

Introduction

During the American Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln's administration engaged in protracted negotiations with representatives of the Netherlands to aid in the voluntarily colonization of free African Americans to Suriname. The American government also held similar negotiations with representatives of Panama, Haiti, St. Croix, British Honduras, and British Guiana, and made inquiries on the topic of African American migration with Ecuador and Nicaragua. In 1862 and 1863, Panama and Haiti actually received emancipated African Americans as a result of these negotiations, but both attempts to settle American blacks in the region ultimately failed.

In the shadow of these better-known examples of Civil War colonization schemes, the Dutch Suriname case drew the lowest number of mentions in the American press and remains today probably the least known. Most of the discussion about this Dutch-American plan remained in diplomatic circles and was neither leaked to the press, nor recalled in published memoirs after the war. It is, in a sense, a forgotten story that can be reconstructed only from original documents in archival collections. For American history, Suriname's neglect in Civil War colonization literature is unfortunate because the Dutch plan provides an additional and alternative case demonstrating the seriousness and depth of the Lincoln administration's interest in colonization. But this story also has multiple other dimensions worth considering. For example, it sheds light on Dutch racial thinking, the history of Suriname, and the role of governments in shaping new post-emancipation labor systems in the Atlantic world. It is a case of one of the many "what ifs" of history. What if the Dutch and American governments had successfully colonized African Americans in Suriname? How might that have affected race relations and the progress of African Americans in the United States? What effect might such a migration have had on the culture and development of Suriname? How could the post-emancipation Atlantic World labor market have developed in different ways? These are the kinds of questions such new sources encourage us to ask.

In the years 2011 and 2012, I discovered two folders of papers on the Suriname colonization plans kept in two separate collections in the Netherlands' National Archive in The Hague. The papers were a mix of English, Dutch, and French writing, oftentimes existing only as copies of their originals. At the time that I located

these papers, a historiographical debate on colonization in the Civil War era was heating up among academics in the United States.¹ Few, however, had paid much attention to the case of Dutch Suriname or had bothered with foreign language sources. Meanwhile, in the Netherlands, where the history of slavery and race was also becoming a topic of increasing interest, the history of the relationship between Suriname and the United States fell outside the traditional areas of study of the Dutch national and global history. The papers that I had found in The Hague had only once been cited in an academic work. That honor went to Jozef Siwpersad (1944–2007), a respected Surinamese historian who in 1979 defended a PhD dissertation on the emancipation of slaves in Suriname.² Siwpersad, however, made little use of these Dutch-American diplomatic papers, likely because they seemed tangential to his project, and because, even for a Dutch-speaker, much time and effort was needed to understand the context and read the difficult handwriting of the old documents. After all, the papers were not in any kind of order, chronological or otherwise, and there was little context for them in their archival collections. But the clear connections to President Abraham Lincoln, U.S. Secretary of State William H. Seward, and other prominent names in American Civil War history aroused my interest. Historians of the American Civil War, I have been arguing, too often engage in arguments about the same old sources, which leads them to repeat the same arguments on the same perennial topics. But, here, across the Atlantic Ocean, I had discovered what were in a sense “new” documents on the American Civil War. So, in 2012, I began translating these and other related papers on Dutch-American colonization

¹ The literature on African American colonization during the Lincoln administration peaked in the 1950s, with a number of articles and dissertations. Noteworthy challenges to the older historiography include: M.E. Neely, “Abraham Lincoln and Black Colonization: Benjamin Butler’s Spurious Testimony,” *Civil War History* 25 (1979), 77–83 and D.B. Davis, “Reconsidering the Colonization Movement: Leonard Bacon and the Problem of Evil,” *Intellectual History Newsletter* 14 (1992), 3–16, and recent contributions have included: P.S. Paludan, “Lincoln and Colonization: Policy or Propaganda?,” *Journal of the Abraham Lincoln Association* 25:2 (Winter 2004), 23–37; R.J. Blackett, “Lincoln and Colonization,” *OAH Magazine of History* 21:4 (Oct., 2007), 19–22; M.E. Neely, “Colonization and the Myth that Lincoln Prepared the People for Emancipation,” in W.A. Blair and K.F. Young (eds.), *Lincoln’s Proclamation: Emancipation Reconsidered* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 45–74; N. Guyatt, “A Topic Best Avoided,” *London Review of Books*, Dec. 1 (2011), 27–31; A. Guelzo, Review of Philip W. Magness and Sebastian N. Page, *Colonization After Emancipations: Lincoln and the Movement for Black Resettlement* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2011) in the *Journal of the Abraham Lincoln Association* 34, Nov. (2013), 79–84; P.W. Magness and S.N. Page, “Lincoln, Colonization, and Evidentiary Standards: A Response to Allen C. Guelzo,” *Social Science Research Network*: https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2267625.

² J.P. Siwpersad, *De Nederlandse Regering en de Afschaffing van de Surinaamse Slavernij (1833–1863)* (Groningen/ Castricum: Bouma’s Boekhuis, 1979).

negotiations with the goal of better understanding the sources, cross-checking names for potential leads, and thoroughly mining the text for clues to the story of colonization.

Once I was confident in reading and understanding the sources, I used them to write an article that was published in the journal *Civil War History* in 2015. Significant portions of that article have been reproduced, with permission, in this introduction. In that article I highlighted the difficulties caused by a lack of singular vision in the negotiations, in which a variety of opinions and tensions were at play. Some members of the Dutch government, I showed, were in full support of an agreement or treaty on colonization, but the Dutch diplomats in the United States were reluctant, and the Lincoln Administration seemed at once confident and then silent, almost cryptic about it all. I argued that in the end the negotiations failed not essentially because of a lack of will or obvious dismissal by the Lincoln Administration, but because of diplomatic delays and the changing situation on the ground, which ultimately made any such international agreements unnecessary. Prior to the publication of this peer-reviewed article, a condensed version of my findings was published in the *New York Times*' Disunion blog. This was later reprinted as a short chapter in a book with Oxford University Press. A Dutch-language version of my findings was also published in popular form in *Geschiedenis Magazine* in 2013.³ Readers are encouraged to locate these sources for more context on the topic.

I recognize that in publishing these translated sources I am in a sense repeating the story I told in previous publications. However, I have come to believe that these sources are rich enough to tell more than one story, and that they are useful for a variety of researchers writing on a number of topics. For American historians, the most obvious contribution of the sources produced in this volume is the addition of new sources for the resurgence of colonization scholarship. In particular, scholars have been interested in this topic for what it can tell us about the character and political motives of Abraham Lincoln. The dominant view of Lincoln on colonization is expressed by the American historian Eric Foner, who believes the president's thoughts on African Americans evolved during the Civil War, as did his relationship with the colonization movement. After the Emancipation Proclamation took effect in January 1863 – this line of argument goes – Lincoln more or less abandoned

³ M.J. Douma, "The Lincoln Administration's Negotiations to Colonize African Americans in Dutch Suriname," *Civil War History* 61.2 (2015), 111-37; M. J. Douma, "Holland's Plan for America's Slaves," *New York Times* [online], 11 July. Reprinted in Ted Widmer (ed.), *The New York Times Disunion: A History of the Civil War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 260-3; M.J. Douma, "Hoe verder zonder slaven? Het kolonisatie project van Amerikaanse vrijgelaten slaven op de Surinamse plantages, 1862-1866," *Geschiedenis Magazine* 4 (2013), 14-9.

his interests in colonization. A 2011 study by Philip Magness and Sebastian Page, titled *Colonization After Emancipation*, challenged this view, and encourages us to look to Caribbean and European archives for evidence of the continued interest in the Lincoln administration's colonizationist plans.⁴ Following Magness and Page, it appears that Lincoln, through his Secretary of State, William H. Seward, kept colonization on the table in 1864 and 1865. That is to say, American negotiations concerning colonization remained open, even if they had stalled.⁵

The negotiations to colonize African American in Suriname and the related correspondence on this topic began in 1862, during the second year of the American Civil War, and continued until 1866, a year after the war had ended. The documents in this volume indicate that Lincoln must have been aware of the Dutch Suriname plan as it continued to be discussed in 1863 and 1864. In fact, most of the diplomatic correspondence on colonization in Suriname occurred *after* the Emancipation Proclamation took effect.

The American government, under President Abraham Lincoln, was motivated in this discussion by a number of factors, including the fear of potentially high unemployment and social unrest among emancipated African Americans at the end of the war. The Dutch, meanwhile, were concerned about a shortage of laborers on their colonial Surinamese plantations with their own emancipation law coming into effect in July 1863. Coincidentally then, the two separate emancipations aligned, but they were connected in a wider world of changing political orders. Negotiations between the Netherlands and the United States were intended to establish inter-governmental regulations to aid in the expressly *volunteer* migration of free laborers from the U.S. to Suriname. The negotiations stalled during the war, and while the American government ultimately allowed the Dutch to recruit potential laborers on American shores as the war came to a close, it appears that no African Americans chose to leave the United States for Suriname in this period.

A Dutch-American agreement on colonization was signed in December 1863, a full year after Lincoln's famous act, but the agreement languished in Congress, awaiting a ratification vote. In February 1864, Seward wrote separate letters to James Shepherd Pike (the U.S. Minister in the Netherlands) and Roest van Limburg

⁴ P. Magness and S. Page, *Colonization After Emancipation: Lincoln and the Movement for Black Resettlement* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2011). This work improved on early research by J. L. Coryell, "The Lincoln Colony: Aaron Columbus Burr's Proposed Colonization of British Honduras," *Civil War History* 43:1 (March, 1997), 5-16; R. L. Gold, "Negro Colonization Schemes in Ecuador, 1861-1864," *Phylon* 30:3 (1969), 306-16.

⁵ Recent books with this view include: W.A. Blair and K.F. Young (eds.), *Lincoln's Proclamation: Emancipation Reconsidered* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 176; and C. Manning, *What This Cruel War Was Over* (New York: Vintage, 2007), 86.

(the Netherlands' Resident Minister in the United States), stating that he did not expect the U.S. Senate to ratify the proposal. Roest van Limburg was told that the likelihood of the approval of the treaty was "doubtful" because of the "altered condition of affairs relating to the treaty since the negotiations commenced." Similarly, Seward informed Pike that the treaty was "not now expected" to be ratified, since "the American people have advanced to a new position in regard to slavery and the African class since the President in obedience to their prevailing wishes accepted the policy of colonization."⁶

Seward's statement on Lincoln was vague and ambiguous. Did he mean to say that Lincoln had previously accepted colonization only because of the wishes of the people? This, of course, could not have been the case, since no one seriously doubts that before 1863 Lincoln supported colonization. Nor does Seward make clear any change of mind in Lincoln himself. According to Seward, the failure of the ratification of the Dutch proposal had more to do with a change in American society than a change with the president. "Now not only their free labor, but their military service is also appreciated and accepted," Seward concluded in his February 1864 letter to Pike. Seward's use of the passive verb leaves some ambiguity: who exactly appreciated and accepted African Americans for their free labor and military service? Shortly after Lincoln's death, Seward is reported to have said that, regarding Lincoln, "no knife was sharp enough to divide us on any question of public policy" except "his 'colonization' scheme."⁷

A thorough reading of the papers of the Netherlands' Department of Foreign Affairs demonstrates that the Dutch continued to hold out for a potential ratification of the Suriname colonization treaty through to the end of the war. Indeed, the war's end sparked another round of Dutch inter-department memoranda on colonization. These sources show, furthermore, that neither Seward's words to Roest van Limburg nor Roest van Limburg's growing pessimism about the plan convinced the Dutch government that the plan had been defeated. In fact, the Dutch had reason to hold out hope. Although no further official American correspondence on colonization in Suriname appeared after February 1864, Roest van Limburg, as the lead Dutch diplomat in the United States, continued to field relevant information on the matter until spring 1866. Roest van Limburg's personal correspondents at

⁶ Seward to Roest van Limburg, Feb. 12, 1864, folder 142, NA 2.05.13, Papers of the American Legation, Collection 2.05.13, National Archives of the Netherlands; Seward to Pike, Feb. 15, 1864, Diplomatic Instructions from the Department of State, 1801-1906 (vol. 14, Jan. 29, 1833-Sept. 12, 1864), General Records of the Department of State, RG 56, U.S. National Archives.

⁷ F.B. Carpenter, *Six Months at the White House with Abraham Lincoln* (Bedford, MA: Applewood Books, 2008 [original 1866]), 291.

this time included former U.S. Secretary of State, Lewis Cass, the Danish chargé d'affairs in Washington, Waldemar Raasløff, the commissioner of emigration and Freedman's Bureau general, Oliver O. Howard, and the interim secretary of state, William Hunter, among others. Roest van Limburg grew increasingly convinced that the plan was impractical or even infeasible but not that it was impossible or diplomatically defeated. In the end, it was not the Lincoln administration that killed the Dutch Suriname colonization plan; instead, diplomatic inefficiencies delayed progress and preparation for the scheme, and African Americans demonstrated a consistent reluctance to migrate to foreign lands. Hence, the Dutch-American colonization proposal died a slow death.

So far, this is a story that I have already told. I have emphasized in particular that the Suriname colonization scheme's failure to launch falls into this picture of the Lincoln Administration's reticence to abandon colonization. But this historical topic is interesting in a number of other regards, particularly for what it shows us about transatlantic attitudes regarding slavery and emancipation and the role of governments in protecting their citizens. The sources translated for this volume have not seen the light of day since their original composition. They can be used to tell new stories and find new links in Dutch, Surinamese, American, and Atlantic World history. The sources reproduced here will be useful for scholars who study (1) the international dimensions of the Dutch colonial world, (2) the development of labor markets in the Caribbean during the age of migration, (3) Dutch views on race and slavery in the nineteenth century, or (4) the history of Suriname and its long-term relationship with the United States, among other topics.⁸

To understand the place and relevance of these documents, their various frames of reference, time-scales, and background, a certain amount of explanation is required. First, I provide some background on colonization in its social and political context in the United States. But to understand the domestic U.S. story it also helps to have a background in U.S. race relations in antebellum America and an understanding of the aims of the American Colonization Society. And then, to understand the view from the Netherlands and the Dutch colonial dimension, it helps to have some background knowledge of Suriname, of Dutch political and diplomatic culture, and the development of emancipation ideas in the Dutch world. All of this is set within an interconnected Atlantic world, a Dutch colonial web, and an expanding American sphere of influence. The sections that follow will aim to explain these themes.

⁸ J. Egger, "The Economic Influence of the United States in Suriname," in H. Krabbendam, C.A. Van Minnen, and G. Scott-Smith, *NL-USA: Four Centuries of Dutch-American Relations* (Amsterdam: Boom, 2009), 886-95.

Colonization in U.S. Politics and Society

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, northern states adopted various emancipation laws. Slave-owners in states that maintained the legality of slavery also sometimes manumitted their slaves. Free blacks lived alongside free whites, mostly in peace, but not without tension. Colonization was the name given to the policy and practice of providing transport for free-born blacks and emancipated slaves to return to Africa or go to other countries like Mexico, Canada, or Haiti. Colonization could be seen as liberating or racist. It was a proposed solution for the threat of slavery to the republic, or to presumed social strife in a post-emancipation era. Although colonization was a political position most identified with political moderates, there were also significant numbers of slaveholders and abolitionists who supported it. Some saw colonization as a salve for the wound of slavery, an antidote to sectionalism, or an aide for the Christianization of Africa. With the coming of the American Civil War, colonization remained a crucial part of the political discussion of slavery.⁹

The American Colonization Society (ACS), which formed in 1816, was the largest player in this political movement and was particularly popular in border states like Maryland and Pennsylvania. The ACS has been the subject of significant research. In particular, historians have been keen to track its members and main supporters, showing their social connections to free labor advocates, political moderates, or racist ideologists. The ACS had wealthy financial backers but it also sought support from the government, and was favored by the American Whig Party. Southern slaveholders, however, increasingly saw colonization as a threat to the “peculiar institution” and their theory of good slavery. Abolitionists, meanwhile, worried that colonization distracted Americans from the true spirit of freedom and disrupted African American communities.

Through the ACS’s efforts, over 11,000 African Americans migrated to Africa. The ACS established an independent republic in Liberia in 1847, but despite the hopes of its backers the new republic failed to become a bridge between American and African culture, but persisted as a sort of in-between nation, with a hybrid culture.¹⁰

⁹ B.C. Tomek, *Colonization and its Discontents: Emancipation, Emigration, and Antislavery in Antebellum Pennsylvania* (New York: New York University Press, 2011); B. Tomek and M.J. Hetrick (eds.), *New Directions in the Study of African-American Recolonization* (Place: University Press of Florida, 2017). Entry for “Colonization” in P. Finkelman (ed.), *Encyclopedia of African American History, 1619-1895: From the Colonial Period to the Age of Frederick Douglass* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

¹⁰ M. Tyler-McGraw, *An African Republic: Black and White Virginians in the Making of Liberia* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2007).

African Americans often refused to support the ACS, particularly because the society didn't take a clear stance against slavery while many of its members held explicitly racist views.¹¹ African Americans also had little motivation to relocate to a country they had never known. The American Colonization Society continued to be active during the American Civil War. The society opposed colonization schemes that would compete with their efforts in Liberia.

Suriname in Dutch Colonial History

Colonization is also not just an American story but rather one that must be seen within an international context. Suriname in the nineteenth century was of course part of a Dutch colonial network, linked by trade and common diplomacy with the Netherlands. Even with emancipation, the Dutch looked to control their colonial labor market, and thereby regulate production and trade. As the historian Duco Hellema suggests, some liberal policies were pursued in the 1830s and 1840s, but it was only after the change of government in 1848 that free trade made substantial gains. By the 1860s the Dutch ended their monopoly on trade with their colonies. Without this monopoly privilege, Dutch colonial trade decreased, but other trade increased. It was the geographical position of the Netherlands, its relationship to the international political structure, its position in the world economy, and, perhaps most importantly, its domestic culture which allowed liberal free trade and neutrality.¹² But reconciling the story of slavery, emancipation, colonization, and imported labor that defined the 1860s in Suriname is a challenge for historians to address.

In Suriname, colonization was the latest Dutch proposal concerning the importation and control of labor in their South American colony. First established by the English, conquered by the Dutch in 1667, reconquered by England in 1672-74, and then returned to the Netherlands in 1674, Suriname was essentially a sugar colony that also produced significant exports of cacao, coffee, and cotton. The Dutch government initially placed Suriname under the control of the Charter Society of

¹¹ O.K. Power-Greene, *Against Wind and Tide: The African American Struggle against the Colonization Movement* (New York: New York University Press, 2014); E. Burin, *Slavery and the Peculiar Solution: A History of the American Colonization Society* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2005); P.J. Staudenraus, *The African Colonization Movement, 1816-1865* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961); D.R. Egerton, "Averting a Crisis: The Proslavery Critique of the American Colonization Society," *Civil War History* 43:2 (June, 1997), 142-56.

¹² D. Hellema, *Neutraliteit & Vrijhandel: De Geschiedenis van de Nederlandse Buitenlandse Betrekkingen* (Utrecht: Het Spectrum, 2001).

Suriname which, consisting of three equal partners – the West India Company, the City of Amsterdam, and Cornelius van Aerssen van Sommelsdijk (and, later, his descendants) – who ruled the territory until 1795. Under the Dutch, slave imports were almost always needed to maintain stable populations and to promote economic growth. When France took control of the Netherlands in 1795 and threatened to occupy its colonies, the English provided protection for Suriname and became its ostensible sovereign. Now free of French rule, the Dutch regained control of Suriname in 1816. Although Surinamese trade picked up in the wake of Napoleon's defeat, the colony faced financial difficulties throughout the first half of the nineteenth century, despite subsidies from the Netherlands. Once a crown colony, in 1848 Suriname became the responsibility of the Dutch Parliament and its advisor, the minister of colonies.¹³

Global Context of Post-Emancipation Labor

By making Dutch primary sources available in English translation, their potential audience grows manyfold. One particular area of research deserves special mention. Such translations, I believe, are critical for those scholars of Atlantic World and Caribbean history who typically have to rely on the few English-language secondary sources about the Dutch if they are to include Suriname, the Netherlands, the Dutch West India Company, or topics of Dutch trade in their research. The sources demonstrate channels of knowledge and racial and colonial attitudes within the Atlantic world. One way knowledge spread in this world was through newspapers. But diplomats formed another kind of knowledge network, as did merchants. These sources indicate some ways in which news came to Suriname from other places and how information spread into a variety of networks. General news of developments in the United States typically came to Suriname via British Guiana and the English-language newspapers there. Some, but not all, of those news articles were translated into Dutch by newspaper editors in Suriname. Letters from the Dutch government also directed colonial administrators, who conversed with their support base, the Surinamese planters. It appears that the Surinamese planters were aware of the American colonization talk, but it is unclear if they knew many specifics. Perhaps additional sources located in archives in the Netherlands or Suriname can tell their story. Knowledge transfers in the Atlantic World were subject to delays. For example, it took sixteen days for mail from the Netherlands to reach Washington D.C.

¹³ C.C. Goslinga, *The Dutch in the Caribbean and in Surinam 1791/5-1942* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1990); R. Hoefte, *In Place of Slavery: A Social History of British Indian and Javanese Laborers in Suriname* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 1998).

This collection should be particularly useful for scholars interested in labor markets in the era of emancipation in the Caribbean. The British abolished slavery in their colonies in 1833, with a 5-year gradual indenture before slaves received complete freedom. France and Denmark followed with colonial emancipation laws in 1848, but these had little direct impact in Suriname, even though Suriname neighbored French Guiana.

The Dutch, with an emancipation law of 1863, were late on the scene of colonial emancipation, but it must be remembered that others in the region, such as Cuba and Brazil, continued as slave societies for decades to follow. Labor in the nineteenth century Caribbean then was always a mixture of free and slave labor. Generally, nations and colonial powers took a mercantilist approach with the idea that controlled forms of labor (slavery, indenture servitude, labor contracts) were beneficial to the state on the whole, since the costs of labor could be held down and no plantations would fail on account of the emigration of workers.

The attempt to recruit American blacks for Suriname was part of a wider Dutch concern, an international system of state-sponsored and regulated migration that distributed wage laborers around the world. The history of slavery in Dutch Suriname or the Dutch Atlantic World and the history of slavery in the United States therefore converged at this date. Extensive negotiations between the two nations on the topic of resettling blacks in Suriname continued as late as 1866. The related correspondence regarding colonization demonstrates the depth and significance of Dutch and American colonial sympathies. Indeed, the Dutch responded positively to Lincoln's colonization message of the summer of 1862; they saw colonization as a desired component of colonial emancipation plans. A key figure in the Dutch discourse was Adriaan David Van der Gon Netscher (1811-1897), a former Dutch sea captain, who had also been an attorney, a painter, and part proprietor of a coffee and plantain estate in Demerara, British Guiana. According to his own account, he served as magistrate and member of the Court of Policy in British Guiana from 1841 to 1857 before returning to life in the Netherlands where he served on a government committee to recommend emancipation policy for Suriname.¹⁴ Van der Gon Netscher, like most other Dutchmen, believed emancipation in the Dutch West Indies was inevitable and desirable but that the main concern would be finding the proper procedure to enact such reforms.¹⁵ In a series of lengthy pamphlets, two

¹⁴ P.C. Molhuysen and P.J. Blok (eds.), *Nieuw Nederlandsch biografisch woordenboek*, pt. 3 of 10 (Leiden: A. W. Sijthoff, 1914), 910.

¹⁵ J.M. van Winter, "De openbare mening in Nederland over de afschaffing der slavernij," *De West-Indische Gids* 34:3 (1953), 61-90; P.C. Emmer, "The Ideology of Free Labor and Dutch Colonial Policy, 1830-1870," in G. Oostindie (ed.), *Fifty Years Later: Antislavery, Capitalism, and Modernity in the Dutch Orbit* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1996), 207-22.

from 1858 and one from 1859, he outlined a plan consisting of three main parts: compensation for slave owners, state supervision of freed slaves for ten to twelve years of contract labor, and state subsidized immigrant recruitment to prevent a decline in production on the Surinamese plantations.

Immigration was the key plank in Van der Gon Netscher's platform, since he believed that only immigrant labor could compensate for the loss of slave labor. For this reason he supported the immigration of thirty-six thousand laborers over the twelve years immediately following emancipation. He asked for government premiums to be paid to immigration recruiting agents to encourage the flow of people: Africans (at a cost to the government of 60 guilders each), Chinese (at 200 guilders each), Portuguese (including people from Madeira, Azores, and Cape Verdeans, Canary Islands at 75 guilders each), while inducements for Dutch, Germans, and other northern Europeans to journey to Suriname would be paid for by a tax on Surinamese planters.¹⁶

Although the Dutch never got their hoped-for emigration treaty, they still managed to open up the possibility of migrants leaving the United States for Suriname. Ostensibly, Dutch law allowed for whites or blacks, or people of any nationality, to immigrate to Suriname as long as a Dutch consul was present at the port of emigration to ensure proper procedure. A January 1865 royal decree also relaxed the requirements for immigration, allowing anyone to recruit immigrants, so long as a Dutch consul supervised them.¹⁷ But in the minds of the Netherlands' Department of Foreign Affairs, the real idea was to get African American laborers. This much is clear from Roest van Limburg's letter of 21 April 1866, in which the author mentions specifically the intention to ship blacks, and not whites, from Boston to Suriname. Yet, without the U.S. government supporting a colonization effort, emigration plans fell flat. African Americans were allowed to leave the United States voluntarily, but by 1866 there was no government effort to aid them, or to recruit them for such a move.

Emmer also notes that Dutch labor policies in the colonies were based on cost-effectiveness, not ideology.

¹⁶ A.D. van der Gon Netscher, *Bijdrage ter aanwijzing van de grondslagen, waarop de afschaffing der slavernij in Suriname dient gevestigd te worden* ('s Gravenhage: A. Belinfante, 1858); A.D. van der Gon Netscher, *Beschouwing van het op den 25e oktober 1858, aan de Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal voorgesteld ontwerp van wet ter afschaffing der slavernij in Suriname, voornamelijk ter aanwijzing der noodzakelijkheid om eene gelijktijdige en voldoende immigratie door wetsbepalingen mogelijk te maken en te verzekeren* ('s Gravenhage: A. Belinfante, 1858); A.D. van der Gon Netscher, *De Quaestie van Vrijen Arbeid en Immigratie in de West-Indie, toegelicht door A. D. van der Gon Netscher* ('s Gravenhage: A. Belinfante: 1859).

¹⁷ Royal decree dated Jan. 26, 1865, folder 142, Papers of the American Legation, Collection 2.05.13, National Archives of the Netherlands.

The Dutch Diplomatic Network

Collections like these are also essential for exploring the international and transnational dimensions of the Dutch colonial world, and for pointing scholars to crosscurrents of inter-imperial relations. At the intersection of empires is where we can discover new hints about regional and global patterns. These documents, for example, suggest numerous connections between the Netherlands and other political powers in the Americas. How did information in the 1860s flow from British Guiana to Dutch Suriname, as indicated in the selection from the newspaper, *The Colonist*. Knowledge networks in the Dutch empire and across empires are a new and promising avenue of historical research. To date, however, most of the focus on this topic of the global Dutch presence has been on the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.¹⁸ The records provided here also give insight into the nature of diplomatic networks in the nineteenth century, the limitations of international knowledge transfer, and the difficulties of complex diplomatic negotiations. Drawing on scholarship from historians like Duco Hellema, we can use these sources to look to the relationship between the Netherlands and the United States and see the impact of American diplomacy on Dutch colonial policy. Such diplomacy, it is clear, went well beyond reciprocal trade agreements. American power in the Western Hemisphere shaped Dutch colonial policy in a variety of ways that have not been fully explored.

From the summer of 1862 to 1866, the Resident Minister Roest Van Limburg followed the orders of the Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs, urged on by the Minister of Colonies, to organize his consular officers in the United States to prepare for encouraging and aiding freed African Americans to migrate to Suriname. While Roest van Limburg worked on this in the United States, the Dutch government was negotiating a deal with the American Ambassador to the Netherlands, James Shepherd Pike. One wonders if the delay in the treaty proposal was ultimately responsible for its failing to come before the U.S. Senate, which might have been more supportive of the measure earlier in the war. In support of this view, the Senate was also likely awaiting word of how the colonization venture on Île à Vache, Haiti, had fared. Ships with African American colonists set sail in early 1863 and,

¹⁸ K. Fatah-Black, "A Swiss Village in the Dutch Tropics: The Limitations of Empire-Centered Approaches to the Early Modern Atlantic World," *BMGN – Low Countries Historical Review* 128:1 (2013), 31–52; C. Antunes and J. Gommans, *Exploring the Dutch Empire: Agents, Networks and Institutions, 1600–2000* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015); R. Raben, "A New Dutch Imperial History: Perambulations in a Prospective Field," *BMGN – Low Countries Historical Review* 128:1 (2013), 5–30; W. van den Doel, "The Dutch Empire. An Essential Part of World History," *BMGN–Low Countries Historical Review* 125:2–3 (2010), 179–208; W. Klooster and G.J. Oostindie, *Realm Between Empires: The Second Dutch Atlantic, 1680–1815* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2018).

after months of conflicting reports on its success or failure, had to be rescued in early 1864.¹⁹ An important reason for the Dutch treaty's failure must also be seen in the delay, inefficiency, and opposition within diplomatic channels. The Dutch government, including the king, the Department of Foreign Affairs, and, above all, the Department of Colonies, supported the efforts to settle African Americans in Suriname. Furthermore, the Dutch and American consuls in Suriname expressed their willingness to aid the project. But Roest van Limburg, the leading Dutch diplomat in the United States, expressed increasing reservations about the efforts, while the Dutch consuls in American port cities were reluctant to participate. Pike and Seward, acquainted through long careers in New England politics, were no help to the proposal, and Pike, at least, secretly hoped for its failure. In 1861, he wrote to Seward, "We have got to destroy the race of slaveholders in order to prevent permanent dismemberment."²⁰

A relatively high rate of turnover in key ministry positions contributed to the diplomatic struggles on the Dutch side. From the late spring of 1862 through early 1866, Roest van Limburg answered to three different foreign affairs ministers (P. T. van der Maesen de Sombreff, W. J. C. van Kattendijke, and E. J. Cremers) and three colonial ministers (Gerhard Hendrik Uhlenbeck, Gerardus Henri Betz, and I. D. Fransen van de Putte.²¹ In December 1862, the Dutch Senate (Eerste Kamer) refused a bill to enlarge the colonial domains and Uhlenbeck resigned. De Sombreff did the same the following year when the Senate rejected the enlargement of the Foreign Affairs Department.²² Roest van Limburg must have felt like he was talking to a revolving door. Each new colonial minister also demanded action, and Roest van

¹⁹ P.W. Magness, "The Île à Vache: From Hope to Disaster," *New York Times*, 12 April 2013, available at <https://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/04/12/the-le-vache-from-hope-to-disaster/?fbclid=IwAR1ZTIEDqd3NS99sGywBKGSTMr8IhIJYVjqrFANx88W2kVwM7PicFULDOPE>

²⁰ Pike to Seward, July 7, 1861, reel 64, Seward Papers, Library of Congress.

²¹ James Loudon was foreign affairs minister from 12 March 1861 to 31 January 1862; Paul Therese van der Maesen de Sombreff, from Roest van Limburg, a Roman Catholic, was minister of foreign affairs from 12 March 1862 to 2 January 1864, and a liberal of the second Thorbecke cabinet. From Groningen, E. J. B. "Eppo" Cremers, at 31 years of age became minister of foreign affairs from 15 March 1864 to 1 June 1866. Cremers was a Liberal, with ties to Fransen van de Putten. Colonial ministers included Gerhardt Hendrik Uhlenbeck, born in Ceylon, a Liberal officer in the military in the Dutch East Indies, who served as minister from 1 February 1862 to 3 January 1863. Isaac Dignus Fransen van de Putte, a Liberal from Zeeland was minister of colonies from 2 February 1863 to 30 May 1866. Willem Huyssen van Kattendijke was also minister of foreign affairs from 2 January 1864 to 15 March 1864.

²² "Jhr. Mr. P.Th. van der Maesen de Sombreff," *Parlement en Politiek*, accessed 12 July 2012, http://www.parlement.com/id/vgo9ll34k2y1/p_th_van_der_maesen_de_sombreff.

Limburg explained why he could do very little to speed things up. Colonial ministers took every event in the development of the war in the United States as a sign in their favor. And yet, Roest van Limburg, on the ground, could only report with an increasingly pessimistic tone his late receipt of the news of the signing of the convention. Indeed, he felt slighted to have first learned about the signing through a clipping from the 19 December 1863 *Nederlandsche Staats Courant*, handed to him by a German. His first official notice of the event, a letter from the minister of foreign affairs dated 18 January 1864, would not have arrived at his station until early February. Roest van Limburg was not sure if such a convention was legitimate; discussion with Cass led him to believe that the United States would not allow any foreign government to make such an agreement.²³ Seward had just informed him that the Senate had not seen the text of the convention, probably would not see it, and would not pass it as law if they did see it. Yet, the Dutch government thought ratification was imminent. Roest van Limburg found it necessary to write at length to bring the new minister, Kattendijke, up to speed on what had transpired over the past two years and to express his frustrations.

These sources demonstrate the inner workings of the Dutch diplomatic network and highlight the personalities of its members. For example, Roest van Limburg's letters to the minister of foreign affairs from 1864 are lengthy, passionate expressions of frustration, tempered only by the requirement to remain civil and formal in diplomatic writing. As is clear in the letters of Roest van Limburg, information in the Dutch world flowed through political channels, through Dutch ministers and consulates. But these diplomatic officials were also informed by merchants and businessmen, by politicians representing other nations, and by a plethora of newspapers in circulation. Roest van Limburg's cooperation with the Danish representative in D.C., for example, points to the importance of personal connections between diplomats as a source of useful information. Representatives from smaller nations like the Netherlands and Denmark might be more willing to share information and thereby expand their knowledge networks. Dutch ideas about slavery and labor markets, as shown in these documents, also indicate that the Dutch were influenced by British and French political and economic models. It is also worthy of note that Roest van Limburg, the central figure in the documents in this volume, became the Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs in 1868, and played a role in Dutch diplomacy that prepared the way for east Asian migration to Suriname.²⁴

²³ Roest van Limburg (New York) to Netherlands Department of Foreign Affairs, Jan. 30, 1864, folder 142, Papers of the American Legation, Collection 2.05.13, National Archives of the Netherlands.

²⁴ R. Hoeft, *In Place of Slavery: A Social History of British Indian and Javanese Laborers in Suriname* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 1998), 30-1.

Racial Thinking

These documents also provide numerous examples of Dutch racial thinking, evidence that can contribute to the growing literature on this topic by Dienke Hondius, Guno Jones, Gloria Wekker, and others.²⁵ We can see racial thinking laid bare in the failure of the proposed colonization treaty. It is clear that the treaty failed not only because the U.S. government turned against the project but also because colonization in general was rejected by African Americans, who were perceived to have a proclivity to stay where they were – to enjoy their newfound freedom on known soil. This image of content, intentionally stationary African Americans convinced American and Dutch observers that diplomatic efforts to encourage migration constituted much work for little gain.

Diplomats also observed the behavior of freedmen as a sign of natural temperament relating to their race. The Dutch general consul in New York City, Rudolph C. Burlage, for one, exemplified this stereotype when he wrote, “Blacks are by nature lazy and sluggish.”²⁶ Once the Union army began recruiting black soldiers, there was no chance of getting strong, young African men, Roest van Limburg wrote. Emigration agents, he continued, might be able to find willing emigrants in Washington, D.C., or Norfolk, but what kind of people would they be? Mostly the weak, sick, and demoralized, he figured. Other potential emigrants would likely fear that five-year contracts were a new form of involuntary servitude. Roest van Limburg could find no kind words for Pike, that “fiery abolitionist” who failed to see the problems that emancipation wrought.²⁷

²⁵ D. Hondius, *N. Jouwe, D. Stame, Dutch New York Histories: Connecting African, Native American and Slavery Heritage* (place: LM Publishers, 2017); D. Hondius, *Blackness in Western Europe: Racial Patterns of Paternalism and Exclusion* (place: Transaction Publishers, 2014); G. Wekker, *White Innocence: Paradoxes of Colonialism and Race* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016); G. Jones, “De Slavernij is onze geschiedenis (niet). Over de discursieve strijd om de betekenis van de ntr-televisieserie De Slavernij,” *BMGN – Low Countries Historical Review* 127:4 (date), 56–82; M.J. Douma, “A Black Dutchman and the Racial Discourse of the Dutch in America, 1850–1920,” *Dutch Crossing: Journal of Low Countries Studies* 36:2 (2012), 143–57; M.J. Douma, “A Dutch Confederate: Charles Liernur Defends Slavery in America,” *BMGN – Low Countries Review* 132:2 (June, 2017), 27–50.

²⁶ Rud C. Burlage (New York) to Roest van Limburg, 3 June 1863, folders. 3230–1, Papers of the Netherlands Department of Foreign Affairs, Collection 2.05.01, National Archives of the Netherlands.

²⁷ Roest van Limburg (New York) to Kattendyke, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Feb. 16, 1864, Papers of the American Legation, Collection 2.05.13, folder 142, National Archives of the Netherlands. William H. Seward, U.S. Department of State (D.C.) to Roest van Limburg, Feb. 12, 1864, folders 3230–1, Papers of the Netherlands Department of Foreign Affairs, Collection 2.05.01, National Archives of the Netherlands.

Contrasted with this negative image of racialization, control, and discrimination of African Americans, these sources indicate a humanitarian concern of government officials. Regardless of their personal beliefs – whether they were outright abolitionists or reluctant opponents of slavery – Union government officials and Dutch diplomats in the United States all expressed hope for the sound treatment of African Americans. Many of the letters in this collection attest to their liberal concern for regulations to prevent corruption and mistreatment.

The Translated Documents

Of the ninety-four source documents included in this collection, only four have been previously available in digital databases or published in any form. One is a selection from the 1858 Lincoln-Douglas debate at Galesburg, Illinois, one of many occasions in the 1850s when Lincoln gave his support for colonization. This selection helps to give some context to the story, indicating that colonization was very much a part of the political discussion in the 1850s, and that it was on Lincoln's mind as he entered the presidency in 1860. Two reports by James Mitchell, the U.S. commissioner on colonization, and a selection from Adrian David Van der Gon Netscher's book *Werking van de Wet Tot Opheffing der Slavernij in de Nederlandsche West Indische Kolonien, en Middelen om Suriname van verder verval te redden*, were originally published in the 1860s but have not been reproduced since then.

In sum, then, this collection provides a completely new set of records for historians interested in a variety of topics, including but not limited to the history of Suriname, comparative emancipation, the Lincoln administration, and the Dutch diplomatic network in the nineteenth century. Besides a few newspaper clippings and printed governmental ordinances, all of the original materials have been transcribed from handwritten sources and, when necessary, translated into English from the original Dutch or French. A total of forty-eight of the documents were translated from Dutch, and eight from French. The remainder were either originally in English or bilingual side-by-side Dutch and English. For the translations of sources originally in French, I thank Sebastian Page and Reyes Mabasa. For help with some difficult words and idioms, I sought the advice of native speakers of Dutch, including Dries Glorieux.

The bulk of the records reproduced here come from the Netherlands's national archive in The Hague, and are located specifically in the records of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Dutch Colonial Office. Suriname was a colony of the Netherlands until 1975, and most Surinamese records are still housed in the Netherlands. Attempts to locate relevant records in Suriname proved fruitless. Additional records on this topic were located in the files of the U.S. Department of

State, held in the United States' national archives. Each source includes information on its archival location, author, date, and original language. Naturally, as historians know all too well, archival sources can be found in a jumble, with no apparent chronological or thematic order. I have chosen to organize these sources in chronological order, so that one can follow the story by reading the sources from first to last. In a few cases, the original dates on these documents were not clear and had to be partially deciphered either through handwriting analysis or the context of the content of the materials. I am confident that the dates given here are accurate, but it is possible that I have made errors in reading the date of one or more letters.

As a non-native speaker of Dutch, I felt it necessary to translate all of the Dutch (and French) documents in question so as to better understand what I had discovered, and so that I would be thoroughly familiar with the records before I attempted to piece the story together. For a number of reasons, the translations proved to be a difficult task. Nineteenth century Dutch handwriting is legible enough, but when the only surviving text is a copy of the original letter made by a department secretary, one wishes that the copyist had not sacrificed clarity for speed. Two or three memoranda in the relevant Dutch files were scribbled so poorly that my attempts at transcription failed, and the sources are therefore not reproduced here. The longer, formal Dutch correspondence, on the other hand, was entirely legible, although produced by a variety of different hands. Here, the primary difficulty was understanding the diplomatic Dutch language of the period, with all of its formalities, abbreviations, French loan words, and complex syntax.

In particular, the formal system of honorific titles also proved to be difficult to deal with. Nineteenth-century Dutch had long list of honorific titles for persons of various governmental and social ranks. Writers commonly used the formal title "Hoogedelgeboren" (high well born) abbreviated as "Hoogedelgeb" or "HEgb", but they also used the similar "Hoogweledelgeboren" and the abbreviated HEWgb" or "Hoogedelgestrenge heer" (high noble sir) abbreviated as "HEGH" and other similar titles with variations on their abbreviations. Added to this difficulty, the abbreviations could appear without the full word present in the same correspondence. The abbreviations are sometimes all in capital letters, and the form of the capital letters is inconsistent. Errors here, however, will not likely detract from the text or significantly alter its meaning.

I have produced fairly literal translations, attempting to represent as much as possible the structure of written language in the mid-nineteenth century, while also producing an English-language text that is true to the period and understandable to modern ears. I have attempted, of course, to avoid any anachronistic use of modern language in the translations. The diplomatic language of the mid-nineteenth century could at time serve as a straightjacket, limiting the personal expression of the authors, forcing them into fixed formalities. At the same time, however, the

language was precise and functional. For those familiar with the style, the long but properly-formed sentences with all the redundancies of form made sure that the writers were understood clearly, and that communication would not be delayed or misinterpreted because of a rare unreferenced pronoun, or a confusion about the precise matter of concern of correspondence. References to letters sent and received indicated how a chain of correspondence functioned as a larger discussion. The correspondence reproduced here – including materials from a single archival folder – was not generally labelled as consecutive pieces of writing. This is because, in this period, most Dutch diplomats appear to have organized their correspondence chronologically, and not by topic or theme. When correspondence was copied or transferred to other offices, however, topical letters were extracted from the general chronological order. For purposes of following the narrative, and for ease of locating sources, I have found it best to maintain a strictly chronological order for the sources.