

To

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6) The Dutch Parliament: Commission of the Second Chamber for: Internal Affairs,
Education, Culture and Science; Foreign Affairs; Security and Justice.
Post Office Box 20018
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Subject: Painting on the Side Panel of the “Golden Carriage”

The Hague / Heemskerk, September 11, 2012

Excellencies, Prime Minister, Ministers of the respective Departments and Members of the respective Commissions of the Second Chamber Committees of the Dutch Parliament

We: The National Platform Dutch Slavery Past and the Foundation Committee Honor of Debts, ask your attention for the following.

Soon, on September 18th the Golden Carriage will ride through the streets of the city of The Hague again. Thousands of Dutch citizens and tourists will visit the Royal residence again to catch a glimpse of the Queen and her relatives. The Queen will in turn ride again in her Golden Carriage: the symbol of the Dutch Monarchy wherein, through the painting on the Side Panel of the Carriage, the criminal colonial history of oppression and exploitation is being glorified.

In 2011, the National Platform Dutch Slavery Past and the Foundation Committee Debts of Honor, supported by the Members of Parliament: Harry van Bommel (Socialist Party/SP) and Mariko Peters (Greenleft/GL) made critical remarks regarding the painting on the Side Panel "Hulde der Koloniën" (Tribute to the Colonies) of the Golden Carriage. This, with great amazement of many Dutch people, including: politicians, intellectuals and journalists. The responses were very outraged. Some people have indicated that they never have noticed the painting before. Prime Minister Rutte mentioned the critical remarks "bizar".

Some critics and historians have indicated that the offending painting on the Golden Carriage should be seen as expressions of a part of the legitimate Dutch history, for which a nation, which apparently is meant, white people, does not have to be ashamed. Meanwhile the people in the Netherlands are no longer 'white' civilians only. But they also consist of descendants of the victims of the Dutch Slave Trade, slavery and colonial Past.

Some quotes (pros and cons) of some statements:

"This historical picture makes clear that Dutch prosperity for a greater part did arise from our role in the great world (exploitation) ".

"On the opening-day of the Dutch Parliament this Golden 'Spijker' is a beautiful symbol, just when we seem to think that our prosperity could not exist without the countries and peoples around us (EU)".

"That people do not know where they are looking at has nothing to do with the Carriage, but with a lack of information. Now that this information is being broadcasted, it appears to be important. All the more reason to preserve our history and not to sweep it under the carpet because it is so tedious. So that we can learn from it. Moreover, I am of the opinion that the Queen herself must decide whether she still wants to ride in the Carriage. End whatever she should decide: that is important information. And teachable".

"On the one hand you can not blame the colonial powers of that time that they thought the way they did, after all it was another time. Not all colonization had to do with profit. More stronger, many colonial conquests even took place in the light of 'Education' of the savages. Our "superior white race", would bring civilization to the savages. In principle, this idea was not bad even, but unfortunately, the implementation was not very great. Then again with the knowledge of now you may dare to say that the deeds of the past were wrong. Proceeding Insight leads to different norms, values, ideas, conclusions ".

"Once to think deeply about our colonial past and the horrors that took place can never be wrong. A debate about whether or not an excuse must be made should continue to be conducted".

"Remove that picture whereby slaves or residents of VOC and WIC colonies are offering resources to the Crown. Apart from that, descendants of the people on these paintings are probably Dutch citizens now, and I'm more curious about their opinion than the opinion of the native Dutchmen whose ancestors never have been conquered and whose countries never have been colonized".

"To show off a criminal past is for a queen, who is supposed to be honest, embarrassing. Remove that thing".

"Do not think the (African) President from the U.S., Barack Obama and the former South African President, freedom fighter for equal rights and the abolition of the criminal Apartheid system, Nelson Mandela, during a visit to the Netherlands would like to ride in the Golden Carriage wherein their ancestors are portrayed as subjects of the so-called whites. Michelle Obama would diplomatically let you know: no way!"

End of the quotes.

The critical remarks in 2011 were also seen in the perspective of the "UN International Year for People of African descent" that was declared for 2011. We consider it as an excellent opportunity, within the frame of the UN Year, to bring up this issue of the Golden Carriage, into discussion. But also from the believe that the Netherlands as a civilized country, have transcended the stage of the Colonial Past and from the awareness of the Netherlands as a Multi-ethnic society, where the morals, standards and values deemed to have been changed. And for that reason there should be no place for the glorification of expressions which have their basis in racist ideologies, oppression and exploitation.

The signers of this current letter, on behalf of their constituencies, just like in 2011 deem, that in the time in which we are living now, the half-naked African and Indonesian men, women and children on the Side Panel, whereby they are offering goods to the 'slaveholders', which are produced through 'slave labour' is still inappropriate, insulting and disrespectful to the civilians of African and Indonesian origin in particular. It is offensive and disrespectful to all people of African and Indonesian descent anywhere in the world.

The Side Panel 'Tribute to the Colonies' is evoking strong counter-pressure for a large group of citizens in the Netherlands, both of African and Indonesian descent and other citizens of Good Will and solidarity. Every year that the Golden Carriage is riding with the relevant offending Side Panel, the painting evoked memories of a horrific period in Dutch history by maintaining the permanent indication, to the African and Indonesian community in the Netherlands, that they are and always have been inferior human beings.

Perhaps one of the reasons why the descendants of the Dutch despicable past still have not been offered apologies, while in 2001 (Final Resolution of the UN World Anti-Racism Conference in Durban / South Africa) The United Nations have declared all practices relating to the Trans Atlantic Slave Trade, Slavery and Colonialism as a crime against humanity.

The benefactors, the "Association of the People of Amsterdam' (Vereeniging van het Amsterdamsche Volk'), could not have suspect in 1898, that 103 years later Slave Trade, Slavery and Colonialism would have been declared as crimes against humanity. In the colonial period and the aftermath of the Slave Trade and Slavery a picture as challenged indeed seemed to be quite common. The general civilization in the Netherlands: norms and values, was not in that stage to realize that oppression and exploitation of entire peoples were crimes. On that time there was no awareness that once the Netherlands should be a Multi-ethnic country.

As the Netherlands could take an example by the British Royal House it should be every reason to the Dutch Royal Family from the point of view of human rights and the human dignity in mind, to replace the offending painting on the Side Panel of the Golden Carriage by a painting which refers to the Dutch Multi-ethnic society.

In Germany, all expressions that glorified the crime against humanity are banished from public life. This says a lot about the level of civilization of a nation.

The Netherlands is 150 years too late!

Excellencies, Prime Minister, ministers and members of the respective Second Chamber Committees.

We are ready to think positively with you. We are ready to discuss with you about alternative painting for the offending Side Panel of the Golden Carriage. What we have in mind is a painting that portrays and reflects on the Multi-ethnic character of the Dutch society.

We are convinced that the launching of a national competition towards Dutch visual artists to develop an alternative painting, will realizes many good responses. Right now visual artists in the Netherlands but also from abroad are eager to contribute.

In summary:

What are we asking for: The National Platform Slavery and the Foundation Committee Honor of Debts?

We ask for:

According to the Dutch Constitutional Law set out in ministerial responsibility, to contrive that:

-The painting on the Side Panel of the Golden Coach "Tribute to the Colonies ", which are expressions of the crimes against the African and Indonesian humanity, be removed;

-The offending Side Panel will be placed for instance in a Dutch museum where similar paintings, which refer to the Dutch colonial history are exhibited. This, in the belief that a Dutch museum is the best place where from the perspective of the education of the past and human rights education information on the Dutch Slave Trade, Slavery and Colonial Past and its effects can be provided;

-To discuss the ideas with Her Majesty the Queen in respect of the launching of a national competition, in which Dutch visual artists are call on to realize alternative ideas to replace the offending painting on the Golden Carriage.

We realize that because of the Dutch parliamentary elections it could be that between the sending and delivery of this letter, a different composition of Cabinet, Parliament and Second Chamber committees has took place. We assume that this correspondence will hand over to possible successors.

We are looking forward to your response and an invitation to discuss other alternative ideas with you.

Sincerely,

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