franklin_Lafour.

Anja Meulenbelt, "Tweede Golf – the Movie," Blogpost, http://www.anjameulenbelt.nl/weblog/2005/12/04/tweede-golf-persoonlijk/.

Steijlen, Fridus. "Actie Wassenaar 1970 – Een Wake Up Call." *Moluks Historisch Museum.* https://www.museum-maluku.nl/actie-wassenaar-1970-een-wake-up-call/.

Obituary Arnold E. Nieuwendam. *Dignity Memorial.* https://www.dignitymemorial.com/obituaries/brandon-fl/arnold-nieuwendam-7438531.

-

Interviews

Lucien Karg. August 29, 2022. Paramaribo, Suriname.

-

Primary Literature

30 Mei 1969: Rapport van de Commissie tot Onderzoek van de Achtergronden en Oorzaken van de Onlusten welke op 30 Mei 1969 op Curaçao Hebben Plaatsgehad. Oranjestad: Verenigde Antilliaanse Drukkerijen, 1970.

Baraka, Imamu Amiri, ed. *African Congress: A Documentary of the First Modern Pan-African Congress*. New York: William Morrow & Company, 1972.

Diekmann, Miep. *Een Doekje voor het Bloeden.* The Hague: Leopold, 1970.

Carmichael, Stokely, and Ekwueme M. Thelwell. *Ready for Revolution: The Life and Struggles of Stokely Carmichael (Kwame Ture)*. New York: Scribner, 2003.

Hilliard, David, and Lewis Cole. *This Side of Glory: The Autobiography of David Hilliard and the Story of the Black Panther Party.* New York: Lawrence Hill Books, 2001.

House Committee on Internal Security. *The Black Panther Party, Its Origin and Development as Reflected in Its Official Weekly Newspaper, the Black Panther*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Service, 1970.

Howard, Elbert. *Panther on the Prowl*. Self-Published, 2002.

Karg, Cyriel. *Regering van de Media.* Paramaribo: Familie, n.v., 1977.

Locke, Alain. *The New Negro: An Interpretation.* New York : A. and C. Boni, 1925.

Meulenbelt, Anja. *De Schaamte Voorbij: Een Persoonlijke Geschiedenis.* Amsterdam: Van Gennep, 1976.

Newton, Huey. *To Die for the People: The Writings of Huey P. Newton*. New York: Random House, 1972.

Rodney, Walter. *The Groundings with My Brothers*. London: Bogle-L'Ouverture, 1969.

Schumacher, Peter. *Eldridge Cleaver: Een Zwarte Panter in Amerika.* Odijk: Sjaloom, 1969.

-

Secondary Literature

Abbenhuis, M.F. "Carel Paulus Rier, 1863 – 1917." *Emancipatie 1863 – 1963: Biografieën*. Paramaribo: Surinaamse Historische Kring, 1964. 124-137.

"AHR Conversation: On Transnational History." *The American Historical Review* 111.5 (2006):1440-1463.

Allen, Rose Mary. *Di Ki Manera? A Social History of Afro-Curaçaoans, 1863-1917.* Amsterdam: SWP, 2007.

"The Trinta di Mei Labor Revolt and Its Aftermath: Anticipating a Just and Equitable Curaçaoan Nation." *Equaliberty in the Dutch Caribbean: Ways of Being Non/Sovereign.* New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2022. 69-84.

Alofs, Luc, and Leontine Merkies. *Ken ta Arubiano? Sociale Integratie en Natievorming op Aruba, 1924 – 2001*. Oranjestad: VAD/De Wit Stores, 2001.

Anderson, William A., and Russell R. Dynes, *Social Movements, Violence, and Change: The May Movement in Curaçao*. Columbus, Ohio State University Press, 1975.

Angelo, Anne-Marie. "The Black Panthers in London, 1967-1972: A Diasporic Struggle Navigates the Black Atlantic." *Radical History Review* 103 (Winter 2009): 17-35.

Austin, Curtis J. *Up Against the Wall: Violence in the Making and Unmaking of the Black Panther Party*. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2006.

Banivanua Mar, Tracey. *Decolonisation and the Pacific: Indigenous Globalisation and the Ends of Empire.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016.

Berger, Stefan, and Holger Nehring. *The History of Social Movements in Global Perspective: A Survey*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017.

Besselink, Leonard F.M. *Kingdom of the Netherlands: Charter and Constitution.* Nijmegen: Ars Aequi Libri, 2004.

Bhagwanbali, Radjinder. *Tetary, de Koppige: Het Verzet van Hindoestanen Tegen het Indentured Labour System in Suriname, 1873-1916.* Den Haag: Amrit, 2011.

Blakely, Allison. *Blacks in the Dutch World: The Evolution of Racial Imagery in a Modern Society*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993.

Bloom, Martin and Waldo E. Martin, Jr., *Black Against Empire: The History and Politics of the Black Panther Party*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013.

Bogle, Donald. *Primetime Blues: African Americans on Network Television.* New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2001.

Bogues, Anthony. "Black Power, Decolonization, and Caribbean Politics: Walter Rodney and the Politics of Groundings with My Brothers," *boundary* 2 (2009), 127–147.

"The *Abeng* Newspaper and the Radical Politics of Postcolonial Blackness." *Black Power in the Caribbean*, ed. Kate Quinn. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2014. 76-96.

Bootsma, Peter. *De Molukse Acties: Treinkapingen en Gijzelingen 1970-1978.* Amsterdam: Boom, 2015.

Bosma, Ulbe, ed. *Post-Colonial Immigrants and Identity Formations in the Netherlands*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2012.

Broek, Aart G. *De Kleur van mijn Eiland: Ideologie en Schrijven in het Papiaments sinds 1963.* Leiden: KITLV, 2006.

The Colour of My Island: Ideology and Writing in Papiamentu (Aruba, Bonaire & Curaçao); A Birds-Eye View. Haarlem: In De Knipscheer, 2009.

Cain, Artwell. *Tula: De Slavenopstand van 1795 op Curaçao*. Amsterdam: NiNsee, 2009.

Campbell, Horace. *Rasta and Resistance: From Marcus Garvey to Walter Rodney*. New Jersey: African World Press, 1985.

Christiaens, Kim. "Europe at the Crossroads of Three Worlds: Alternative Histories and Connections of European Solidarity with the Third World, 1950s-80s." *European Review of History: Revue Européenne d'Histoire* 24.6 (2017): 932-954.

Christiaens, Kim, John Nieuwenhuis, and Charel Roemer. *International Solidarity in the Low Countries during the Twentieth Century: New Perspectives and Themes*. Berlin: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2020.

Clemons, Michael L., and Charles E. Jones. "Global Solidarity: The Black Panther Party in the International Arena." *New Political Science* Volume 21, No 1 (1999): 177-203.

Dalhuisen, Leo, Ronald Donk, Rosemarijn Hoefte, and Frans Steegh, eds. *Geschiedenis van de Antillen: Aruba, Bonaire, Curaçao, Saba, Sint Eustatius, Sint Maarten*. Zutphen: Walburg Press, 1997.

Dean, Robinson E. *Black Nationalism in American Politics and Thought.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

Della Porta, Donatella, and Sidney Tarrow. *Transnational Protest and Global Activism: People, Passions, and Power*. Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005.

Dew, Edward M. *The Difficult Flowering of Surinam: Ethnicity and Politics in a Plural Society*. Dordrecht: Springer Science and Business Media, 1978.

"The Dutch Caribbean: Studies in the Fragmentation of a Political Culture." *Modern Political Culture in the Caribbean*, eds. Holger Henke and Fred Reno. Mona: University Press of the West Indies, 2003. 370-393.

Dragtenstein, Frank. *Alles voor Vrede: De Brieven van Boston Brand Tussen 1757 en 1763.* Amsterdam: NiNsee, 2009.

Drayton, Richard. "Secondary Decolonization: The Black Power Movement in Barbados, c. 1970." *Black Power in the Caribbean*, ed. Kate Quinn. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2014. 117-135.

Edmondson, Locksley. “The Internationalization of Black Power: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives.” *Mawazo* 1.4 (December 1968). Reprinted in *Black Separatism and Social Reality: Rhetoric and Reason*, ed. Raymond L. Hall. Elmsford: Pergamon Press, 1974. 183-194.

Emmer, Piet, and Wim Klooster. “The Dutch Atlantic, 1600-1800: Expansion Without Empire.” *Itinerario* 23.2 (1999): 48-69.

Essed, Philomena, and Isabel Hoving, eds. *Dutch Racism.* Leiden: Brill, 2014.

Fatah-Black, Karwan. *Eigendomsstrijd: De Geschiedenis van Slavernij en Emancipatie in Suriname.* Amsterdam: Ambo Anthos, 2018.

Fearn-Banks, Kathleen. *The A to Z of African American Television*. Plymouth: Scarecrow Press, 2006.

Forman, James. “The Concept of International Black Power.” *The Black Experience in American Politics,* ed. Charles Hamilton. New York: Capricorn Books, 1973. 145-54.

Frankel, Oz. “The Black Panthers of Israel and the Politics of the Radical Analogy.” *Black Power Beyond Borders: The Global Dimensions of the Black Power Movement,* ed. Nico Slate (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012. 81-106.

Gildea, Robert, James Mark, and Niek Pas. “European Radicals and the ‘Third World’: Imagined Solidarities and Radical Networks, 1958-73.” *Cultural and Social History* Volume 8, No 4 (2011): 449-471.

Gilroy, Paul. *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993.

Gobardhan-Rambocus, Lila, Maurits S. Hassankhan, and Jerry L. Egger. *De Erfenis van de Slavernij.* Paramaribo: Anton de Kom University, 1995.

Gowland, Ben. “Narratives of Resistance and Decolonial Futures in the Politics of the Bermudian Black Power Movement.” *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 46 (2021): 866-881.

Groenewoud, Margo. “Decolonization, Otherness, and the Neglect of the Dutch Caribbean in Caribbean Studies.” *Small Axe* 25.1 (2021): 102-115.

Hendricks, Derick. “Youth Responses to Discriminatory Practices: The Free Beach Movement, 1970-1975.” *Black Power in the Caribbean*, ed. Kate Quinn. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2014. 219-238.

Henry, Paget. “Black Power in the Political Thought of Antigua and Barbuda.” *Black Power in the Caribbean*, ed. Kate Quinn. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2014. 181-196.

Hoefte, Rosemarijn. “Internationale Reacties op de Revolte en het Nederlandse Ingrijpen.” *Dromen en Littekens: Dertig Jaar na de Curaçaose Revolte,* ed. Gert Oostindie. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1999. 147-162.

Suriname in the Long Twentieth Century: Domination, Contestation, Globalization. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.

Höhn, Maria. “The Black Panther Solidarity Committees and the Voice of the Lumpen.” *German Studies Review* 31.1 (Feb. 2008): 133-154.

Jansen van Galen, John. *Kapotte Plantage: Een Hollander in Suriname*. Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Contact, 1995.

Joseph, Peniel E. “Black Liberation Without Apology: Reconceptualizing the Black Power Movement.” *The Black Scholar* 31.3 (2001): 2-19.

The Black Power Movement: Rethinking the Civil Rights – Black Power Era. New York: Routledge, 2006.

Keck, Margaret E. and Kathryn Sikkink. *Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998.

Kelley, Robin D.G. and Betty Esch. “Black Like Mao: Red China and Black Revolution.” *Afro Asia: Revolutionary Political & Cultural Connections Between African Americans & Asian Americans*, eds. Fred Ho and Bill V. Mullen. Duke University Press, 2008. 97-154.

Kelley, Robin D.G. “‘But a Local Phase of a World Problem’: Black History’s Global Vision, 1883-1950.” *Journal of American History* 86.3 (1999): 1045-1077.

Kempen, Michiel van. *Een Geschiedenis van de Surinaamse Literatuur*, vol. 4. Paramaribo: Okopipi, 2002.

Klimke, Martin. *The Other Alliance: Student Protest in West Germany and the United States in the Global Sixties.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010.

Kroes, Rob. "The Great Satan versus the Evil Empire: Anti-Americanism in the Netherlands." *Anti-Americanism in Europe,* eds. Rob Kroes and Maarten van Rossum. Amsterdam: Free University Press, 1986. 37-50.

Kuhn, Konrad J. "Liberation Struggle and Humanitarian Aid: International Solidarity Movements and the "Third World" in the 1960s." *The Third World in the Global 1960s*, eds. Samantha Christiansen and Zachary A. Scarlett. New York: Berghahn Books, 2013): 69-85.

Lewis, Rupert C. *Walter Rodney's Intellectual and Political Thought*. Barbados: University of the West Indies Press, 1998.

Lowenthal, David. "Black Power in the Caribbean Context." *Economic Geography* 48.1 (1972): 116-134.

Lux, William R. "Black Power in the Caribbean." *Journal of Black Studies* 3.2 (1972): 207-225.

Magnarella, Paul J. *Black Panther in Exile: The Pete O'Neal Story.* Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2021.

Malloy, Sean L. *Out of Oakland: Black Panther Party Internationalism During the Cold War*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2017.

Marable, Manning. "Black Studies and the Racial Mountain." *Souls: Critical Journal of Black Politics & Culture* 2.3 (2009): 17-36.

Marcha, Valdemar, Paul Verweel, and Jacqueline Werkman. *Kleur Bekennen: Idealisering en Ontkenning van de Eigen Huidskleur*. Amsterdam: Carib Publishing, 2012.

Marshall, Edwin K. *Ontstaan en Ontwikkeling van het Surinaams Nationalisme: Natievorming als Opgave*. Utrecht: Eburon Uitgeverij, 2003.

Martin, Toni. "African and Indian Consciousness." *General History of the Caribbean: The Caribbean in the Twentieth Century* (London: UNESCO, 2004). 224-281.

Meeks, Brian. *Radical Caribbean from Black Power to Abu Bakr.* Barbados: University of the West Indies Press, 1996.

Meel, Peter. "Anton de Kom and the Formative Phase of Surinamese Decolonization." *New West Indian Guide* 83.3-4 (2009): 249-280.

Tussen Autonomie en Onafhankelijkheid: Nederlands-Surinaamse Betrekkingen 1954-1961. Leiden: KITLV Uitgeverij, 1999.

"Verbroederingspolitiek en Nationalisme." *Bijdragen en Mededelingen Betreffende de Geschiedenis der Nederlanden* 109.4 (1994): 638-659

Menckeberg, Stuart. "De Tijdschriftpers in de Roerige Jaren Zeventig." *K'ranti: De Surinaamse Pers, 1774-2008*, ed. Alex van Stipriaan. Amsterdam: KIT Publishers, 2008. 139-150.

Millette, James. "Decolonization, Populist Movements, and New Nations, 1945-70." *General History of the Caribbean: The Caribbean in the Twentieth Century*. London: UNESCO, 2004. 174-223.

Murch, Donna J. *Living for the City: Migration, Education, and the Rise of the Black Panther Party in Oakland, California.* Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2010.

"When the Panther Travels: Race and the Southern Diaspora in the History of the BPP, 1964-1972." In *Black Power Beyond Borders*, ed. Nico Slate. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012. 57-78.

Nicholls, David G. "East Indians and Black Power in Trinidad." *Haiti in Caribbean Context.* London: Macmillan, 1985. 61-80.

Nimako, Kwame, and Glenn Willemsen. *The Dutch Atlantic: Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation.* London: Pluto Press, 2011.

Ogbar, Jeffrey O.G. *Black Power: Radical Politics and African American Identity*. Second edition. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2019.

Onaci, Edward. *Free the Land: The Republic of New Afrika and the Pursuit of a Black Nation-State.* Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2020.

Onrust, Ger Jan. “De Zwarte Historische Dag: Reacties van de Antilliaanse Pers.” *Dromen en Littekens: Dertig Jaar na de Curaçaose Revolte*, eds. Gert Oostindie. Amsterdam: Amsterdam UP, 1999. 97-120.

Oostindie, Gert. “Black Power, Popular Revolt, and Decolonization in the Dutch Caribbean.” *Black Power in the Caribbean*, ed. Kate Quinn. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2014. 239-160.

Curaçao, 30 Mei 1969: Verhalen over de Revolte. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1999.

Dromen en Littekens: Dertig Jaar na de Curaçaose Revolte. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1999.

Het Paradijs Overzee: De ‘Nederlandse’ Caraïben en Nederland. Third edition. Leiden: KITLV Uitgeverij, 2000.

Paradise Overseas: The Dutch Caribbean: Colonialism and its Transatlantic Legacies. Oxford: Macmillan Education, 2005.

Oostindie, Gert, and Inge Klinkers, *Knellende Koninkrijksverbanden: Het Nederlandse Dekolonisatiebeleid in de Caraïben 1940-2000.* Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2001.

Oostindie, Gert, and Jessica Roitman. *Dutch Atlantic Connections, 1680-1800: Linking Empires, Bridging Borders.* Leiden: Brill, 2014.

Parascandola: Louis J. *Look For Me All Around You: Anglophone Caribbean Immigrants in the Harlem Renaissance.* Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2005.

Pinkney, Alphonso. *Red, Black, and Green.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976.

Plummer, Brenda Gayle. *In Search of Power: African Americans in the Era of Decolonization, 1956-1974.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

Postma, Johannes. *The Dutch in the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1600–1815*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

Quinn, Kate, eds. *Black Power in the Caribbean*. Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2014.

Ramsoedh, Hans. *Surinaams Onbehagen: Een Sociale en Politieke Geschiedenis van Suriname, 1865-2015.* Hilversum: Verloren, 2017.

Riche, Martha F. "The American Institute for Free Labor Development: A Catalyst for Latin American Labor Through Union Leader Training and Social Projects Sponsorship." *Monthly Labor Review* 88.9 (September 1965): 1049-1055.

Römer, René A. *De Curaçaose Samenleving Voor en Na 30 Mei 1969*. Willemstad: Dovale Associates Inc., 1995.

"Het 'Wij' van de Curaçoënaar," *Kristòf*, 1.2 (1974): 49–60.

Un Pueblo na Kaminda: Een Sociologisch Historische Studie van de Curaçaose Samenleving. Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 1979.

Ryan, Selwyn D. and Taimoon Stewart. *The Black Power Revolution of 1970: A Retrospective.* St. Augustine: I.S.E.R., 1995.

Samaroo, Brinsley. "The February Revolution (1970) as a Catalyst for Change in Trinidad and Tobago." *Black Power in the Caribbean*, ed. Kate Quinn. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2013. 97-116.

Santos do Nascimento, Ryçond. *Het Koninkrijk Ontsluierd.* Apeldoorn: Maklu Uitgevers, 2016.

Schields, Chelsea. "Insurgent Intimacies: Sex, Socialism, and Black Power in the Dutch Atlantic." *Radical History Review* 136 (2020): 98-110.

Shames, Stephen, and Bobby Seale. *Power to the People: The World of the Black Panthers.* New York: Abrams, 2016.

Sharpe, Michael Orlando. "Race, Color, and Nationalism in Aruban and Curaçaoan Political Identities." *Dutch Racism*, eds. Philomena Essed and Isabel Hoving. Leiden: Brill, 2014. 117-131.

Shilliam, Robbie. *The Black Pacific: Anti-Colonial Struggles and Oceanic Connections.* London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015.

"The Polynesian Panthers and the Black Power Gang: Surviving Racism and Colonialism in Aotearoa New Zealand." *Black Power Beyond Borders: The Global Dimensions of the Black Power Movement,* ed. Nico Slate. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012. 107-126.

Slate, Nico. *Black Power Beyond Borders: The Global Dimensions of the Black Power Movement.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.

Spencer, Robyn C. *The Revolution Has Come: Black Power, Gender, and the Black Panther Party in Oakland*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016.

Stipriaan, Alex van. "Marrons in Vergelijking." *Kunst van Overleven: Marroncultuur uit Suriname*, ed. Alex van Stipriaan and Thomas Polimé. Amsterdam: KIT Publishers, 2009.

Sutton, Paul. "Black Power in Trinidad and Tobago: The 'Crisis' of 1970." *Journal of Commonwealth & Comparative Politics* 21.2 (1983). 115-132.

Swan, Quito J. "Black Power Abroad." *Black Power Encyclopedia: From "Black is Beautiful" to Urban Uprisings,* ed. Akinyele Umoja, Karin L. Stanford, and Jasmin A. Young. Santa Barbara: Greenwood, 2018. 143-154.

Black Power in Bermuda: The Struggle for Decolonization. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.

Pauulu's Diaspora: Black Internationalism and Environmental Justice. University Press of Florida, 2020.

Teelucksingh, Jerome. "The Black Power Movement in Trinidad and Tobago." *Black Diaspora Review* 4.1 (2014): 157-186.

Tien, Charles. "The American College Experience: A View from the City University of New York, Hunter College." *Higher Education and Equality of Opportunity: Cross-National Perspectives*, eds. Fred Lazin, Matt Evans, and N. Jayaram. Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2010. 89-102.

Tyson, Timothy B. *Radio Free Dixie: Robert F. Williams & The Roots of Black Power.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999.

Umoja, Akinyele, Karin L. Stanford, and Jasmin A. Young, eds. *Black Power Encyclopedia: From "Black is Beautiful" to Urban Uprisings.* Santa Barbara: Greenwood, 2018.

Van Deburg, William L. *New Day in Babylon: The Black Power Movement and American Culture, 1965-1975.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992.

Vertovec, Steven. "Conceiving and Researching Transnationalism." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 22.2 (1999): 447-462.

Waldschmidt-Nelson, Britta. ""We Shall Overcome": The Impact of the African American Freedom Struggle on Race Relations and Social Protest in Germany after World War II." *The Transatlantic Sixties: Europe and the United States in the Counterculture Decade*, eds. Grzegorz Kosc, Clara Juncker, Sharon Monteith, and Britta Waldschmidt-Nelson. New York: Columbia University Press, 2013. 66-97.

Watkins, Rychetta. *Black Power, Yellow Power, and the Making of Revolutionary Identities.* Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2010.

Watson, Mary Ann. *The Expanding Vista: American Television in the Kennedy Years.* Durham: Duke University Press, 1994.

Wekker, Gloria. *White Innocence: Paradoxes of Colonialism and Race.* Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016.

Wessels, Marius. "Logboek van een Revolte van Vuur." *Dromen en Littekens: Dertig Jaar na de Curaçaose Revolte, 30 Mei 1969*, ed. Gert Oostindie. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1999. 177-210.

Westmaas, Nigel. "An Organic Activist: Eusi Kwayana, Guyana, and Global Pan-Africanism." *Black Power in the Caribbean*, ed. Kate Quinn. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2014. 146-178.

Williams, Yohuru R. *Rethinking the Black Freedom Movement.* New York: Routledge, 2016.

"American-Exported Black Nationalism: The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, the Black Panther Party, and the Worldwide Freedom Struggle, 1967-1972," *Negro History Bulletin* 60 (July-September 1997): 13-20.

Woodard, Komozi. *A Nation within a Nation: Amiri Bakara (LeRoi Jones) & Black Power Politics.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999.

-

Dissertations

Delgado, Lisenne. "Being Human and Having Rights: Human Rights Education and Racism at the United Nations and in Curaçao." Ph.D. Dissertation. Utrecht University, 2021.

Laarhoven, J.P.G. van. ""PAN": Nederlandse Film Als Socialistisch Wapen," M.A. Dissertation. Utrecht University, 2013.

Meyeren, Emma van. ""Kwantu Dia Mas Prome Ku un Revolusjon?" On Political Newspaper Vitó (1966-1971) and Curaçaoan Resistance against Dutch Colonialism." M.A. Dissertation, University of Amsterdam, 2017.

Runs, Astrid. "Surinamese Immigrants in the United States of America: A Quest for Identity?" M.A. Dissertation. University of Amsterdam, 2006.

Sachs Collopy, Sachs. "The Revolution Will Be Videotaped: Making a Technology of Consciousness in the Long 1960s," Ph.D. Dissertation. University of Pennsylvania, 2015.

Simanga, Michael. "The Congress of African People (1970-1980): History and Memory of an Ideological Journey." Ph.D. Dissertation. Union Institute and University, 2008.

Acknowledgments

Where to even start when writing words of thanks for a project that has been supported by so many wonderful people along the way? From the initial idea to the formal submission, this project took exactly five years to complete. This period was never once uneventful, filled with numerous research trips, repeated lockdowns, and some overlap with a demanding teaching position in the final year. Nothing was more valuable in all of this than having a solid support network that cheered me on along the way.

From the moment the idea for this dissertation emerged, it was clear that it was going to be a challenging one to write. Though I was convinced there was a story to be told, there was little literature to back up my idea, while the relevant primary sources were tucked away deep into the archives. Luckily, this did not stop my supervisors, Damian Pargas and Giles Scott-Smith, from taking a chance on me. I am beyond thankful for their decision, as well as their continuous patience, guidance, and encouragement over the following years. The same applies to my co-supervisor, Peter Meel, who came on board later but whose input and support have been of equal importance.

For most of my PhD, I had the pleasure of being based at the Roosevelt Institute for American Studies in Middelburg, which not only funded my project but also welcomed me into its tight-knit community. I feel so grateful for my colleagues there: Celia Nijdam, Paul Brennan, Nanka de Vries, Cees Heere, Marcella Schute, Christine Mertens, Manar Ellethy, Dario Fazzi, Gaetano Di Tomasso, our many interns and visiting fellows, and of course Leontien Joosse. Although I appreciate all of you, I do want to express my special thanks to Celia for always listening to my random archival finds and joining me in celebrating the seasons, Paul for the best conversations on imperialism and food, and Marcella for always reading and hyping up my work, even when I was feeling overwhelmed and insecure.

Over the years, I was lucky enough to become part of several other communities, too, which never failed to inspire me. I am particularly grateful for my cohort at the Huizinga Institute, my fellow board members at the Netherlands American Studies Association, and the countless scholars I have crossed paths with at the conferences I attended over the years. Likewise, my thanks go out to the esteemed

historians and other scholars who were willing to meet and discuss my project with me, including Kate Quinn, Anne-Marie Angelo, Margo Groenewoud, Lianne Leonora, Lisenne Delgado, and Gert Oostindie. Equally as meaningful were my exchanges with fellow PhD candidates working on the Dutch Caribbean, including Rosa de Jong and Jan Bant, who also helped me translate some complex Papiamentu texts. Masha danki!

One of the most exciting aspects of this project was that it gave me the opportunity to travel across the Atlantic in search of new stories. Reflecting on these journeys, I have particularly fond memories of the archivists at the Mongui Maduro Library in Curaçao, the National Archives at College Park in the United States, and the International Institute for Social History in Amsterdam. Even more so, I am eternally grateful to Sanne van den Bergh and Lucien Karg for welcoming me into their homes and sharing with me the personal papers and memories of their parents. Moreover, I would like to thank my friends Katie, Erica, and Nicole for hosting me during some of my trips, as well as my father, Johan, who came with me to Suriname to drive me around and join me on jungle hikes, swamp tours, and more. I am so glad we got to spend this time together.

Then of course there are so many others who have been there for me along the way. My mother, Jaike, who has followed my academic career with such enthusiasm. My friends, who had to be so patient with me during these hectic years, yet always had my back. And, above all, my incredible partner Sean, who never once doubted my ability to get any of this done. Thank you for providing some much-needed stability through seven moves, endless early mornings, and so many stressful periods. I feel fortunate to have you by my side.

On a final note, I would like to express my gratitude to all of those who have, over the past decades, made an effort to preserve the stories told in this dissertation, especially within the Caribbean communities that lie at the heart of it. While I may never know exactly who you are, I know I could not have finished this project without your labor. Please know that your efforts have not gone unnoticed. This dissertation is dedicated to you.

Samenvatting

Toen in april 1968 honderden demonstranten in Amsterdam de straat op gingen om de vermoorde Amerikaanse burgerrechtenactivist Martin Luther King, Jr. te herdenken, klonk in de Nederlandse hoofdstad voor het eerst een uitgesproken steun voor de zogenaamde Black Power-beweging. Dit was een radicale transnationale beweging die zo'n tien jaar eerder in de Verenigde Staten was ontstaan om meer zelfbeschikking, zelfbescherming en zelfrespect onder de Zwarte bevolking te creëren. Met kreten als "Pacifisme is zelfmoord, Black Power sla toe nu!" en "King is dood, Stokely leeft!" – verwijzend naar Black Power-leider Stokely Carmichael – spraken meerdere demonstranten hun steun uit voor de beweging. Dit was het begin van een nieuwe golf van Black Power activisme in het Koninkrijk der Nederland (hierna 'het Koninkrijk'), dat in deze periode bestond uit Nederland, Suriname en de Nederlandse Antillen. Dit proefschrift onderzoekt waarom en hoe activisten in het Koninkrijk zich bij de Black Power-beweging aansloten.

Om deze vraag te kunnen beantwoorden begint dit proefschrift met een overzicht van de geschiedenis en historiografie van de Black Power-beweging. Hier worden een aantal belangrijke kenmerken van de beweging besproken. Ten eerste wordt benadrukt dat Black Power geen volledig nieuwe beweging was, maar voortbouwde op de eeuwenoude intellectuele traditie van het Zwart nationalisme. Ten tweede wordt onderbouwd waarom de Black Power-beweging gezien moet worden als transnationale beweging, wijzend op de vele grensoverschrijdende netwerken, ideeën en symbolen die de beweging inspireerden, vormden en uiteindelijk tot een wereldwijd fenomeen ontwikkelden. Tot slot wordt besproken hoe historici deze transnationale processen in de afgelopen decennia hebben besproken, waarbij voornamelijk wordt gekeken naar het Black Power activisme in de Engelstalige Cariben. Op basis van deze analyse wordt geconcludeerd dat door de onevenredige aandacht voor de voormalige Britse gebieden veel andere delen van de wereld buiten beschouwing worden gelaten. Dit geldt ook voor de landen binnen de Nederlandse invloedssfeer.

Naar aanleiding van deze historiografische beschouwing verplaatst het narratief zich naar het Koninkrijk. De geschiedenis van het Koninkrijk wordt gekenmerkt door twee belangrijke historische processen die beiden aanzienlijke

invloed hebben gehad op de ontwikkeling van Suriname en de Nederlandse Antillen, namelijk de slavernij en het kolonialisme. Hoewel beargumenteerd wordt dat vanwege deze gedeelde geschiedenis gesproken kan worden van een samenhangende 'Dutch Atlantic' is het evenwel belangrijk om de grote verschillen te erkennen tussen deze twee gebieden, alsmede tussen de zes eilanden die samen de Nederlandse Antillen vormden. Na een korte overweging van deze verschillen wordt besproken hoe, ondanks de lange geschiedenis van koloniale onderdrukking, de Nederlandse Cariben ook een lange geschiedenis van verzet kennen. Mede door dit verzet zagen de Caribische delen van het rijk in de twintigste eeuw een aantal koloniale hervormingen, een waarvan leidde tot ook het Statuut voor het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden in 1954, dat bepaalde dat Suriname en de Nederlandse Antillen autonome landen binnen het Koninkrijk vormden.

Waar het Statuut voor velen gezien werd als een groot succes reikte de regeling voor sommigen niet ver genoeg omdat het geen volledige onafhankelijkheid bewerkstelligde. Daarom ontstonden in de jaren vijftig en zestig verschillende nationalistische bewegingen in het Koninkrijk, zoals *Wie Eegie Sanie* ('Onze Eigen Dingen') in Suriname en *di-nos-e-ta* ('dit-is-van-ons') op Curaçao. In beide delen van de Cariben werden deze nationalistische bewegingen gestuurd door activisten van Afrikaanse afkomst, die aan hun campagnes ook een nadrukkelijk Afrocentristisch karakter gaven. In plaats van een creools ideaal na te streven, waarbij de verschillende bevolkingsgroepen konden samensmelten in een nieuwe Surinaamse of Antilliaanse cultuur, streefden deze bewegingen principes van Afro-Caribische authenticiteit en eigenaarschap na. Het was binnen deze bewegingen, breed genomen, dat de Black Power-beweging aanhang vond. Maar ook binnen de bestaande literatuur over deze bewegingen wordt er niet meer dan een aantal regels aan dit onderwerp gewijd.

Om te bepalen waarom en hoe activisten in het Koninkrijk zich bij de Black Power-beweging aansloten stelt dit proefschrift een aantal kritische vragen. Wie waren de meest vooraanstaande Black Power activisten in het Koninkrijk? Hoe waren zij met de transnationale beweging verbonden? Hoe legitimeerden deze activisten het belang van Black Power in hun eigen samenlevingen? Hoe beïnvloedde het koloniale landschap van de Nederlandse Cariben hun interpretatie en receptie van Black Power? Welke positie namen zij in binnen lokale bewegingen voor gelijkheid en nationalisme? En hoe succesvol waren zij in het nastreven van hun doelen? Om deze vragen te

beantwoorden is gebruik gemaakt van uitgebreid archiefonderzoek, waarbij een beroep is gedaan op de nagelaten documenten van activisten zelf, van een grote hoeveelheid mediabronnen, van diplomatieke uitwisselingen aan beide kanten van de Atlantische Oceaan en van een aantal interviews met betrokkenen.

Door middel van deze bronnen konden vier Black Power-groepen in het Koninkrijk worden geïdentificeerd: de Black Panthers of Curaçao (1968-1969) en de Antilliaanse Black Power organisatie (1969-1970) op Curaçao, het Black Panther Solidariteitscomité (1969-1970) in Nederland en Black Power Suriname (1970-1973) in Suriname. Hoewel alle vier deze groepen relatief klein bleven binnen de bredere antikoloniale bewegingen, met enkele honderden tot enkele duizenden volgers, geven hun activiteiten een rijk beeld weer van het Black Power activisme dat in het Koninkrijk bestond. Zoals de namen van de groepen suggereren waren alle geselecteerde partijen uitgesproken in hun steun voor de Black Power-beweging en geloofden zij dat er behoefte was aan Black Power ideologie binnen hun eigen omgevingen. De groepen benaderden de Black Power-beweging allemaal op een unieke manier, met hun eigen ideologische kaders, protestmethodes en campagnes. Ze dienen daarom als uitstekende casussen om de bovenstaande onderzoeksvragen te beantwoorden.

Vanuit een vergelijkende analyse blijkt dat leden van de bovenstaande groepen allen dezelfde motivatie hadden om zich bij de Black Power-beweging te voegen: alle vier geloofden dat de Black Power-beweging hen kon helpen om de voortdurende macht van Nederland in de Cariben te verbreken. Zij geloofden dat de beweging de potentie had om door middel van de Afrikaanse diaspora een wereldwijd netwerk van Zwarte solidariteit, samenwerking en eenheid te bewerkstelligen waardoor politieke, sociale, culturele en economische banden met de Europese kolonisator opgeheven konden worden. In tegenstelling tot de eerdergenoemde nationalistische bewegingen waren deze Black Power groepen ervan overtuigd dat Suriname en de Antilliaanse eilanden hun vrijheid niet konden winnen zonder deel uit te maken van een dergelijk netwerk, omdat zij zonder externe steun te zwak zouden zijn om het tegen het Westen op te nemen. Black Power was voor hen dus een vorm van internationalisme. Daarnaast geloofden de activisten dat Black Power hen kon helpen om de Zwarte bevolking van het Koninkrijk mentaal te bevrijden van het kolonialisme, doordat ze via de beweging hun banden konden herstellen met Afrika. Het was dus, in de meest

complete zin van het woord, een vorm van dekolonisatie. Dit begrip van Black Power wordt dan ook *Decolonial Black Power* genoemd.

Het eerste hoofdstuk behandelt de geschiedenis van de Black Panthers of Curaçao (BPC), een kleine activistische groep die in 1968 werd opgericht door de Curaçaose revolutionair Stanley C. Brown. Zoals de naam van de groep suggereert haalde de BPC inspiratie uit het werk van de Afro-Amerikaanse Black Panther Party (BPP), van wie het niet alleen de naam maar ook de ideologie en symbolen ontleende. De groep maakte deel uit van de bredere revolutionaire beweging rondom het tijdschrift *Vitó* dat eveneens door Brown uitgegeven werd. In de column 'Black Panthers na Korsow' schreef de eindredacteur over racisme en raciale identiteit op het eiland, waarbij hij de lokale taboes rondom deze onderwerpen doorbrak. Hoewel deze column al in het voorjaar van 1969 verdween en de BPC daarna slechts nog tijdens fysieke protesten actief was, klonken van diens ideeën nog wel weerklank in de opkomende golf van Curaçaos antikolonialisme in datzelfde jaar, met name tijdens de opstand van 30 mei 1969. Brown, wie later bekendheid vergaarde als een van de leiders van deze opstand en als medeoprichter van de politieke partije Frente Obrero Liberashon 30 di Mei, bleef de Black Panthers nog enkele jaren naar voren schuiven als revolutionair voorbeeld voor Curaçaose activisten.

In het tweede hoofdstuk wordt de geschiedenis van de Antilliaanse Black Power organisatie (ABP) besproken. Deze groep werd opgericht door de Curaçaose Benjamin F. Fox, wie jarenlang in New York had gewoond en tijdens de opstand van 1969 terugkeerde om de Black Power-beweging op het eiland van de grond te krijgen. In tegenstelling tot Brown was Fox een aanhanger van het cultureel nationalisme, wat inhield dat Zwarte mensen pas vrij konden worden van politieke onderdrukking wanneer zij zich van het witte superioriteitsdenken hadden ontdaan. Om dit te bereiken zette Fox een campagne op van Zwart bewustzijn, waarbij hij zich specifiek richtte op het delen van historische informatie, het herintroduceren van Afrikaanse tradities en de institutionalisering van het Papiaments. Uiteindelijk probeerde Fox hiermee zijn Zwarte landgenoten te stimuleren om een Afrikaanse identiteit te omarmen, zodat zij zich een konden voelen met hun vervreemde familie in de diaspora. Hoewel hij met deze campagne een bekend gezicht werd binnen de antikoloniale beweging op Curaçao, bracht een intern conflict tussen Fox en Brown al in 1970 een einde aan een korte periode van Black Power activisme op het eiland.

Het derde hoofdstuk brengt het narratief naar de andere kant van de Atlantische Oceaan, waar een groep van jonge witte mannen onder leiding van journalist Peter Schumacher in 1969 het Black Panther Solidariteitscomite (BPSC) oprichtten. Dit comité maakte deel uit van een breder Europees solidariteitsnetwerk dat als doel had om de strijd van de BPP tegen racisme, kapitalisme en imperialisme te steunen door middel van kennisverspreiding, fondsenwerving en politiek protest. Dit transatlantische netwerk stond onder toezicht van de BPP zelf, waardoor de Nederlandse activisten in direct contact stonden met bekende Amerikaanse activisten als Kathleen Cleaver en Elbert 'Big Man' Howard, wie beiden ook naar Nederland reisden om hun volgelingen toe te spreken. In hun strijd werkte het solidariteitscomité ook samen met diverse linkse en antikoloniale actiegroepen, waarmee het niet alleen de groeiende invloed van de Verenigde Staten in Nederland maar ook de voortdurende invloed van Nederland in de Cariben veroordeelde. Net als de Curaçaose groepen viel de BPSC echter ook uiteen na een intern conflict, waarna de Amsterdamse Vrijheidsschool onder leiding van At van Praag en Lily van den Bergh het solidariteitsnetwerk nog voor korte tijd overnam. Tegen het eind van 1970 was de Nederlandse campagne voor de Black Panthers echter zo goed als verdwenen.

Het vierde hoofdstuk keert terug naar de Cariben en bespreekt de groep die als laatst aan het Black Power-landschap van het Koninkrijk werd toegevoegd: Black Power Suriname (BPS). Deze groep werd opgericht in de zomer van 1970 door journalist Cyriel R. Karg en reisagent Arnold E. Nieuwendam, wie beiden veel tijd in New York hadden doorgebracht en hier betrokken waren geraakt bij de Zwarte beweging. Het doel van de BPS was om een nieuw gevoel van Zwarte eenheid in Suriname te creëren en deze te gebruiken om volledige onafhankelijkheid na te streven. Karg geloofde dat economische belangen de grootste reden waren voor Nederland om haar Zuid-Amerikaanse kolonie te behouden en streefde daarom naar de oprichting van een internationaal Zwart handelsnetwerk waarmee Suriname zich vrij kon vechten van de Nederlandse autoriteiten. Om dit te realiseren bouwde Karg een indrukwekkend netwerk op binnen de transnationale Black Power-beweging, dat de Surinaamse revolutionairen verbond aan Amerikaanse organisaties als de Nation of Islam (NOI) en de Republic of New Afrika (RNA). Hun ideologische invloed op Karg's organisatie was zelfs zo aanzienlijk dat de Black Power voorman binnen enkele maanden overstapte naar een ideologie van Pan-Afrikanisme en de naam van de

organisatie veranderde in Afro-Sranan, welke – later onder leiding van Cedric M. Lashley – bleef voortbestaan tot ten minste 1973.

Hoewel deze vier groepen slechts kort actief waren en nooit meer dan een paar duizend volgers kregen, vormt hun verhaal een waardevolle toevoeging aan de literatuur over de Black Power-beweging enerzijds en het Caribisch antikolonialisme anderzijds. Ten eerste introduceert het nieuwe plaatsen, actoren en ideeën in de studie van Black Power, dat voorheen gedomineerd werd door perspectieven uit het (voormalige) Britse rijk. Ten tweede laat het zien dat Black Power in de Cariben nauw verbonden was aan het Black Power activisme in de Verenigde Staten, terwijl wetenschappers de twee in het verleden hebben neergezet als gescheiden bewegingen. Tot slot geeft dit proefschrift een nieuwe blik op de antikoloniale geschiedenis van het Koninkrijk, omdat het laat zien dat activisme tegen het Nederlandse bewind na 1954 meerdere vormen aannam dan alleen het nationalisme. Het laat zien dat niet iedereen die wilde dekoloniseren zich weidde tot een retoriek van authenticiteit en eigenaarschap, maar dat sommigen hun toekomst zochten in alternatieve netwerken en identiteiten.

Of de Black Power-beweging in het Koninkrijk succesvol is geweest is een lastige vraag. Enerzijds valt natuurlijk niet te ontkennen dat de groepen die besproken worden hun droom van een krachtig wereldwijd netwerk van Zwarte solidariteit niet hebben kunnen bereiken. Ook is duidelijk dat, gezien de huidige samenstelling van het Koninkrijk en de recente geschiedenis van het onafhankelijke Suriname, de dekoloniale doelstellingen van de Black Power activisten niet gehaald zijn. De groepen werden immers fel bekritiseerd om, bijvoorbeeld, hun radicale standpunten en vanwege de Amerikaanse basis van de beweging, waardoor deze als ongepast of ongewenst werd beschouwd. Wel valt er iets te zeggen voor de invloed van het Black Power activisme op de culturele en psychologische dekolonisatie van de Nederlandse Cariben, waarbij zowel Brown en Fox als Karg in de jaren zestig en zeventig een duidelijke bijdrage leverden aan de hernieuwde aandacht voor het Afrikaans Caribisch erfgoed en een herwaardering van de Afrocentrische cultuur. Ook waren er verschillende Black Power leden die hun ideeën later in hun leven meenamen naar hun politieke carrières.

Zoals reeds genoemd is het doel van dit proefschrift niet om een definitieve en allesomvattende geschiedenis van het Black Power activisme in het Koninkrijk te

geven. Gezien dit de eerste toereikende academische studie van het onderwerp is bestaat er nog veel ruimte voor verder onderzoek. De eerste suggestie ligt op het niveau van de Black Power-beweging zelf en betreft de synchronisatie van nieuwe onderzoeken naar transnationaal Black Power activisme, wat nu bijna alleen op regionaal niveau bestudeerd wordt. Ten tweede zou het gewenst zijn om meer informatie te verzamelen over Black Power activisme op de vijf Antilliaanse eilanden naast Curaçao, waar wel Black Power protesten plaatsvonden maar waar in het onderzoek voor dit proefschrift geen Black Power organisaties geïdentificeerd konden worden. Dit valt ook samen met de derde suggestie voor verder onderzoek, namelijk om de invloed van Black Power buiten deze formele affiliaties te bestuderen, bijvoorbeeld op het gebied van Caribische literatuur. Tot slot ligt er nog veld braak voor een gedetailleerdere studie van het nalatenschap van de beweging in het Koninkrijk, waarbij zelfs de invloed van de Black Power op het hedendaags activisme bestudeerd kan worden. Nog in 2020, toen tienduizenden Nederlanders afkwamen op de Black Lives Matter-protesten, werd duidelijk dat de beweging tot op de dag van vandaag dient als inspiratiebron voor Zwarte activisten en actiegroepen.

Curriculum Vitae

Debby Esmeé de Vlugt was born in 1994 in Harderwijk, the Netherlands. From 2013 to 2016, she studied Liberal Arts & Sciences (History, Religious Studies, and Philosophy) at University College Roosevelt, from which she graduated *summa cum laude* with her Bachelor of Arts. In 2017, she obtained her Master of Studies in US History at the University of Oxford, St. Anthony's College. She began her doctoral work at Leiden University in 2019, receiving a full scholarship from the Roosevelt Institute for American Studies to support her research on the transnational history of the Black Power movement. In this period, she also briefly joined the North American Studies program at Leiden University as a thesis supervisor and spent time at the British Library as a visiting fellow at the Eccles Centre for American Studies. In 2023, she took up a new position as lecturer in the History of International Relations at Utrecht University, where she has worked since. Throughout her career, Debby Esmeé has shown a commitment to academic community building, serving on various educational boards and committees. Currently, she serves as a board member of the Netherlands American Studies Association, having previously been founding editor-in-chief of its student journal, the *Netherlands American Studies Review*. Her own work has appeared in the *Journal of American Studies*, *De Moderne Tijd*, *De Nederlandse Boekengids*, and various digital platforms.