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

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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

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[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.

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[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

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[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,

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[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]

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[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]

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[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]

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[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]

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[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]

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[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

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[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.

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[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.