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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

From the Heart of New York to the Streets of Paramaribo

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Legitimizing Black Power in a Multiracial Society

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

[478] Ramsoedh, 114.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

[483] As phrased by journalist Humphrey J. Keerveld in "Eenwording Natie in Gevaar door V.H.P. Racisme," *De Vrije Stem*, 21 July 1970, 3.

[484] Dew, *The Difficult Flowering of Surinam*, 161; Ramsoedh, 115-116.

Afro man in our own land and abroad; we do not preach anarchy but the fortification of the black man through a common purpose."[485] This applied not just to the 'Creoles', but all Surinamers of African descent, including the "members of the malatta-group" who often identified as White and the Maroons, fondly referred to as "our brothers from the interior."[486]

In some cases, Karg pushed his definition of Blackness even further. Whenever he wrote about Black Power on a global rather than a local level, he explained that the movement was not only about African empowerment but about the empowerment of the entire 'colored' world. He explained:

> Black Power is, as we and our brothers and sisters around the world see it, the fight of the majority of the world population against the White Power that has systematically placed us into a position of oppression and exploitation, sustained by colonialism and neo-colonialism.[487]

Blackness, in this context, was not limited to the African diaspora but included "anyone who is not white, or does not feel white."[488] To the confusion of many Surinamese readers, this also included "the Hindustani, the Javanese, the Chinese, etc. Even the white man who does not agree with white domination (…) could join if he wanted to."[489] And if these groups did not want to accept their Blackness, he suggested, all they had to do was look at other countries where their people lived and recognize that Whites over there treated those of Indian descent no better than their African neighbors, like in South Africa.[490] Here, anyone who was seen as 'colored' by White regimes was treated as Black and thus as inferior.[491] "Now the time has come," Karg

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

[486] "Poging tot Moord door Politie-Agent," *Uhuru*, February 1973, 2, Paramaribo, Suriname, ZK 37709 (1973:no.6-7), International Institute for Social History, Amsterdam, the Netherlands; Karg, "Na Nengre de Kiri Nengre," 2; Cyriel R. Karg, "Vrees voor het Onbekende Mag Geen Sta-in-de Weg Zijn. Wij Werken Naar de Eenheid maar dan op een Reële Basis," De Vrije Stem, July 31, 1970, 2.

[487] As cited from Uhuru in "Ingekomen Nota van J.G. Koenders," 3.

[488] Karg as cited in American Consul Paramaribo, "Marxist-Leninist Newspaper Started in Paramaribo," 2. See also "Black Power Geen Kans van Slagen in Suriname," 2.

[489] "In Suriname Geen Plaats voor Black Power-Beweging," *Amigoe*, July 17, 1970, 1.

[490] Karg, "Vrees voor het Onbekende," 2.

[491] "In Suriname Geen Plaats voor Black Power-Beweging," 1.

argued, "that we all come to realize that Suriname belongs to Surinamers, and that the world for the most part consists of black people."[492]

While the inclusion of Indo-Surinamers and other racial groups may seem contradictory to the very concept of Black Power, Karg's definition of Blackness was not unique at the time, and certainly not in the region. Only a year earlier, Guyanese historian and Black Power leader Walter A. Rodney had published *The Groundings with My Brothers* (1969), a collection of speeches he had given in previous years. In his chapter "Black Power – Its Relevance in the West Indies," Rodney explains that the inclusion of both Africans and Indians in the movement is vital because "power is denied them [both]."[493] The Guyanese Ratoon group held a similar view. Following the aforementioned speaking tour of Stokely Carmichael in Guyana, Ratoon member Clive Thomas had argued that especially in Guyana, Trinidad, and Suriname, the unique historical implications of slavery and indentured labor had created a need for "African-Indian solidarity at all and every stage in the struggle against imperialism and white racism."[494] Likewise, the Trinidadian National Joint Action Committee (NJAC), which had been involved in the February Revolution mentioned earlier, had made significant efforts to involve Indian protesters in their organization, even convincing the Society for the Propagation of Indian Culture (SPIC) to become involved in the movement too.[495] In none of these places, however, Black Power was ever able to mobilize a significant amount of Indians. According to historian Brinsley Samaroo, this was mostly because Indians were never able to see themselves as Black.[496]

Despite his optimism, Karg did realize that it would be difficult to overcome this racial schism. Using the same theory as Fox had done in the Netherlands Antilles, he blamed the Whites' "ancient system of divide and conquer" responsible for this.[497] Applying this theory to Suriname, the BPS foreman believed that the elections had only

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

[493] Rodney, 24.

[494] Clive Thomas as cited in Swan, *Pauulu's Diaspora*, 161,

[495] Samaroo, 105.

[496] Ibid., 106.

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

been won by the VHP because the Dutch had started to fear Pengel's powerful campaign for independence and therefore decided to "take power away from the Afro-Surinamer and lay it into the hands of the Surinamer of Hindustani descent."[498] That is not to say that Surinamers of color were devoid of responsibility in this situation, Karg proclaimed. To secure their own safety and wealth, a small selection of people of color had historically "placed themselves and their channels at the disposal of White Power."[499] Referring to these men as "henchmen of the whites," "the pawns of white power," and the classic "Uncle Toms," the Black Power foreman believed these people had been subjected to centuries of White indoctrination, designed by colonial powers to keep their overseas territories shielded from within. In times of slavery, these had been the enslaved men and women who betrayed anyone who planned to run away or rise up against their masters. Now, they were the privileged Afro- and Indo-Surinamese men and women who protected the status quo through their political parties, media outlets, or educational curriculums. "This is an old theorem of the whites, namely: "give some of those blackies the feeling they are 'white' and they will devour their own kind"," Karg explained.[500]

The reason the Whites had used these tactics in Suriname, Karg further argued, was to protect their own economic interests in the colony. While they had lost much of their political power with the installation of the 1954 Charter, the Dutch still owned most of the capital in the country, including some of the most influential businesses, industries, and banks. To protect their position, the Black Power foreman suggested, the colonizer had turned Surinamers of African and Indian descent against each other. For example, he believed they had "purposefully used some Hindustani names to pretend like economic power lies in the hands of the 'Hindustanis'," so that Afro-Surinamers would feel threatened by them and racial divisions would grow. And while they were busy fighting amongst each other, the Dutch could calmly continue to exploit the nation and its natural resources. [501] This kept Suriname poor, Karg wrote, because

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

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

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

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

the Dutch never reinvested their profits into Surinamese society. Instead, they used their earnings to support White communities in the Netherlands and elsewhere in the world, including those in apartheid South Africa.[502] The money they did transfer, under the guise of development aid, was merely intended to hide their theft while simultaneously restoring some of their political influence.[503] From this perspective, the BPS alleged the only way for Surinamers to claim their freedom was to take charge of the economy, which would not only allow them to gain control over their own land, but also prevent the Dutch from using their profits to support racial oppression elsewhere. "We will not allow our treasured resources to be abused to provide foreign white workers with jobs or foreign white children with schools, when we are so desperately in need of those ourselves," Karg firmly stated.[504]

But before Surinamers could take the economy into their own hands, they had to overcome their internal divisions. And the only way to do so, according to the BPS leader, was to accept that they were all Black, regardless of skin tone or ethnic background. In his final piece in the *De Vrije Stem* series, he wrote:

> The problem is that all of you are merely looking at things through a local racial lens, while we of Black Power as black nationalists see things internationally. That is why we are able to preach Black Power without making it a racist attack on the 'Hindustani'. The minute you black whites get rid of that delusion of superiority installed through white indoctrination, you will see things as we do and the entire Surinamese community (with the exception of some whites) will be Black Power and act accordingly. (…) So free yourself from it and live! Because it is beautiful to be black, once you know what black means.[505]

At this early stage of Black Power activism, the Surinamese organization thus embraced a kind of political Blackness, based not on ethnicity but on how people of color were treated by White authorities around the world. To understand this, however, Karg repeatedly stated that people needed to see the bigger picture of racial oppression: they required a transnational vision.

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[502] Karg, "Black Power," 1; Karg, "Na Nengre de Kiri Nengre," 2; Cyriel R. Karg, "Vrees voor het Onbekende," 2.

[503] Cyriel Karg, "Resolutions of the Surinam Delegates," *African Congress*, 123.

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

[505] Karg, "Vrees voor het Onbekende Mag Geen Sta-in-de Weg Zijn," 1.

The Congress of African Peoples

This transnational vision was of immense importance to Karg, who had not only taken the inspiration for his organization from the United States but also wanted it to become a full participant in the broader Black Power movement. After all, as explained previously, he defined Black Power as a global movement that aimed for unity in the worldwide fight against White oppression. While he was trying to convince people at home of the importance of such cross-border solidarity, he had also begun to reach out to Black Power advocates abroad to strengthen the position of the BPS itself. His efforts were successful. Around the same time that Karg was setting up his organization in Suriname, he also found out – likely through Nieuwendam in New York – that Black Arts leader Amiri Baraka was organizing a gigantic Black Power conference in Atlanta, Georgia, that September. He reached out to Baraka and arranged for him and another member of the organization, Stanley Reemnet, to attend the conference and give a speech – though Reemnet would not play an active role in the latter.[506] On 28 August 1970, the two departed for New York to visit Nieuwendam and then went south.[507]

In many ways, this conference – the Congress of African Peoples – proved to be an ideal opportunity for the Surinamers to build their network and strengthen their connections to the Black Power movement, which had previously been limited to Karg's old community in New York. It connected the local organizers to some of the most renowned Black Power leaders of the time and, in turn, brought a new sense of awareness about Suriname and the Dutch empire to the broader movement. This

[506] Reemnet was also secretary of the General Union for Civil Servants (Algemene Bond Overheidspersoneel, ABO). Much like Karg himself, Reemnet was no stranger to the United States: several years earlier, he had attended the American Institute for Free Labor Development (AIFLD) in Washington, DC. This institute was established by the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) to support Latin American and Caribbean labor movements by training their leaders in the tactics of the American labor movement. See "Bond van Personeel bij de Hygienische Wasserij Opgericht," *De Vrije Stem,* April 24, 1969, 2. For more information on the AIFLD, see Martha F. Riche, "The American Institute for Free Labor Development: A Catalyst for Latin American Labor Through Union Leader Training and Social Projects Sponsorship," *Monthly Labor Review* 88.9 (September 1965): 1049-1055.

[507] American Consul Paramaribo, "Surinam Black Power Advocates Visit U.S.," September 2, 1970, p. 1, Subject Numeric Files, 1970-1973, Political and Defense, Box 2605, Pol SUR, General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD, United States; American Consul Paramaribo, "Surinam Police Report Correction in Name of Black Power Leader Visiting U.S.," September 2, 1970, p. 1, Subject Numeric Files, 1970-1973, Political and Defense, Box 2605, Pol SUR, General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD, United States; Intelligence Evaluation Committee, 49.

section will lay out the intentions and ideological backgrounds of the Congress of African Peoples, its proceedings during the Labor Day weekend of 1970, and Karg's role as a central spokesman for the typically neglected parts of the African diaspora in the 'Third World'. Speaking to Charlayne Hunter of *The New York Times*, Karg proclaimed that the convention was "the best thing that could happen to black people" in their fight against White people, who – reiterating his earlier message – had "used every trick in the book to keep us divided."[508] His participation in the conference would deeply challenge Karg's earlier definitions of Blackness and, with that, change the direction of Black Power in Suriname.

The Congress of African Peoples took place from 3 to 6 September 1970 at Morris Brown College, a historically Black liberal arts college in Atlanta. With none other than Baraka as its principal organizer, the Congress was seen as the fifth in a series of consecutive Black Power conferences that had taken place in the late 1960s.[509] The annual Black Power conference was originally supposed to be held in Barbados that year but had to be canceled when Barbadian Prime Minister Errol Barrow increased pressure on its organizing committee following the recent Black Power uprising in Trinidad and Carmichael's controversial speaking tour.[510] The intention of the failed Barbados conference had been to improve the "international strategies of the Black Power movement," stressing the importance of including any diasporic communities that had been historically underrepresented in the movement.[511] While the Barbados conference was canceled, this same sentiment was taken to Atlanta several months later. Much like its predecessors, the Congress of African Peoples had been organized in an attempt to bring together representatives from different corners of the diverse Black political landscape of the United States and Anglophone Caribbean.[512] Unlike the previous Black Power conferences, however, the

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[508] Charlayne Hunter, "Third World Seeks Unity at Conference," *The New York Times*, September 6, 1970, 40.

[509] Swan, *Pauulu's Diaspora,* 166-168; Woodard, 162; Amiri Baraka, "Introduction," in *African Congress*, vii.

[510] Swan, *Pauulu's Diaspora,* 145-147.

[511] Swan, *Pauulu's Diaspora,* 148-149.

[512] Baraka, "Introduction," vii-viii; Pinkney, 132; Michael Simanga, "The Congress of African People (1970-1980): History and Memory of an Ideological Journey," Ph.D. Dissertation (Union Institute and University, 2008), 57-59; Swan, *Pauulu's Diaspora,* 169; Woodard, 162-163.

Congress aimed to go far beyond the confines of the English-speaking Americas and, just as crucially, beyond the limits of the Black Power movement itself. Organizing under the umbrella theme "From Black Power to Pan-Africanism," the Congress stood on the verge of a new phase in the Black liberation struggle of the twentieth century.[513]

Spread over the long Labor Day weekend, an estimated 2700 to 4000 people attended the Congress. According to Baraka, approximately 350 of them had traveled there from "African and Third World countries."[514] Among them were some of the most renowned members of the Civil Rights and Black Power movements, including religious leaders, famous artists, college professors, government officials, and prominent community organizers. To ensure the program of the Congress reflected and truly celebrated the diversity of these representatives, fifteen of the most notable attendees were invited to speak in the plenary session, among whom were Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) president Ralph Abernathy, Newark's first African American mayor Kenneth A. Gibson, Nation of Islam spokesman Louis Farrakhan, and – through a written letter delivered by student activist Howard Fuller – Kwame Ture. Many others got the opportunity to speak during smaller workouts hosted over the following three days.[515]

The ambitions of the Congress were equally as ideological as they were practical. At the very heart of the conference lay the aim to renew a sense of Pan-Africanism in the Black world that could transcend the fast-growing ruptures in the movement, many of which had been provoked by the FBI and similar organizations elsewhere. As Baraka spoke during his opening speech:

> The veil of controversy which is thrown over our movement by our enemies is only to hide the simplicity of what we intend! The Pan African movement encourages African people wherever they are in the world to understand that they are brothers and sisters, families, communities, nations, a race together, bred in common struggle, brought forth from, and a result of common history, and in the circulating combustible of our racial memory, we all strive for a common future; a people united,

[513] Swan, *Pauulu's Diaspora,* 167.

[514] *African Congress,* cover; Intelligence Evaluation Committee, 49; Swan, *Pauulu's Diaspora,* 181; Pinkney, 132; Simanga, 61; Woodard, 162; Hunter, 40.

[515] A full list of speakers and workshops at the Congress of African Peoples can be found in *African Congress*, xi-xiv. More on women's involvement in the conference can be found in Swan, *Pauulu's Diaspora,* 186.

> independent, basing our claim to national and international sovereignty upon a unified, independent mother Africa, whose freedom, then, would automatically raise the level of Africans' lives all over the planet.[516]

Using Maulana Karenga's concept of 'operational unity' (unity without uniformity), the organizer of the Congress explained that this Pan-African approach could bridge many of the differences across the diaspora and within the borders of the United States.[517] After all, everyone who was present at the conference did share one common goal: Black liberation.[518]

Of course Baraka's message of harmony and brotherhood was in no way new to the attendees of the Atlanta conference, as similar ambitions had been pursued since even the earliest days of the Black Power movement – as previous chapters in this dissertation have also shown. Baraka understood this and realized that the pursuit of unity would remain ambiguous unless the conference's delegates were actively engaged in the development of a new organizational structure based on "concrete plans [for] black institutions at the local, national, and international level."[519] Identifying 'Four Ends of Black Power' – namely self-determination, self-sufficiency, self-respect, and self-defense – the Congress hosted eleven workshops or 'Work Councils' that focused on different forms of racial resistance.[520] The themes of these workshops ranged from institutionalized forms of mobilization, such as politics, education, and law, to more grassroots methods, such as art and community work. Each workshop consisted of two to eight speakers, who connected the topic of the session to their experience in the field. Together with the participants, they searched for practical solutions and created proposals for new universal Black institutions that could resolve those issues on a structural basis.[521]

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[516] Baraka, "Introduction," vii.

[517] Baraka, "Introduction," viii; Pinkney, 133; Swan, *Pauulu's Diaspora,* 169; Woodard, 164.

[518] *African Congress*, cover.

[519] Swan, *Pauulu's Diaspora,* 180-181.

[520] Amiri Baraka, "Ideological Statement of the Congress of African People," n.d., The Black Power Movement Part 1: Amiri Baraka from Black Arts to Black Radicalism, Reel 2, Series 5, University Publications of America, Bethesda, MD, accessed via Roosevelt Institute for American Studies, Middelburg, the Netherlands; Pinkney, 132; Swan, *Pauulu's Diaspora,* 169.

[521] Baraka, "Introduction," ix; Pinkney, 133; Swan, *Pauulu's Diaspora,* 180-181; Woodard, 162.

Karg had been invited to speak at the Political Liberation workshop that weekend, which was the largest and best-attended session of the entire conference. The workshop was first in line and consisted of eight speakers, six of whom were African American and two of whom came from the Caribbean: Karg and Dominican activist Roosevelt 'Rosie' Douglas, who had played a significant role in the Black Power protest at Sir George Williams University in Montreal, Canada, the previous year.[522] Coordinated by Baraka himself, the aim of the Political Liberation workshop was to create "a political institution that expresses and moves to fulfill the needs of Black people, wherever they are."[523] In an ideal situation, the coordinator argued, such an institution would take the shape of a nation, but because the reality of the diaspora did not yet allow for the creation of a Pan-African state, he lobbied for the establishment of a transnational political party: the World African Party.[524] In his opening statement, Baraka made a number of suggestions for the work such a party could do on local, regional, state, national, and international levels, all centered on four areas of political power: public office, community organizations, alliances and coalitions, and disruption.[525]

Not only was Karg part of this first panel, but he was also the first to take the stage after Baraka's statement. Speaking on behalf of the BPS, the Surinamese Black Power leader explained that he had been motivated to attend the Congress of African Peoples with one central goal in mind: "to warn the Black man that the whites by no means consider themselves beaten."[526] Taking the example of his home country, which he described as "one of the few Black nations that has no independence and is from the outside being governed by the white man," Karg concentrated on the need for global Black unity in three spheres: economics, politics, and communications.[527] In a critical speech to his audience, he asserted:

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[522] The other speakers on the panel were Hannibal El-Mustafa Ahmed, the Council of the Congress of African Peoples in Philadelphia (no individual names provided), Hassan Olufu, Ayuko Babu, John Cashin, and Imari Abubakari Obadele. See *African Congress*, xi-xii.

[523] Amiri Baraka, "Coordinator's Statement," in *African Congress*, 115.

[524] Baraka, "Coordinator's Statement," 115.

[525] Baraka, "Coordinator's Statement," 115-122; Swan, *Pauulu's Diaspora,* 187; Pinkney, 132.

[526] Cyriel Karg, "Resolutions of the Surinam Delegates," *African Congress*, 123.

[527] Karg, "Resolutions," 123.

> It is against this, Black Brothers and Sisters, that we came here to warn you. While you in America, in Africa and in some other parts of the world are preparing for a fight to finish with the white man, your Black brothers in still other parts of the world – like for instance, South America, Latin America and the West Indies – have to look up to the white man even for food and education of [their] children. (…) They are still a prey to the white man who, being the vulture that he is, will not let [them] go.[528]

While Karg held the 'White man' responsible for creating this situation in the first place, he also laid some of the blame in the hands of Black communities that were better off, as they had not made any significant efforts to support their Third World kin. He urged his listeners to understand that the independence of Suriname and other colonized territories would be in their best interest, too, as it would weaken the global position of the Whites.

In the spirit of the Political Liberation workshop, Karg offered three resolutions that could improve transnational relations between different Black communities.[529] The first tied in with Karg's main topic of interest: economic exchange. In his speech, Karg identified the "dishonorable so-called development aid" of Europeans and Americans to Third World countries as one of the most significant forms of colonialism of their time.[530] As a solution to this problem, he appealed to his more affluent allies to start investing in these countries so that White financial support would become obsolete, which would help these countries decolonize further. "We prefer that in our country if there have to be foreign companies," he argued, "that this be Black capital and Black owned companies."[531] He proposed to construct an Economic Development Plan during the workshop that would be mutually rewarding to Black investors, who could make "a huge profit" from these investments, as well as the recipients, who would no longer depend on "the white man who never had the interest of the Black

[528] Karg, "Resolutions," 124.

[529] For reasons unknown, only Karg's first two resolutions were published in *African Congress*. A copy of the original speech in Karg's private family archive, however, shows that Karg had presented a third resolution. Because the rest of his speech was identical to the chapter in the book, the final resolution was likely left out by mistake rather than edited out on purpose. As Karg did include this final resolution at the conference, it is included in this chapter.

[530] Karg, "Resolutions," 124.

[531] Karg, "Resolutions," 124.

man at heart but only tried to exploit him."[532] Through this structure, Karg further motivated, "you are not only investing your dollar in a sound business but you are, at the same time, weakening your enemy – the white man – at the places where it hurts him the most."[533] He even went as far as to suggest that this Economic Development Plan could lead to Black control over the entire global economy "so that the Black peoples of the world will most benefit by this."[534]

Karg's second resolution was a response to Baraka's coordinating statement, which had concerned the establishment of a World African Party. In contrast to Baraka, Karg was of the opinion that political unity should operate in the form of an international council rather than a transnational political party. This council would consist of representatives from different Black nations, much like the Congress of African Peoples itself. Ideally, this council would provide a similar structure as the United Nations. According to Karg, the actual United Nations had failed its anticolonial promises many times over by supporting colonial member states that were "willfully withholding freedom from Black people who are eager for their freedom."[535] Among these was the Netherlands, which the Surinamese delegate believed had no intention of granting any independence to its colonies in accordance with the 1960 Declaration on Decolonization. He called for a global boycott of the Netherlands and other colonial powers and simultaneously urged the representatives of UN member states at the Congress to take a firmer stance against the oppressive policies of these states. If this was unsuccessful, Karg argued, the "Black powers of the world" should establish a Black United Nations. Such a Black presence on the global political stage would hurt "the cause of the white man" because it would put an incredible amount of diplomatic pressure on him by people who did not depend on his support. "This is what the white man fears the most!" he proclaimed.[536]

[532] Karg, "Resolutions," 123.

[533] Karg, "Resolutions," 124.

[534] Karg, "Resolutions," 125.

[535] Karg, "Resolutions," 125.

[536] Karg, "Resolutions," 123-124.

Karg's third and final resolution concerned the establishment of a transnational communications network, or rather, an independent Black press service.[537] Perhaps not unsurprisingly, considering his background in journalism and media, Karg believed communications to be "the strongest weapon in any fight," and especially in the "struggle of life and death against white oppression."[538] He criticized mainstream news outlets for gatekeeping the media and only sharing the information they deemed interesting or necessary for White people. Not only did this keep Black people ignorant about global politics, but it also prevented them from learning about and from each other and, consequently, from mobilizing across borders to overcome shared problems. He called for the Congress to start thinking about a basic system of communication that could enable such a dialogue "in order to get correct and true information to all of the Black people of the world so that they too can join in the fight against white oppression."[539]

After Karg's and the other six speeches, the interactive part of the Political Liberation workshop began. Here, the speakers and audience got together to find common ground, brainstorm different approaches to their shared objectives, and attempt to set up practical and feasible projects that could bring them closer to the ultimate goal of Black liberation. During this session, Karg joined the Sub-Committee on Alliances and Coalitions together with Douglas, Namibian activist Veive Mbaeve, and Imari Abubakari Obadele of the Republic of New Afrika (RNA).[540] Together, they came up with a substantial set of resolutions, ranging from the establishment of Karg's proposed communications network to the donation of combat materials to a number of liberation movements in continental Africa. It also included a boycott of "Holland and the rest of the colonial powers" that did not respect the Declaration on Decolonization.[541]

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[537] "Speech and Resolutions of the Surinam Delegates to be Presented to the First Session of the Congress of African People by C. Karg from Surinam," Private Archive Family Karg, 5.

[538] Karg, "Resolutions," 122; "Speech and Resolutions of the Surinam Delegates," 5.

[539] "Speech and Resolutions of the Surinam Delegates," 5.

[540] Amiri Baraka, "Resolutions," 167.

[541] Baraka, "Resolutions," 170.

Yet, despite his passionate speech, active participation in the program, and immense enthusiasm for the convention's message of Black unity, Karg's impression of the Congress was not all favorable. According to historian Quito Swan, the Surinamese representative – as well as some other non-American attendees – felt like they had been standing in the shadows of the conference because it had "lacked the expected global pan-African focus and instead focused primarily on African American issues," particularly those from Newark and New Jersey, where Baraka himself was active.[542] While on paper the Congress had been concerned with Pan-Africanism as a "global expression of Black nationalism," the disproportionate representation of African American organizations and, as a logical consequence, the overwhelming focus on American systems and problems left many of the non-American delegates feeling marginalized.[543] Having received complaints from numerous participants from the Global South, Bermudan co-organizer Pauulu Kamarakafego (Roosevelt Brown) hosted an informal meeting on international collaboration at the end of the weekend. While it is unclear who exactly were present at the meeting, the delegates passed an additional set of resolutions meant to truly capture the Pan-African spirit of the convention.[544] According to Swan, Karg even lobbied for the next edition of the Congress to be held in Suriname, "remarking that if the government there gave them difficulties, they would "burn down their Goddamn capitol.""[545] Revitalized by this final session, Karg and Reemnet returned to the Caribbean, armed with a fresh set of rhetorical tools, an extended transnational network, and a reimagined future for their organization.

Transition to Pan-Africanism

As soon as Karg set foot on Surinamese soil again, he organized a press conference to discuss his takeaways from the Congress and to announce a new direction for his organization: Pan-Africanism. His time in Atlanta had convinced him

[542] Swan, *Pauulu's Diaspora,* 187-189; Intelligence Evaluation Committee, 49.

[543] Baraka, "Ideological Statement of the Congress of African People," 3.

[544] Swan, *Pauulu's Diaspora,* 189.

[545] Swan, *Pauulu's Diaspora*, 187.

that the struggle against racism required a deeper sense of diasporic solidarity and a much more practical approach than he had preached earlier. How exactly Karg defined Pan-Africanism at the press conference is unclear, but the BPS would later describe it as follows:

> We all know that the origins of the Black Race are found in Africa. Our ancestors were brought here as slaves from many different parts of the West Coast of Africa. We are the descendants of these slaves, which many refuse to understand. This is undoubtedly the result of many centuries of slavery and colonialism. (…) Pan-Africanism (…) refers to the personality, environment, nationalism and internationalism of the Black man. It teaches Negroes who they are, brings them together and underlines the purpose of the Black man. Slaves in Suriname were just as unfree as those in America of Jamaica. And we were even less so at a later stage, as colonized subjects.[546]

With that, Black Power Suriname completely diverged from the racial perspective that Karg had so passionately defended in his earlier writings for *De Vrije Stem*. Rather than embracing an inclusive definition of Blackness that surpassed ethnic boundaries, the Black Power leader now endorsed a heavily Afrocentric perspective on race. That is not to say that the organization became anti-Indian, at least not beyond the occasional statement that Afro-Surinamers needed to mobilize to restore balance. In fact, Karg argued that he found Lachmon's efforts to unite Indo-Surinamers "highly respectable" and served as a major source of inspiration for his organization because it showed what was possible through racial solidarity and awareness.[547] "It is the job of our organization," he even wrote, "to raise more consciousness among Afro-humans so that they can become as aware of their roots as Hindustanis are aware of theirs."[548]

To formalize this change, Karg changed the name of his organization from Black Power Suriname to Afro-Sranan, which translates to Afro-Surinamese in Sranan Tongo. This name would 'delocalize' the organization, he believed, and place a stronger emphasis on Afro-Surinamers' African heritage and identity.[549] To truly embrace the

[546] "Cedric Lashley Afro Sranan: Eenheid onder Negers Vereist," *De Vrije Stem*, September 17, 1972, 1.

[547] "Afro-Sranan Volgt VHP's Voorbeeld," *De Vrije Stem*, September 17, 1970, 4.

[548] See "Afro-Sranan in Business, Cyriel Karg as Promotor," *De Vrije Stem*, December 2, 1970, 1.

[549] "Black Power Krijgt Nieuwe Naam," 1; "Afro-Sranan Volgt VHP's Voorbeeld," *De Vrije Stem*, September 17, 1970, 4; "Ingekomen Nota van J.G. Koenders," 2.

Pan-African spirit of the movement, Karg himself also changed his own name. "After selling our ancestors to the plantation owners (…) we were re-named and this time after the white 'owners'," he explained, citing the speech made by NOI spokesman Louis Farrakhan at the Congress.[550] This was, again, part of the "art of Divide and Rule" used by European colonizers to "not allow us to see things eye to eye (…) because of economical *[sic]* reasons."[551] To free himself from this form of colonialism, he adopted the name Emiri Abubaekari, most likely inspired by Amiri Baraka (born LeRoi Jones) and Imari Abubakari Obadele (born Richard Bullock Henry) of the RNA, whom he had connected with during the Congress.

Both of their names, as well as many others in the movement, found their roots in Swahili, the preferred African language among Pan-Africanists in the Americas. Like many others, Karg decided on a name based on its meaning. Emiri, a variation of Amiri, meant 'prince' and was often adopted by those who considered themselves leaders. Abubaekari, more commonly spelled as Abubakari, referred to the legendary figure of Mansa Abu Bakr II, also known as Abubakari, a presumed former emperor of Mali. The legend of Abubakari said that he was the first African to travel to the 'New World' in the fourteenth century, many years before Columbus did.[552] As such, the name symbolized the connection between Africa and the Americas, as well as the inventiveness, braveness, and successes of African empires prior to European colonization. Unlike his friends, however, Karg never used his new name consistently and, for the most part, would only do so as a pseudonym whenever he wrote about Black Power-related issues.[553]

In the months following the Atlanta Congress, Afro-Sranan's central committee grew rapidly. Where it had consisted of only three members at the Black Power stage, it expanded to a total of seven after the transition to Pan-Africanism. Playing into the vocabulary of Black nationalism in the United States, each member was assigned a ministerial position. Chairman Karg became Minister President, former secretary Tam

[550] Cyriel Karg, "Let's Get Together," *Sonde Spikri*, October 1978, Private Archive Family Karg.

[551] Cyriel Karg, "Let's Get Together."

[552] Maulana Karenga, "For Imari Obadele: Free the Land, Liberate the People," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, November 2, 2010, 7.

[553] Lucien Karg, interview by author.

became Minister of Finance, and former treasurer Heymans became Minister of Public Relations. The first new addition to the board was theater producer Franklin D. 'Frank' Lafour, who became Afro-Sranan's Minister of Cultural Affairs. Born in the Netherlands, Lafour had moved to Suriname in 1969 to work for the Cultural Center of Suriname (CCS) and was known on both sides of the Atlantic for his deep appreciation of the American Black Arts Movement, inspiring him to perform a number of successful plays by Amiri Baraka in the late 1960s and early 1970s. He was also the brother of BPSC member Lucien Lafour, mentioned in the previous chapter.[554] Other new members were Minister of Information Mavis C. Treurniet, Minister of Foreign Affairs Paul Nieuwendam, and Minister of Economic Exchange Meyer (first name unknown), who lived in the United States. Other positions Afro-Sranan hoped to add in the future were Minister of Defense, Minister of Labor, and Minister of Women's Affairs, though it is unclear if these positions were ever filled. [555]

The Pan-African inspiration of the organization also shone through in Afro-Sranan's monthly journal *Uhuru*, named after the Swahili word for freedom, which was published from 1970 to 1973. The logo of the journal, covering the front page of each edition, portrayed two men reaching out to each other and holding hands, symbolizing their coming together. Written above them were the words *Uhuru* and *Vrijheid*, joining both men in their wish for freedom. Written in between the men were the words 'Black' (in English) and 'Afro-Sranan'. Underneath the logo were the contact details of the organization and its motto:

> We will appreciate our beauty and our culture,
> We will no longer be ashamed of ourselves and our people
> Because someone who is ashamed of themselves could never be free!!!!![556]

Its pages were filled with reports on current events, stories about local and international Black heroes, calls for action, and highly theoretical analyses of

[554] "Franklin D. Lafour," *Theater Encyclopedie*, accessed February 27, 2022, https://theaterencyclopedie.nl/wiki/Franklin_Lafour; Van Kempen, 299; Leslie Fredrik, "The Dutchman," *De Ware Tijd,* June 14, 1972, 5.

[555] "Ingekomen Nota van J.G. Koenders," 2. Paul Nieuwendam was the brother of BPS founder Arnold Nieuwendam.

[556] *Uhuru*, January 1973, 1; *Uhuru*, February 1973, 1.

Surinamese society, viewed through what its authors called a 'Black-Nationalist-Pan-Africanist' lens.[557] References to prominent Pan-African thinkers such as Kwame Nkrumah and Franz Fanon appeared on a regular basis, showing how Afro-Sranan positioned itself within the same intellectual tradition.[558] Especially in the beginning, Karg himself wrote most of the articles, while his wife Marita stenciled the paper and his teenage son Lucien made the illustrations.[559] The journal had a circulation of approximately two hundred, of which some fifty were sent to the SAL in New York.[560]

Uhuru also provides insight into the activities Afro-Sranan organized, at least in the later period, as only a few editions have been archived. In line with Karg's earlier writings in *De Vrije Stem*, the organization identified three central goals in its journal: (1) to obtain full independence, (2) to decolonize the Surinamese economy, and (3) to create a cultural revolution among those of African descent.[561] While the first goal lay at the heart of all Afro-Sranan's activities, there were few projects that targeted constitutional independence directly. Rather, the organization mainly focused on the second goal of self-sufficiency and the third goal of cultural consciousness. In pursuit of economic freedom, the organization focused on at least three projects. The first was the composition of a Black business network that encouraged members of the organization to buy exclusively from Afro-Surinamese entrepreneurs – particularly those owned by fellow members of Afro-Sranan. [562] On the final page of *Uhuru*, the organization published a list of businesses owned by "our people," which included supermarkets, gas stations, beauty salons, and clothing stores.[563]

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[557] "Een Zwart-Nationalistische-Pan-Afrikanistische Analyse," *Uhuru*, January 1973, 2. Sadly, I was only able to locate two issues of the journal, namely those from January and February 1973. Other information that I found comes from "Ingekomen Nota van J.G. Koenders," which analyzed the journal's first few issues from 1970.

[558] *Uhuru*, January 1973, 1-4; *Uhuru*, February 1973, 1-4; "Ingekomen Nota van J.G. Koenders," 2.

[559] Lucien Karg, interview by author.

[560] Lucien Karg, interview by author.

[561] "Cedric Lashley Afro Sranan: 1; "Ingekomen Nota van J.G. Koenders," 2; *Uhuru,* January 1973, 1; *Uhuru,* February 1973, 1.

[562] "Afro Sranang," *De Ware Tijd*, September 18, 1970, 1; "Afro Sranan Wil Werkloosheid Bestrijden," *De Ware Tijd,* November 28, 1970, 1; "Karg Kondigt Werving Grote Zwarte Macht Aan," *De Ware Tijd*, September 16, 1970, 1; "Ingekomen Nota van J.G. Koenders," 3.

[563] *Uhuru*, January 1973, 4.

The organization presented even more ambitious business plans in December 1970. Focusing especially on financial independence from powerful European and American industries, Karg presented a plan that would replace "white economic domination" in Suriname with that of the global "Black establishment."[564] The main aim of this project was to convince wealthy African American entrepreneurs to invest in Surinamese companies, trade, and industrial projects through a 'joint ventures' scheme, where profits would be divided equally among foreign financiers and Afro-Surinamese entrepreneurs, who could then reinvest their earnings into Surinamese schools, hospitals, and infrastructure.[565] Using his network in the United States, Karg welcomed two potential investors from Wisconsin and Michigan that winter to discuss possibilities for a record manufacturing business and a canning factory.[566] Unfortunately, it seems none of these efforts ended up being successful, though they do further illustrate Karg's dedication to transnational economic collaboration.

On a more local scale, the organization also developed plans for a small-scale agricultural project intended to stimulate Black land ownership, reduce unemployment rates, and help local youths to "stay off the streets."[567] At first, Karg and his associates tried to gain ownership over some small patches of farmland outside Paramaribo, which they stated had originally belonged to free Black communities but had "bit by bit been taken away from the Creoles by the Hindus."[568] The men reached out to Minister of Infrastructure and Traffic Rudy Goossen of the PNP and Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries Ramsewak Shankar of the VHP, both of whom were quite enthusiastic about their plans to help unemployed youths build a career in agriculture. Instead of these farmlands, however, Afro-Sranan and the

[564] "Afro-Sranan in Business," 1.

[565] "Afro Sranan Wil Werkloosheid Bestrijden," 1; "Afro-Sranan in Business," 1; "Ingekomen Nota van J.G. Koenders," 3.

[566] "Afro Sranan Wil Werkloosheid Bestrijden," 1; "Afro-Sranan in Business," 1. Names that are mentioned in the press are Rita Wight, a record studio owner, and someone named as Russel Brouw, supposedly a Senator in Detroit. Unfortunately, the latter's name was likely misspelled and his position wrongly described, leaving him untraceable.

[567] "Afro-Sranan in Business, Cyriel Karg as Promotor," *De Vrije Stem*, December 2, 1970, 1; "Afro Sranan Wil Werkloosheid Bestrijden," 1.

[568] "Afro-Sranan in Business," 1.

ministers set their eyes on an alternative location: plantation Slootwijk in the Commewijne district. On the old sugar plantation, Afro-Sranan would be able to work some 125 acres of land and set up a confection factory and medical center, providing work for both men and women. Slootwijk was the ideal location for the community, allowing them to produce their own crops, catch fish, and ship their goods to Paramaribo to sell at the city's Central Market. The ministers even promised to fund the necessary medical training of twenty-six Afro-Sranan members to do their envisioned work effectively.[569] On 26 January 1971, Afro-Sranan and the ministers held a press conference to formally announce their plans. Again, however, it seems their plans were never realized, likely because the plantation was owned by the Dutch government.[570]

In this same period, as in later years, Afro-Sranan also organized a number of cultural events intended to revitalize Afro-Surinamers' "Egi Afro Koeltoeroe" or "Own African Culture."[571] Cultural awareness and education, according to the organization, were of utmost importance to the Pan-African revolution because diasporic Africans had to rediscover who they were and where they came from before they could understand their worth as an independent people. "Humans who neglect their culture lack the power to invent," the organization stated in *Uhuru*. "Cultural revival serves a positive goal, (…) it will help us find new ways of being. It will provide us with a new personal power."[572] Many of the events they organized to reach this level of consciousness were hosted at Wie na Wie, whose community center was freely available to Afro-Sranan. Here, the group hosted African-inspired dance acts and musical performances, familiarizing Afro-Surinamers with "the Afro-school [which] lets the public feel at one with what is, lives and always will be, namely our Afro-nature."[573] They also held fashion shows that promoted traditional West-African

[569] "Afro Sranan Wil Werkloosheid Bestrijden," 1; "Ministers Spraken op Afro-Bijeenkomst," *De Ware Tijd,* January 29, 1971, 1.

[570] The Dutch had bought the land in 1963 to accommodate a group of Indonesians who had been loyal to the Dutch in the Indonesian Independence War ('Toegoenezen'). They only lived there for a few years and departed for the Netherlands in 1967. See Marshall, 179-180.

[571] "Afro-Sranan in Business," 1.

[572] "Een Zwart-Nationalistische-Pan-Afrikanistische Analyse," *Uhuru*, January 1973, 2.

[573] Cyriel R. Karg, "Tjintjie," *De Vrije Stem*, September 21, 1970, 4; "Ingekomen Nota van J.G. Koenders," 3; "Prefoeroe Trad op the Moengo," *De Vrije Stem,* July 8, 1972, 6.

clothing, explaining that "only once [we] start dressing like Africans will people see [us] for the Africans we really are."[574] The highlight of Afro-Sranan's cultural program was going to be their Christmas 1970 Africa Show, where all of these cultural forms would come together. The organization had invited an African American show group of some twenty members to come to Suriname and perform a mix of modern and traditional African dance to "new black music" while dressed in "the latest Afro-fashion to popularize it in Suriname."[575] However, much like many of their other plans, it seems the show had to be canceled when neither Afro-Sranan nor the show group were able to pay for the necessary travel.[576]

On occasion, Afro-Sranan also became involved in political issues and discourse, even though it had explicitly positioned itself as a non-political organization. One example was a roundtable discussion that the organization hosted in December 1972 with representatives from several Afro-Surinamese parties. Their intention was to discuss how these parties could collaborate to grow a stronger sense of Black unity in Suriname and to bring some issues from the Afro-Surinamese community to their attention.[577] On other occasions, Afro-Sranan directly contacted the Surinamese government or specific political parties to express their concerns. In November 1970, for example, Afro-Sranan sent a long letter to parliament calling for the legalization of Winti, an Afro-Surinamese religion with deep roots in West African culture. Arguing that its prohibition posed a threat to universal freedom of religion and formed "a clear form of discrimination (…) based on ethnic background."[578] Similarly, they sent a letter to the Minister of Health to demand fair payment for

[574] "Cedric Lashley Afro Sranan," 1; "Ingekomen Nota van J.G. Koenders," 3.

[575] ""Afro-Sranan in Business," 1; "Afro Sranan Wil Werkloosheid Bestrijden," 1.

[576] "Ingekomen Nota van J.G. Koenders," 3, mentions that the organization was still trying to collect the necessary funding several weeks before the event was to take place. Since no sources mention anything about the show after Karg's announcement, it is likely that their performance had to be canceled.

[577] *Uhuru*, January 1973, 1; "Afro-Sranan Vraagt," 3. Members of Afro-Sranan also participated in similar roundtable conversations organized by other groups. See "Debat over Zwarte Mens en Zijn Problemen," *De Vrije Stem*, December 8, 1972.

[578] "Afro-Sranan," *Suriname*, November 3, 1970, 4.

medical personnel on their behalf, as these "incredibly hardworking and loyal servants to the state" had no time to stand up for themselves.[579]

Afro-Sranan also expressed solidarity with the Black teachers that had gone on strikes in October 1970, protesting against the – in their opinion – disproportionate appointments of Indo-Surinamese school directors by the VHP government.[580] One of the main leaders of these strikes was the dean of the General Secondary School (Algemene Middelbare School, AMS) Ronald R. Venetiaan. Venetiaan was a close friend of Karg's and a known associate of Afro-Sranan, though he never became a formal member.[581] Another active striker was vice-director Eric J. Lo Fo Wong of the Dahlberg School. Much like Venetiaan, Lo Fo Wong was known for his Black Power sympathies and was even accused of making the Teacher's Union into "an instrument of Afro-ideological activities."[582] While the October strikes were meant to target the government, historians have written that the protesters ended up "destroying Hindustani stores, molesting merchants, and attacking bus drivers who did not respond to the call for [their] strike."[583] Yet, while the media were eager to emphasize the relationship between Afro-Sranan and these anti-Indian actions, there is no evidence that the organization played an active role in them.

Liberation Beyond the State

While Afro-Sranan organized a range of activities at home, it also continued to invest in its transnational network. Most of his foreign relations came out of the Congress of African Peoples. For one, Karg stayed in touch with conference organizer

[579] "Afro-Sranan Vraagt Betere Salarisregeling voor Verplegend Personeel," *De Ware Tijd,* June 2, 1971, 10.

[580] Dew, *The Difficult Flowering of Surinam*, 163; Ramsoedh, 116; "Hanhaving Wet en Orde Noodzakelijk!" *De Vrije Stem*, October 21, 1970, 1.

[581] "Raciale Insinuaties door Bond van Leraren," *De Vrije Stem*, October, 12 1970, 1; Jansen van Galen, 130; "Ingekomen Nota van J.G. Koenders," 3. According to this third source, Venetiaan was also one of the founders of the Surinamese Socialist Union (Surinaamse Socialistische Unie, SSU) and had previously "attempted to make the Union into a Black Power movement," with the support of fellow Black Power-enthusiast and English teacher Wim Udenhout. Both Venetiaan and Udenhout would later serve as national leaders of Suriname. Udenhout served as the military-installed Prime Minister of Suriname from 1984 to 1986. He would later also become the country's ambassador to the United States. Venetiaan served three terms as President of the country, first from 1991 to 1996 and later from 2000 to 2010, making him the longest serving President in Surinamese history.

[582] "Onderwijs Moet op de Helling," *De Vrije Stem,* September 19, 1970, 1.

[583] Ramsoedh, 117.

Amiri Baraka, who sent him monthly packages with new publications, vinyl records, and African products to share with his organization.[584] With other participants of the Congress, Karg established even closer ties. The most important was with Imari Abubakari Obadele of the Republic of New Afrika, which aspired to construct a sovereign Black nation in the American South, including parts of South Carolina, Georgia, Mississippi, Alabama, and Louisiana.[585] Whilst in Atlanta, Karg and Obadele had bonded over their shared interest in economic self-sufficiency, land ownership, and cultural reclamation, and believed that diplomatic ties between their two organizations could lay the basis for a strong diplomatic network of aspiring independent Black nation states.[586] As the RNA wrote:

> Independence (…) would enable us to pursue economic development without interference. It would enable us to engage in world trade for our own benefit as a people, to align with and help (and be helped by) our brothers in the Caribbean, notably Guyana and Surinam.[587]

According to an FBI report, they had signed an agreement to formalize their mutual support at the end of the Congress, dated September 8.[588]

In November 1970, Karg traveled to the American Midwest to learn more about the RNA and to discuss further possibilities for their collaborations.[589] When he returned, he announced that the RNA and Afro-Sranan had extended their agreement, which contained the following points:

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[584] Lucien Karg, interview by author. The archives of the Committee for Unified Newark (CUN) confirms that Karg regularly received information from Baraka. See Cheo Elimu to Imamu Amiri Baraka, Memorandum, Committee for Unified Newark, December 30, 1970, Series XVII: Komozi Woodard's Office Files, 1956-1986, Atlanta-Fulton Public Library, accessed via Archives Unbound, Gale Primary Sources.

[585] For an extensive history of the Republic of New Afrika, see Edward Onaci, *Free the Land: The Republic of New Afrika and the Pursuit of a Black Nation-State* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2020). See also Imari Abubakari Obadele, I, "Yes – An Independent Black Nation in Our Time, in This Place!" in *African Congress*, 157-166.

[586] "Karg Kondigt Werving Grote Zwarte Macht Aan," 1; "Afro-Sranan Volgt VHP's Voorbeeld," 4; "Afro Sranang," 1; Intelligence Evaluation Committee, 49; "Ingekomen Nota van J.G. Koenders," 3.

[587] Brother Imari, "Proposed Declaration of Economic Intent," San Francisco, October 24, 1970, as cited in Federal Bureau of Investigation, "Republic of New Africa (RNA)," San Francisco, November 23, 1970, p. 2, 157-9079, nr. 1127197-000, section 27. See also "Detroit Report of SA [Blank]," May 24, 1971, p. 116, 157-9079, nr. 1127197-000, section 40, Archives Unbound, Gale Primary Sources.

[588] "Detroit Report of SA [Blank]," 116.

[589] "Afro Sranan Wil Werkloosheid Bestrijden," 1;

1) The Republic of New Afrika, hereafter the Republic, and the Afro-Srana[n] Movement, hereafter the Movement, hereby declare to enter into an agreement to support each other during independent congregations and to defend each other's interests in every regard: i.e. politics, economics, culture and socially, in their own countries.
2) The Republic will help the Movement obtain a printing press.
3) The Movement will organize a performance of high quality by a theater group from the Republic in Suriname.
4) The Movement and the Republic will try to improve mutual trade relations and the Republic will support the Movement in her quest to obtain investments from Afro industries in Suriname.
5) The Movement and the Republic will regularly exchange news reports and cultural materials.
6) The Republic will appoint honorary consuls to Suriname based on proposals by the Movement.
7) Both agree to do anything possible to defend the interests of the Republic and Movement to reach their goals of full national independence and their people's freedom from slavery.[590]

While many of these points were taken up over the fall and winter of 1970, as the previous section has demonstrated, none of them were actually realized. The Africa show was organized but had to be canceled, as mentioned in the previous section, the investors who came to visit did not decide to invest, and the RNA's printing press never actually arrived. Karg did visit the RNA again in 1971 to speak about the need for Black unity across national borders, but neither Obadele nor any other prominent members of the RNA seem to have ever returned the favor.[591]

At the Congress of African Peoples, Karg also established contacts with the Nation of Islam (NOI), which he proclaimed had played a formative role in his understanding of Black oppression and liberation. [592] While it is unclear what exactly Afro-Sranan's connections to the NOI looked like, it appears Karg managed to settle two agreements with the Black Muslims. In search of a market for the goods he hoped to produce in his agricultural projects, Karg had reached out to NOI director Elijah Muhammad, who famously ran a multi-million dollar Black business network. While it

[590] "Ingekomen Nota van J.G. Koenders," 3. This text was likely taken directly from one of the first editions of *Uhuru*.

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

[592] Cyriel Karg, "Let's Get Together."

is unclear what exactly he requested, he received a letter from Muhammad in the summer of 1971 telling Karg he would buy "what ever you have in your Country that we can bargain for and use (…) in the States."[593] The NOI also offered Karg help with his plans to establish an Institute for African Sciences, where Afro-Surinamers could study Africa and the diaspora through a range of academic fields. The Black Muslims promised three scholarships for Surinamese girls to study at the NOI's University of Islam in Harlem, New York, to prepare them for teaching positions at this Surinamese Institute.[594] Much like many of the plans discussed previously, however, it remains unclear if these scholarships were ever used.

Afro-Sranan's connections to both the RNA and the NOI watered down when Karg laid down his leadership of the organization in the spring of 1972. As Head of Information and Press for the PNR, he had become increasingly occupied with the upcoming elections and was left with little time to focus on Afro-Sranan. He handed his position over to Cedric M. Lashley, the owner of an African shop in Paramaribo.[595] While most of the organization's activities continued as before, its transnational connections changed. Instead of the United States, Lashley focused on connecting Afro-Sranan to like-minded groups in the Caribbean. In 1972, Afro-Sranan joined the Committee for the Removal of Colonialism in the Caribbean (CRAC), which was founded in Guyana in 1972 and reportedly included members from Belize, Puerto Rico, French Guiana, Guyana, the US, and Africa.[596] The purpose of this committee was "to combat the presence of European and American colonialism in the Caribbean," and it was created by a number of Pan-African organizations in the region.[597] While no Afro-Sranan delegates had been able to attend its first meeting, Lashley's request to join the

[593] Letter from Elijah Muhammad to Cyriel Karg, August 4, 1971, Private Archive Family Karg. Several years later, in 1975, Karg would also visit Muhammad at the NOI headquarters in New York to persuade him to invest in Surinamese tourism post-independence. See "Curriculum Vitae van Cyriel R. Karg."

[594] "Ingekomen Nota van J.G. Koenders," 3; "Afro-Sranan in Business," 1; "Afro Sranan Wil Werkloosheid Bestrijden," 1.

[595] Lucien Karg, interview by author.

[596] "Cedric Lashley Afro Sranan," 1; "Afro Srenan Werkt Internationaal," *De Vrije Stem*, June 28, 1972, 2; "Het Was Afro-Sranang," *De Ware Tijd,* June 28, 1972, 4.

[597] "Resolutie Afro-Sranan in Guyana Aangenomen," *De Vrije Stem*, June 26, 1972; "Afro Srenan Werkt Internationaal," 2.

network was accepted, upon which CRAC announced that it "wholeheartedly support[ed] the battle of the Surinamese people against Dutch colonialism."[598] Based on the scarcity of archival and secondary materials on this committee, however, it is likely that CRAC itself never got off the ground to truly put these ideas into action.

Other efforts to keep Afro-Sranan connected to the Pan-African movement concerned the Sixth Pan-African Congress, to be held in Tanzania in June 1974, and a preparatory Caribbean conference in Guyana in December 1973, organized by Eusi Kwayana (Sidney King) of the African Society for Cultural Relations with Independent Africa (ASCRIA).[599] The purpose of this conference was to gather input from grassroots activists throughout the Caribbean region and discuss these with formal government officials, with the ultimate goal of putting forward a coherent agenda during the Congress in Tanzania.[600] Kwayana had invited Afro-Sranan to attend the preparatory conference, which included fellow representatives of the Bermudan Black Beret Cadre, the Barbadian People's Democratic Movement, the Antiguan Afro-Caribbean Liberation Movement, the Vincentian Organization for Black Cultural Awareness, and Trinidad and Tobago's Organization for Black Cultural Awareness.[601] Unfortunately for the Caribbean delegates, the Steering Committee of the Pan-African Congress in Tanzania decided that only delegations "sponsored by governments, those from ruling parties, liberation movement approved by the OAU [Organization of African Unity] (…), and parties not objectionable to the governments or states they came from" would be allowed to attend the conference.[602] This decision led to great disappointment

[598] "Afro Srenan Werkt Internationaal," 2.

[599] For more information on Eusi Kwayana and ASCRIA, see Kate Quinn, ""Sitting on a Volcano": Black Power in Burnham's Guyana," in *Black Power in the Caribbean,* ed. Kate Quinn (UP of Florida, 2014), 146-158; Nigel Westmaas, "An Organic Activist: Eusi Kwayana, Guyana, and Global Pan-Africanism," in *Black Power in the Caribbean,* ed. Kate Quinn (UP of Florida, 2014), 159-178.

[600] Swan, *Pauulu's Diaspora,* 212-213.

[601] "Afro Srana Doet Mee aan Pan-Afrikaanse Conferentie," De Vrije Stem, November 13, 1973, 4; Swan, *Pauulu's Diaspora,* 212-213. *De Vrije Stem* stated that Afro-Sranan was planning to attend this meeting and send three to five delegates, but it is not clear if they actually were able to.

[602] Swan, *Pauulu's Diaspora,* 213.

within the Caribbean region and ultimately prevented grassroots organizations like Afro-Sranan from attending.[603]

Despite Afro-Sranan's efforts to build meaningful coalitions with fellow Pan-African organizations abroad, most of their transnational initiatives did not last long. This was partly because of the transition of leadership within the organization but even more so due to the limited financial resources available to the members of Afro-Sranan. While travels to neighboring Guyana might have been possible, trips to the United States or, indeed, Africa were extremely expensive. Though no financial records of Afro-Sranan have remained available, a government report on the group stated that it took Karg and Reemnet several months to financially recover from their travels to Atlanta.[604] Publicly, the organization usually pointed to "certain circumstances" for its inability to attend events abroad, and it is assumable that a lack of funds was the most limiting.[605] Yet, these limitations never discouraged Afro-Sranan from underlining the importance of transnational Black solidarity. "Brothers and sisters all over the world are fighting by our side," Lashley proudly announced in *De Vrije Stem* on 28 June 1972. "Unite now, so that we can stand strong in our fight against colonialism in our beloved Suriname!"[606]

As Afro-Sranan celebrated the promise of global Black unification, however, its fiercest critics pointed towards this very same pursuit as the group's main pitfall. From the moment the BPS was founded until long after the organization's shift to Pan-Africanism, Surinamers from a range of different backgrounds castigated Afro-Sranan for its American-inspired rhetoric and, by extension, its transnational vision. What the activists had seen as an opportunity to find common ground with other diasporic Africans was interpreted by its opponents as "uncritical copycatting," "import of outlandish little theories," "sickly imitations," and "nothing but plain old aping."[607] To

[603] Letter from Ambassador S.D. Emanuels to Ministry to Foreign Affairs, "Afro Caribische Radicalen Niet Welkom op Pan Afrikaanse Congres te Tanzania," Port of Spain, June 10, 1974, Aangelegenheden Betreffende de Black Power Opstand en Activiteiten, inv. nr. 14617, Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken: Code-archief 1965-1974, 2.05.313, Nationaal Archief, The Hague, The Netherlands; Swan, *Pauulu's Diaspora,* 213-214.

[604] "Ingekomen Nota van J.G. Koenders," 3.

[605] "Afro Srenan Werkt Internationaal," 2.

[606] "Afro Srenan Werkt Internationaal," 2.

[607] "Geen Zwarte Macht Wel Totale Kracht," 1; "In Plaats van Black Power Gezond Surinamer Zijn," *Amigoe di Curaçao*, July 20, 1970, 1; "In Suriname Geen Plaats voor Black Power-Beweging," 1; "We Zijn er Tegen," 1; "Noot

them, there was no place for Black Power in Suriname because the movement had been created by African Americans to solve specific forms of oppression in the particular context of the United States.[608] One group of anonymous authors wrote:

> We can imagine that people might align with this [movement] in response to the oppression, humiliation and the frustration of coloreds in America. But in Suriname these conditions do not exist. We do not want to deny that discrimination exists or that there once was a time when the black Surinamer could not find a job, but that time is long gone. Therefore, there is no room for Black Power (…) in our country.[609]

Similar points were made about South Africa and Rhodesia, where apartheid ensured that Black citizens could not enjoy the same rights as Whites.[610] But in Suriname, they argued, "absolutely no single group is exploited or oppressed by another."[611]

Instead, these critics argued in support of a movement that was truly Surinamese at its core, designed by Surinamers to solve the unique problems of their own country. "Suriname does not need Black Power, but Total Power to solve its complicated issues," one of the organization's opponents urged.[612] This 'Total Power' had to include Surinamers from every racial group, including well-intending White farmers, missionaries, teachers, and investors who had settled in the country over time and had helped build Surinamese society.[613] Some even argued that Dutch businesses had an important role to play in such a movement, as Suriname "could not

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Red. VS: Geen Plaats voor Black Power," 2; "De Creolen tot Ondergang Verdoemd?" *De Vrije Stem*, August 8, 1970, 2.

608 "We Zijn er Tegen," *De Vrije Stem,* July 27, 1970, 1; "Noot Red. VS: Geen Plaats voor Black Power," *De Vrije Stem,* July 31, 1970, 2; "Geen Zwarte Macht Wel Totale Kracht," 1; "In Suriname Geen Plaats voor Black Power-Beweging," 1; "Karg Schrijft en Spreekt Blank," *De Vrije Stem*, August 4, 1970, 4; "Afro Sranang," 1.

609 "Geen Zwarte Macht Wel Totale Kracht," 1.

610 "Open Brief aan "De Groep"," *De Vrije Stem*, September 15, 1969, 2.

611 "We Zijn er Tegen," 1.

612 "In Suriname Geen Plaats voor Black Power-Beweging," 1. Similar sentiments in: "Nodig: Eigen Identiteit, Geen Import," *De Ware Tijd,* September 16, 1970, 1.

613 "Open Brief aan "De Groep"," *De Vrije Stem*, September 15, 1969, 2; "In Suriname Geen Plaats voor Black Power-Beweging," 1; "Mamanten Tori," De Vrije Stem, July 20, 1970, 4; "We Zijn er Tegen," 1; "Noot Red. VS: Geen Plaats voor Black Power," 2; "Karg Schrijft en Spreekt Blank," 4.

manage to build itself up without the financial support of the Netherlands."[614] With regards to Total Power, one of Karg's own colleagues at *De Vrije Stem* wrote:

> Suriname is home to at least ten races and nationalities, who together shape Surinamese society. We must do anything we can to bring these descendants together into a close-knit nation and refrain from anything that will push our people apart. We need to grow together from white to black, anyone whose destiny is tied to this community. We must grow into a national unity. Black Power stands in the way of this growth. It brings it to a halt.[615]

One particularly outspoken critic of the organization was law student Ellin M.A. Robles, herself Afro-Surinamese, who, throughout a number of articles in *De Vrije Stem*, argued that Afro-Sranan was "intensely pathetic" for blaming global forces for discrimination without taking a critical look at themselves.[616] In a series of articles, she argued that discrimination against Black people in "America, Europe, and elsewhere in the world" was not unfair but in fact justified because of Black people's own "antisocial way of living," "vulgar behavior," and the "commitment of all crimes imaginable."[617] Instead of aiming for power, she suggested to Afro-Sranan, those who wanted to improve Black life should be "teaching negroes patriotism, a sense of responsibility, discipline and self-criticism."[618] Responding to the organization's arguments that Afro-Surinamers had to reclaim their African identity through art, music, and fashion, Robles pointed out that "an individual cannot be African unless he has an African nationality and participates in African society."[619] The only reason Afro-Sranan promoted African culture as their own, she continued, was because its members were "too lazy to pursue an interest" in their own heritage.[620]

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[614] "In Suriname Geen Plaats voor Black Power-Beweging," 1.

[615] "We Zijn er Tegen," 1. Similar ideas about Black Power obstructing the development of Surinamese nation building were expressed in ; "Noot Red. VS: Geen Plaats voor Black Power," 2.

[616] Ellin Robles, "Wie heeft Schuld?" *De Vrije Stem*, November 28, 1972, 3.

[617] Robles, "Wie heeft Schuld?" 3.

[618] Robles, "Wie heeft Schuld?" 3.

[619] Ellin Robles, "Afro Sranan is Niet Reel," *De Vrije Stem*, November 24, 1972, 10.

[620] Robles, "Wie heeft Schuld?" 3.

By the time Robles published her criticism, however, the organization had already fallen into decline. While Lashley was still negotiating to send a Surinamese delegation to the Pan-African Congress the next year, it seems like the organization had mostly become inactive by this point, with its final activities taking place that same year. In contrast to the ABP or the BPSC, no public statements were made to announce the end of the organization, though it would not be hard to make an educated guess. In 1973, a political bloc of three Afro-Surinamese parties, supported by the Javanese Party for National Unity and Solidarity (Kerukunan Tulodo Pranatan Inggil, KTPI), had won the national elections, thus placing political power back into Afro-Surinamese hands. One of the victors was the PNR, for whose campaign Karg had left his position in Afro-Sranan. On 15 February 1974, only a few months after the election, the new government announced that it would be seeking independence from the Kingdom before the end of the following year. The Dutch were easily convinced, granting Suriname full autonomy by 25 November 1975. Two of Afro-Sranan's central goals, the restoration of Black unity and the independence of the country, seemed to have been reached, even if not by their doing.

From its founding in 1970 to its decline in 1973, the history of the BPS/Afro-Sranan was characterized by a continuous effort to connect the struggle for Surinamese independence to the much larger fight for Black Power around the world. Though the organization struggled to define Black Power in its own environment, there was no denying that the BPS helped some Surinamers better understand their position in the African diaspora and global struggle against imperialism. Under Karg's leadership, the organization turned to the United States, where it found common ground with some of the most influential groups in the movement. These shared Karg's ideas about decolonization and economic cooperation, and inspired him to take on a more Pan-Africanist ideology. Though these connections were lost when Karg left the organization in 1972, his successor Lashley managed to build new connections closer to home, in the Caribbean. Here, too, the Surinamese organization reached out to other Afrocentric groups, linking Afro-Sranan to ASCRIA and the 6PAC in Tanzania. Though such connections may seem marginal in the larger story of transnational Black Power, they had a profound influence on how Surinamese Black Power advocates envisioned their future.

Domestically, the BPS had mixed successes. For three years, the group organized many activities in and around Paramaribo. These activities ranged anywhere from community support to political lobbying, leading to collaborations even with government officials. In hindsight, however, the most impactful activities of the BPS were probably Karg and Lashley's writings in *De Vrije Stem* and other newspapers, which led to nationwide debates on racial unity, cooperation, and decolonization. As this chapter has shown, responses to their writings were deeply divided. On the one hand, Karg and Lashley's ideas led to quite a lot of criticism, accusing the Black Panther leaders of racial determinism, inauthenticity, and even obstructing the nationalist cause. At the same time, it is undeniable that their writings generated an interest in the Black Power movement, helping them gain a few hundred followers over the course of three years. Many of these followers were also involved in the broader anticolonial movement, which at one point even led to a discussion about the incorporation of Black Power into the formal ideology of the PNR, though this proposal was quickly denied.[621]

Though the Black Power organization was no longer around by the time Suriname gained independence, it is possible that the group's popularity had some influence on the process. At least, that is what sociologist Edward Dew has suggested in *The Difficult Flowering of Suriname* (1977), still considered one of the most detailed studies of the period to this day. Reflecting on the years leading up to independence, Dew argued that the "most obvious explanation" for the victory of the Afro-Surinamese bloc in the 1973 elections was that "the appeals for Creole solidarity (made earlier by the Black Power Organization …) had struck a responsive note, bringing this group together in a show of unity that was virtually unprecedented in Surinam's modern history."[622] Having received such widespread exposure in national newspapers and having even organized a roundtable with members of different political parties, Dew might have had a point. At the same time, it would be impossible to determine how much of the rhetoric of Black unity really came from the BPS, as other Afrocentric organizations like Wie Eegie Sanie had made similar calls decades earlier.

[621] "Negende PNR-Congres," *De Ware Tijd*, September 22, 1970, 3.

[622] Dew, *The Difficult Flowering of Surinam*, 173.

Regardless of the question whether Black Power Suriname influenced Surinamese independence or not, it is important to recognize the history of the BPS in the broader context of Surinamese anticolonialism. While Karg's organization was by no means the first to call for Black empowerment or self-determination in the country, it did introduce the moment to a new internationalist approach, bringing questions of transnational solidarity and unity to the fore.[623] Recognizing the existence of groups like the BPS in this era not only broadens our knowledge of Surinamese anticolonialism but also complicates it, showing that even within the pro-independence section of society there were divergent visions for a decolonial future. In that sense, nationalism and Black Power did not necessarily clash, but were complimentary. For Karg, connecting Suriname to the global network of the Black Power movement was a way to strengthen the pursuit of and preemptively safeguard independence. He became a Black Power advocate not in spite of but because of his dedication to the nationalist cause.

[623] As mentioned in the introduction, there is a longer history of Black internationalism in Suriname. This argument is made specifically with regard to the movement of the 1960s and 1970s.