

# **Public History, Collective Memory and Competing Representations of Slavery and its Legacies in England and the Netherlands<sup>1</sup>**

**Stephen Small, University of California, Berkeley  
Kwame Nimako, University of Amsterdam**

**Paper presented at International Political Science Association Annual Conference, Madrid, Spain, July 8, 2012.**

**Panel: Postcolonial memories and identity politics in Europe  
Organisers: Renaud Hourcade and Noémi Michel**

## **ABSTRACT**

The struggle to end the slave trade and slavery in England and the Netherlands was immediately superseded by a struggle to publically remember and collectively represent the nature of slavery and its legacies. It was also accompanied by efforts to distort, suppress or symbolically annihilate public memory of slavery. Each nation reveals common elements, including long term refusal to officially or publically acknowledge slavery and its legacies; the large scale immigration and settlement of the descendants of the enslaved in the metropolis; the social mobilization of these Black immigrants and settlers for public recognition of slavery and its legacies; and the uneven incorporation of demands for recognition in a range of public institutions. Black migration, settlement and social mobilization in the metropolis are the primary reasons for the increased public attention to slavery and its legacies at the present time. And active borrowing of information, ideologies, and institutions from across the Diaspora, by Black groups in both nations, has been a key tactic for achieving these results. Gender, and the unequal access of men and women to knowledge and positions of power, systematically shaped all these processes outcomes. In both nations today the public history and collective memory of slavery and its legacies is currently reflected in the activities of five social movements or trends: The remembrance and commemoration movement, the reparations movement, the anniversaries and apologies trend, the museum heritage and artefacts trend and the new anti-slavery movement. These groups reveal unequal processes of social forgetting and social remembering; and they promote dramatically different public histories of the nature of slavery and its legacies. They also reveal highly divergent access to knowledge production, knowledge dissemination and political power. The differences between these groups are fundamental and highly consequential. The first three movements/trends highlight public history and

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<sup>1</sup> We are comparing two nations – the United Kingdom and the Netherlands – but as the vast majority of Black people in the UK live in England, most of our analysis mainly relates to England and we do not claim that our analysis also applies to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

public accountability of slavery and its legacies; the fourth trend shares some common element with the first three; and the fifth trend marginalizes past slavery and its legacies in order to highlight what is called 'modern slavery'.

The institutional grounding and influence of the movements that strive to increase public history and public accountability for slavery and its legacies (the first three movements) are currently (2012) under threat in both nations. Due to the small size and limited institutional power of Black communities; the relative incorporation of some demands into the mainstream; the political preoccupation with Muslims and Islam; the dire effects of economic recession and its repercussions; the resurgence of conservative and nativist forces; and new circuits of international migration that have led to significant increases in populations of new migrants and permanent settlers. These forces threaten to contain, stall and possibly reverse some of the gains made already. While the two nations share many common elements, we argue that the outcomes that emerge for public history and collective memory of slavery and its legacies are far more likely to be determined by the specific developments in each nation. In this paper we describe the range of groups, organizations and activities that currently exist; we describe the ways in which Diasporic exchange has been central to the success of groups pushing for public recognition and accountability; we identify the unique patterns in each nation that pose a serious threat to maintaining public histories of slavery and its legacies; and we assess the likely developments in the coming decade.

## Introduction

The European slave trade and slavery lasted hundreds of years, involved thousands of voyages across the so-called middle passage, resulted in the kidnapping and enslavement of millions of Africans, and produced economic activity worth hundreds of millions of dollars that benefited European nations (Eltis and Richardson, 2010). Slavery involved the British, Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, French and Danish across the Americas; its legacies are manifest in key areas of economic, political and social life across Europe today. During these several hundred years Europeans and Africans lived parallel lives and intertwined belongings (Nimako and Willemsen, 2011). By parallel lives and intertwined belongings we mean that they occupied the same spaces but experienced them from different vantage points. Europeans and African shared the same spaces in the castles of west Africa, but while Europeans locked the gates, Africans were the ones locked up; they shared the same spaces on the ships of the middle passage, but Africans were kept below in chains, and Europeans were above without chains; and they shared the same spaces on plantations, but Black men and women worked in the fields and lived in slave cabins, while whites wine and dined in the big house mansions. These groups shared intertwined belongings - relationships of mutual dependence, work, family, sexual relationships, religion and entertainment - but they experienced them from fundamentally different positions of power, law and social status. When slavery was legally abolished, white master-enslavers bemoaned the human property they had lost, sought (and received) financial compensation for the loss

of this property and their priority was to find new ways to coerce and exploit Black labour. At the same time, Black people embraced their long sought after legal freedom, thought of and pursued their family members that had been sold down the river, and prioritised issues of self-determination and economic independence.

And once slavery legally ended, the struggle to end it was immediately superseded by a struggle to remember or suppress remembrance of slavery (Nimako and Willemsen, 2011; Fryer, 1984; Ramdin, 1987). The parallel lives and intertwined belongings that characterized slavery were decisive in shaping the paths and priorities that emerged. They gave rise to divergent memories of what had transpired. Powerful nation states such as Great Britain and the Netherlands sought to suppress, marginalize, distort or selectively highlight aspects of slavery and its legacies. And they did so largely in public spaces, spearheaded by the state, disseminated throughout educational institutions and funded with extensive resources. While at the same time, small Black communities sought to commemorate, memorialize and remember resistance, resilience and the humanity of the enslaved. And they were largely confined to private spaces, unfunded or systematically opposed by the state, marginalized in the educational realm, and with highly limited resources. Gender and the differential location of men and women in knowledge production and knowledge dissemination again fundamentally shaped outcomes. In the public domain and in the private domain. These divergent memories have continued in each nation ever since, and they are manifest in each nation at the present time (2012) though at the present time, the parallel lives, intertwined belongings and divergent memories are far more intricately entangled than ever before.

### Five movements and trends

In both nations today (2012) the public history and collective memory of slavery and its legacies is currently reflected in the activities of five social movements or trends. These movements or trends are highly racialized, and irrepressibly gendered. And they differ fundamentally in their assumptions, their conceptualization of slavery and its continuing relevance; their organizational groups; and in their access to political power and knowledge production processes. These groups promote overlapping but dramatically different public histories of the nature of slavery and its legacies.

The first movement is *the remembrance and commemoration movement*. Led primarily by Black people, it seeks explicit and public acknowledgement of slavery and its legacies, including emphasis on the humanity of the victims of slavery. It is the movement that has most consistently recognized slavery and its legacies, with many activities beginning the very moment that slavery was legally abolished (Nimako and Willemsen, 2011). It can be found overwhelmingly in private spaces, and increasingly in public spaces in Black communities and Black organizations in both nations.

In England this movement has always been reflected in poetry, song and music, in carnivals and street festivals, in religious gatherings and memorial services, and in group discussions and celebration of anniversaries. In England,

slavery and its legacies is ever present throughout the Notting Hill Carnival, as well as a wide range of activities in Black History Month (October) each year. It is evident in Black community organizations including self-help groups and educational groups from London and Liverpool to Birmingham and Bristol. Black women have been central to all these activities (Bryan, et al, 1985). In England the impact of Rastafari as a religious, political and social movement, has always played a decisive role in these activities and continues to do so today. And the role of Reggae music provided a conduit for wider public dissemination of themes and issues (Campbell, 1985; Small, 1983). It is reflected also in the work of Black churches. Research by Madge Dresser documents that legacy of slavery in terms of the monuments and memorials built, and still in existence across the nation, to honor and publically commend the master-enslavers and the politicians and establishment figures from British history that supported them (Dresser, 2007).

In the Netherlands, the relatively smaller Black communities also reveal activities to commemorate and remember slavery. Black communities organized community remembrance and commemorations, and issues of slavery and its legacy were addressed in churches, in community organizations and events, in festivals and in music and poetry (Willemsen, 2006). It was initiatives from within the Black community that led to the slavery monument (formally unveiled in July 2002) and to the establishment of Ninsee (The National Institute for the Study of Dutch Slavery and its Legacy), which opened in July 2003 (Stipriaan, 2001). As Willemsen points out, “before the official monument for commemoration, there were commemorators” (Willemsen, 2006). He then asks, “Who were these commemorators?” His response is that they involved a series of Black groups and organizations that laid root and expanded with the migration and settlement of Surinamese in the Netherlands in the 1970s. These groups were “the seed bed for the development of organisations in the major cities of Amsterdam, Rotterdam and The Hague” (Willemsen, 2006). Today these organizations include the Nationaal 30 juni/1 juli Comité (national 30 June/1 July committee); the Keti Koti festival on July 1<sup>st</sup> each year; the Stichting Eer en Herstel, Betaling Slachtoffers van de Slavernij in Suriname; and Sophiedela, which is an Afro-European Women’s movement with branches in the Netherlands and elsewhere. It also includes the Stichting van slavernij in Middleburg, (the town in Zeeland responsible for outfitting the ships “that carried about 30 percent of the Dutch Slave Trade between 1601 and 1803” which involved the transportation of 180,00 captives that were enslaved (Horton and Kardux, 2005, p. 45). At the forefront of these activities in the last 9 years has been Ninsee. Officially a national organization it has had highly sustained Black community input. And a wide range of activities have been organized by Dew Baboeram, who is the founder and director of the International Institute for Social Research. Originally from Suriname, and a long-term resident of Netherlands, he is a scholar, intellectual, activist, journalist, publisher and community organizer who has organized training sessions for teachers, symposia and conferences on reparations and related topics, and published articles and books on slavery and its legacies (Hira, 2012a, 2012b). Central to his activities is the systematic

critique of the dominant and mainstream Dutch framework for analyzing slavery and its legacies; and the articulation and elaboration of an alternate 'decolonial' framework (Hira, 2012a, 2012b). He continues to play a highly significant role in maintaining a critical framework for the analysis of slavery; in mobilizing the community to challenge dominant representations of slavery in the Netherlands and in a wide range of other activities.

The second movement, *reparations*, is also primarily Black-led. It seeks financial payments to the descendants of the enslaved; the return of stolen artifacts and precious items held in museums; and significant revision of the historical record to tell more accurate and complete story of slavery and the slave trade. The demand for reparations have been stridently articulated in Britain for at least 20 years (Small, 1994b, 1997; Brennan, 2004, 2005, 2008, 2012); and increasingly expressed in the Netherlands over the course of the last ten years. In both nations it has had a significant presence in Black communities, with only intermittent attention in the public domain, for example, when MP Bernie Grant took up the issue in the 1990s; and in the Netherlands as part of the movement to memorialize slavery (which was itself closely intertwined with efforts to combat racial discrimination) in the 1980s and 1990s. It has continued in recent years, with increased vigor in the summer of 2010, when a new book on reparations (*herstelbetalingen*) was launched, and a symposium took place, in Amsterdam, at Ons Surinam (Zunder, 2010).

In England in the early 1990s, MP Bernie Grant was responsible for moving Reparations into the public realm. As founder of the African Reparations Movement: UK branch, he was involved in international conferences on the topic (notably in Jamaica and Nigeria), made a series of public statements on the issue that garnered substantial press attention and raised the issues several times in the House of Commons. He coordinated the activities of several Black organizations, organized meetings and events, a series of press statements and information leaflets, and recruited one of the authors (Stephen Small) to undertake lectures on Reparations throughout Britain, in particular at British universities, in the early 1990s. Small was also recruited to undertaken work on museums artefacts associated with slavery. Grant also worked alongside Lord Gifford, QC on these issues. A key aspect of his call for reparations involved demanding that British museums provide an accounting of the thousands of artefacts they had plundered during imperial conquest, and return to their original owners any that had not been legitimately acquired. He pressed especially for the return of the 'Benin Bronzes' stolen from West Africa in the 1890s during the so-called 'Punitive Expedition' of the British military (Coombes, 1984). Also involved in demands for Reparations at that time was Dr. Kimani Nehusi, now senior lecturer at the University of East London. Dr. Nehusi continues to work actively for demands for Reparations, and has appeared in the documentary "500 Years Later", a compelling testimony of the legacy of slavery throughout the African Diaspora. Dr. Nehusi remains highly active in the Reparations Movement. Also active in Britain on Reparations at the present time is Ferne Brennan, Senior Lecturer in Law at Essex University, who has published on the legal aspects of Reparations and who leads an international team of experts on the

legal, economic and political aspects of Reparations (Brennan, 2004, 2005, 2008, 2012). She remains central to continuing research and legal issues to do with reparations. The lectures and publications by Catherine Hall and Nicolas Draper on the 20 million pounds paid as 'compensation' in the 1830s to the master-enslavers in the Caribbean that lost their human property, is also highly relevant in providing evidence into the financial demands and legacies of slavery (Draper, 2010). They are documenting exactly how much money was paid to each of these people, and thus provide a pathway for an examination of how much of that money ended up in England, and what was done with the money. They have an active website on these issues, and continue to give lectures, including lectures in England in 2012, and in Netherlands also.

In the Netherlands, reparations has been largely absent from the public domain, and had remained almost entirely in the discussion circles of the nation's small Black communities until very recently. The Reparations issue was forced into the public realm on several occasions, especially recently. For example, in the Black community during mobilization leading up to the national slavery monument; and a conference on reparations was organized by Ninsee in 2003 (Horton and Kardux, 2005; Horton, 2005). Several events around Reparations have taken place in 2010, spear-headed by Dew Baboeram – and the topic is currently (2012) being discussed in the public realm far more than ever before. All indications are that it has gained a sufficient level of traction to generate continued interest across a range of organizations and media. For example, two events on Reparations for the descendants of the enslaved in the Dutch colonies took place in Amsterdam in June, 2010. First, an evening of specially invited guests, representing organizations across the Netherlands, and from Suriname, the United States and France, met for an evening of discussion and a fundraiser. The following day, a one-day international symposium was organized. Both events took place at Vereniging Ons Suriname (Union of Surinamese in the Netherlands), a long-established community organization. As part of that event, a series of paper presentations on a range of topics were offered, and announcement of a recently published book on reparations, entitled "Herstelbetalingen" ("Reparations") by Armand Zunder, who also presented a paper at the event (Zunder, 2010). The book by Armand Zunder had been publically launched the week before. In it Zunder provides an economic analysis of the profits acquired during slavery in Suriname, and calculates the cost of Reparations at 50 Billion Euros. The book, and the symposium, received significant press attention in the Netherlands. Subsequently, a book just published in 2012 by Dew Baboeram, and co-edited by Marten Schalkwijk and Stephen Small, has several chapters on reparations in England and the Netherlands (Schalkwijk and Small, 2012). Several black organizations and activists are planning to make reparations a key public issues in 2013 – the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the legal abolition of slavery in the Netherlands.

The third trend is *anniversaries and apologies*. Also led by Black people, it demands public and official acknowledgement of anniversaries associated with slavery and slave trade; and apologies from government, religious organizations and other prominent groups that were involved or profited from slavery and slave

trade. This trend is a recent development, having begun in England in the last 20 years, and, much more recently in the Netherlands. In 1999 Liverpool city council apologised for slavery; in 2007, the then Mayor of London – Ken Livingstone – apologised for slavery. The British Prime Minister at the time – Tony Blair – refused to apologise for British involvement in slavery, though he has expressed ‘deep regret’ that it happened (Christian, 2007). There have been no formal apologies for slavery in the Netherlands. But demands for such apologies are bound to resurge in 2013 in the Netherlands, the 150th anniversary of the legal abolition of slavery.

Activities associated with the anniversaries of the abolition of slavery have occurred in Dutch colonies for many years, though not in the Netherlands itself (Stipriaan, 1996). They traditionally took place each year in Suriname on July 1<sup>st</sup>. This day largely acted as a formal holiday, and time was allowed for remembrance and celebration. When Surinamese immigrants and settlers arrived in large numbers in the Netherlands in the mid-1970s, they were disappointed to find that no similar activities or formal recognition existed in the metropolis itself. The experiences of celebrating the abolition of slavery in Suriname, and the desire among many in the Surinamese community to see recognition of its anniversary formally acknowledged in the Netherlands, played a significant role in the social mobilization that led to the unveiling of the Slavery Monument in July 2002, in Amsterdam and the founding of Ninsee in 2003 (Willemsen, 2006; Kardux, 2004; Horton and Kardux, 2005; Stipriann, 2001). There have not yet been any formal apologies for slavery or the slave trade from officials or government in the Netherlands, though Black organizations have called for formal apologies (and for reparations) (See Horton and Kardux, 2005). To date, the involvement of city and national government representatives in the July 1<sup>st</sup> ceremonies in Amsterdam, celebrating Slavery Emancipation Day, which began in the early 2000s, come the closest to expressions of sorrow from senior officials. There have been some expressions of regret and remorse by officials. In 2001 during the UN Durban conference dealing with racism the then Minister of city development and integration, Mr. Rogier van Boxtel expressed deep remorse, but stopped short of saying sorry. In July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2008, at the Emancipation Day Activities in Oosterpark, the Dutch Prime Minister, Jan Peter Balkenende, called slavery "a shameful episode in our history, a stain on the country's character."

The fourth trend is *the museum heritage and artefacts trend*, which is predominantly elite and white-led, and focuses on the legacy of slavery in terms of its objects, artefacts, art and physical infrastructure. This trend involves museums, exhibits, galleries, monuments and related buildings. Historically these institutions have largely focused on slavery without the enslaved, and until very recently, these institutions ignored, downplayed, or marginalized explicit discussion of slavery and its legacy, and focussed mainly on material culture, rather than humans. In other words, they have mainly presented and represented items directly associated with slavery, but without addressing slavery or its implications directly; and they have focused on slavery but without addressing the people enslaved. Where they addressed slavery it was often in ways that

glorified the nation, for example, in brining so-called civilisation and Christianity to the enslaved. And in legally abolishing slavery. Or they presented caricatures of Black men and women. Heritage movement sites frequently serve as museums and tourist attractions celebrating the spoils of Empire (for England, see Coombes, 1994). In recent decades, several commentators have criticised museums for their lack of attention to slavery and the slave trade, and for their stereotypical representations of Africa and Black people (Gifford, et al, 1989; Small, 1994c; Willemsen, 2006). Others have commented on the images of Black people in paintings and portraits in Britain in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, including some that occupied an ambiguous status between servant and enslaved person within the nation (Dabydeen, 1992).

In England foremost amongst those museums that are explicit on slavery is the Atlantic Slave Trade Gallery that opened at the Merseyside Maritime Museum in 1994 (Tibbles, 1994; Small, 1997)<sup>2</sup>. In 2007, its collections were expanded, it moved to a bigger location and it became the International Slavery Museum, including a Centre for the study of International Slavery (in conjunction with the University of Liverpool). It now explores not only transatlantic slavery, but slavery in other times and places, including 'modern slavery'. There are plans in progress for further expansion. This is the first and only permanent museum in Britain dedicated to slavery and its legacies. (The Wilberforce House Museum also addresses these issues). The initial intent in the Liverpool Gallery had been to focus exclusively on the slave trade. But this changed fundamentally. The far broader nature and framing of the issues when the gallery opened in 1994 – to cover life in Africa, a wide range of aspects of slavery, and especially the legacies of slavery, including reparations) - occurred primarily because of active involvement in the gallery by Black organizations from Liverpool and elsewhere (Small, 1997; Tibbles, 1994). Since that time, other (mainly temporary) exhibits and galleries on slavery have been started, in London, for example, at the British Museum, the London Docklands Museum, and the Horniman Museum; and in Birmingham, Manchester and Lancaster (Rice, 2007). The activities at the Wilberforce Museum have also been expanded since the gallery opened in Liverpool. The British Empire & Commonwealth Museum, which opened in 2002, addresses these issues (Wallace, 2006). A far wider range of museums and galleries than ever before in Britain now mount exhibits on slavery. Some stately homes have also begun to address the ways in which slavery contributed to family wealth, social status and the acquisition of objects (e.g. Harewood House in the north of England). In Britain, museum activities were given added impetus during 2007, which was the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the abolition of the slave trade in the British Empire (Littler, and Naidoo, 2005; Tulloch, 2005; Monteiro, 2009).

In the Netherlands, many museums possess objects, artefacts and art acquired during the period of slavery and the slave trade, and reveal an

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and we do not claim that our arguments also apply to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

<sup>2</sup> The Merseyside Maritime Museum is now the Liverpool Maritime Museum.



impressive range of architecture inspired by the Dutch colonies in the Caribbean, Suriname and in the Dutch East Indies (Oostindie, 1996, 2001). Many large houses across the nation were funded with the finances accrued during the slave trade, slavery and empire. Many objects and artefacts in them came from similar sources. And many of the significant maritime buildings in the Netherlands came into existence as a result of operations and trade directly and indirectly related to slavery. Some of the most important museums and exhibits highlight acquisitions, art or architecture made during the so-called 'Golden Age' of the Dutch Empire – a period in which there was tremendous Dutch artistic expression, in the Netherlands and abroad, while at the same time the Dutch were expanding their involvement in capturing, kidnapping and transporting hundreds of thousands of Africans into slavery. The Netherlands is also a nation with more than several hundred museums, and it has the potential for a wide range of activities. But so far only one or two initiatives have broken through this previously impenetrable barrier.

Currently, in the majority of these institutions the issue of slavery and the slave trade is omitted, obtuse, or highly circumscribed. There are very few museums, activities, galleries and exhibits that address slavery and the slave trade directly; and typically these are temporary exhibits. For example, The Tropical Museum (KIT) organized a small photo exhibition (13 June 2003-14 September 2003) called "Sporen van Slavenhandel" (Traces of Slave Trade) and also made reference to the 140 years anniversary of abolition of Dutch slavery. The Amsterdam Historical Museum organized an exhibition on sugar from 21 October 2005 to 19 February 2006. In that exhibit there was marginal reference to slavery in Suriname. Ninsee, while not officially a museum, and lacking the artefacts typically held in mainstream museums, offers a permanent exhibit on slavery, and range of temporary exhibits. However, this exhibit will be dismantled during summer 2012, as a result of the end of funding to Ninsee by the national government. It's not clear at this stage if it will be remounted in another venue. There have also emerged recently several monuments to slavery – including the static monument, The Nationaal Monument Slavernijverleden (National Monument to the Legacy of Slavery) that was unveiled on 1 July 2002 in the Oosterpark in Amsterdam, in the presence of Queen Beatrix. There is also a monument to slavery in Middleburg, a town that played a significant role in the slave trade (Horton and Kardux, 2005).

The fifth and final movement is the "*new anti-slavery movement*". It is primarily white-led and builds on the anti-slavery movement long established in Britain, as well as the momentum of several American Activists and organizations. This movement is currently the most visible of all the movements that address slavery, and gets far more attention probably than all the other movements combined, in media and politics. But it is both distinctive and unique, as compared with the other movements, because it remembers slavery primarily as a metaphor, and a foil, to highlight the trafficking and exploitation of the so-called "new slaves" of the modern world (Nimako and Small, 2012; Nimako and Willemsen, 2011). This movement argues that slavery has not yet been abolished, and has continued to the present day, with 27 million so-called

modern 'slaves' around the world, in conditions that claim are worse than the conditions suffered by Africans during of chattel slavery in the Americas (Bales, 1999). These groups turn attention away from the European slave trade and slavery in the past, and focus instead on slavery in Africa and Asia in the present. In opposition to the new anti-slavery movement, we argue that slavery was legally abolished, but emancipation for the enslaved was never achieved. We argue that the new anti-slavery movement's definition of slavery is incomplete and inadequate; that it is not consistent, or legally clear and that it is best understood as a metaphor to evoke social and political involvement and provoke moral outrage. It has activists in both England and the Netherlands, who publish works, are frequently in the national media, and who organize events. These activities are often supported, directly or indirectly, by national government, because they overlap with government concern around 'human trafficking' (especially of women and children for sex work) as well as potential asylum seekers and illegal immigrants. In this regard the linking of past slavery and present trafficking poses a number of problems (Doezma, 2010).

The most fundamental differences in public history and collective memory of slavery can be found between the first three movements – which are led by Blacks and seek to highlight slavery and its legacies publically - and the final movement, which is led by whites, and which seeks to highlight what it calls 'modern slavery' by contrasting it with slavery in the past. These first three movements also reveal limited access to knowledge production and knowledge dissemination in terms of resources and the nature and range of people they can communicate with in each nation, as compared with the fifth movement which has far wider greater to knowledge production and knowledge dissemination. The fourth movement – the artefacts and museum trend – reflects a more ambiguous range of activities, with a small set of museums, exhibits and groups highlighting slavery and its legacies, while a far larger set of museums and exhibits continues to marginalize slavery and its legacies, in part by highlighting artefacts and buildings without mentioned slavery or the humans involved in it.

It does not help the case of the first three movements that scholars in both nations (with few exceptions) have overwhelmingly focussed on a narrow range of topics in slavery – such as the economics and profits of slavery, and the factors leading to legal abolition - topics that invariably marginalized the priorities of Black people who wanted to know more about Black agency, resilience and resistance. Although it is clear that the far greater scholarly engagement with slavery and its legacies in Britain has opened up far more channels of analysis that has the scholarly establishment in the Netherlands. There are simply far more scholars and far more varied (and it might be added critical and progressive) analyses of slavery and its legacies in England than in the Netherlands. This is part reflects differential national culture, the history of a Black presence, and far greater social mobilization of Blacks in England than in the Netherlands.

One issue that is common to both nations is the role of Diaspora resources and exchange. Diasporic resources refers to the ideas, ideologies, and institutions that are exchanged by Black-led groups across the African Diaspora

and the continent, as a means to fuel Black agency and activism, to challenge racism, and to maintain attention on key aspects of slavery and its legacies. Diasporic resources include ideas of culture. They are exchanged via literature (books, novels, poetry), conferences, music, videos, international travel, media, especially the internet and other methods. Also churches. This has always been the case in both England and the Netherlands, as far back at the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, with emerging ideas of pan-Africanism and the pan-African conferences beginning in 1900 (Sherwood, 2007); and later with the work of Marcus Garvey, Franz Fanon, Walter Rodney, Angela Davis, June Jordan and others. There was far more of this in England than the Netherlands. We also recognize that all groups and organizations use many types of international exchange as well, drawing on insights from other nations with regard to government, not-for-profit organizations, scholarship and policy groups. It remains very much the case at the present time.

Some examples of Diasporic resources common to both nations includes access to radical and progressive (including afro-centric) literature from the United States (such as Manning Marable, Molefi Asante, Hazel Carby); the Caribbean (such as Franz Fanon, Walter Rodney, and others); and from Great Britain (Stuart Hall, Paul Gilroy)(Small, 1983, 1994, 2011). They include speakers invited to take part in conferences, both academic and community conferences. For example, in Black History Month in Britain since the 1980s. And they include people active in these movements visiting other places in the Diaspora, such as the United State, the Caribbean and Britain. A clear example of such Diasporic exchange is reflected in the backgrounds and activities of the authors, who were both highly influenced by the exchange of Diasporic resources in our formative years; and are both highly mobile across the Diaspora at the present time; and who both systematically advocate the identification and use of Diasporic resources. Over the last five years alone, one or both of the authors have taken part in multiple conferences in the United States, the Caribbean, Brazil, England, France, Spain, Portugal and Denmark.

In England this includes the wide range of activities in Black History month (October) each year. It includes events at a range of Black organizations such as the Franz Fanon Centre in Birmingham, the George Padmore centre in London and Kuumba Imani centre in Liverpool. It also includes the international speakers that take part in the Slavery Remembrance Day in Liverpool, held on August 23<sup>rd</sup> each year. It is reflected in the websites and email communications on Reparations at Essex University and the work of Ferne Brennan (Brennan, 2012). In the publications of the Association for the Study of Black and Asian life and history. Black sections and groupings such as Operation Black Vote, and the Black Members Council of the National Union of Journalists and the Society of Black Lawyers. In work by Kuumba Imani. And the work of several Black student groups.

In the Netherlands this includes the Black Europe Summer School, founded and directed by one of the authors (Kwame Nimako) which hosts 10-15 students for a 2-3 week program on Black Europe each summer; annual symposia organized in Amsterdam by NiNsee; conferences such as the one on

Reparations in July, 2010, by Ons Surinam; and a wide range of work by other organizations such as the Stichting Monument group led by Barryl Bieckman. One of the authors (Stephen Small), first began his active research in the Netherlands when he was invited in 2006 to speak at NiNsee on museums and the legacy of slavery, took part in many discussions and symposia, and was the chosen to be the NiNsee professor for the study of Dutch slavery and its legacy at the University of Amsterdam (for a five year period beginning in September, 2010). Since the publication of his co-author book – 'The Dutch Atlantic. Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation' in 2010, Kwame Nimako has been involved in two book tours in the United States, and a book tour in England. In the United States this involved lectures, presentations and meeting with scholars and activists in each nation, in universities as far afield as the University of California, Carleton College (Minnesota), Yale University, and the National Council of Black Studies annual conference (in Atlanta, in April, 2012). Stephen Small organized and accompanied Kwame Nimako on the two US tours, and made several presentations himself.

The exchange of Diasporic resources remains a vital and indispensable component of the mobilization of the three Black-led movements, and of Black interactions with the two white-led movements. It is highly likely that all these aspects of the exchange of Diaspora resources will continue in foreseeable future, and will likely be substantially increased especially with the potential for exchange revealed in the activities of the internet and web resources.

One does not have to be a specialist on the legacies of slavery in Europe to immediately ask why we are comparing these two nations, that seem so different in their histories, national political cultures, and contemporary black presence. But it is precisely these differences that are the question. We are not arguing that these five movements are identical in both nations. Far from it. Our goal is to demonstrate that despite fundamental differences between the two nations – in terms of history, politics, national culture, and the Black presence – what is remarkable is that the two nations share so much overlap in these five movements. We believe the overlap is evidence exactly because of the parallel lives, intertwined belongings and fractured memories that have arisen from these nations' involvement in slavery and the slave trade.

### Several Challenges in 2012

So this is the situation in both nations right now. But it will not remain as it is, because a wide range of social forces are in play that threaten to undermine and even reverse many gains made by the social mobilization of Black people in bringing formal and public recognition of slavery and its legacies into the mainstream of each nation.

First, the relatively small size and limited institutional power of Black communities, vis-a-vis whites in general, and the power of the state. Despite being concentrated in large numbers in a limited number of cities in each nation (London, Birmingham and Manchester, in England; Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Utrecht and the Hague in Netherlands) Blacks are a tiny percentage of the total

population (less than 2% in England, and less than 3% in Netherlands). Their representation in national and local politics is limited. And their economic power is also highly limited. And some of the more prominent demands for formal recognition of slavery and its legacies – in curricula, in the educational system, in monuments or memorials, in recognition of important anniversaries – have already been met. If only at a nominal level.

Second, is the intense political and social preoccupation in national and international policies - with the war on terror – reflected in a focus on Muslims within Europe, and Islam outside Europe – garners most attention. The impact of 9/11 in the United States has been highly significant in each nation, the continuing war of terror, the presence of military from both nations in Iraq, and the deadly events of 7/7 in Britain, all reflect that national attention devoted to monitoring and surveillance of Muslims, with all its risks. To say that no one cares about Blacks any more, may be going just a bit too far, but this idea captures the fundamentals of national concern in each nation, and the relative marginalization of Blacks in the political realm.

Third, is the economic recession engulfing the West and the world – with immediate and highly consequential effects in England and increasing effects in Netherlands. The economic recession has been at the forefront of national politics and public concern in Britain, and was central in the election of a Conservative/Liberal Democrat coalition Government in 2010. Since that government took office, and the institution by it of severe economic cutbacks, all evidence is that by 2012, the economic recession has worsened, unemployment has increased and economic growth has stalled. The effects in the Netherlands were less immediate, but by 2012 they were becoming highly consequential. One of the actions of the Dutch government in 2011, was to cut the entirety of its contribution to NiNsee – around 80% of Ninsee's budget. At the time of writing (June, 2012) Ninsee is expecting to dismiss all staff on August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2012. It is currently searching for funds to maintain the institution in a highly attenuated form. Whether it is successful remains to be seen.

Fourth is the resurgence of conservative and nativist forces in both nations. Nationalism is gaining ground again. And it involves a rearticulated language of racism that highlights the so-called 'indigenous population' (meaning whites) over other immigrants of people of color, even if born in Europe and regardless of how many generations their families have been there. These forces are a central factor in the critique of multiculturalism by Prime Minister David Cameron in Germany in Spring, 2010; and they are a central factor in the formation of a coalition government including Geert Wilders, in the Netherlands in 2010.

And fifth is the large current presence and increasing number of non-Black immigrants – both minorities of color and whites - in each nation. This includes Indians, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis in England; Turks, Indonesians and Moroccans in Netherlands. As well as white immigrants and settlers from across Europe, especially within the European Union. Minorities of color already outnumber Blacks in both nations. The growing numbers of all these groups – a significant number of whom have already been there several generations –

means Blacks people are a decreasing size of the national population. These groups are making increasing demands of various kinds, upon the state and other organizations, including documentation and memorialisation of their histories. In other words, competition is intense.

Clearly these are not separate and mutually exclusive issues, but rather overlap and feed into one another, in different combinations and at different junctures. They have been immediately consequence in both nations, in terms of marginalizing the Black population and its concerns, redirecting resources to these other priorities. Exactly how they unfold in each nation will depend of a range of factors, all of which need to be kept under observation. These factors are at play vividly in both nations, but with differential effect depending on a variety of factors. We believe that the national context will be decisive. There will be far greater resilience in Britain where a large black population, the existence of courses, a literature and a wide range of Blacks groups is already institutionalised. The far weaker position of Black groups in the Netherlands means they could far more easily succumb.

Clearly, these issues are not just at stake in Great Britain and the Netherlands but have analogues in other nations across Europe, especially those with imperial histories that involved slavery. For example, in France, as we have seen on this panel, there has been increased and increasing momentum by groups and individuals in that nation to push discussion of slavery and its legacies – in particular the ideologies of race and racism that are consistently denied under French Republicanism – into the public arena. We have limited evidence on similar types of activities in Spain and Portugal, but their emergence in those nations is not out of the question. And if that happens, then we expect that the exchange of Diaspora resources will also play a significant role in how these movements unfold, and in the social mobilization that ensues.

## Conclusion

This description and assessment of public history and collective memory of slavery in England and the Netherlands reveals the highly racialized nature of social remembering and social forgetting; and the divergent access of racialized groups to knowledge production, knowledge dissemination and political power. This means that parallel lives, intertwined belongings, and divergent memories are widely manifested across the African Diaspora, though their manifestations and levels of success are highly contingent upon national contexts.

In this paper we have highlighted public history and contemporary collective memory of slavery in the broader context of social forgetting. Most collective remembering of slavery has been undertaken at the community level, in response/reaction to the social forgetting at the national level. In areas of remembrance and commemoration, in pushing the demand for reparations and in recognizing anniversaries and demanding apologies, Black people in both nations are at the forefront of collective remembrance. The museum heritage and artefacts trend ignored slavery and the slave trade for a long time, and has only

recently (1990s in England, and since the 2000s in the Netherlands) become more explicit in its treatment and representations. And even then, it is uneven across museums, and often ephemeral. And the anti-slavery movement remembers slavery only as a way to highlight so-called 'modern slavery'; in other words, it remembers slavery only to make it secondary or irrelevant to so-called 'modern slavery'. The ways in which these processes of unfold, and their impact on societies at large, reflect the highly divergent access of contemporary racial and national groups to knowledge production and political power. At the present time there remains a continuing struggle in the realm of ideology and collective memory among the groups described. It is a struggle that continues to be waged in multiple arenas, from exhibits, galleries and museums, to monuments and memorials; and from government, politics and education, to television, press and the internet.

There is a long history of organizational and group activities to collectively remember slavery and the slave trade, as well as the long arm of their legacies, in both England and the Netherlands. In both nations Black social mobilization has been at the forefront of efforts to remember slavery, and for much longer periods, than have activities and practices in the larger public realm. These issues have been articulated in Black community organizations, churches, and exhibits and galleries. They have also been articulated in music, performance, literature and poetry. Black people remembered and commemorated legal abolition of slavery and the slave trade, from the moment it occurred (especially in the colonies) and brought these traditions to Europe when they arrived here, initially in small numbers, and then later in much larger numbers. The extent and impact of their efforts, and their ability to bring them into the larger public (especially national) domain, were impeded by their limited resources and access to political and social power (including access to financial resources) as well as obstacles to knowledge creation and dissemination. Though they share similarities, these processes are unevenly manifested in each nation, as a result of the historical, demographic and institutional differences between them.

The institutionalized practice of the social forgetting of slavery has also been widespread in England and the Netherlands. This social forgetting was fuelled, collectively, in processes and practices prevalent across the public realm – in government, in the media and across educational institutions. It was also abundantly evident in museum exhibits and galleries. Social forgetting was achieved largely through the omission or elimination of discussion of slavery from historical analysis and from museum exhibits; or through distortions, marginalization or trivialization of slavery and its importance for the growth of empire and colonization in each nation. It was also achieved by virtue of the dominant nationalist self-reference frame, in each nation. Both nations highlight their nationalist commitment to freedom, tolerance and democracy. In England this frame includes the public promotion of the British as leaders of the abolitionist movement (see examples in Draper, 2010). In the Netherlands it includes an emphasis on emancipations of various kinds (Wekker, 2009). These self-images in both nations have involved systematic efforts of social forgetting (Draper, 2010; Horton and Kardux, 2005).

Since the arrival in large numbers of immigrants and settlers from their former colonies, England and the Netherlands have seen these efforts to raise discussions of slavery - and to move discussions out of the realm of the Black community, and into the larger public realm with white populations - increasingly gain strength, invigoration and support from Diasporic exchange. Such exchange – including the exchange of Diasporic resources – involves information, literature, insights and analysis, and takes the form of symposia and conferences, some directly about slavery and its legacies, others about racial discrimination (for example, the United Nations Conference on Racism in Durban). These are not just formal exchanges, but also significant consciousness-raising and exchange via music, art and performance.

The institutional grounding and influence of the movements that strive to increase public history and public accountability for slavery and its legacies (the first here movements) are currently (2012) under threat in both nations. Due to the small size and limited institutional power of Black communities; the relative incorporation of some demands into the mainstream; the political preoccupation with Muslims and Islam; the dire effects of economic recession and its repercussions; the resurgence of conservative and nativist forces; and new circuits of international migration that have led to significant increases in populations of new migrants and permanent settlers. These forces threaten to contain, stall and possibly reverse some of the gains made already. While the two nations share many common elements, we argue that the outcomes that emerge for public history and collective memory of slavery and its legacies are far more likely to be determined by the specific developments in each nation. In brief, this means that the stronger institutional basis already established in England is more likely to survive, than is the precarious institutional base established in the Netherlands. And this analysis has implications for other nations in Europe, where there is already evidence of social mobilization to challenge dominant representations of slavery and its legacies in the public realm (for example, work by Christine Chivallon, Françoise Vergès, Renaud Hourcade Crystal Fleming in France (Fleming, 2011)). The work of colleagues on this panel provides a range of evidence around these issues. Given that several other nations in Europe were centrally involved in slavery and colonialism (especially France, Spain and Portugal); given the significant migration and settlement of significant numbers of the descendants of the enslaved in these nations; and given the continued exchange of Diaspora resources between Black populations in these nations and elsewhere; it is highly likely that many of the issues described in this paper will become more prominent in these nations, despite the current challenges that threaten to undermine them.

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