

Proposal Community Engaged Learning project 2023

Utrecht University's accountability for its slavery past

by

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Introduction

About the role of the university

The main advice of the *University of Utrecht and Slavery Committee* from February 2022 to Utrecht University is 'to recognise that the trade and exploitation of enslaved people had consequences, from which some benefited and under which others suffered'. It is of great importance for the university to examine its own past and take responsibility for the various connections the university has with slavery. In the book *Slavernij en de stad Utrecht*, Nancy Jouwe, Matthijs Kuipers and Remco Raben took a critical look at the involvement of Utrecht's major institutions in slavery. The study revealed that all major institutions in the city profited from slavery and from slave-based colonial exploitation. Although the university was not researched in-depth in the book, it became clear that in various ways it benefited from the colonial connections of the Netherlands and the wealth that resulted from those colonial relations. It is important to mention that colonialism and slavery are inherently linked and that, when researching university's past, involvement in colonial exploitation is inherently linked to the university's role in slavery. Moreover, Utrecht and the university do not only have links to the transatlantic slave trade, but it extends beyond that, to slavery and colonialism in southeast Asia or even modern-day slavery. So when we are looking for ways to account for the university's slavery past, we should leave no stone unturned and include all those who have been affected by the university's slavery past in the broadest sense.

The monumental buildings in the city centre, where the Faculty of Humanities (GW) and the Faculty of Law, Economics and Governance (REBO) are located, are probably the most visible example of the links between the university and the slavery past. The residents of these buildings often were former colonial administrators and their families, or had heavily invested in colonial undertakings. They bought themselves into the patriciate of Utrecht with their fortune acquired in the colonies.¹ Moreover, many colonial administrators and their children studied at Utrecht University. An academic education allowed students to hold the top positions within the organisation of the VOC.² Thirdly, the development of many academic disciplines profited directly from the colonial connections (e.g. natural history/biology or geography), or were instrumental in the support or legitimization of colonial expansion and exploitation (law or theology).

¹ 'Sporen van slavernij in Utrecht ook zichtbaar op de universiteit. Accessed 23 March 2023.

<https://www.uu.nl/nieuws/sporen-van-slavernij-in-utrecht-ook-zichtbaar-op-de-universiteit>.

² Nancy Jouwe, Matthijs Kuipers en Remco Raben, *Slavernij en de stad Utrecht* (Utrecht 2021) 33.

It is therefore of great importance that the university adopts a critical attitude towards its own past and specifically its (indirect) involvement in the slavery past. A university that carries as its motto *Sol iustitiae illustra nos* (May the Sun of Righteousness Enlighten Us) has an obligation to look into its own complicatedness in the injustices of the slavery past and its enduring effects. In creating awareness among its own students and professors, for instance, much can still be gained. The university can do this by looking beyond its walls. Many organisations and initiatives exist in Utrecht that are actively engaged in commemorating the slavery past. This Community Engaged Learning project has shown that it is very important to share and co-create knowledge and experience, engage with each other, listen to each other and think together about appropriate ways of commemoration and redressing past and enduring injustices. For the Faculty of Humanities, this CEL-project is the only and therefore most important project 'as part of plans to account for the university's acquisition histories and slavery-based exploitation within the faculty'.³ The faculty has an obligation to face the past and address the existing present inequalities.

Utrecht University is far from the first university to look into its own involvement in slave-based colonialism. For that reason, our CEL research project and this proposal build on initiatives from universities around the world. To understand how different countries, universities and regions have engaged with their slavery past, we have looked at many initiatives as means for inspiration. In this way, we are building upon the foundations set around the world to consider different routes and ideas UU may follow. It certainly allowed us to think critically about the different paths that the university can take, and helped us gain a better understanding of the global context of the issue. Furthermore, it helped guide some of our conversations with relevant community actors by getting their input on what kind of proposals would be most effective in the context of the UU.

Reflections on our own project

In early 2023, the Faculty of Humanities initiated a Community Engaged Learning project on the slavery past of Utrecht University. During period 3, we would work, together with 'the community', on a project regarding the issue of how to properly reflect on the involvement of Utrecht University with the history of slavery. This is an important yet complex issue. Here we must note that our group is made up of only white people, which we took into consideration in our engagement with the project. None of us have a family background with connections to colonial systems. We therefore prioritised the input from people who have a

³ Commissie 'Universiteit Utrecht en slavernij', Adviesrapport *Rekenschap geven* (February 2022).

more significant background in the commemoration community concerning the slavery past. As well as approaching the University in a very critical manner - as will become evident in our discussion on the curriculum and our proposal for the University to take more accountability for its colonial past.

After the start of the project, we soon ran into the limited time available for this significant undertaking. In the first weeks, we mainly focused on how we could shape the project and, more importantly, who were the 'community'. We then started approaching various people and organisations, including Keti Koti Utrecht, ACHN, Nancy Jouwe ('Sporen van Slavernij Utrecht') and Stichting Keti Koti Tafels. Apart from those we talked to a number of members of the academic community, students, staff members and administrators. Considerable time went into brainstorming about a good final product and contacting the many people and organisations. In the conversations with community members we focused on co-creating knowledge, sharing information and experiences and asking questions. We asked for their views on this project, their expectations and, most importantly, whether collaboration might be possible and desirable. The advice we received, we took to heart. The most important task was to shape this project together.

Therefore, we would urge the University to appoint a new group of motivated and interested students to take over and continue our work. The ideas we present to you in this proposal are worked out well, collaborations are ongoing and the will is definitely there. It is important for the Faculty of Humanities and Utrecht University to continue to account for its involvement in the history of slavery. In this way, this Community Engaged Learning project will not just be a one-off initiative and the faculty as well as the university can show willingness to own up to its (indirect) involvement in slavery, create awareness among current and future generations of students and make the first steps towards structural inequality resulting from the colonial and slavery past.

Alberto, Danthe, Luna, Merel and Sarah

Introducing the community

When approaching the community, we had to take into account that we could not talk to everybody. We therefore had to make strategic choices based on who we consider the appropriate 'community' to be. In our earlier discussions we made distinctions between different implicated communities: the student-body (in which we are included), the University, the African-Caribbean community in Utrecht, and the South-East Asian community. We were very aware of the fact that our group was completely white, situated in a white institution. This is why we prioritised meetings with interest groups from outside the university that represented the voice of the African-Caribbean and South-East Asian communities. Due to our short time-span we cannot claim to have spoken to the complete cross section of any of the implicated groups, but we have definitely gained invaluable insight from those we have spoken to. Eventually we had several conversations with Makeda Ferguson (ACHN), Migaisa Poeketi (Keti Koti Utrecht), Leen Dorsman, Emanuel van Dongen and Rebecca van Musscher (Faculty of REBO), Nancy Jouwe and Miranda Jansen.

African Caribbean Heritage Network (ACHN)

ACHN is a UU student-led Diversity Network, celebrating the African and Caribbean heritage by means of social and educational activities. It is a thriving community open to all students and staff of African and Caribbean descent and for those interested in learning more about African and Caribbean culture. The main goal of this organisation is to create a supportive space for students of African and Caribbean heritage, give students a sense of belonging (a community), share knowledge and raise awareness on matters related to equality, diversity and inclusion and provide safe spaces for students. We spoke to Makeda Ferguson and the conversation revealed that a collaboration with ACHN would be very valuable in sending a signal to the university that we as students support each other in the plans to create more awareness and ensure safe places for all students within the university.⁴

Keti Koti Utrecht

It is important that the community is not exclusively confined within the walls of the university. Keti Koti Utrecht raises awareness around Utrecht's transatlantic slavery past by

⁴ 'African and Caribbean Heritage Network'. Accessed 23 March 2023.
[African and Caribbean Heritage Network - Equality, Diversity & Inclusion - Utrecht University \(uu.nl\)](https://www.uu.nl/en/equality-diversity-inclusion/achn).

connecting residents, past and present. In 2018, the Comité 30 June/1 July Utrecht started to give the city an official annual commemoration and celebration during Ketikoti. Their mission is to transfer knowledge about the transatlantic slavery past in an accessible way, by stimulating a connection between people of different backgrounds and ages. They strive to create awareness in Utrecht about the transatlantic slavery past. Everyone is welcome to commemorate the slavery past and celebrate freedom. Tolerance, diversity and inclusion are highly valued by Ketikoti Utrecht.⁵ The exchange of ideas, thoughts and initiatives in the conversation with Migaisa Poeketi was very valuable and has certainly given new insights.

Nancy Jouwe and ‘Sporen van Slavernij Utrecht’

Nancy Jouwe has set up a number of great initiatives concerning the slavery past of the city of Utrecht, including ‘Sporen van Slavernij Utrecht’ (2010) and Mapping Slavery (2018). She also organises educational walking tours in Utrecht. With a guide, you visit places in the old centre of Utrecht that show how the city and its (former) inhabitants are in various ways connected to the history of slavery and the global trade in enslaved people. Moreover, Nancy Jouwe was involved in the committee that advised the UU to account for its slavery past as well as in the realisation of the book *Slavernij en de stad Utrecht*. In collaboration with Nancy Jouwe and her crew, we plan to organise walking tours for students, professors and other interested parties focusing mainly on the university's monumental buildings and their connection to slavery.⁶

Miranda Jansen

Miranda Jansen is director of the Faculty of Humanities and also involved in this Community Engaged Learning project. It is important to inform Miranda Jansen about the various initiatives we have shaped in cooperation with the community outside the university. Utrecht University needs to ‘open up’ to the view from the community on the university as an institution and its (indirect) involvement in the slavery past. In collaboration with Miranda Jansen, real change can be achieved from within. Moreover, the conversation revealed that Miranda Jansen is very interested in the input of students and she is open to new ideas and initiatives.

⁵ ‘Over ons Ketikoti Utrecht’. Accessed 23 March 2023.
<https://www.ketikoti030.nl/over-ons>.

⁶ ‘Sporen van Slavernij Utrecht’. Accessed 23 March 2023.
<https://sporenavslavernijutrecht.nl/stadswandeling/>.

Faculty of REBO

The REBO faculty has several great initiatives including Dean's dinner, the Impact Night and the Pierson Chair research. We had an interesting conversation with Emanuel van Dongen and Rebecca van Musscher and they both showed their interest in the Community Engaged Learning project and the various initiatives. Nevertheless, we chose to keep the focus on the Faculty of Humanities, of which this project is part, but we certainly think a collaboration with REBO in the future is very valuable.

Shortcomings

While we talked to a lot of different people when trying to engage with the community, both time constraints and ethical considerations did not allow us to reach the full potential of our project. When approaching people, we had to take into consideration the sensitivity of the topic and the personal boundaries of people within the community. That is why we chose to focus on organisations that have been working on similar issues, which resulted in very fruitful and open conversations with people that were interested in and inspired by the work that we were doing and vice versa. However, we were not able to reach out to members of the community that are not affiliated with these organisations, because it is hard to approach them in a way that is still respectful of their boundaries. By continuing the work on the slavery past of the UU and creating more awareness, future efforts can try to increase the reputation of the project and work on openness and approachability, so this project can form a point of contact for those who want to share their experiences and insights.

Furthermore, the organisations we talked to mostly represented the Afro-Caribbean community. However, as mentioned in the advisory report *Rekenschap Geven*, slavery and colonial exploitation in the Dutch context were not limited to the transatlantic slave trade. Utrecht University also has ties to colonialism and slavery on the Asian continent.⁷ Therefore, it is relevant to include people from the Asian community, specifically from regions like the Indian Ocean and Southeast Asia. Unlike the Afro-Caribbean community, there is no diversity network at Utrecht University representing the Asian community. The focus on reconciling with the slavery past has not been focussed on this group but if the university is to address the slavery past, they will have to be included in the community.

⁷ Commissie 'Universiteit Utrecht en slavernij', Adviesrapport *Rekenschap geven* (February 2022) 4.

The final challenging aspect of this project was getting a clear overview of who to reach out to in the University. Because we started from scratch we had to spend considerable time orienting on who to talk to. This turned into a project in itself, especially because of communication delays. It also became obvious that this lack of overview not only confused us, but the people connected to the university that we took meetings with as well.

Tangible history & walking tours

The buildings owned and/or used by the Humanities faculty offer the most tangible connection to slavery. This becomes evident when one looks at the overview provided by the *Rekenschap Geven* advisory report in its second appendix.⁸ As stated in this report, these buildings were owned by people with high-ranking roles in the colonial system. The list provided is not extensive, as we have found in our research on other buildings that are used by the inner-city faculties. As it is, almost every building in use in the inner-city campus has in one way or another a strong connection with slavery and profits made from slave-based colonial exploitation. The essence of our idea regarding the walking tours is for it to be incorporated into the University's action plan regarding the accounting for its own historical connection to slavery. To reach this goal we are currently setting up a collaboration with Sporen van Slavernij. Because of the time constraints on this project, we were able to lay the foundations for a university-based walking tour. This is why in what follows we will explain what our plan is and what needs to be done.

One of our first concrete ideas was that it is important to highlight the history of the buildings. After speaking with the ACHN and Nancy Jouwe this was confirmed. Highlighting this history is an important step in the process of taking accountability for the university's connections with the history of colonialism, as well as a starter for a discussion on the long-term implications. To not keep this history hidden when it is clearly part of the existence of these buildings, we implore the university to take accountability by making this history visible. One important way to make students and staff acquainted with this history is through walking tours. This way, the participants are able to actively engage with colonial heritage by seeing, listening and conversing. Walking tours that centre colonial heritage are not an original idea since this already exists in Utrecht in the form of the Sporen van Slavernij (Traces of Slavery) project, which offers several walks in the city centre of Utrecht that focus on the history of how the city and its former inhabitants are connected in various ways to the history of slavery and the global trade in enslaved people.⁹ As we learned in our conversation with Nancy Jouwe, one of the walks from the Sporen van Slavernij project already focuses specifically on the monumental university buildings and their link to the history of slavery.

An important distinctive feature of these walking tours is the emphasis on mutual participation of the guide and the participants. What we discussed with Jouwe in our

⁸ Rapport *Rekenschap geven*, Adviesrapport commissie 'Universiteit Utrecht en slavernij' (February 2022), 20.

⁹ Another example of this type of themed walking tour is the book *Wandelgids sporen van slavernij in Utrecht / Hiking traces of slavery in Utrecht* by Esther Captain and Hans Visser.

conversations is also present in her article “Sporen van Slavernij: Samen wandelen door Nederlandse steden” in the Faro publication *Erfgoed is Mensenwerk* (Heritage is Human Work), the act of walking together is not a means, but an end itself.¹⁰ The participants are encouraged to engage in knowledge exchange, whilst also making room for the sharing of personal experiences. Jouwe continues by stating that empathic capability can grow because of the interplay of multiple sensations, emotions and the presence of different kinds of participants, especially for those participants for whom this history is the most abstract.¹¹ Hence, we believe that offering walking tours as a means of sharing this colonial heritage is a fruitful example of making this history more tangible and accessible. Furthermore, as we learned from our conversations with Nancy Jouwe, it is important to not just highlight the history of the white colonial figures, but to also tell the stories of the enslaved persons that inhabited these buildings alongside them. Only focussing on the white side of colonial history would be reductive, and would not tell the whole story of colonialism.

Which buildings would be interesting for a walking tour?

Kromme Nieuwegracht 80 - Asiento de Negros

Kromme Nieuwegracht 80 was an important building during the diplomatic talks for the Vrede van Utrecht/Peace of Utrecht in 1713. The building is especially of note because it was where the Asiento de Negros was negotiated - the deal on who gets the sole right to ‘deliver’ enslaved people to the Spanish crown.¹² Nowadays this building is very important for the inner-city faculties.

Drift 27 - Sitie

Drift 27 was owned by Joan Gideon Loten (1710-1789), who had been governor of Makassar and Ceylon in the mid-18th century. In particular in the former position, he oversaw the intensive slave trade between Makassar and Batavia. Part of his household was the woman Sitie, who Loten received as a gift from a king of Bone (South Sulawesi). Loten always denied that Sitie was an enslaved woman - hence she was not registered in his household as such, in the Netherlands, nobody was registered as a slave. Sitie was therefore regarded as a free woman.¹³

¹⁰ Nancy Jouwe, “Sporen van Slavernij” in Rijksdienst voor Cultureel Erfgoed “Erfgoed is mensenwerk, samen verder met Faro in de leefomgeving” (2022) 47-52.

¹¹ Nancy Jouwe “Sporen van Slavernij” 50.

¹² Rapport *Rekenschap geven*, Adviesrapport commissie ‘Universiteit Utrecht en slavernij’ (February 2022), 20.

¹³ Nancy Jouwe, “Eduard, Sitie, Pieter en Lizette Vier eeuwen zwarte aanwezigheid in Utrecht” in: Nancy Jouwe, Matthijs Kuipers en Remco Raben (ed.), *Slavernij en de stad Utrecht*, (Zutphen 2021) 215-234.

Janskerkhof 13 – Jan van Voorst

In 1765, Janskerkhof 13 became the property of Jan van Voorst, who worked for the West India Company and was director general at Elmina (1747-1754), the main Dutch slave trading post in western Africa. As director general, Van Voorst was responsible for the deportation of enslaved people to America. As his station ended, Van Voorst sold 275 enslaved people in 1764, making a large sum of money. With his money earned from the slave trade, Van Voorst was able to purchase Janskerkhof 13.¹⁴ Nowadays this building is the home of the department of Philosophy and Religion. During the slavery past, theology was heavily implicated in both the legitimization of slavery as well as the abolitionist movement.

Boothstraat 6 - Nicolaas Beets (abolitionist)

In 1854 Nicolaas Beets and his family came to live at the Boothstraat. Nicolaas Beets was the well-known author of *Camera Obscura*, which he published under the pen name Hildebrand. Between 1874 and 1884, Beets was a Professor of church history at Utrecht University.¹⁵ Less well known is that he campaigned for the abolition of slavery. Beets played a prominent role in the Utrecht Committee of the Maatschappij ter Bevordering van de Afschaffing der Slavernij (Society for the Promotion of the Abolition of Slavery), founded in 1852.¹⁶

Janskerkhof 2-3 – De Provinciale Utrechtsche Geoctroyeerde Compagnie

In 1736, the Compagnie bought ownership of a coffee plantation in Suriname, including about 80 enslaved people.¹⁷ Janskerkhof 2-3 was the seat of the States of Utrecht. The States of Utrecht had in both, the WIC chamber of Maze and the VOC chamber of Amsterdam, a delegate director.

How would this work?

The walking tour would take place with a group of ca. ten students and one guide. Because the inner-city faculties almost all reside in buildings with historical ties to colonialism, we

¹⁴ Nancy Jouwe, Matthijs Kuipers en Remco Raben, "Inleiding: Slavernij en de stad Utrecht" in: Nancy Jouwe, Matthijs Kuipers en Remco Raben (ed.), *Slavernij en de stad Utrecht*, (Zutphen 2021) 16.

¹⁵ Carl Haarnack, "Nicolaas Beets en Julien Wolbers" in: Nancy Jouwe, Matthijs Kuipers en Remco Raben (ed.), *Slavernij en de stad Utrecht*, (Zutphen 2021) 205.

¹⁶ Ibidem, 204.

¹⁷ C.H. Slechte, "De Firma List en Bedrog" in: Vereniging Oud-Utrecht, *Jaarboek Oud-Utrecht* (Utrecht 1998), 212.

have to select the buildings that best represent this connection, and the various varieties of involvement. The choice for Drift 27 is therefore especially interesting due to the fact that all Humanities students move through the hall of this building. The audience for these tours are therefore most likely the students who engage with these buildings on a daily basis. Versions of these tours could become staples during open days, introduction weeks or during courses that touch on the history of universities/slavery. It could even become a monthly event that people can sign up for if they are interested, hopefully also reaching people from outside the university. Whilst walking from building to building, mention can be made of other buildings on the route. For the four (perhaps more) buildings that function as the highlight of this tour we take more time to reflect. We will tell its history, and ask questions of how learning this information impacts the students and the university as an institute. We will make time for conversation, it should not be a one-sided lecture.

An alternative, or addition, to real-life walking tours would be to place QR codes on the buildings that people can scan, and they would receive information on the building either in the form of text or an audio message. This way, the walking tours become available for both students and others interested in the history of the UU buildings and their link with slavery. People can take parts of the tour at their discretion.

Yet another idea was to make small booklets (for example BooQi's) with a map and short notes on the histories of the buildings. Making these available at the information desks, makes them accessible to anyone who finds themselves in the area. An additional note here is to include a small note on the colonial history of the building on the website. For example, the information page of Drift 27 mentions that this building is the former palace of Lodewijk Napoleon, but could also include it being the former home of a colonial governor.

By promoting the walking tours and audio tours on social media (the Humanities' Instagram page) and including further information in resources such as the newsletter (DUB) or the university website, awareness could be spread among students and professors and information about the past could become more visible.

What do we need?

In collaboration with Nancy Jouwe and Sporen van Slavernij we hope to create a concrete plan for the walking tours: dates, guides, promotion. Evidently, the faculty has to make an investment in the development of the tour, in particular as the help and knowledge of an outside organisation such as SvS is involved. Because we had no approval yet from the

Faculty to carry out this project, we were limited in the promises and commitments we could make for this collaboration. But it is clear that a collaboration is possible. This is also why we hope that there will be a group after us that can further this collaboration and explore the possibilities listed here. This is especially pressing when it comes to the question of who will be giving these tours. We hope for the collaboration with Sporen van Slavernij to also mean that they are willing to give these tours on a regular basis. Realistically, we also hope for student participation in the process of guiding these walks, either as guides themselves or as assistants to the guide. Possibly in exchange for credit, or as a part of courses related to slavery and/or the University's history.

Another necessary next step is to continue research on the buildings and their inhabitants. We quickly concluded that more information was necessary on the buildings that were not listed in the *Rekenschap Geven* advisory report. For example, the buildings around Trans 10 had been left out of both the *Slavernij en de stad Utrecht* book and the *Rekenschap Geven* report. The houses on the Trans, the seat of the dean of the Humanities Faculty and of the Department of Languages, Literature and Communication, have colonial histories. A simple quick search in the Utrecht notarial archives has unearthed various connections of former owners to colonial riches. Several families living on the north side of Trans, such as Van Spall, Van Schuler and Van IJsseldijk had repatriated from or profited from family members working in different parts of the Dutch empire. In this process of garnering more information we wish to see student involvement. The most obvious way would be to employ students for research projects, but we implore the university to be creative with this challenge.

Art installations

One of the challenges we decided to focus on during this CEL-project was to reflect on how to make the information about the past of Utrecht in its relation to slavery more visible to students. In this way, we wish to show information and share the stories and perspectives of those enslaved people or those generations that have suffered from the repercussions of slavery. Additionally, it would work towards holding the university accountable for its past

connections to slave traders, the ways in which the institution profited from slavery as an economic engine of human labour and commemorate abolitionism. To increase visibility and the availability of this information, we propose the installation of art or audiovisual guides throughout some of the Utrecht University buildings. There are many stories to be told from people who have not had a voice for a very long time and in light of the attempts by the University to reconcile with their past, we strongly recommend taking a step towards supporting artists that are connected to this past and making these stories visible.

How would this work?

The specific implementation of art installations could range from poems, videos, paintings, sculptures and many more. Through poems and paintings, the work could reach a lot of people and catch the attention of the students, staff and other visitors of the buildings. Places like the entrance hall of Drift 27, the university library, the lecture halls and the bicycle parking lend themselves perfectly to 'confront' students and staff with the message and grab their attention, even if it is just for one short moment. This confrontation is part of becoming aware that this colonial history resides in the buildings. Awareness can lead to curiosity to what exactly the University's connection to slavery was. In that case, being able to offer the walking tours, or leaflets with this information would be a great follow-up to this initial information exchange.

In order to carry out this proposal, we propose contacting local artists and poets who have worked on similar topics to those we are seeking for said installations. Nancy Jouwe advised us to contact Babs Gons 'the queen of the spoken word', Onias Langveld, Jörgen Gario and the Central Museum Utrecht for their exhibition MOED: What is left unseen. In this way, we would be supporting local artists who are connected to the topic, while simultaneously spreading awareness about the past, showcasing relevant information we want to share and making it more accessible for students and staff. There are many untold stories which need to be shared and we believe that an effective way of doing this is through the aforementioned art installations in the UU buildings. In addition, we can think of collaborating with HKU or the department of 'History and Art History'. In the spirit of creating awareness among students and staff, students can work on artworks or poems on the traces of slavery within the university and the city of Utrecht.

Belle van Zuylen chair

Based on the advisory report of a committee set up by the Executive Board of Utrecht University, which includes our supervising professor Remco Raben, the first and most important step Utrecht University can take towards 'accounting for its own slavery past' is to critically examine its own past. The Board of Governors has been forced to conclude that it knows too little about its own history and the role the University has played, directly and indirectly, in the colonial slavery past. And that is telling. An important example of this ignorance is reflected in the name of the Belle van Zuylen chair.

Utrecht University has several types of chairs. However, the naming and classification of these is subject to change. The Belle van Zuylen chair is a university exchange chair financed and established by the Executive Board.¹⁸ Although Belle van Zuylen was definitely a very prominent and 'enlightened' woman with important, revolutionary ideas about the position of women in eighteenth-century society, until recently very little was known about her large shares in trading companies such as the Dutch East India Company (Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie (VOC) and the Dutch West India Company (WIC) and the colonial roots of the family capital she inherited.

As it turned out, Belle van Zuylen invested almost 40 percent of her capital in both the VOC and the WIC, with the latter trading company mainly focussing on trading enslaved people.¹⁹ "The colonial profits made it possible to live a writing life in luxury".²⁰ In none of her works she challenged colonial slavery or pointed out the inhuman oppression by slave owners. Both her social and familial contacts and her financial capital both appeared to have been quite 'colonial'.²¹

What do we need?

We consider changing the name of the Belle van Zuylen chair a step too far. A name change would detract from the meaningful role Van Zuylen played with her revolutionary ideas on the position of women in eighteenth-century society. Moreover, Belle van Zuylen offers a good example to illustrate the complexities and ambiguities of the (anti)slavery issue. Another point to bring into this debate is the 1992 appointment of bell hook as a Belle van Zuylen

¹⁸ 'Chairs'. Accessed 25 February 2023.

<https://profs.library.uu.nl/index.php/info/chairs>

¹⁹ Jouwe, Kuipers en Raben, *Slavernij en de stad Utrecht*, 18.

²⁰ Ibidem.

²¹ Caroline Drieënhuizen, 'Belle van Zuylen in koloniale zaken', in: *Slavernij en de stad Utrecht*, 161.

professor at the Women's Studies (now Gender Studies) department. Famously, bell hooks was a scholar who contributed to the debate on the intersections between race, gender and class. Which is a point we argue which adds to the multifacetedness of Belle van Zuylen and how we can react to this fraught history.

The various conversations we have had with the community (African and Caribbean Heritage Network, Keti Koti Utrecht, Nancy Jouwe on behalf of 'Sporen van Slavernij' in Utrecht) have also indicated that a name change is not necessarily desirable. It is imperative, however, to create more awareness about the different dimensions of Belle van Zuylen, and create awareness about the fact that she and her kin profited highly from investments in slave based colonial exploitation. When awarding the chair, the university could, for example, account for this multifacetedness by also (briefly) reflecting on her 'colonial' capital alongside her revolutionary ideas. Another option is to offer more information about Van Zuylen's involvement in the trading companies, for example by posting information on the University website. In this way, the university demonstrates its willingness to also show this side of Belle van Zuylen, showing awareness of the personal stratification and also contributing to the creation of awareness on a larger scale.

Scholarship

Slavery is not just an issue of the past, it has long-standing consequences that influence society and the university until this day. The fact that Utrecht University, both the student community and staff, is a dominantly white institution, shows that structural inequality persists. In a city like Utrecht, where several links to slavery and colonialism have been discovered, racism within the educational system or limited economic opportunities, as a direct or indirect consequence of Utrecht's slavery past, play an important role in people's abilities to attend university in the first place. In our conversation with Keti Koti Utrecht, for example, it became clear how some people from the community experience difficulties trying to get access to the university because of a lack of money, little knowledge about their opportunities or an incorrect assessment of their level of education.

What examples are there?

As an educational institute, a way in which Utrecht University can work on accountability for the past is through a scholarship. By offering a scholarship to students that are connected to the university's slavery past, a first step towards addressing structural equality can be taken. Utrecht University already has initiatives to support people that have a difficult socio-economic background. There is a First-Generation Fund that supports students who are the first in their families to study at Utrecht University, by offering small scholarships and having a programme for students to connect to other first-generation students and talk about their experiences.²² Furthermore, The Right To Learn Fund is funding projects that help refugees and other disadvantaged groups by promoting higher education and enabling access to university.²³ With these examples in mind, a scholarship for descendants of enslaved people or others that have been disadvantaged by slavery and colonialism could ensure that these disadvantaged do not bar them from having access to Utrecht University. The scholarship or even a fund should be aimed specifically at the history of slavery and colonialism because this is an important step in recognising the slavery past of Utrecht University.

There are a couple of universities worldwide that already have scholarships to deal with the legacy of slavery, mainly at universities in the United Kingdom and the United States, where the connections to slavery are very clear. All Souls College at Oxford created an annual

²² 'First-Generation Fund'. Accessed 13 March 2023.
<https://www.uu.nl/en/organisation/donate/first-generation-fund>.

²³ 'The Right To Learn Fund'. Accessed 13 March 2023.
<https://www.uu.nl/en/organisation/donate/the-right-to-learn-fund>.

scholarship in 2017 for Caribbean students and has a programme for visiting fellowships and travel grants that enables Caribbean researchers to come to Oxford. The Black Academic Futures Scholarships offer financial support to UK Black and Mixed Black students that pursue graduate education at All Souls College. The scholarship covers the programme fees and offers a grant for living costs for the full duration of the programme. Candidates have to provide their ethnicity information in their application for the scholarship.²⁴

In Virginia, the US, the Enslaved Ancestors College Access Scholarship and Memorial Program requires universities that benefited from slavery to offer scholarships and economic development programmes to descendants of enslaved people. The State Council of Higher Education from Virginia (SHEV) published a guiding document that includes guidelines on how to identify people with a connection to slavery. Applicants for the scholarship can for example submit a personal statement or documentation “that shows a personal and logical connection to slavery or continues to experience the negative legacy of slavery.”²⁵

What do we need?

Utrecht, and by extension Utrecht University, has historical ties not just to the transatlantic slave trade, but also to slavery and colonialism in regions like the Indian Ocean and Southeast Asia. This brings about a lot of challenges when thinking about accountability, reconciliation and possibilities for reparations. Yet, it has been demonstrated that with the right guidelines, a scholarship can offer a way to reconcile with the past by ensuring broader access to Utrecht University and promoting diversity. Considering the history of Utrecht University with slavery and colonialism, a fund for scholarships aimed at descendants of enslaved people should not only include people of Afro-Caribbean descent, as is often the case in policies at British and American universities. Applications should also be open to descendants of enslaved people from the Indian Ocean and Southeast Asia if they are able to provide a statement that shows their connection to the practice of slavery and colonialism.

In order to establish a scholarship, we will have to consider which requirements for applying to such a scholarship would be suitable in the context of Utrecht University. Furthermore, the format for this scholarship has to be elaborated on. When following the example of the

²⁴ ‘Black Academic Futures’. Accessed 13 March 2023.

<https://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/graduate/access/academic-futures>.

²⁵ State Council of Higher Education for Virginia. ‘Enslaved Ancestors College Access Scholarship and Memorial Program: Guidance Document’, 2021. Accessed 23 March 2023.

<https://www.schev.edu/home/showpublisheddocument/2689/638104237220505526>.

First-Generation Fund, such a fund can include not just a scholarship, but also financial support for the community in other ways. It could be both about lowering financial thresholds and about providing a programme that is attending to the specific needs of the community, for example in the form of mentor programmes and community building. This can be done in collaboration with student organisations like ACHN, which already do a lot of work on community building. In the context of accounting for the past, the scholarship would ideally be (partly) funded by the university to demonstrate the will to create change.

Bridging the gap with preliminary education

When thinking about ways to address the structural inequalities that flow from a long history of colonialism and slavery, equal access to higher education plays an important role. As also emerged from the conversations with the community, Utrecht University is a dominantly white institute and this can make it hard for people from the Afro-Caribbean community and (Southeast) Asian community to participate in the academic world in the same way that the white majority can. A scholarship, as mentioned above, can offer financial stimulation for better access to the university. However, there is more that can be done. In our discussions with the Afro-Caribbean community, we discussed how the threshold to the university is something that is strongly linked to primary and secondary schools. The advice on the level of education is for example decided very early on, and can be misplaced. Furthermore, the information about the university in secondary schools is often limited. Stakeholders expressed their desire for better information provision and better support for secondary school students that want to attend university. This could be in terms of helping them understand their opportunities, or more practical support when applying to the university. Many students who struggle with finding their way into the university, experience a wide variety of problems. Whether it is discrimination during preliminary education that limits their opportunities, or a lack of intergenerational knowledge for first-generation students, these are problems that should be addressed and Utrecht University can play a role in lowering the barriers to higher education.

How does it work?

Utrecht University already has several initiatives focussed on underprivileged students and their initial access to the university. For example, Honours Trajectum Utrecht (HTU) is a

programme that aims to bridge the gap between secondary education and the university for students that experience problems because of their sociocultural or economic background. The programme tries to contribute to equal opportunities by working on Dutch language skills, knowledge of the world, and science and study skills. However, for the purpose of this project on inequality as an (in)direct consequence of the history of slavery, some important aspects are lacking. HTU only includes a small selection of secondary schools and focuses on students that are recognised as “bright students”. If programmes like this are supposed to include support for students that have been disadvantaged by the colonial and slavery past, we will have to look critically at the selection of participating schools. Moreover, spreading knowledge about opportunities at the university might not need to be limited to “curious students from second and third grade *havo* and *vwo*.”²⁶ Instead, to improve inclusivity and diversity, access to these kinds of programmes should not be limited to certain levels of education or even to secondary schools. It is important to foster curiosity and promote equal opportunities among all students that can benefit from this.

On March 22, the fifth edition of *Meet the Professor* took place. This is a good example of an initiative with the potential to address accessibility issues at the root. For this event, 105 professors from Utrecht University visited primary schools in Utrecht to talk about science, research and the university. One of the professors was Bruce Mutsvairo, professor of Media and Culture Studies who, as a person of colour among his dominantly white colleagues, can be seen as a role model for primary school children of colour that have an interest in the university.²⁷

What do we need?

Working with organisations like *Gelijke Onderwijskansen* (UGO) and *Taal Doet Meer* to reduce language disadvantages can be a start, but not all students facing problems because of the slavery past have to deal with language-specific problems.²⁸ From our conversations with Keti Koti Utrecht, we learned that knowledge about the education system remains a crucial challenge. Utrecht University could focus on improving collaborations with secondary schools and even primary schools, providing more information about studying at the university at different levels of education. By focussing on diversity in the process of approaching these schools, these initiatives will hopefully reach students that continue to slip

²⁶ ‘Honours Trajectum Utrecht’. Accessed 25 March 2023. <https://www.uu.nl/htu>.

²⁷ ‘Meet the Professor’. Accessed 25 March 2023. <https://www.uu.nl/organisatie/meet-the-professor/>; Instagram. ‘Faculteit Geesteswetenschappen - Universiteit Utrecht op Instagram’, 23 March 2023. <https://www.instagram.com/p/CqH-5SZIqUA/>.

²⁸ Taal Doet Meer. ‘Activiteiten - Jeugd’. Accessed 25 March 2023. <https://www.taaldoetmeer.nl/wat-doen-we/activiteiten-jeugd/>; Gelijke Onderwijskansen. ‘Home’. Accessed 25 March 2023. <https://gelijkeonderwijskansen.nl/>.

through the cracks. This means looking for ways to pay attention to students of colour and striving for better representation, like mentioned in the example of *Meet the Professor*.

Curriculum

Another area where we think more work needs to be done is the curriculum at Utrecht University. Based on research, conversations with community actors, and personal experiences throughout this CEL project; we realised there is a clear need for a different approach and a reflection on the curriculum taught at the university. Firstly, and perhaps most importantly, is the emphasis we want to give to the need for further research to be carried out on how the colonial history and ties of Utrecht University with colonialism have shaped the current curriculum and information taught to students. It is necessary to attempt to fully understand the ramifications of UU's ties with slavery and to what extent they are present in the current educational system. As the report 'Rekenschap Geven' indicates, one of the short-term core tasks for the University should be to reflect on their colonial past and research the impact the Dutch colonial system had (and still has) on the education curriculum.²⁹

While this process of research ought to be carried out regardless of other policies, we also want to point towards potential pathways that the University may follow to ensure the curriculum engages with UU's history and colonial past. A possibility is to work on implementing new modules to be established at a wider scale within university programmes, either as a mandatory or optional component of their degree. These could include courses on the colonial history of the institution, Utrecht or more broadly the Netherlands. In this way, information could become more available within the student community and emphasise the recognition of the university's colonial ties. Another possibility is to implement reflection on the colonial heritage of Utrecht University in already existing courses at the Faculty of Humanities. Especially courses that deal with the history and/or ethics of certain disciplines could integrate reflections on the implications of the ties between colonialism and the curriculum. Berteke Waaldijk who teaches the CEL course "Community-based Research in the Humanities", and consequently internship supervisor to some of us, proposed the idea to create a CEL minor. Meaning, to combine this internship project with the aforementioned course and two other related courses. This way, the continuation of this project is also guaranteed.

In a similar regard, Utrecht University could also follow the footsteps of universities around the world who have dealt with similar situations and learn from their examples. For instance, as the Center for the Study of Slavery and Justice at Brown University does, additional support within the university structure could be given to curriculum-based initiatives like

²⁹ Commissie 'Universiteit Utrecht en slavernij', Adviesrapport *Rekenschap geven* (February 2022).

'Seminar Series' focusing on providing spaces for the community to debate and discuss in a classroom-like environment.³⁰ The Canadian university system model could also be examined, where courses for indigenous languages have been broadly included alongside the creation of minors and certificate programmes towards language revitalization and indigenous history.³¹ Thus, alongside the recognition that more work needs to be done and a reflection on the colonial connections to Utrecht University's curriculum is carried out; some of these pathways by global universities could be followed.

Additionally, as pointed out by the report 'Rekenschap geven', programmes could also engage in different ways with history and colonialism rather than just the aforementioned additional modules or courses. For instance, there can be further collaboration and participation in activities like the city walks organised by 'Sporen van Slavernij' as means to allow the students to reflect outside the classroom but still within the official curriculum. Another example would be to organise project weeks, where students from multiple disciplines cooperate on small (research) projects concerning colonialism and the university. Again, through this proposal we wish to emphasise that there are various means to tackle the re-approach to the curriculum at the University; and they are not necessarily limited to the boundaries of the classroom.

At its core, we ask for further and additional reflection by the board, heads of department and programme coordinators to think about how UU's and the Dutch (including the city of Utrecht) colonial past has shaped the current curriculum and what are the necessary steps to tackle this issue. In this proposal, we are pointing to various pathways which may be followed based on previous research, global initiatives, and internal conversations; nonetheless there are many possibilities to move forward with.

³⁰ CSSJ | Brown University. 'Work of the Center' (2020). Accessed 23 March 2023. <https://cssj.brown.edu/work-center>.

³¹ Leila El Shennawy, 'Colonial institutions'. The Pigeon (23 November 2020). Accessed 23 March 2023. <https://the-pigeon.ca/2020/11/23/colonial-institutions/>.

Engaging the student community

Getting the university's slavery past on the agenda requires a lot of work and is partly dependent on the willingness of the university community to be open to the issues at hand. Luckily, we met with a lot of people who showed genuine interest in being part of the change. First of all, there are initiatives all over the university that try to deal with the slavery past of Utrecht University. Faculties like REBO are working hard on initiatives like the Dean's Dinner, Impact Night and the Pierson chair.³² Diversity networks like ACHN are also supported in their efforts to address the university's colonial and slavery past. While cooperation between the different universities could be improved upon, the first steps towards awareness about the past are being made.

The student community has the ability to play a key role in spreading this awareness. With more than 35.000 students, engaging students at Utrecht University can have major implications for the reach of this project.³³ Among students at the university, student organisations can play a central role. This should not be limited to organisations that are aimed specifically at dealing with the slavery past. Organisations like study associations can also contribute to more widespread knowledge about the history of the university. For example, the history study association UHSK has expressed interest in a collaboration. Their involvement could be similar to their yearly Holocaust Memorial Day.³⁴ This is a generally well-attended event, which shows that there may be an interest among students in a similar commemoration of the slavery past. This is something that student associations could collaborate on, together with student-led diversity networks such as ACHN or faculty initiatives on the university's slavery past.

What do we need?

In order to engage the student community it may be necessary to gauge whether student associations are interested in cooperating on commemorations and other information facilities about the slavery past. While some organisations might be too small to form a memorial committee, like UHSK has done for the Holocaust Memorial Day, a faculty-wide

³² 'Stuurgroep voor initiatieven rondom slavernijverleden Universiteit Utrecht', 25 January 2023. <https://www.uu.nl/nieuws/stuurgroep-voor-initiatieven-rondom-slavernijverleden-universiteit-utrecht>.

³³ 'Feiten en cijfers'. Accessed 25 March 2023. <https://www.uu.nl/bachelors/algemene-informatie/hoer-is-het-om-te-studeren/feiten-en-cijfers>.

³⁴ Utrechtse Historische StudentenKring. 'Holocaust Memorial Day'. UHSK. Accessed 25 March 2023. <https://www.uhsk.nl/vereniging/commissies/commissies/holocaust-memorial-day>.

collaboration between these associations might expand the reach of events aimed at raising awareness. One possibility is to organise a brainstorming session where we invite all boards (and other interested students) of the humanities study associations to discuss their role in the commemoration of the slavery past. This is something that could be done in cooperation with the Study Associations Consultation Humanities (SVO) and, possibly, their Sustainability and Diversity committee.³⁵ ACHN has already expressed an interest in collaborating on the organisation of such an event. By providing the necessary information for memorial events, connecting associations to ready-made initiatives like the (future) walking tours, or making brochures with information for first-year students, this can enable student organisations to use their network to reach more students that are interested in the slavery past.

³⁵ 'Study Associations Consultation Humanities'. Accessed 26 March 2023. <https://students.uu.nl/en/hum/personal-development/student-participation/study-associations-consultation-humanities>.

Keti Koti Dialogue Tables

In the search for suitable initiatives where awareness can be created, we came across the initiative of the Keti Koti Dialogue Tables. In 2012, *Keti Koti Table* introduced a new tradition, the Keti Koti Table, where 'through the exchange of personal experiences, memories and feelings, we reflect on the contemporary consequences of the Dutch slavery past with white and black Dutch people and all colours in between'. One of the main goals of the dialogue tables is to bring together people from diverse cultural backgrounds and create awareness of the 'blind spots' in society about the 'complex historical and social backgrounds of Dutch slavery and the colonial past' that continue to this day.

The Tables

Prior to the dialogue, a specific theme and several questions will be formulated in cooperation with the participants and depending on the local context. The questions provide space to share personal experiences. A dialogue lasts about 20 minutes and is conducted in a very structured way. Of great importance is that participants can contribute equally to the conversation and that they feel comfortable and safe enough to share their personal experiences and memories. Telling, listening and reflecting seem to be important elements. Usually around 100 people participate at the Keti Koti Dialogue Tables.

Rituals

Apart from the dialogue tables the Keti Koti Table is accompanied by various rituals. For instance, the Fri Yeye choir welcomes the participants and songs of mourning and liberation are sung. At the time of slavery, enslaved people were forbidden to express themselves in their own language and culture, but singing was allowed. Many songs contained lyrics about injustice, pain, sorrow and violence. In addition, singing also has a powerful and healing effect. It connects and also creates a collective experience. The songs sung during the Keti Koti Tables have been passed down from generation to generation and are sung with full devotion.

A meal is also offered during the Keti Koti Dialogue Table. According to the foundation, eating together is an important unifying factor and therefore the essential conversations take place during the meal. The dishes consumed during the dialogues are meals that were most

probably eaten by former enslaved people. Often these were leftovers from the owners or made from cheap ingredients.

Various symbolic rituals and actions are also used at the Keti Koti Dialogue tables. For instance, participants are invited to take turns rubbing each other's wrists with coconut oil. This ritual symbolises rubbing away the pain from the past that is still felt by many in the present. Kwasi Bitá and sugar cane are also offered. Kwasi Bitá is a plant species from Suriname. Participants are invited to chew on the piece of wood, in remembrance of the bitter times in the past. In contrast, the sugar cane represents the sweet taste of freedom, but also recalls a bitter past. Another important ritual is the 21 shots. On 1 July 1863, the abolition of slavery was heralded with 21 cannonball shots. During the Keti Koti Table, this will be performed with, for example, 21 colourful balloons and pins.³⁶

Advice

The organisation of a long Keti Koti Dialogue Table on the Drift in Utrecht seems to us a very valuable initiative. The vision and core values of the Keti Koti Table foundation are closely aligned with the main goal of this CEL-project, formulated in consultation with the community: create awareness among students, professors and other involved or interested parties alike. Both the student organisation ACHN, and Nancy Jouwe responded very positively to this potential initiative. ACHN mentioned for example that they organised a Keti Koti Table event last year together with *Kenniscentrum Inclusief Samenleven* and the University of Humanistic Studies. They expressed their interest in co-hosting a similar event with us during Keti Koti this year.

On the other hand, Migaisa Poeketi of Keti Koti Utrecht expressed doubts about the safety and fairness of an initiative like this. Keti Koti Utrecht has also organised an event in the past in cooperation with the Keti Koti Tafel foundation. This received mixed reactions. The feeling that one side of the table seemed to have to 'deliver' information (mainly among participants of colour), while the other side seemed to take a more welcoming stance, prevailed among some participants. Keti Koti Dialogue tables should instead be a safe environment, where a conversation can take place on equal terms and each participant contributes equally. Migaisa advised us to perhaps realise the plan of the Keti Koti Dialogue Tables at a later stage and first focus mainly on having conversations and asking critical questions.

³⁶ The information below was largely obtained from the website <https://www.ketikotitafel.nl/>.

This is why we decided to include the initiative of a Keti Koti Table on the Drift in this proposal. It seems to us, partly because of the positive reactions from Nancy Jouwe and ACHN, a nice initiative to realise in the future. This could, for instance, be done in cooperation with Keti Koti Utrecht to ensure that the participants feel safe and the conversations are equal. The preparatory work we have already done is researching the Keti Koti Dialogue Tables, the Keti Koti Table foundation and their core values. We contacted Mercedes Zandwijken, founder and general director of the organisation. It seemed worthwhile to us to get in touch with Keti Koti Tafel and perhaps, if interested, enter into a collaboration to realise the initiative of a long Dialogue Table on the Drift.

The Drift and Janskerkhof lend themselves perfectly for hosting such an event. The university buildings are monumental buildings with a telling history, and a significant proportion of both the buildings and their occupants have a link to the slavery past. An interesting location for interesting conversations.

What to do next?

Although the Keti Koti Table Foundation obviously has a lot of experience with organising the Keti Koti Dialogue Tables, it is important to do enough research yourself and to be aware of what needs to be arranged. It is important to investigate what needs to be arranged to realise such an initiative.

- Is a permit needed from the municipality or Utrecht University to realise this plan?
- Could professors and perhaps even students be involved in implementing this initiative?
- How will the tables be arranged?
- What could be an interesting, valuable theme for the Dialogue Tables?
- How to ensure promotion among students and professors (social media, university website?)
- When could the event take place? Perhaps during Keti Koti (1 July)? Or perhaps earlier because of the summer holidays?

These are examples of questions that could already be considered. From experience, we know that collaborations are best established when we too have sufficiently immersed ourselves in the organisation we want to work with and the end product we have in mind is

as detailed as possible on paper. This makes it all the more important for Utrecht University and the Faculty of Humanities to appoint the next group, which could further pick up and develop our preparatory work.

'Dialogue is perhaps more the art of listening and understanding than the art of speaking'

Monitoring accountability

One of our main takeaways from this project has been the realisation that there needs to be more accountability, for the historical connections with colonial history and slavery, within the internal structure of the university. Without further responsibility in dealing with the university's past, proposals and initiatives may remain at a surface level and concrete action will be slow and difficult to carry out. It is not sufficient to aim for further research and expand the available knowledge on the relations between Utrecht University and slavery, rather, a structural change is necessary to hold the UU accountable in the long term and evaluate their policy implementation. We believe that Utrecht University needs to expand in matters of reconciliation with slavery, and for this we propose a framework based on initiatives from other universities and countries around the world.

Firstly, something to emphasise and a key starting point for the monitoring of new policies at the university level is the implementation of safe spaces. Following our conversations with Nancy Jouwe and Migaisa Poeketi, it became clear to us that changes may bring along uncomfortable situations and confrontations, thus it is necessary to ensure the safety of those involved in the process. Though structural changes are important as part of reconciliation policies, they are also essential as a means to create the feeling of safety within the community. In this way, the university will demonstrate its commitment to new ideas, feedback and proposals from those members who may be worried about speaking up due to the difficult or confrontational situations it may bring along. Without spaces that safeguard everyone's ideas and beliefs, it will become difficult to receive contributions on how the university can improve and meaningfully change. For this reason, following insights from community actors, we believe that as the UU attempts to increase their internal accountability, safe spaces will be instrumental to protect this process.

Countries like the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom, have taken the forefront in regard to holding universities accountable and increasing the awareness of their past; thus, many relevant and important centres for the study of slavery have arisen. For instance, at Brown University in 2012, the Centre for the Study of Slavery and Justice (CSSJ) was created; which works to recognize slavery as an engine for the development of the Americas through its 'public humanities mission'. The key element to extract from their work is that even though it is a scholarly research centre, their activities and initiatives expand far from the conventional academic sense. One of their main components is their focus on supervising that the university upholds the education and community recommendations

outlined by the CSSJ in their annual reports.³⁷ For instance, they monitor new policies regarding changes to the curriculums or advise on the availability of safe spaces for community members outside the classroom. In other systems, such as in the Canadian model, universities have to report to an official government external organisation (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada) and implement their recommendations. In any case, these two models present alternatives to the specific functioning. However, they point to the same issue: tackling the lack of accountability in the university system.

These examples serve as possible pathways to follow, and by looking at how other universities have tackled the issue of reconciling with their past we may extract some aspects for Utrecht University. As part of our proposal, we recommend that a committee (or board) is implemented to review initiatives such as our internship and how other faculties are working to uphold the commitment of making UU's past more accessible and increase awareness among students. This committee could also take on the responsibility of making annual reports to update the community on the progress which the university has been making following the example of the CSSJ from Brown University. Furthermore, in its role as an external committee with close ties to the board of UU it could also push for more initiatives and/or projects to receive funding and support from the university body, such as the internship to continue over an extended period of time. UU has a responsibility to its community to uphold their commitments and the promises to increase awareness about their past, and to do this, the implementation of an external committee is necessary. By providing policy recommendations, reviewing how the university acts and making the process more visible to the students through reports, awareness may be spread and change can be achieved.

³⁷ CSSJ | Brown University. 'Work of the Center' (2020). Accessed 23 March 2023. <https://cssj.brown.edu/work-center>.

Conclusion

During this Community Engaged Learning project we have tried to define problems and come up with goals and solutions in collaboration with different communities that have an interest in the university's slavery past. We had conversations with organisations representing the Afro-Caribbean community like Ketu Koti Utrecht and ACHN and experts on the history of slavery like Nancy Jouwe and her colleagues at 'Sporen van Slavernij'. There are many more to talk to and the work is far from done. Within the limited time for this project, we have chosen to focus on planting a seed with those interested in continuing the important work of uncovering and visualising the colonial and slavery past of the university. We have found that involving administrative and student bodies within the organisation is an important first step towards acknowledging the past and creating possibilities for accountability. We urge the university and the faculty to seriously consider the information and proposals in this document. While accounting for the slavery past may seem like a very intimidating endeavour, we have tried to distil the input from the communities, examples from initiatives worldwide and lessons from the ones within our university into specific viable suggestions. While some of the necessary structures might already be in place, the university still has a very long way to go. More commitment is required to show that we as a university are serious about accountability for the past.

Our successors can continue to work on our plans for the walking tours, art installations, the Belle van Zuylen chair, scholarship, bridging the gap with preliminary education, the curriculum, engagement with the student community, the Ketu Koti Dialogue Tables and better monitoring of accountability. When considering these ideas, we suggest focusing on long-term projects and recurring events to show commitment to the cause. In this spirit, a small group of students in a short-term project will not have enough manpower to bring all these ideas to fruition. Additionally, structural change is a lengthy process. Some ideas might take a long time to be implemented and there may well be a lot of issues along the way. Yet, we think that all the ideas in this proposal are worth exploring and we want to stress the university's responsibility in making sure that sufficient resources will be devoted to this end.

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