



## ***Representation of Africa and the African Diaspora in European Museums***

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**Abstract:** Museums in Europe have a tradition of marginalizing the image and narrative of persons from the African Diaspora. This is often evident in the frequency of appearances and the quality of these scarce productions. Another point of interest is the manner in which these productions are presented. On the one hand, several questions arise regarding the representation of the African after the abolishment of chattel slavery right up to this present age of emancipation. Who gathers and presents these cultural artifacts? Which criteria are applied during the gathering and production of these presentations? Which sorts of museums are inclined to present the African Diaspora in their productions? On the other hand, the participation of persons from the African Diaspora in museums in Europe is problematic. Persons of African Diaspora are not by definition employed as administrators, curators and other stakeholders in these museums. Interest in Europe about Africa and the African Diaspora has always been partial, distorted or deficient. In the cases where attention has been paid to the African Diaspora, it has been by and large of a negative nature. A central point of inquiry is why this state of affairs has been perpetuated for such long a period of time? In this paper, the author focuses on several aspects of representation of the African Diaspora in European museums in relation to power construction, which goes hand in hand with racism and social exclusion. The main points of departure in this paper are the articulation and location of representation of the African Diaspora especially from the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the present day. Additionally, the author raises questions about the ways in which NiNsee (The National Institute of Dutch Slavery Past and Legacy) is developing its own distinctive image of the Dutch slavery past and its heritage and how it is attempting at the same time to foster an alternative representation of the African Diaspora.

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

Any effort to assess the representations of people of African descent in museums must address a number of key issues and confront a number of problems. Museums in Europe have a tradition of marginalizing representations, images and narratives of people from Africa and the Diaspora. This

is often evident in the (in)frequency of appearances and the quality of the presented work. Another point of interest is the manner in which these productions are offered. On one level the question arises regarding the representation of the African after the abolition of chattel slavery to this present age of emancipation. On the other level it has become almost commonplace to

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seek but find little or no positive images of the African Diaspora in these museums. Why has there been such a packaging over the years of the African Diaspora for viewing, displaying and the entertainment of white Europeans? Who gathers and presents African Diaspora cultural artifacts and other material? What criteria are applied during the collection and production of these presentations? And which kinds of museums are inclined to present the African Diaspora in their production?

The representation of persons from the African Diaspora in museums in Europe remains problematic. There are still too many narrow and one-sided representations, with distortions and misrepresentations. One of the major reasons that this is the case is that people of African Descent are not commonly employed as administrators, curators and other stakeholders in these museums. People of African descent are hardly consulted to participate in productions and presentations, even when these are dealing with their way of life or cultural practices. The main points of departure in this paper are the articulation and location of representation of the African Diaspora especially from the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the present day. Additionally I raise questions about the ways in which NiNsee (The National Institute of Dutch Slavery Past and Legacy) is developing its own distinctive image of the Dutch slavery past and its heritage and how it is attempting at the same time to foster an alternative representation of the African Diaspora.

In assessing the role of NiNsee, it is imperative to locate NiNsee in the context of museum, galleries and exhibits in the Netherlands. NiNsee is not a museum, but rather it has a gallery and exhibit space. This exhibit space is unique. In this respect it is not a classical museum, like those typically found in many of the cities in the Netherlands or for that matter any place else in Europe. European museums are commonly experienced and adept at

displaying paintings, material artifacts, a range of physical items, as well as icons, illustrations and other objects which represent the glory of Europe in general or specifically a certain theme in relation to European history, culture, grandeur, taste, personalities, fancy and what else they choose to place on a pedestal. This is tantamount to a distortion of the real range of European societies and experiences. Eichstedt and Small (2002) offer a description of southern plantation museums and history. According to them, what becomes accepted as history is often what comes from the dominant group—whether it be dominance in the arena of class, race, gender, sexuality, nationality or something else (Eichstedt and Small 2002:16). For a long period of time in the modern age the dominant group not only wrote the history but also determined the content of the museums. This dominance has begun to change, especially with the arrival of hundreds of thousands of migrants in Europe from the former colonies in the Caribbean and also from independent African countries. These groups and individuals have questioned the misrepresentations, challenged the assumptions and proposed more accurate representations.

Interest in Europe about Africa and the African Diaspora has always been partial, distorted or deficient. In the cases where attention has been paid to the African Diaspora it has been by and large of a negative nature. A central point of inquiry is why has this state of affairs been perpetuated for such long a period of time? The historical record in Europe provides clear evidence of the various ways in which individuals and groups have tried to influence 'the powers that be' to take a different and more varied outlook of the manner in which people of the African Diaspora are portrayed in their museums and the amount of time this is done (Fryer 1984; Ramdin 1987). These efforts had very limited success. In bringing the representa-

tion of the African Diaspora in the European museum into focus, we bring to this discussion a range of historical examples of world exhibitions held in Europe in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

In this paper, I focus on several aspects of representation of the African Diaspora in European museums in relation to power construction, which goes hand in hand with racism and social exclusion. This is done by making use of the developments within NiNsee to give the reader an exposé of how one manages the placing of certain information and images into the center of attention, which have been buried for years in the belly and dungeons of large and not so large European museums. Stuart Hall (1994) declares that one needs a change from the struggle over the relations of representation to a politics of representation itself (1994:442). This I interpret as meaning, it is time to stop worrying about their representations of you and begin representing yourself.

## II. RACE AND REPRESENTATION

The practice and history of portraying the African Diaspora in a narrow and particular manner is linked not only to the institutions of slavery and colonialism, but also closely to the birth of the new imperialism period 1880–1930, and to the accompanying ideologies of scientific racism (Collins 2000; Brown and Webb 2007). This was a period fuelled by a spirit to conquer, dominate and divide Africa among a few European nations via the deployment of anthropological adventures, which were part and parcel of the mission and submission efforts of Europeans to dominate Africans and people of other continents and cultures. The so-called research findings of these anthropologists were a blessing in disguise for the imperialists. Studies pertaining to physical anthropology and biology were especially used to construct

typologies of the 'human' races. During the several centuries leading up to the period of dividing up and distributing African land among European states, the history and experience of the slave trade and chattel slavery provided a clear indication of where whites and blacks were to be located in the racial hierarchy (Banton 1977; Gossett 1965). Racism as an underpinning of racialized enslavement is localized by some scholars as an important factor within the general colonial matrix of power (Grosfoguel 2006; Mignolo 2008).

It has also been recorded that discrimination against Blacks in Western Europe existed well before the introduction of slavery in the Americas and the Caribbean (Gould 1993). It became racism when racial prejudice was combined with ethnocentrism in the service of the slave societies (Lampe 2001:114). Racial subordination and social terrorism were routine and popular instruments of repression during the Atlantic slave trade and chattel slavery. Chattel slavery was irrepressibly and inextricably racialized. Central to this process were legal representations. Every black man, woman and child had to bear evidence on their person to prove that they were not enslaved. It goes without saying that anti-black racism is not just a social construct but a living fact, which has its roots in the 16<sup>th</sup> century slave societies. The enslavement of Africans from the 16<sup>th</sup> century to provide free labour in the Americas and the Caribbean area went hand in hand with an ideology of racial superiority and domination (Miles, 1982). In simple terms, it just happened that in the age of the enlightenment and Christian morality, European thinkers had to find a cover for their nakedness in regards to the enslavement of Africans.

The uprisings in Europe of the protestants against the Roman Catholics in the 16<sup>th</sup> century which led to the protestant reformation is also an important factor that helped to shape the meaning pertaining to

racialized enslavement. John Calvin (1509–1564) provided a theological theory of predestination. His teachings specified who was chosen and who was condemned. The holy bible was used as an instrument to certify that Africans were condemned by God to be enslaved in the service of whites. Prior to the European conference in Berlin, Germany, regarding the European expansionist drive in the 1880s to divide and conquer Africa, scientists and other learned persons had already advertised the presumed biological superiority of the white race (Banton 1977). Carl Linnaeus (1707–1778) a botanist and zoologist among other things, presented his colleagues and others research material for the biological definition of the human race in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. His works next to Charles Darwin's (1809–1882) work were extensively used to justify the ill treatment and dehumanization of those enslaved. The theory was that they were unfit or undeserving of equality. It is rather ironic that the offices and gallery of NiNsee stand today in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in the Linnaeusstreet in Amsterdam—a street named to honor this very person.

### III. THE ESTABLISHMENT AND ACTIVITIES OF NiNSEE

The Atlantic slave trade and Chattel slavery in the Caribbean—whether English, Spanish, French, Danish, Dutch or other—are not topics or themes which are popular in the media, academia, in museums or with the general public in European nations. This is especially so in the Netherlands. It took the Netherlands 140 years after the abolition of legal slavery before any serious institutional attention was directed towards public acknowledgment of slavery and its legacies. In all those years silence was the resounding norm. Many scholars have documented the ways in which museums (along with galleries and

exhibitions) are sites where knowledge and power are played out (Coombes 1994; Horton and Horton 2006; Eichsted and Small 2002). They view the museum as creative agencies but also as 'contested terrains.' NiNsee operates in the same context.

It took many years before the national monuments pertaining to Dutch slavery in the West were erected. First was the National Slavery Monument in the Eastern park in Amsterdam in 2002. NiNsee as knowledge centre followed in 2003. NiNsee was born out of a struggle by the Afro-Caribbean (Surinamese and Antillean) grassroots individuals and organizations. It was a context in which most institutions, and even schools and educational institutions, provided limited, unsatisfactory and highly problematic representations and/or discussion of slavery and its legacies. The ambitions and aspirations of the communities were high and still remain high in terms of what the expected actions from NiNsee are. They are to a certain degree constantly comparing the mis-representations and or representations of NiNsee of the African Diaspora with those used by the various institutions, museums and galleries in the Netherlands.

NiNsee is involved in a range of activities that create, interpret and disseminate knowledge. At NiNsee we utilize the gallery and exhibit space as educational instruments. In other words as tools to represent the narrative of the Dutch slavery past and its heritage from a different perspective than that which prevails more generally in the Netherlands. Our approach represents a new phenomenon in the Netherlands. The International Slavery Museum of Liverpool in the United Kingdom is different than that at NiNsee. Hence both cannot be compared.

NiNsee as a knowledge centre is structured around five main pillars, these are: 1) The setting-up and conducting of research pertaining to the Dutch slavery past and its

legacies; 2) The preparation and development of school and general educational information regarding the same; 3) Using the findings of research and public history to display and share knowledge through exhibitions in the gallery; 4) Creating space to gather all the relevant documents and other sources of information, whether printed and or audio visual works, regarding this history and its heritage; 5) And last but not least, the organizing of the annual national commemoration and remembrance day of the abolition of Dutch slavery in the Caribbean and the breaking of the chains festival on the 1<sup>st</sup> of July, the commemoration of the Tula uprising in 1795 on the 17<sup>th</sup> of August and also the commemoration of UNESCO International day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of August.

Next to these main activities NiNsee also organizes public lectures, at least twice per month. These lectures are given by local and international scholars, a Summer school program in June articulating Black European thinkers is also a yearly event, which lasts for two weeks. There is also a yearly international symposium. In all these respects, NiNsee plays an important role in the facilitating of the grassroots organizations to undertake their own activities. Another preoccupation of NiNsee is working in cooperation with other institutions and organizations to further realize joint objectives. These are just a few of the endeavors that are generally administered by NiNsee. In essence NiNsee is a certified private foundation with a statutory board of directors. The foundation receives a yearly grant from the Dutch government based on a classified plan and budget.

In the case of NiNsee a wide range of efforts are made to present the African Diaspora in a manner that speaks to the essence of one's own being and viewpoint. This was a conscious decision taken from the moment NiNsee came into being in

2003, and it was a central factor in shaping the first permanent exhibition produced called 'Breaking the Silence.' Having gone through the first development stages we are now bent on revamping the exhibition to meet present needs.

#### IV. COLONIAL MUSEUMS AND EXHIBITIONS

There exist, according to figures gathered from the Dutch Association of Museums, approximately 1000 museums in the Netherlands. In the case of Amsterdam, the national capital, there are round and about 129 museums. In terms of museums dedicated to exhibiting peoples, cultures and artifacts from the colonial past there are four: The Royal Museum of the Tropics, Amsterdam (KIT) located just across the street from NiNsee; the African Museum in Berg aan Daal; the World Museum in Rotterdam; and another African museum in Cader and Keer in the extreme South of the country. There also exists a Mollocan Museum which, not unlike NiNsee, is administrated and run by the Mollucans.

These four museums focus on the 'other' and are still chiefly interested in presenting the Dutch and or other foreign visitors with a view or an opinion regarding the exotic other. The penchant for presenting the 'other' in large scale exhibitions seems to hark back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when this was envisaged by the powers that be as the obvious thing to do (Blanchard et al. 2008; Coombes 1994). Such exhibits were framed by a crude dichotomy on western and non-western, in order to contrast the civilized world as against the uncivilized world. For example a World exhibition was organized in Paris in 1878 (Nieuwsbrief geschiedenis 2010). It was at that moment the biggest exhibition of natives, these being about 400 colonial subjects from Senegal, Indochina and Tahiti in their makeshift huts. The natives were

required to behave and act as if they were in their natural habitats. Next to offering entertainment to the thousands of Parisians, French and other European visitors, it was also an ideological approach to demonstrate the superiority of the colonizer vis-à-vis those who were primitive and had to be colonized.

Another very interesting case, worth relating here, is a book presentation which was done at NiNsee in 2009. This book is called 'De Inboorling' in Dutch, meaning 'the Natives.' It was written by Stevo Akkerman, a Dutch journalist, who is employed at a national newspaper, called *Parool* which has Amsterdam as its base and brings a great deal of news and opinions having to do with Amsterdam. The writer of the book set out to paint a picture based on historical facts with a mixture of fiction. The narrative has its roots in an exhibition that was held in Amsterdam in 1883. The purpose of the exhibition was not unlike the world exhibition in Paris to have West Indians and Indigenous people displaying themselves to the general public. This was 20 years after the abolition of Dutch slavery in the Caribbean region and also 10 years after the end of apprenticeship in the then Dutch colony of Surinam. Akkerman claims in the book to have found interesting material in one of the larger museums in Amsterdam. This museum and the findings also play a role in the book.

The representation of slavery abolition was that they were made free by the compassionate Dutch King. These ex-enslaved had no notion of the fact that this same King William III was a staunch opponent of their freedom. He was in fact a dedicated slave-owner. He, like the other Dutch slave-owners and planters, demanded financial compensation for giving up of their property. They were compensated at the rate of 300 guilders per enslaved in Surinam (Willemsen 2006). The enslaved got nothing. Neither did they know of the

compensation. What they viewed as benevolence was to the King a business disaster. In fact they were brought on a pretense to Europe as representatives of the native, the savage and the uncivilized—i.e., as what it was like to be different from the biological and socially white. Before they left Surinam they were taught songs of praise to the King and were overwhelmed with joy for the opportunity to meet and greet their bogus freedom fighter. One of their foremost wishes was also to complain to the King regarding their social economic position after attaining their freedom. A freedom tantamount to what W.E.B. Du Bois referred to in the context of the United States as a mockery of freedom (Du Bois 1990:107). In fact, the extra semi-enslavement referred to as apprenticeship was actually a new construction fabricated by the planters and the legislature council members to delude many into thinking that this system was meant to teach those Africans who would have attained their freedom from chattel slavery about how to work and become civilized (Willemsen 2006). This was rather ironic because by that particular moment in history the enslaved had been forced and brutalized for centuries into furnishing free labour in the service of western expansion, industrialization and capitalism. In this book dealing with the natives one is told that the Africans and a few indigenous persons of Surinam origin were tricked into making the journey to the Netherlands. The supposed purpose of this trip was to pay their respect and tribute to King William III of the Netherlands and thank him for securing their freedom from slavery.

They were placed in a tent in Amsterdam on one of the squares for months on end, where they remained throughout various seasons. Their temporary dwelling place was also in their show arena. The local populace and other visitors, who could afford it paid one quarter (25 cents) to see, ridicule, mock and scorn them. These

natives thought they were waiting for the King to make an entrance. In fact they were part and parcel of a racist circus. In the period of waiting for the King to make his appearance one young man from the indigenous group died. The King did visit the exhibition on the first day and did the ceremonial opening. However, the minute he was finished he disappeared (Akkerman 2009).

Being involved with the organizing of the presentation, I was among those who read the book. We were also able to contact and invite a black woman, Mavis Carrilho as a panelist for the panel discussion. She is a somewhat prominent black businesswoman who moves around in the Dutch business and cultural circles. She had earlier told us that one of the persons brought to the Netherlands to validate white superiority was her great, great grandmother. The picture of her great, great grandmother happens to be pasted against the windows of our building. Actually we have photographs of all of these persons who were brought to the Netherlands, represented separately on the surrounding glass windowpanes of our building. The photograph of her great, great grandmother on the glass was one of the elements that assisted us in arranging a lively panel discussion of five participants. The mere fact that these photographs are displayed on the windows distinguished NiNsee from other organizations in the area. It is also a clear representation and a testimony to those who travel along the building, that somehow there is a connection between the folks on photographs on the windowpanes and other persons in the Dutch society.

We use this example of the book *De Inboorling* to illustrate the historical continuities in misrepresenting Black people as 'the other,' in distorting their lives and experiences for the satisfaction of European audiences. The point is that even though chattel slavery was abolished in the Dutch

Caribbean colonies on the 1<sup>st</sup> of July 1863, exhibits 20 years later continued to objectify and exoticise Black people. And even up to the present the representation of the African has not changed in any fundamental way. Akkerman did not bother himself with any analysis having to do with epistemic racism, domination, colonialism or false representations. What he emphasized was the ambivalent issues that his main character, the black Surinamese civil servant in a Dutch organization, had relating to his identity. This main character thought he had everything, including a white girlfriend and yet he later came to realize that he only had himself and all his identity issues.

The examples just given are not unique or exceptional. In fact, they are indicative of common practices over the last 200 years. The representations in Dutch and European museums, of people of the African Diaspora in these narrow, distorted and peculiar manner continued in fact throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. For example, in 1897 a large and popular exhibition of 'negroes' was organized in Brussels, Belgium (Nieuwsbrief geschiedenis 2010). This consisted of about 200 Congolese. During this 'negro' exhibition, seven of the persons exhibited died. There were no registered protest or opposition to this exhibition. To compound matters even worse, King Leopold II of Belgium considered the Congo as his personal property and hence claimed the right to do what he wanted with his property. The atrocities, theft and destruction, which had been committed in his name in the Congo were viewed as "collateral damage" in relationship to the civilization of the African 'savages.'

Another example of racist representations is the large 'negro' exhibition held in Rotterdam in 1928 (Nieuwsbrief geschiedenis 2010). A special 'negro' village was built in a Lunapark in Rotterdam to coincide with the Olympic games, which were held

in Amsterdam in 1928. The 'negro' exhibition was a section of the industrial exhibition called 'Nenijto,' which aimed at the promotion of national trade. One of the highlights of this negro exhibition was the birth of the child Amadou in this village (zoo). He was the son of Prosper Seek and his wife, who were also held in the village. Commandant Prosper Seek, a Senegalese by birth, was said to have been a decorated captain in the French army. Prosper Seek was compelled to wear his World War I uniform with decoration of valor received from the French government during the period, in which he and his family were being exhibited in the negro village. This state of affair was such that there was not a minimum of protest regarding the manner in which these persons were represented in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century as animals in a zoo.

## V. GENERAL REPRESENTATION OF THE BLACK WOMAN

Actually, the history of European museums can be located and framed in a few words: The glorification of European past and present in terms of history, religion, culture, art, war heroes, pioneers and thinkers. Even though this history is riddled with theft, plunder and the looting of the treasures which rightfully belong to other folks around the world, this was not an attribute in the representation of the European in their museums and galleries. Their story is an imperial narrative of heroism, conquest, civilization and modernity.

Over the years the tendency has been to display people of the African Diaspora in stereotypes meant to buttress certain ill-conceived images based on racialized ideologies. Negative and distorted images of Black women have played a major part in this. Exoticism is frequently used to depict Africans and other women of colour. The so-called Hottentot Venus or Bush woman is a very good example, where the

representation was meant to depict the African woman in an inappropriate fashion. The story of Saartje Baartman started with Dutch colonists in 1810 in Cape of Good Hoop. She was a member of the khoi-San tribe of South Africa. She was sold by Dutch colonists to the British who proceeded by taking her to London for exhibitions purposes. It was said that due to her big buttocks and protruding vulva, she was seen and accepted as the living representative of the wild animal inclinations and sexual temperament of the black woman (Wikipedia.org).

Similar representations can be found in today's media, particularly in glossy magazines, television, videos, DVDs, etc. The black woman is still placed out there as being without a true essence of decent womanhood. That is, in the sense of how the Western world interprets and labels true womanhood, in a Eurocentric fashion. One is aware that in Western countries images are created for particular reasons. It is often a question of what you see and how you interpret it. However, the context in which the image is presented is important in relation to the interpretation. So, too, is the context of accumulated knowledge in society regarding certain individuals and groups. The manner in which one looks and interprets is governed by the social laws of race, ethnicity, skin color, gender, sexuality, and a host of other real and imagined factors. If a certain image is presented repeatedly chances are that this image will be seen and interpreted as natural and truthful.

However, in recent years there have been fundamental changes in the manner in which the black woman has been represented. Barson (2010) analyses works of O'Grady on the one hand, and on the other hand, Gilroy to certify that since the 1980s and even before this period, black women artists have been investigating the representation of the black female body and giving them another framing. This concep-



tualization of Barson was fully evident during the exhibition “Afro Modern: Journey through the Black Atlantic” held at the Tate Liverpool from 29 January to 25 April 2010. In this particular exhibition black women artists such as Tracey Rose, Sonia Boyce, Kara Walker, Ana Mendieta plus others provide a sort of Stuart Hallish self-representation through existing bodies of racism and rationalism. These developments ensued in a context in which African-Caribbeans and others mobilized to protest racist images in the media, in schools and in museums (Small 1997).

To date, we have not been witnesses to large-scale protest or opposition to the representation of the African Diaspora in the Netherlands, whether within or without the museum. One exception was *Negrofila* (White over Black) done by Felix de Rooy, an Antillean Dutch, who was one of the founders of *Foundatuion Cosmic Illusion*. This was around the period of 1989/1990. There have been recent exhibitions such as ‘Black is Beautiful’ in Amsterdam, and in few other museums attention was paid to the presence of the immigrant (the black) in the Dutch society, but these have been scarce productions. It is obvious that if change is going to come and action has to be taken, this has to be the prerogative of Afro-Caribbean persons, those from the African Diaspora and others in the Netherlands. One cannot wait and hope that someone else is prepared and willing to do it on his/her behalf.

## VI. NiNSEE’S OPTIONS TO PRESENT ANOTHER IMAGE

NiNsee has been using its unique position as a centre of knowledge in the Netherlands to make a difference. Our work is driven by knowledge through research and education, learning and making information available throughout the nation and in fact the world. We recognize knowledge

production and dissemination as our core business. The main goal is to reach out to educate as many persons as possible about the Dutch slavery past and its legacies. The fundamental assumption is that here lies the key towards influencing the representation of the African on various levels and in different arenas within the society.

NiNsee does not visualize and/or conceptualize the Dutch slavery past and its heritage as an issue that lends itself to entertainment, it is taken more seriously. Enslavement was and remains a solemn history. And it is a history that must be approached with full attention to the facts, and with appreciation of the sensitivity of the issues. In an age when much could be done using the social media and a host of new technological gadgets, the belief is that now more than ever everyone has a responsibility to pay closer attention to the representation of the African Diaspora in Europe, whether inside and outside of the museum. If this means having to refuse to participate in certain preconceived programs or projects produced by others, then so be it. NiNsee will only participate or produce material for its gallery and in other arenas, which does not present persons of the African Diaspora in a manner that depicts black men and women constructively.

At NiNsee we recognize that we are not the only institution involved in a struggle over representations of the past; and we are not the only institution involved in discussions about the many artifacts and precious items acquired during colonialism that are currently housed in museums across Europe. The fact that the British are embroiled with Greece relating to the true ownership of the Elgin Marbles is a good example of vandalism and looting within the European realms. The Elgin Marbles are still in the British Museum and Athens is still waiting for their return. In many European museum depots there are enough African related art, objects and property to

full many exhibition halls in Paris and Amsterdam. In the case of Africa there has been numerous plunders and exploitation of people, including the Benin Bronzes (Coombes 1994). This went hand in hand with the theft of artifacts, precious stones and other riches from Egypt in the North to South Africa in the South. However, if Greece, a European country and member of the European Union is having difficulties reclaiming artifacts related to its cultural heritage, what are the chances of African countries to retrieve theirs? The struggle must continue.

It goes without saying that, on its own, NiNsee is not capable of turning around five hundred years of history colored and impregnated with the Caribbean or (better said) the transatlantic slave trade, chattel slavery and colonialism—a history of attempted total and comprehensive domination and misrepresentation. But our endeavors at NiNsee are very important, symbolically, and they also represent in concrete ways a set of initiatives that we believe will get the ball rolling and raise awareness and consciousness of the issues. We also believe that our work will lead to new projects and research being carried out, as well as to new frameworks of analysis. We see the framework of the African diaspora as a key feature of this analysis. By this we mean locating the experiences of Dutch slavery in the context of other European nations and slavery, their impact on Africa, the establishment and growth of colonies across the Americas based on enslaved labor, and all the legacies that result from them.

Central to our framework is the identification of commonalities that the Dutch share with other nations, as well as the unique aspects of the Dutch slavery experience. And we insist on examining, representing and highlighting the African diaspora links—political, social and cultural ideologies of Black people across the Diaspora, shared with one another for

survival and success. These include resistance and rebellion, maroons, religion, music, political formations and pan-Africanism. The objective is and remains to work with other local, national, and international organizations and institutions to further an agenda geared at gaining and disseminating knowledge regarding the Dutch slavery past and legacies. This is of essential importance to the entire Dutch populace, because the heritage of that slavery past is an everyday experience in the present day society.

And we believe that before NiNsee came into existence there was very little knowledge, information, or analysis of Dutch slavery past and its legacies. We plan to change that because, in a sense, the manner in which individuals and groups see each other and or are represented in the media, academia and in other arenas of the society chiefly determines the ensuring racial and social relations.

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