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Keti Koti and Juneteenth

A Comparative Study of the Political and Socio-
Economical Aspects of Abolition and Reconstruction in
Suriname and the U.S.

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Introduction

“I leave you, hoping that the lamp of liberty will burn in your bosoms until there shall no longer be a doubt that all men are created free and equal.”¹

Abraham Lincoln

Twenty-one gun shots from Port Zeelandia, Paramaribo, announced the end of slavery in the Dutch colony of Suriname. It was the first of July, 1863, 6 o'clock in the morning. Circa 63% of the population was declared free that day. The anniversary of this special day, known to the liberated people of Suriname as *Keti Koti* (broken chains), is still widely celebrated both in Suriname and the Netherlands every year. The Netherlands certainly was no precursor in the abolition of slavery when compared to other colonial powers. France and Denmark had abolished slavery in 1848, Great Britain as early as 1834. Nevertheless, the Dutch were not the only ones that did not follow the international trend of emancipation.² The first half of the 1860s also witnessed the abolition of another slave society: the United States of America. Only six months before the Dutch declared their slaves free, President Lincoln had signed the Emancipation Proclamation. Although this proclamation did not free all slaves, it was a big step towards legally ending slavery in the U.S.³

Although extensively researched and compared, the history of American emancipation and reconstruction has never been studied in comparison to the Dutch colony of Suriname. This is strange, since slaves in Suriname became legally emancipated only six months after Lincoln issued his Emancipation Proclamation. This short time frame is unique in emancipation history and makes Suriname the perfect chronologically parallel Caribbean case study. The fact that both countries abolished slavery in the same year could possibly indicate some sort of *Zeitgeist*. Besides the

¹ Lincoln Speech Chicago Illinois, July 10, 1858:

<http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/index.asp?document=153>

² Peter C. Emmer, *The Dutch in the Atlantic Economy, 1580-1880: trade, slavery, and emancipation* (Leiden: Ashgate, 1998), 111-112.

³ Mary Beth Norton et al., *A People and a Nation* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2005), 428.

emancipation period, the reconstruction periods following abolition also ran almost parallel. The governments of both countries felt the need for a reconstruction period in which the slaves were slowly integrated into society. Both American Reconstruction and Dutch State Apprenticeship lasted around ten years. By comparing these two slave societies that both started emancipating their slaves in 1863, a new light could be shed on America's abolition history.

This study will focus on exactly this comparison, building on the research that has already been conducted on the emancipation and reconstruction periods in the U.S. and Suriname. The history of slavery and emancipation is an extremely popular topic among historians. Logically, many works have been written on this. The overflow of studies has led to many disagreements. One of these slavery and abolition-discussions is related to the ongoing debate on "American exceptionalism." The question if America has an exceptional identity is one that has interested scholars of American Studies since the rise of the discipline. By using the term "exceptional," scholars argue that for some reason the American path differs from all other nations. In general, there are two different views on this subject. The first traditionally sees the United States as "a shining city upon a hill": the U.S. as an example for all other nations. The second and more modern view is the concept that the United States is neither better nor worse than other countries, but that it is just different. Within these two schools, the reasons why America is unique vary.⁴

Most historians believe that when looking at the history of emancipation and reconstruction, the U.S. is just that: exceptional. Peter Kolchin states in his book *American Slavery*, that the emancipation of slavery in America was part of a general process in the world. He argues that freed people everywhere struggled to "maximize their social autonomy and to avoid falling into a dependency reminiscent of the old days."⁵ Yet, he goes on to argue that just as southern slavery was in some ways distinctive, so too, was southern emancipation. According to Kolchin, the fact that America emancipated its slaves was not unique, but the U.S. was exceptional in the way they abolished slavery. Kolchin feels that when compared to other

⁴ John Parker, "A Nation Apart: Special Issue on America," *The Economist* November 8 (2003): 3.

⁵ Peter Kolchin, *American Slavery: 1619-1877* (London: Penguin, 1995), 200.

countries, Americas' abolition was instant, developed late, and resulted into a Civil War.⁶

Eric Foner, on the other hand, argues in his book *Politics and Ideology in the Age of the Civil War* that the fact that the abolition of slavery led to a Civil War does not distinguish the U.S. It rather proves that America is not unique politically speaking, since the eruption of the Civil War only shows that the U.S., just as any other nation, could not always solve its problems by reasoned disputations.⁷ However, Foner does feel that America's emancipation story has its unique features. In *The Story of American Freedom* he argues that the history of American slavery will always be unique, since "freedom" has always been the driving force in American history.⁸

Ira Berlin emphasizes in his book *Generations of Captivity: A History of African-American Slaves* that although emancipation followed more or less the same course "whether in Vermont or Barbados, Jamaica or Brazil," they were never precisely the same from place to place. He argues that freedom took a distinct turn in the U.S. since it took a different shape in the former free states than the former slaves states. Freedom gained new meanings dependent on the demographic balance of black and white, the resilience of the old class structures, the nature of the crop, and the course of the military conflict by which freedom arrived. According to Berlin, this results into a diverse and distinct history of freedom in America.⁹

Even though most historians do not seem to agree to what extent emancipation in the U.S. was unique, they do seem to agree that in some way or the other the abolition of slavery and the reconstruction period in the U.S. was distinct when compared to other countries. This thesis will test this proposition of American exceptionalism by comparing American abolition and reconstruction to the Dutch colony of Suriname. The main research question of this thesis will be: to what extent was the U.S. unique in their abolition of slavery when compared to the Dutch colony of Suriname? Which

⁶ Kolchin, *American Slavery*, 201-204.

⁷ Eric Foner, *Politics and Ideology in the Age of the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 127.

⁸ Eric Foner, *The Story of American Freedom* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1999) 1-422.

⁹ Ira Berlin, *Generations of Captivity: A History of African-American Slaves* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University), 12-14.

agreements and differences can be found when looking at the political, economic and social aspects of the abolition and the reconstruction periods of both countries?

Supporters of the uniqueness-theory usually compare the U.S. to Great Britain, The Caribbean or Latin America to prove America's exceptional path. For example, Rebecca Scott argues in *Degrees of Freedom: Louisiana and Cuba after Slavery* that the post-emancipation society that arose in Louisiana was completely different from the one that came into existence in Cuba. In both societies, according to Scott, former slaves used the same strategies to make similar demands for citizenship and respect after abolition. In Louisiana, however, racism defined politics and segregated society by color, while in Cuba, public commitment to racial equality resulted into a public politic that celebrated cross-racial alliances and rejected racism.¹⁰ Although this comparison is legitimate in many ways, it has one major limitation: slavery was abolished in Cuba in 1886, which is more than twenty years after Louisiana freed its slaves in 1864.¹¹ The relative lateness of abolition in Cuba may explain the difference in racial politics. After all, Cuba had twenty years to learn from other nations' mistakes.

In *Nothing but Freedom: Emancipation and its Legacy*, Eric Foner compares the U.S. South to the British Caribbean and Haiti, stating that the freedmen of the U.S. received much more than freedom when compared to ex-slaves in the Caribbean. In the U.S. the former slaves received, besides their freedom, voting rights and the promise of Constitutional protection. Although the experiment with interracial democracy in the U.S. was short, Foner argues that it was radical and unique when compared to other post-slavery societies.¹² Although Foner's thesis is well argued, his comparison has the same limitation as Scott's: in both Haiti and the British Caribbean, slavery was abolished decades before emancipation occurred in the U.S. This gave the U.S. time to reflect on the post-emancipation situations in the

¹⁰ Rebecca J. Scott, *Degrees of Freedom: Louisiana and Cuba after Slavery* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press: 2005) 1-365.

¹¹ Rebecca J. Scott, *Slave Emancipation in Cuba: The Transition to Free Labor, 1860-1899* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1985), 3.

¹² Eric Foner, *Nothing but Freedom: Emancipation and its Legacy* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana University Press, 1983), 1-144.

British Caribbean and Haiti and to find a solution for the problems that arose there.

Foner and Scott are not the only historians comparing the U.S. to other nations where slavery was abolished decades before or after emancipation in the U.S. occurred. This means that the current exceptionalist-theory on emancipation and reconstruction is based on lopsided comparisons. Suriname is the perfect case study to break the circle of imbalanced comparisons. Through this comparison, the proposition of the uniqueness of American emancipation and reconstruction can be tested on a chronological parallel case study for the first time.

A comparative study like this naturally must consider certain limitations. These rest mainly in the fact that America and Suriname are two completely different societies: America is an independent nation, while Suriname, at the time, was a colony. However, one might argue that the Confederate States of America were considered a sort of colonial territory after the Civil War, governed by the Union. This study will first compare the political discussion and actions in both slave societies. It will examine the political debates and the notions of freedom, the reasons behind emancipation, and the final rights and obligations for the freedmen. Next, since the periods of State Apprenticeship in Suriname and the Reconstruction period in the U.S. run almost parallel, the second focus will be on the socio-economic effects that emancipation had on the freedmen. Emphasis will be put on the ways in which emancipation and reconstruction changed their financial situation, family life, and the community at large. A final note: due to the limited scope of this thesis, the focus of this study will be on the overall development of the processes rather than on specific details.

Unfortunately, not much is known about the lives and experiences of the Suriname slaves. Therefore the source material is limited. Glenn Willemsen, Maarten Kuitenbrouwer, and J.P. Siwipersad have written comprehensive studies on the political debates surrounding emancipation.¹³

¹³ Glenn Willemsen, *Dagen van Gejuich en Gejubel: Viering en Herdenking van de Afschaffing van de Slavernij in Nederland, Suriname en de Nederlandse Antillen* (Den Haag: Amrit, 2006), Maarten Kuitenbrouwer, "De Nederlandse Afschaffing van de Slavernij in Vergelijkend Perspectief," *Bijdragen en Mededelingen betreffende de Geschiedenis der Nederlanden* 93, Vol. 1 (1978): 69-101, and J.P.

Ellen Klinkers has focused on the social aspects of emancipation, while Eduward Sloomweg and Pieter Emmer have studied the economical effects of abolition.¹⁴ The Colonial Reports, available at the National Archive in The Hague, form a rich resource on the laws and regulations regarding emancipation and the extent to which the former slaves followed these rules.

The U.S. however, has much more extensive archives and resources of the slave experience and reconstruction policies. The Constitution and its Amendments form a rich source of information on the political rights granted to African Americans after emancipation. Award-winning historian Eric Foner has written several very comprehensive and detailed studies on American Reconstruction as well as on emancipation policies.¹⁵ Other authors, such as John Hope Franklin, Michael Klarman, Peter Kolchin, and Mason Lowance discuss many aspects of American abolition and reconstruction in their books.¹⁶ The social effects of emancipation on the lives of American freedmen have been extensively researched by Herbert Gutman and Leon Litwack, as well as by Donald Henderson.¹⁷ The economic

Siwipersad, *De Nederlandse Regering en de Afschaffing van de Surinaamse Slavernij (1833-1863)*, (Groningen: Bouwma's Boekhuis, 1979).

¹⁴ For the social effects of abolition in Surinam, see Elisabeth Maria Leonie Klinkers, "Op Hoop van Vrijheid: Van Slavensamenleving naar Creoolse Gemeenschap in Suriname 1830-1880," (PhD. diss., Leiden University, 1997). For the economic effects of abolition in Suriname, see Eduard Sloomweg, "Het Staatstoezicht in Suriname (1863-1873)," (PhD. diss., Leiden University, 1987), and Pieter Cornelis Emmer, *The Dutch in the Atlantic Economy, 1580-1880: trade, slavery, and emancipation* (Leiden: Ashgate, 1998).

¹⁵ Foner's most consulted works for this thesis are: *Forever Free: The Story of Emancipation and Reconstruction* (New York: Random House inc., 2005), *Politics and Ideology in the Age of the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York: Harper & Row, 1989), and *The Story of American Freedom* (New York: Norton, 1999).

¹⁶ John Hope Franklin, *Reconstruction after the Civil War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), xxi-xxx, Michael J. Klarman, *Unfinished Business: Racial Equality in American History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), Peter Kolchin, *American Slavery: 1619-1877* (London: Penguin, 1995), and Mason I. Lowance Jr., ed., *A House Divided: the Antebellum Slavery Debates in America 1776-1865* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).

¹⁷ Herbert G. Gutman, *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750-1925* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1976), Leon F. Litwack, *Been in the Storm So Long: The Aftermath of Slavery* (New York: Knopf, 1979), and Donald H. Henderson, *The Negro Freedman: Life Conditions of the American Negro in the Early Years After Emancipation* (New York: Schuman, 1952).

changes have been explored by Roger Ransom and Richard Sutch in *Time on the Cross* and by Robert Higgs in *Competition and Coercion*.¹⁸

This study is divided into two chapters. The first chapter will explore the main focus points in the discussion regarding emancipation, the degree of freedom the governments were prepared to give the ex-slaves, the civil rights the freedmen received, and the limits the practical goal of abolition brought to these rights. The history of the political discussion surrounding emancipation in the Netherlands will first be discussed. The focus will be on the conclusions of the Dutch Royall Commission, as well as the notions of freedom that surrounded the parliamentary debates. Furthermore, the reasoning behind abolition will be researched. Thereafter, the final legislation on Dutch abolition will be discussed, giving special attention to the rights and obligations of the Freedmen. Next, the focus will shift to the American political process. The position of slavery within the political history will be considered and the visions of the Radical Republicans and the conservatives will be discussed, with a special focus on the position of the president. Finally, the motor behind emancipation will be explored as well as the legislation that was passed on the rights of the freedmen.

The second chapter will revolve around the socio-economic aspects of abolition and reconstruction. It focuses on the society that developed during the periods of Reconstruction and State apprenticeship. Furthermore, the change in economic circumstances for the freedmen will be discussed, as well as the changes that can be discovered in the composition of slave communities when considering family-life, religion, social and medical care. It will first explore the transition period in Suriname by researching the social safety net, the financial situation and the living conditions of the ex-slaves. Next, family life and community will be discussed, ending with a special focus on religion as a way of resistance. Hereafter, the African-American situation will be researched. The work of the Freedmen's Bureau and the new system of sharecropping will be discussed, as well as the black family before and after slavery. Finally, special attention will be given to

¹⁸ Roger L. Ransom and Richard Sutch, *One kind of Freedom: the Economic Consequences of Emancipation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), Robert Higgs, *Competition and Coercion: Blacks in the American Economy 1865-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977).

religion and education, as they can be seen as the foundation of modern black community.

The title of this thesis finds its inspiration in the celebration of emancipation in both countries. *Keti Koti*, the anniversary of the emancipation of the slaves of Suriname, has been previously described at the start of this introduction. The annual celebration of freedom for African Americans in the U.S. varies by state. This is due to the fact that not every state ratified the Thirteenth Amendment at the same time. However, the celebration on the nineteenth of June, or *Juneteenth*, is one of the oldest and biggest celebrations in the U.S., commemorating the abolition of slavery. On this day in 1865, the abolition of slavery was announced in the state of Texas, after the Union army arrived to take possession of the state and enforce emancipation. Since then, many states have adopted this day as national emancipation-celebration date. Nowadays, *Juneteenth* is recognized as a state holiday in 37 U.S. states.¹⁹

¹⁹ Junius P. Rodriguez, ed., *Slavery in the United States: A Social, Political, and Historical Encyclopedia* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2011), 355.

Chapter One Long awaited change: Political intentions and emancipation legislation.

“Whenever I hear any one arguing for slavery I feel a strong impulse to see it tried on him personally.”²⁰

Abraham Lincoln

Liberty is one of the most central values in Western society today. However, it is a difficult concept to define. Several notions and beliefs about freedom have made their appearance in the discussion on liberty over time. According to the historical and cultural sociologist Orlando Patterson in his book *Freedom in the Making of Western Culture* the pursuit of freedom arose in response to the existence and growth of slavery. The first people who realized that being free was not just a value were those who were enslaved.²¹ The contradiction between slavery and freedom has not always been recognized by everyone. As American historian Eric Foner argues in his book *The Story of American Freedom*, slaveholders in the Southern states of America were long convinced that slavery stood at the very basis of freedom. Their definition of freedom entailed being independent from others for their livelihood. Owning slaves contributed to the increase of one’s economic autonomy and thus one’s freedom. Therefore freedom was not automatically regarded as the antithesis of slavery.²²

Although the abolition of slavery seemed to be a moral issue, in most countries the discussion surrounding emancipation was more a practical than an ethical one. In both Suriname and the United States, the abolition of slavery was initiated by national governments and established by law. This chapter will focus on the notions of freedom and the practical aspects of emancipation that dominated politics in both countries. What were the main focus points in the discussion surrounding emancipation? What degree of

²⁰ Abraham Lincoln in a speech to the 14th Indiana Regiment on March 17, 1865:

http://www.nps.gov/archive/libo/thoughts_on_slavery3.htm

²¹ Orlando Patterson, *Freedom in the Making of Western Culture* (New York: Basic Books, 1991), 47-106.

²² Foner, *The Story of American Freedom*, 63-65.

freedom was the government prepared to give the ex-slaves? Would the freed men receive civil rights, including the right to vote and the right to own land? After the discussion of these questions, the focus will be on the limits that the practical goal of abolition brought to the rights of the ex-slaves during the periods of State apprenticeship and Reconstruction.

1.1 The findings of the Dutch Royal Committee and first proposals

In order to understand the debate about freedom surrounding the treatment of the Emancipation bill by the Dutch government, it is important to first take note of the findings of the State Committee, which was established on November 29, 1853, by Royal decree. This committee was charged with the examination of the proceedings that the government had to take on slavery and abolition.²³ Questions such as whether immediate and direct emancipation was preferable, or if a transitional measure first had to be proclaimed that would abolish slavery, but would not grant absolute freedom were the main focus points of the discussion. The committee also examined if it was better to improve the conditions of the slaves and maintain slavery altogether.²⁴

The Dutch Royal commission seems to have found its inspiration for State Apprenticeship in the French political thinker Alexis de Tocqueville. Tocqueville advised the French Government in 1839 to add a sort of limbo to the road to freedom in order to prevent the plantation system from collapsing. The system of apprenticeship as maintained in the British colonies had failed to do so since it resembled slavery too much. Tocqueville felt it was best if the slaves would indeed be freed, but for a time be obliged to become employees of the government. The planters would then hire the former slaves from the government. In this way the link between the former slave and the master would be broken and the ex-slaves could get adjusted to a system of wage labor. If the state would not intervene, it seemed likely that the slaves would revert to a state of laziness and barbarism.²⁵ In their

²³ Kuitenbrouwer, "De Nederlandse Afschaffing van de Slavernij in Vergelijkend Perspectief," 78.

²⁴ Willemsen, *Dagen van Gejuich en Gejubel*, 78-80.

²⁵ Sally Gershman, "Alexis de Tocqueville and Slavery," *French Historical Studies* Vol. 9, No. 3 (1976): 466-468.

report concerning emancipation, the committee thus pleaded for State Apprenticeship and labor coercion of the freed ex-slaves, just as Tocqueville suggested. In that context they preached opinions and views on civilization and barbarism, the laziness of “the Negro”, his backwardness and his failure as a free citizen. The government and MPs repeatedly referred to these thoughts and beliefs throughout the legislative period.²⁶ These ideas will be discussed later on when the intentions and considerations of the Dutch government will be covered.

Successive governments drew up bill after bill based on the State Commission reports issued in 1855/56, all of which were rejected by the Second Chamber of parliament. This fate also befell the 29 Emancipation Proposals submitted by various individuals. The rejection of these proposals can be explained by two reasons: the expectations of the bill were high, and there were many conflicting interests at stake. Four main points can be distinguished. First, the interests of the ex-slaves were kept in mind. Second, the interest of the slaveholders had to be considered. Third, the financial interest of the Dutch state was at stake. And fourth, the importance of Suriname as sugar-producing colony and a beneficial territory for the colonial fatherland was something that had to be regarded. It was clear that one or more of these interests would suffer some losses.²⁷

Maarten Kuitenbrouwer describes in his article “De Nederlandse Afschaffing van de Slavernij in Vergelijkend Perspectief” that the clash of interests surrounding the emancipation discussion continued after a new Prime Minister was elected in 1858, Jan Jacob Rochussen. Rochussen saw the settlement of the protracted emancipation issue as one of his main tasks. He drafted as many as three proposals in two years time, which were all declined by both parliament and settlers. New to his propositions was the rejection of two ideas that had dominated formal proposals. The first idea he rejected was the notion of stationing the freed slaves in communities so they could serve to cultivate sugarcane. Secondly, the opinion that the former slaves had to pay their own liberation money was something Rochussen found unjust. His somewhat mild attitude towards the slaves can possibly be

²⁶ C.A. Sypesteyn, “Afschaffing der Slavernij in de Nederlansche West-Indische Kolonien, Samengesteld uit Officiële Bronnen,” *Economist (Amsterdam)* Vol. 15, No. 1 (1866): 1-16.

²⁷ Willemsen, *Dagen van Gejuich en Gejubel*, 80-82.

explained because his proposal depended on a large expected number of immigrants for the supply of agricultural labor. Therefore, punishment and disciplinary rules to force the ex-slaves to do scheduled labor were not necessary.²⁸ According to Siwipersad, both the parliament and the settlers were skeptic about the labor immigration plans. For some years, the Dutch government had tried to attract immigrants to Suriname, but unfortunately their mission had failed. A test with 500 Chinese immigrants in 1858 went completely wrong, because the recruitment of immigrants had not gone as carefully as planned. This resulted in extremely high costs per imported immigrant, 350 Gld., which was too high for the planters to pay. This made it impossible to hire out even a part of the brought in force.²⁹ Partly due to this disappointing outcome, the public administration did not dare take part again in such costly and risky business. This reopened the discussion about the content of the emancipation bill.³⁰

The discussions and rejected proposals led to some general conclusions by 1861. The main conclusion was that the abolition of slavery should not only end an inhumane system, but should also be used as a way to give the economy of Suriname a new impulse. Besides this main point, there were four general points on which government, planters and abolitionists agreed. The first point was that the process of emancipation should not be left to private organizations, but should be coordinated by the state. Secondly, as proposed by Rochussen, the costs associated with the emancipation should be borne by the government, not the slaves. Thirdly, the planters were entitled to some form of compensation. The fourth and final point of agreement was that emancipation had to be accompanied by the advent of free laborers for the plantations.³¹ These points were completed in a proposal drafted by the Minister of Colonies, J. Loubon. His motion, which he presented on November 20th, 1861, was adjusted and finally accepted in 1862.³²

²⁸ Kuitenbrouwer, "De Nederlandse Afschaffing van de Slavernij," 84-85.

²⁹ Siwipersad, *De Nederlandse Regering en de Afschaffing van de Surinaamse Slavernij*, 244-261.

³⁰ Kuitenbrouwer, "De Nederlandse Afschaffing van de Slavernij," 80.

³¹ Willemsen, *Dagen van Gejuich en Gejubel*, 82.

³² Sloomweg, "Het Staatstoezicht in Suriname", 7-8.

1.2 Intentions and considerations of the Dutch government

Before proceeding to the discussion and analysis of the bill that eventually settled the abolition of slavery in Suriname, the reason why the Dutch government gave the order to abolish slavery must be examined. Siwipersad's *De Nederlandse Regering en de Afschaffing van de Slavernij* as well as Willemsen's *Dagen van Gejuich en Gejubel* and Kuitenbrouwer's "De Nederlandse Afschaffing van de Slavernij in Vergelijkend Perspectief" show that moral, religious, or Enlightenment-related arguments did not play a decisive role in the discussion. These Zeitgeist-related arguments were all secondary. The most important value- the texts leave no mistake about that- was the preservation of Suriname as an exploitation colony for the Netherlands.

Professor Doctor P.C. Emmer argues in his book *De Nederlandse Slavenhandel* that it would be an obvious conclusion that the prohibition of the slave trade would have hastened the abolition of slavery in the Dutch colonies, as was the cause in England. However, in the Netherlands this was far from being the case. Reform and industrialization took their time in coming to the Netherlands in the early nineteenth century. For example, the Dutch abolitionists' movement never attracted more than a few hundred members. Therefore, there was scarcely any debate on the abolition of slavery. A small number of experts deliberated in peace and quiet over the question without being pressured by a large and vocal abolitionist lobby. Emmer underlines that slavery was still economically fruitful in the Dutch colonies. Therefore, the Dutch politicians preferred to keep the institution as long as it was making profits. However, it was inevitable that after the abolition of slavery in England, France, and Denmark the Dutch politicians had to follow, even though the experience of the English and French colonies had shown that it would result in the collapse of the plantation economy and a sharp decline in income of both the planters and the emancipated slaves. To prevent the collapse of the plantation system, a ten-year-period of state apprenticeship was proposed.³³

³³ P.C. Emmer, "*De Nederlandse Slavenhandel (1500-1850)*", (Amsterdam: De Arbeiderspers, 2003), 202-206.

Emmer thus argues that slavery in Suriname was abolished despite its economic success; however, statistics show that as a sugar-producing colony Suriname was in deterioration. The reason for this lay in the decline of the slave population. Due to the extremely low birthrate and very high mortality rate natural growth simply did not exist. The plantation owners thus were very dependent on a constant import of new slaves, but since the slave trade was abolished, the population could not be replenished. A new supply of free labor proved to be a difficult and controversial task. Unfortunately, it also seemed the only solution. Public opinion in the Netherlands and Europe opposed the idea of a society that consisted of both slaves and free immigrants. To get out of this situation, the government decided to first abolish slavery and then try to import free labor forces. To prevent future problems, the ex-slaves were to be transformed into an agricultural proletariat over a period of ten years. The government hoped that by reforming the social system, not so much a system of free labor or a free market would come into existence, but that investors would at least be willing to invest money in Suriname.³⁴

Kuitenbrouwer expresses that for the conservative ministers and MPs, who initially dominated the decision-making process in the Netherlands, economic and financial considerations were more important than humanitarian intensions. To some extent, the same can be said of the liberal MPs (led by Van Bosse), who left a clear mark on the final emancipation laws.³⁵ Glenn Willemsen states that in spite of the long discussions surrounding emancipation, the Dutch government was consistent in its views and positions regarding the policy concerning slavery in Suriname. As early as 1844, the former Minister of colonies J.C. Baud had advised King Willem II that Suriname as a colony could only be maintained if the slaves were emancipated:

³⁴ Willemsen, *Dagen van Gejuich en Gejubel*, 83-85.

³⁵ Kuitenbrouwer, "De Nederlandse Afschaffing van de Slavernij," 96-97.

“The emancipation is thus (...) a measure of material necessity, without which Suriname is indispensable to perish by the decay of its farmers. With emancipation, Suriname will have fewer benefits than now, but will be spared total destruction. In short, emancipation seems the only means of salvation.”³⁶

The above-mentioned points show that the Dutch government had one obvious goal in mind when discussing and realizing emancipation: preservation of the slaves as laborers for economic revival. In the next subchapter the implications of this main goal for the rights of the former slaves will be discussed by analyzing the final Emancipation bill.

1.3 Freedom versus Economic interest: the final Dutch Emancipation Bill

On November 20th, 1861, Minister Loubon presented his proposal to the Dutch parliament. In preparing the proposal, he was assisted by a small committee consisting of formal governors of Suriname and a Suriname specialist who had close connections with the planters group. The slave population itself was not represented or consulted.³⁷ Loubons’ proposal was based on four principles that, according to the Minister, should remain untouched by a possible amendment of the bill. The first of those four principles was that emancipation should happen immediately, not gradually. The second principle be that the planters were entitled to some form of compensation. Thirdly, there would be a ten-year-period of State Apprenticeship. Finally, immigration had to occur under direction and supervision of the state.³⁸

When debating the proposed bill, many different views and perspectives regarding the degree of freedom that the freed slaves should be

³⁶ Original quote: “*De emancipatie is derhalve (...) een maatregel van materiële noodzakelijkheid, zonder welken Suriname onmisbaar te gronde gaat, door het wegsterven zijner landbouwers. Met emancipatie zal Suriname wel minder opleveren dan thans, maar zal voor algeheele vernietiging behoed blijven. Kortom, voor Suriname schijnt de emancipatie het eenige middel van behoud.*” In: Glenn Willemsen, *Dagen van Gejuich en Gejubel: Viering en Herdenking van de Afschaffing van de Slavernij in Nederland, Suriname en de Nederlandse Antillen* (Den Haag: Amrit, 2006), 86.

³⁷ Willemsen, *Dagen van Gejuich en Gejubel*, 89.

³⁸ Sypesteyn, “Afschaffing der Slavernij,” 1-85.

given were put forward. According to Glenn Willemsen in *Dagen van Gejubbel en Gejuich* there were two distinct visions. The first one, although supportive of abolition, proposed many restrictions on the rights of former slaves. Those who shared the second view were supporters of the widest and broadest understanding of freedom. The first view was dominant in parliament. Most politicians felt that the black population of Suriname was not ready for absolute freedom. The black community first had to be educated to make its people suitable for freedom. Slaves simply were not civilized enough, so complete freedom was not in the best interest of the slave population. The politicians feared that the freed slaves would resort to a life of unemployment and vagrancy. A popular view on civilization in Europe at that time was that black people would lose their degree of civilization if they were not in daily contact with white people. The government was afraid that if they did not intervene and implant some sort of apprenticeship-like period, the black population would return to a “state of nature” where the ex-slaves would live in cabins in the woods and would only work on their own land for their livelihood. For this reason, the parliamentarians wanted to ban the ex-slaves from owning land. Freedom for the ex-slaves, such was their opinion, would mean not working. This would be in contrast with the main goal of abolition: sustaining the freedmen as a labor force. With these arguments the parliament defended their plans for State Apprenticeship.³⁹

The Netherlands never had a real public debate on slavery and abolition. This was due to the absence of a strong abolitionist movement. As the debates dragged on, some MPs lost their interest in the case. As one Member of Parliament explained:

“Besides, it was so annoying, to speak and hear repeatedly of those Negroes who lived so far away, and their release would be so costly and we need money for business here, for works of public interest: the first symptoms of railway fever are beginning to show.”⁴⁰

³⁹ Willemsen, *Dagen van Gejuich en Gejubel*, 90-100.

⁴⁰ Original quote: “*Daarbij, het werd zoo vervelend, bij herhaling te spreken en te hooren van die negers, die zoo ver af woonden, en dan hunne vrijmaking zou zoo veel geldkosten en men behoefde geld voor zaken in het binnenland, voor werken van algemeen nut: de eerste verschijnselen der*

However, some liberal MPs, such as Van Bosse, Groen van Prinsterer and Hoevell, shared the second view of freedom for the ex-slaves and advocated a system of free labor instead of a ten-year-period of State Apprenticeship. Van Bosse felt that forced labor was the same as slavery and so it would not benefit the economy. He was prepared to accept a period of four years of state supervision, as in the British colonies. However, the slaves should be free to choose the kind of labor they would perform and should be able to negotiate their salary. In short, the liberal MPs wanted a direct transition to the system of free labor. Only those who would not work and would surrender to a vagrant lifestyle should be forced to work.⁴¹

Even though the liberal abolitionists were far outnumbered in parliament, they managed to exert some influence on the final rights for the freed slaves. The law certainly became more generous when it comes to the degree of freedom the formal slaves received. First of all, the period of State Apprenticeship was changed from ten years to *a maximum of ten years*.⁴² Besides this, it became theoretically possible to be released from State Apprenticeship, although in practice this was hardly applied. Probably the most important right the liberals influenced was the right to own property. Article 22 states:

“The ordinary civil and criminal law is applicable to the redeemed, except the restricted conditions during the time of State Apprenticeship, for those it implies to.”⁴³

This meant that the released could work, besides their contract labor, on their own plots of land. It is clear that the parliament regarded the ex-slaves as part of the Dutch population. In all documents the MPs speak of “black

spoorwegkoorts beginnen zich te vertoonen.” In: Julien Wolbers, *Geschiedenis van Suriname* (Amsterdam: Emmering, 1970), 746.

⁴¹ Klinkers, “Op Hoop van Vrijheid”, 106-110.

⁴² Sypesteijn, “Afschaffing der Slavernij,” 12-16.

⁴³ Original quote: “*Het gewoon burgerlijk en strafrecht is op de vrijgemaakten toepasselijk, behoudens de uitzondering die het staatstoezicht gedurende de tijd, dien zij daaronder verkeerden, noodzakelijk maakt.*” Glenn Willemsen, *Dagen van Gejuich en Gejubel: Viering en Herdenking van de Afschaffing van de Slavernij in Nederland, Suriname en de Nederlandse Antillen* (Den Haag: Amrit, 2006), 120.

Dutchmen” or “our free black Dutchmen”. The word “foreigners” is never used.⁴⁴

Besides these liberal adjustments to the bill, the government also agreed on some stricter rules. For example, Article 29 forbade idleness and vagrancy by law. The punishment for either one of these crimes was forced labor on public works. The former slaves also were not allowed to leave the country during the period of State Apprenticeship. However, they did have the right to move within national borders.⁴⁵ The government was also very strict when it came to education. Since the general view in parliament was that the black community had to be educated in order to become more civilized, schooling and Christianity were high on the list of priorities. Article 25 states that the state had to encourage and support religious and school education as much as possible. Children from seven to fifteen had compulsory school attendance. Anyone who missed classes received a fine of 2.50 Gld., while tenants who prevented children from going to school could receive penalties up to 100 Gld.⁴⁶

While shaping the articles concerning State Apprenticeship, the government attempted to find a balance between the differing interests. On the one hand, the purpose of the emancipation was taken into account. During State Apprenticeship, some form of police-law was applied to the freed. After this period, the former slaves would receive the same status as the other citizens of Suriname. What were the restrictions of State Apprenticeship for the ex-slaves? First of all, the former slaves between the ages of fifteen and sixty-six had to have signed a labor contract before October 1, 1863, consisting 300 workdays a year for eight to ten hours a day. Furthermore, all persons between the ages of fifteen and sixty-six had to work as much as they could given their strength and age. In order to supervise all this, Suriname was subdivided into several districts. Each district had its own commissioner who was charged with supervising the regulations and disciplining the ex-slaves when necessary. Penalties for disobeying the law mainly consisted out of forced labor and fines. Even the date of emancipation, July 1st, 1863, was selected to serve the main purpose

⁴⁴ Willemsen, *Dagen van Gejuich en Gejubel*, 118-122.

⁴⁵ Klinkers, “Op Hoop van Vrijheid,” 143.

⁴⁶ Sypesteijn, “Afschaffing der Slavernij,” 15-16.

of the abolition: July was right in the middle of rainy season and thus was there no work on the plantations. Besides, it was very unlikely that the freed men would leave the plantations when the weather was this wet.⁴⁷

On the other hand, the government tried to protect the well-being of the ex-slaves with the laws surrounding State Apprenticeship. This was in the government's best interest, since satisfied laborers were more productive than unsatisfied ones. The former slaves were allowed to find their own employer and were free to negotiate wage levels. They were also guaranteed a number of free days. Furthermore, the freed men could count on housing, medical facilities and (compulsory) education for children. On top of that, they gained access to the legal system. The ex-slaves were allowed to file a complaint with their district commissioner and would receive free legal aid if it would lead to a court case. Voting rights were not discussed since Suriname was a colony and therefore governed from the mother country.⁴⁸

The final Emancipation bill was adopted on 10 July, 1862, after only eight days of discussion. King Willem III signed it on August 8, 1862, making it official: slavery in Suriname would no longer exist from 1 July, 1863.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Slootweg, "Het Staatstoezicht in Suriname," 10-16.

⁴⁸ *Ibidem*, 14-17.

⁴⁹ Klinkers, "Op Hoop van Vrijheid," 106-110.

Abolition in the United States

1.4 Secession, War and Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation

In order to fully comprehend the political debate surrounding American abolition, it is important to understand the position slavery had within the history of American politics. Unlike the Netherlands, slavery had always played a central role in American politics. Americans first began debating the slavery issue in the late seventeenth century when the Quakers developed arguments against the expansion of bondage in North-America. The early opponents of slavery were primarily religious figures who felt that slavery was an unbiblical and immoral system. The antebellum debates in America took place at the same time that arguments concerning slavery arose in Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Those arguments were mostly based on Enlightenment principles such as natural rights. Yet the American discussion was different in tone because the U.S., in contrast with the monarchical governments of Europe, was founded on the principle of liberty and dedicated to the proposition "that all men are created equal".⁵⁰

While the Declaration of Independence proclaimed equality among all men, Michael Klarman believes that most of those who signed the Declaration did not believe this included black people. He argues that although slavery was debated by the Founding Fathers during the writing of the Constitution, they could not agree on a clear view. Therefore the U.S. Constitution plainly recognized the rights of states to either abolish or preserve the institution of slavery.⁵¹ According to the American historian Eric Foner, it was the main intention of the Founding Fathers to place slavery completely outside the national political arena. The only basis on which national politics could exist was to avoid sectional issues.⁵² Foner might be right about this; however, politicians could not avoid the issue forever. Klarman argues that a technological invention in the 1790s put slavery back on the political agenda in a pressing way. Due to the invention and widespread use of the cotton gin, cotton production became extremely profitable. As a result, the southern states became more and more

⁵⁰ Lowance, *A House Divided*, xxi-xxx.

⁵¹ Klarman, *Unfinished Business*, xvi.

⁵² Foner, *Politics and Ideology*, 36.

dependent on slavery while in the North free labor became the dominant working system. By 1804 all northern states had passed laws to abolish slavery. This contrast led to extreme political and economic tensions between North and South and a growing abolitionist movement.⁵³

The political system reacted in the traditional ways to the slavery question. First, it tried to ignore the issue altogether. All political parties agreed that slavery was too explosive a question for either party to address. However, during election time most parties used the slavery issue as a way to discredit their opponents. Therefore, the parties tried to find compromises. The Missouri Compromise of 1820⁵⁴ and the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850⁵⁵ were the last attempts by the government to maintain unity. However, these compromises failed to fulfill their purpose and after 1850, only a small minority in Congress was still willing to compromise.⁵⁶ According to Mike Dunning, due to the westward expansion within the U.S., the slavery question reached new heights. The northern states opposed the institutions of slavery in the new territories while the southern states saw it as part of their manifest destiny to introduce slavery in the new regions. The Slavery Extension Controversy established a huge gap between the political parties. The elections of 1860 would determine whether this crisis would be defused.⁵⁷ The presidential candidate for the Republican Party, Abraham Lincoln, argued in a speech in 1858 that according to him an answer to the slavery question should be found:

⁵³ Klarman, *Unfinished Business*, 25-29.

⁵⁴ The Missouri Compromise of 1820 was an attempt by Congress to control and prohibit the spread of slavery in new states. It permitted Missouri to enter the Union as a slave state, but prohibited slavery north of 36°30' latitude in territory gained by the Louisiana Purchase. Maine had entered the Union as a free state which balanced the slave and free states again.

⁵⁵ The Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 was part of a larger compromise between North and South, called the Compromise of 1850. This Compromise admitted California to the Union as a free state. As a compromise, the Fugitive Slave Act declared that all runaway slaves had to be returned to their masters.

⁵⁶ Foner, *Politics and Ideology*, 43.

⁵⁷ Mike Dunning, "Manifest Destiny and the Trans-Mississippi South: Natural Laws and the Extension of Slavery into Mexico," *Journal of Popular Culture* Vol. 35, Issue 2 (2001): 111-114.

“In my opinion, it will not cease, until a crisis shall have been reached and passes. A house divided against itself cannot stand. I believe this government cannot endure permanently half slave half free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved-I do not expect the House to fall-but I do expect it will cease to be divided. It will become all one thing, or all the other. Either the opponents of slavery will arrest the further spread of it, and place it where the public mind shall rest in the belief that it is in the course of ultimate extinction; or its advocates will push it forward, till it shall become alike lawful in all the States, old as well as new- North as well as South.”⁵⁸

Lincoln was elected president and took office in March 1861. In the eyes of southerners, Lincoln’s election was the first sign that slavery’s national political power was slipping and several states threatened to leave the Union.⁵⁹ Although Lincoln morally opposed slavery, both he and the Republican Party believed that the national government did not possess the power to abolish slavery in the southern states, only the power to prevent its expansion in the new territories. As a last effort to keep the southern states in the Union, Congress passed a constitutional amendment that would have barred Congress forever from interfering with slavery in the states. But before the required number of states could ratify the law, seven southern states seceded from the Union and attacked Fort Sumter. Four more states joined the Confederacy after President Lincoln called seventy-five thousand militiamen into federal service. Although the main purpose of the war was to restore the Union, the objectives of the war soon expanded to include the abolition of slavery.⁶⁰

Due to the government’s attempts to avoid debating the slavery question and to the outbreak of the War, the American government could not debate abolition like the Dutch government did. Jörg Nagler, Professor of North American history, argues that instead of formulating strict plans for emancipation and a well thought-out strategy for reconstruction years ahead of time, the American laws and plans came into being along the way in an ad-hoc manner. Nagler writes that before the war, Lincoln’s vision on

⁵⁸ Jörg Nagler, “Abraham Lincoln’s Attitudes on Slavery and Race,” *American Studies Journal* Vol. 0, Issue 53 (2009): 2.

⁵⁹ Allen C. Guelzo, *Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation: the End of Slavery in America* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004), 14-15.

⁶⁰ Klarman, *Unfinished Business*, 46-48.

emancipation was one of gradual abolition, similar to the Dutch method. He believed that slaveholders should be compensated for their loss and he advocated the idea of repatriation.⁶¹ Lincoln, like many Dutch politicians at that time, believed that complete and direct abolition would make it impossible for African Americans to integrate in white society. Therefore, either re-colonization or gradual abolition would be necessary.⁶²

During the Civil War, reconciling the Union became Lincoln's most important goal. His fear of estranging the Border States⁶³ and losing them to the Confederacy made Lincoln approach the matter of slavery with caution. Campbell and Fraser describe that Lincoln's caution conflicted with the Radical Republicans' vision to use the war to abolish slavery once and for all. Seeking the political middle ground, Lincoln searched for a formula that would initiate the emancipation process but not alienate conservatives.⁶⁴ In November 1861, he urged the Border States to adopt measures for gradual abolition, with the federal government paying slave-owners for their loss of property. He also revived the idea of colonization, but a black delegation that Lincoln had invited to the White House to discuss these ideas, rejected his plea.⁶⁵ Despite his strong convictions about colonization and compensation, Lincoln concluded during the summer of 1862 that emancipation had become a political and military necessity. This stemmed from a lack of military success, along with the hope that emancipated slaves might help the army's need for manpower. Many southern slaves had fled to the North to free themselves. Lincoln was obligated by the Fugitive Slave Act to send these slaves back to their

⁶¹ Repatriation or colonization referred to the idea that America's racial problems would be solved by removing blacks from the U.S. and resettling them elsewhere. This idea was not new; as early as 1714 Americans had proposed to send free blacks back to Africa.

⁶² Nagler, "Abraham Lincoln's Attitudes on Slavery and Race," 12-15.

⁶³ The Lincoln administration regarded Delaware, Kentucky, Maryland, and Missouri as Border States. These states were critical because geographically they were placed between North and South and for the Union questionable in loyalty because slavery existed in all four states. Lincoln was convinced that these states were the key to victory and therefore could not afford to alienate them by passing radical legislation. All four states remained loyal to the Union during the Civil War.

⁶⁴ James M. Campbell and Rebecca J. Fraser, *Reconstruction: People and Perspectives* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO Inc., 2008), xiv-xv.

⁶⁵ M.F. Conway, *Shall the War be for Union and Freedom, or Union and Slavery?: Speech in the House of Representatives: December 12, 1861* (Washington, 1861), 4-5.

masters. However, refusing to send them back would emancipate these southern slaves, and encourage more of them to flee to the North. This then would both cripple the southern economy, and the emancipated slaves could be recruited for the Union army. It seemed like the road to success.⁶⁶

Lincoln issued the Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation on September 22, 1862. It warned the southern states that unless they laid down their arms by the end of 1862, he would emancipate the slaves. The Confederacy did not respond to Lincoln's ultimatum; therefore on January 1, 1863, after presiding at the annual White House New Year's reception, Lincoln retired to his study and signed the Emancipation Proclamation, freeing all the slaves in Confederate territory.⁶⁷

According to Professor Allen Guelzo, the proclamation represented a turning point in national policy as well as in the character of the war. It tied Union success to abolition for the first time, and ignored entirely both compensation and colonization.⁶⁸ However, the proclamation did not actually free any slaves immediately. Its constitutional legality derived from the president's authority as military commander in chief, but the proclamation applied exclusively to areas under Confederate control. It did not affect the half million slaves in the Border States that had not seceded from the Union, nor did it include the slaves in the Confederate areas that were then occupied by Union soldiers.⁶⁹

Despite its limitations, the proclamation set off scenes of jubilation among free blacks and abolitionists in the North and among slaves in the South. As the war drew to a close, the disintegration of slavery accelerated even as southerners desperately clung to the institution. Early in 1865, slaves were still being sold in areas under Union control.⁷⁰ However, by then, more than 1 million blacks were living within Union-borders and another

⁶⁶ Eric Foner, *Forever Free: The Story of Emancipation and Reconstruction* (New York: Random House inc., 2005), 41-53.

⁶⁷ Burrus M. Carnahan, *Act of Justice: Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation and the Law of War* (Lexington: Kentucky University Press, 2007), 123-124.

⁶⁸ Guelzo, *Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation*, 227-235.

⁶⁹ Randall G. Holcombe, *From Liberty to Democracy: the Transformation of American Government* (Ann Arbor: the University of Michigan Press, 2002), 118-119.

⁷⁰ James L. Roark, *Masters Without Slaves: Southern Planters in the Civil War and Reconstruction* (New York: Norton & Company, 1977), 113.

700.000 lived in Border States where slavery was dead or dying. Even in Confederate territory, planters started to negotiate wage and share agreements to get their recalcitrant slaves back to work. By 1865, no matter who won the Civil War, slavery was doomed.⁷¹

1.5 The Main Goal of American Abolition: The Slave Power Conspiracy

Even though the northern states were advocates of emancipation, it did not necessarily mean they were proponents of equal rights for blacks. Despite their calls for abolition, most northerners were racists. The free blacks living in the Union states enjoyed only limited rights. For example, every state that entered the Union after 1800, with the exception of Maine, limited voting to whites only. By 1865, only in five New England states could free blacks vote on the same basis as whites. Free blacks could also not sit as jurors and only in ten states could they testify in court. Several western states prohibited free blacks from entering. For example, blacks that entered the State of Illinois and stayed for more than ten days were guilty of a misdemeanor.⁷²

If northerners clearly were not too concerned with the position of blacks in the South, then why were they prepared to ultimately support the cause of abolition during the Civil War? In order to understand the civil rights legislation for the ex-slaves that was passed during and after the Civil War, it is important to first take note of the main goal of abolition. Even though the abolitionist movement focused on the evils of slavery and argued on the basis of natural rights theory, the real motor behind emancipation, like in Suriname, was the economy. The Industrial Revolution had established a system of free labor in the North and this had become the most basic value of the northern public. With their slogan “Free labor, Free Land, Free men” the Republican Party had won many northern hearts. From the 1850s on, more and more northerners felt that the institution of slavery in the South degraded white labor and retarded economic development. Their support for abolition was motivated by their fear that southern desires to

⁷¹ Foner, *Reconstruction*, 5-10.

⁷² Nicholas J. Santoro, *Atlas of Slavery and Civil Rights: an annotated chronicle of the passage from slavery and segregation to civil rights and equality under the law* (Lincoln: iUniverse Books, 2006), 109-110.

extend slavery into new territories or even existing northern states would mean unfair competition for free white laborers and farmers.⁷³

The political philosopher Michael Sandel argues that the Radical Republicans used this fear to broaden support for abolition and therefore started to focus on the potential harm the institution might do to northern whites. The Slave Power Conspiracy theory, which expressed a belief that the slaveholders' class would slowly take over the government and deprive northerners of their liberties, had many northerners believe that the emancipation of slaves was the only way to safeguard the system of free labor. The clash between free labor and slavery led to the conclusion that "the United States must and will, sooner or later, become either entirely a slaveholding nation, or entirely a free-labor nation."⁷⁴

Although North and South seemed to be contradicting in economic terms, they were intertwined as well. Specifically, the South supplied the raw materials that were processed in the northern factories. Proslavery advocates correctly argued that any disruption of this system through abolition would jeopardize the economic well-being of the southern states, and consequently it would negatively impact the economy of the North. Therefore it was in the best interest of both the northern and southern economy that the freedmen would continue to work after emancipation, just like the ex-slaves in Suriname.⁷⁵ Lincoln underlined this point clearly in his Emancipation Proclamation: "and I recommend to them that, in all cases when allowed, they labor faithfully for reasonable wages."⁷⁶

The above-mentioned points indicate that even though on the surface the Civil War was a war to preserve the Union, its hidden agenda with regards to slavery was economic in character. Its main goal was to secure northern liberties by defeating the Slave Power and establishing free labor throughout the nation. Even before the end of the war, slavery, as stated before, was already doomed. The victory of the Union established free labor as the main economic system. The consequences of implementing free labor

⁷³ Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party before the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 9-11.

⁷⁴ Michael J. Sandel, *Democracy's Discontent: America in Search of a Public Philosophy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), 170-180.

⁷⁵ Lowance, *A House Divided*, 118.

⁷⁶ Emancipation Proclamation 1863.

in the South for the rights of the freedmen will be discussed next by analyzing the reconstruction legislation.

1.6 Radicalism and Congressional Reconstruction: American Reconstruction Legislation

As the Civil War progressed and the scale tipped in favor of the Union, the future political status of African Americans emerged as a key dividing line in the political debate. While all Republicans agreed that “free labor” should replace slavery, very few were certain how the transition should be accomplished and what the position of blacks should be within this system.⁷⁷ Mason Lowance describes that the political discussion surrounding this question rested on three distinct visions. Just like in the Dutch debate on abolition, the first vision, supported mainly by southerners and Democrats, had been pro-slavery. This group supported a vision of restricted rights, or even no rights, for the freedmen. Their arguments mainly rested on the idea that blacks were on a lower step in the process of civilization and that the ex-slaves were incapable of independence. Most of them felt that it was part of the individual states’ rights to decide what to do with the Negroes within their borders.⁷⁸

Just as in Suriname, the second vision entailed equal rights for the ex-slaves. This idea was advocated by the Radical Republicans. Led by Thaddeus Stevens and Charles Sumner, the Radicals were sympathetic with the wishes of the freedmen. They believed that Reconstruction could never be complete until blacks had been guaranteed education, access to land and to the ballot. The Radicals felt that the position of the ex-slaves was very important and therefore had to be decided on by a national, not local, majority. Reconstruction in their opinion was a Congressional matter. Even though the Radicals were a minority within government, they managed to decide on some of the most important legislation on the rights of African

⁷⁷ W.R. Brock, *An American Crisis: Congress and Reconstruction 1865-1867* (New York: St Martin’s Press, 1963), 15.

⁷⁸ Lowance, *A House Divided*, 125-135.

Americans granted during Reconstruction, just as the Dutch Liberals had accomplished.⁷⁹

One difference with the Dutch debate was the existence of a third deciding party in the U.S.: the American president. Lincoln and his successor, Johnson, were more concerned with reconciling and preserving the Union than the status of the ex-slaves. For them, granting African Americans equal rights would only complicate bringing back the seceded states. Both presidents felt that it was not in the power of the federal government to decide on local matters. Especially Johnson never wavered from the conviction that the federal government lacked the authority to impose an equal rights policy on the states, and that the status of blacks should not become an obstacle to the speedy completion of Reconstruction.⁸⁰

The first policy regarding Reconstruction was issued by Lincoln. Lincoln expected the rebellious states to rejoin the Union if they received full control over the rights of the ex-slaves within their own territory. Therefore on December 8th, 1863, Lincoln issued the Proclamation of Amnesty and Reconstruction.⁸¹ In this Proclamation, Lincoln offered amnesty and full restoration of rights to nearly all white southerners who took an oath affirming loyalty to the Union and support for emancipation. When one-tenth of a state's voters had taken the oath, they could elect a new state government. This government would be required to adopt a state constitution abolishing slavery, but otherwise would be allowed to adopt legislation regarding blacks consistent with their present condition as a laboring, landless, and homeless class.⁸²

Just like the Dutch legislation for reconstruction, Lincoln's Proclamation offered no role for blacks in shaping the post-slavery order, a point that met with opposition from the Radicals. Despite their differences, however, Lincoln and the Radicals worked together in obtaining Congressional approval of the Thirteenth Amendment, which abolished

⁷⁹ Foner, *Politics and Ideology*, 128-135.

⁸⁰ David Brion Davis, *Inhumane Bondage: The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 319-322.

⁸¹ Andrew P. Napolitano, *Dred Scott's Revenge: a Legal History of Race and Freedom in America* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 2009), 85.

⁸² Ira Berlin et al., *Slaves No More: Three Essays on Emancipation, and the Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 152-153.

slavery throughout the Union. After initially failing to receive the required two-thirds majority in the House by the first voting round, the amendment was finally approved on January 31st, 1865, with five votes more than the required two-thirds. By the end of the year the states had ratified this amendment ending slavery legally.⁸³

Just as in the Dutch debates, the big question behind the equal rights debates in the U.S. was whether the freedmen should be viewed as individuals ready to take their place as citizens and participants in the competitive market place, or whether their unique historical experience obliged the federal government to take special actions on their behalf. Before this question could be answered Lincoln was assassinated on April 14th, 1865 and Vice-president Johnson took his place the White House.⁸⁴ In the weeks following the assassination, leading Radicals frequently met with the new president to press the issue of black suffrage. However, Johnson was preoccupied with reconciling the Union. At the end of May, he issued his plans for the Reconstruction. His policies were based on control of local affairs by individual states, white supremacy and quick resumption of the South's place within the Union. White southerners appreciated that Johnson's Reconstruction empowered them to shape the transition from slavery to freedom and define blacks' civil status without northern interference.⁸⁵

Similarly to the Suriname planters, white southerners in 1865 wondered: "Will the Negro work?" According to James Browning, most southerners believed that the freedmen were inherently indolent and would only work under supervision and coercion by whites. Browning describes that as a response to demands for a legislative solution to this problem the southern states passed a body of legislature called the Black Codes. This series of state laws was intended to define the freedmen's new rights and responsibilities.⁸⁶ While there were variations from state to state, they

⁸³ W.M. Henry Smith, *A Political History of Slavery: Being an Account of the Slavery Controversy from the Earliest Agitations in the Eighteenth Century to the Close of the Reconstruction Period in America, Vol. II* (New York: Knickerbocker Press, 1903), 155-160.

⁸⁴ Hollander, *Slavery in America*, 121-141.

⁸⁵ Foner, *Reconstruction*, 177-190.

⁸⁶ James B. Browning, "The North Carolina Black Code," *The Journal of Negro History* Vol. 15, No. 4 (1930): 461-473.

embodied some common features. Just like the Dutch Apprenticeship laws, the Black Codes all recognized the rights of blacks to acquire and own property, have legal marriages and offspring, sign contracts, to sue and be sued, and to testify in court cases involving persons of their own color. But the centerpiece was the attempt to stabilize the black work force and limit its economic options apart from plantation labor. Henceforth, just like the colonial government in Suriname, most states enforced labor agreements and plantation discipline, punishing those who refused to work under contract. The entire complex of labor regulations and criminal laws was enforced by a police apparatus and judicial system in which blacks were granted virtually no voice whatsoever.⁸⁷

The enactment of these Black Codes confirmed the North's worst fear, according to professor Donald Nieman. The Republicans, who ruled both the House and Senate, felt that the South was trying to re-establish slavery. The creation of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, commonly known as the Freedmen's Bureau, symbolized the widespread belief among Republicans, just as most politicians in the Netherlands had felt, that the federal government must shoulder broad responsibility for the emancipated slaves.⁸⁸ Vetoed twice by Johnson, the creation of the Freedmen's Bureau was one of the most important ways of protecting the ex-slaves on a national level.⁸⁹ The Bureau's agencies carried out a striking range of duties: providing food, clothing, and medical care for thousands of freed people and white refugees; managing abandoned and confiscated lands that had fallen into the hands of the occupying forces; working with freed communities and northern philanthropic agencies to open schools for African Americans; helping freed people to secure justice in the courts and setting up its own judicial tribunals where they could not; formalizing marriages and assisting freed people to trace missing family members; and,

⁸⁷ Franklin, *Reconstruction after the Civil War*, 40-53.

⁸⁸ Donald G. Nieman, "Andrew Johnson, the Freedmen's Bureau, and the Problem of Equal Rights, 1865-1866," *The Journal of Southern History* Vol. 44, No.3 (1978): 399-420.

⁸⁹ Johnson had first vetoed the establishment of the Freedmen's Bureau, but this veto was overruled by the majority of Republicans in Congress. In 1866, Johnson vetoed a bill that would extend the life of the Bureau, but this too was overruled due to the majority of Republicans.

above all, supervising the establishment of free labor relations in the former slave states.⁹⁰

Just as it did for the Suriname freedmen, the aim of revitalizing the South's production of agricultural staples in many ways undercut that of guaranteeing the freedmen's rights. Foner feels that nowhere was this inherent ambiguity in its mission more evident than in the Bureau's effort to supervise the transition from slave to free labor in the postwar South. Despite its efforts to help the freedmen and instruct planters in free labor principles, the Bureau seemed to consider black reluctance to labor the greater threat to its economical mission.⁹¹ Caryn Bell agrees with Foner and argues that this understanding had its impact on the rights granted by both the states and the Freedmen's Bureau. Howard, head of the Freedmen's Bureau, told a group of blacks in 1865: "I can promise you nothing but your freedom and freedom means work."⁹² Such statements as well as the coercive labor policies adopted by the Bureau show that an identity of interest existed between the Bureau and southern planters, just as an identity of interest existed between the Colonial Government in Suriname, which had to enforce the State Apprenticeship laws, and the Suriname planters. Certainly, many Bureau practices seemed designed to serve the needs of the planters, especially a stringent of orders issued in 1865 restricting black freedom of movement and requiring blacks to sign labor contracts, withholding relief rations from those who refused.⁹³

The Freedmen's Bureau was in reality not the agent of the planter, nor was it precisely the agent of the former slaves. The Bureau can best be understood as the agent of northern free labor ideology itself: its main concern was to put into operation a viable free labor system in the South, to the extent that freedmen were put back to work on plantations and their

⁹⁰ Robert Harrison, "New Representations of a 'Misrepresented Bureau': Reflections on Recent Scholarship on the Freedmen's Bureau," *American Nineteenth Century History* Vol. 8, No. 2 (2007): 205-207.

⁹¹ Foner, *Reconstruction*, 153-157.

⁹² Caryn Cossé Bell, "'Une Chimere': The Freedmen's Bureau in Creole New Orleans," in *The Freedmen's Bureau and Reconstruction: Reconsidered*, ed. Paul A. Cimbala and Randall M. Miller (Fordham: Fordham University Press, 1999): 140-142.

⁹³ Foner, *Politics and Ideology*, 101-105.

rights were restricted.⁹⁴ Most states adopted Black Codes that required black persons to enter into yearlong labor contracts and prohibited vagrancy and idleness. The Freedmen's Bureau elaborated these precepts. It declared in 1865 that: "A man who can work has no right to a support by government or charity."⁹⁵ Also, the Bureau would tell the ex-slaves that if they were found idle they might be forced to work at a place where they would not like it. The penalty for idleness was imprisonment and, just as in Suriname, forced labor. Through all the Bureau's proclamations ran warnings that freedom forbade dependence and enjoined labor.⁹⁶

Klarman describes that after the Thirteenth Amendment and the creation of the Freedmen's Bureau, the Radicals felt that their job was not done yet. Due to their enormous majority in Congress the Republican Party was able to push two more amendments into the U.S. Constitution; both the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendment were ratified as part of the Constitution in 1868 and 1870. Since the Thirteenth Amendment did not define in legislative terms the essence of freedom and did not grant the freedmen any rights beside the right to never be enslaved again, the Fourteenth Amendment was created to further explain the meanings of freedom.⁹⁷ Section one of the amendment forbade states from denying persons equal protection of the law; abridging the privileges or immunities of citizenship; or taking life, liberty, or property without due process of law. Section two reduced the representation of any state that deprived a part of its male population of the right to vote, an indirect attempt to protect the voting rights of blacks. To guarantee that African Americans would enjoy full citizenship, section five of the amendment authorized congressional enforcement.⁹⁸

The southern states despised Congressional Reconstruction and worked hard to prevent further equal rights legislation. This showed in the 1868 elections. Even though the Republicans did win the presidency, the

⁹⁴ Foner, *Politics and Ideology*, 101-105.

⁹⁵ Amy Dru Stanley, " "We Did Not Separate Man and Wife, but All Had to Work": Freedom and Dependence in the Aftermath of Slave Emancipation, " in *Terms of Labor: Slavery, Serfdom, and Free Labor*, ed. Stanley L. Engerman (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999): 191.

⁹⁶ Stanley, "Freedom and Dependence," 189-192.

⁹⁷ Klarman, *Unfinished Business*, 50-53.

⁹⁸ [Fourteenth Amendment to the US Constitution](#)

show of strength by the Democrats could not be ignored. To protect the freedmen from the growing political power of the former confederates, Congress once again turned its attention to the suffrage question. Few were satisfied with the vague provisions in the Fourteenth Amendment. Therefore numerous suffrage amendments were introduced in 1868. In January, 1869, the House of Representatives passed a resolution that became the basis for the Fifteenth Amendment.⁹⁹ The scope of the Fifteenth Amendment is narrow and basically forbids disfranchisement based on race, color, or previous conditions of servitude. It does not, however, explicitly bar literacy tests, poll taxes, or property qualifications. The narrow scope of the amendment almost guaranteed southern circumvention.¹⁰⁰

Nonetheless, the ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment marked the culmination of the Radicals' crusade. At last the black population was free, had gained citizenship, was enfranchised and had a future. An Illinois Republican newspaper echoed this sentiment: "The negro is now a voter and a citizen. Let him hereafter take his chances in the battle of life."¹⁰¹

The political histories of abolition in Suriname and the U.S. seem very different at first sight. In the Netherlands, the plans for reconstruction were debated extensively and the politicians brought every aspects and problem into consideration. They formulated a well thought out plan that embodied the rights and obligations of both the government and the freedmen before emancipating the slaves. The U.S. on the other hand, did not have time for this. While American politicians tried to debate possible emancipation, eleven states seceded. This shifted the focus from abolition towards preserving the Union. During the war, reconstruction plans could not be formulated due to the uncertainty of the outcome and during reconstruction, not all attention could be paid to the status of the African Americans, since reconciling the Union was, in political aspects, more important. When looking beyond this first impression, it can be concluded that the political

⁹⁹ Franklin, *Reconstruction after the Civil War*, 80-83.

¹⁰⁰ Fifteenth Amendment to the US Constitution

¹⁰¹ Foner, *Forever Free*, 149.

aspects of abolition and reconstruction in the U.S. and Suriname are actually not that different.

First of all, the motor behind abolition in both countries is economical. The main goal of abolition was to implement a system of free labor, while keeping the ex-slaves at work on the plantations. Plantation culture in both countries was economically still fruitful and emancipation was not directed at ending plantation economy.

Next, the political debate in both countries rested upon the assumption that black people were inferior to whites, that they did not have self discipline to work and that after emancipation the freedmen would lead a life of indulgence. The laws and regulations for the freedmen in both countries reflect this. The Black Codes adopted by the Southern states in America sustain the same rights and obligations as the Suriname State Apprenticeship laws. In both countries the ex-slaves were granted the right to own land, to legally marry, to sign contracts, negotiate wages, and they were granted access to the legal system. The obligations of the freedmen also correspond. They were obligated to sign work contracts and their movement was restricted. Idleness and vagrancy were in both countries main points of attention.

The last similarity between Suriname and the U.S. lies in the accomplishments of the advocates of equal rights. Although the Radicals and the Liberals were both a minority within politics they managed to stretch the law for the freedmen. In both countries a conservative majority was not very willing to grant rights whatsoever, but the Liberals and Radicals fought hard. Due to their hard work the freedmen could enjoy a better future.

Chapter Two From slaves to wage workers: the socio-economic aspects of Abolition

“The moment the slave resolves that he will no longer be a slave, his fetters fall. Freedom and slavery are mental states.”¹⁰²

Mahatma Gandhi

The abolition of slavery led to major changes in the economic and social conditions of the former slaves. Not only did the freedmen now get paid for the work they performed; they also had to provide for their own food, clothing and shelter. The consequences of this transition for society were enormous. The slave society had to be replaced by a fairer society that consisted of thousands more free citizens than before.¹⁰³

The literature on slavery elaborately discusses how societies developed after the abolition of slavery in plantation-America. One of those disputations is the *proto-peasants* debate. This discussion focuses on whether the experience of slaves in agriculture and trade outside the plantations formed the basis for an existence as peasants after emancipation. According to this approach, both social and economic factors resulted in autonomous action of free slaves and the formation of post-slavery communities.¹⁰⁴

The term *proto-peasant* was introduced in 1979 by anthropologist Sidney Mintz. In his essay “Slavery and the Rise of Peasantries” he states that large numbers of freed slaves moved away from their old plantations after emancipation. The freedmen did this primarily as a response to the agricultural power balance. This reaction led to the rise of a peasantry. Since the basis for an existence as a peasant was already laid during slavery, Mintz characterized the former slaves as *proto-peasants*. With the skills they had acquired during slavery, the freedmen could earn a living independent of

¹⁰² Philip L. Adler and Randall L. Pouwels, *World Civilizations* (Boston: Thomson, 2008), 644.

¹⁰³ Klinkers, “Op Hoop van Vrijheid,” 105-106.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibidem*, 106.

the planter. The money they earned helped them to gradually relinquish their status as slaves.¹⁰⁵

Economic historian Robert Fogel, however, states that the slaves in the United States were not proto-peasants. Fogel argues that too many restrictions were attached to the use of agricultural plots in the U.S. to describe the slaves as proto-peasants. The production on the plots was too small to sell any products on the market. And although most slaves grew vegetables and kept chickens, very few slaves owned money.¹⁰⁶ Dutch historian Pieter Emmer agrees, and feels that Mintz's explanation misses the essential point. He states that the slaves were actually shielded from the market economy, in which maximizing income is the key element. Even though the slaves in Suriname were perfectly capable of producing food and selling their surplus, they did not understand the complex demand of the market since the plantation owner provided their basic necessities.¹⁰⁷

Fogel and Emmer make a valid point. So if the ex-slaves of Suriname and the United States can not be characterized as proto-peasants, what kind of society did develop during the periods of Reconstruction and State apprenticeship? How did the economic circumstances change for the freedmen? To what extent did they receive wages or compensation in products? Did their financial situation improve or decline? And what changes can be discovered in the composition of slave communities when considering family-life, religion, social and medical care? This chapter will explore all the above-mentioned aspects in order to paint a complete picture of the socio-economic changes of abolition for the ex-slaves.

¹⁰⁵ Sidney W. Mintz, "Slavery and the Rise of Peasantries," in: *Roots and Branches: Current Directions in Slave Studies*, ed. Michael Craton (Toronto: Pergamon Press, 1979), 213-248.

¹⁰⁶ Robert W. Fogel, *Without Consent or Contract: The Rise and Fall of American Slavery* (New York: Norton, 1994), 190-192.

¹⁰⁷ Pieter C. Emmer, "The Price of Freedom: The Constraints of Change in Post-Emancipation America," in *The Meaning of Freedom: Economics, Politics, and Culture after Slavery*, ed. Frank McGlynn and Seymour Drescher (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1992), 35-36.

2.1 Wages and compensation: the new financial situation of the freedmen

The French novelist Jean-Baptiste Alphonse Karr once wrote: "plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose" (the more things change, the more they stay the same). When looking at the socio-economic effects of abolition, this statement is not out of place. According to the more liberal parliamentarians, emancipation was expected to boost the agricultural economy of the Dutch colony of Suriname. Both ex-slaves and planters would be able to increase their income. The freedmen would receive wages which granted them more luxury than just life's necessities. The planters, who had to pay these wages, would gain from the higher productivity of free labor as compared to slave labor. The more conservative members of parliament envisioned a decline in agriculture due to the ex-slaves' reversion to barbarism. They feared that the freedmen would not be interested in maximizing their income, but would be satisfied with earning enough to meet their basic needs. In spite of these different expectations, both parties did assume that the lives of the former slaves would change drastically. Very few people imagined there would be substantial continuity between the last few decades of slavery and the first decades of freedom.¹⁰⁸

The festivities on July 1st, 1863 went by without a single incident that required police intervention. The celebrations of emancipation went on for three days. After that, the freedmen had a quiet weekend and went back to work on Monday, July 6, to great surprise of the planters.¹⁰⁹ According to the rules of State Apprenticeship, the freedmen had three months to sign a contract by a planter of choice. During this three month period, the planters were allowed to demand labor from their former slaves up to four days a week. This rule had to ensure that the planters would not be left without a labor force. In exchange for their work, the freedman could remain in their homes free of charge and would receive two thirds of their future earnings. After signing the contract, the freedmen had to work six days a week, eight to ten hours a day, just as before emancipation. The planters had to provide

¹⁰⁸ Emmer, "The Price of Freedom," 23-25.

¹⁰⁹ Pieter C. Emmer, "Between Slavery and Freedom: The Period of Apprenticeship in Suriname (Dutch Guiana), 1863-1873," *Slavery and Abolition: A Journal of Slave and Post-Slave Studies* 14 (London): 91.

medical services in the interim.¹¹⁰ The colonial report of 1863 demonstrates that the freedmen showed much resistance to contracting. The fear of being bounded by heavy labor and the loss of two free days a week were the main causes. The freedmen also distrusted the bosses. Therefore, the transition months left much to be desired. Despite all the difficulties, however, 18.500 contracts were signed by October first. The far majority of ex-slaves were now back at work full time.¹¹¹

Now that they were working again, the freedmen received wages. Some plantations, such as the timber estates in Para, paid their contractors in goods. The workers could keep the outer bark of each tree and were given time to carve it and sell it at the local market.¹¹² Other plantations paid their workers in cash. How much money the freedmen receive as wages is unknown, but estimations can be made. According to the colonial report of 1864, the planters and laborers were free to negotiate their own wage agreement. This resulted in differences in pay per plantation. Unfortunately, many workers did not use their good bargaining position to get higher wages; the freedmen were more interested in a smaller work task or extra days off.¹¹³ According to Slootweg, there are many indications that the wages hovered around 80 cents per task. Governor van Lansberge reported in 1883 that the wages for the district Nickerie were calculated at 80 cents per job. Plantation owner Bartelink wrote that on his plantation “Caledonia” 60 to 80 cents per job was paid. Finally, a witness calculated that a family consisting out of a man, a woman and two children had a combining income of 12 tot 15 guilders per week. Per day three tasks were performed (man 1, woman 1, children each half a task). This equates to 18 tasks a week, which means 67-80 cents per task. The freedmen could receive a bonus for signing a long-term contract. This bonus fluctuated between 15 and 30 guilders per contract. Besides these bonuses, laborers could receive money from selling food from their own plot at the local market.¹¹⁴

According to Emmer and Slootweg, the wages the ex-slaves received did not differ too much from the costs per slave during slavery. This means

¹¹⁰ Klinkers, “Op Hoop van Vrijheid,” 111-112.

¹¹¹ *Colonial Report of 1863, Archief van het Ministerie van Koloniën 1848-1939* (code: 2.10.01).

¹¹² Klinkers, “Op Hoop van Vrijheid,” 128-129.

¹¹³ *Colonial Report of 1864, Archief van het Ministerie van Koloniën 1848-1939* (code: 2.10.01).

¹¹⁴ Slootweg, “Het Staatstoezicht in Suriname,” 48-49.

that the economic situation of the plantation owners did not change much due to emancipation. Did the financial situation of freedmen improve or decline through the coming of wage labor?

Unfortunately, not much is known about the lives of the former slaves, including their financial conditions before and after slavery. Sloomweg states that after emancipation the numbers of food robberies went up. He thinks that the occurrences of food thefts may indicate an increase in poverty, and contemporary observers support this view. For example, friar Jansa writes that life on the plantations was very indigent and that children sometimes came to school on an empty stomach. However, according to Sloomweg, evidence of growing wealth can also be found. In 1873, a missionary described that the ex-slaves came to church in beautiful clothes, wearing golden watches. Others paid for the maintenance of the church or bought plantations. Governor Lansberge described that a freedman had accomplished to save 70 guilders in only six months' time. This amount did not have to be saved only from wages; many ex-slaves resorted to card and dice games.¹¹⁵ These conflicting images of the financial situation of the ex-slaves that Sloomweg describes may indicate an increase in income inequality. His arguments that indicate an increase in poverty as well as his examples describing growing wealth among the ex-slaves are valid, leading to conclude that due to emancipation the income inequality in Suriname grew extensively.

Buschkens describes the appeal that the city of Paramaribo had for the ex-slaves. Many emancipated slaves moved to the capital or to a plantation close to town. Due to the large supply of workers that migrated into Paramaribo, wages were obviously lower in and around the city. In the provinces higher wages were offered due to the labor shortage.¹¹⁶ This may explain Sloomweg's conflicting findings on the financial situation of the freedmen. Due to the unequal division of labor, the workers outside the city gained more income per task than those working in the city. Therefore, inequality in income grew after emancipation.

¹¹⁵ Sloomweg, "Het Staatstoezicht in Suriname," 92-94.

¹¹⁶ Willem F.L. Buschkens, *The Family System of the Paramaribo Creoles* (s'Gravenhage: Nijhoff, 1947), 108-109.

Pieter Emmer states that even though contemporary observers mention that the change from slavery to apprenticeship brought poverty to some ex-slaves, the statistics imply that the financial situation of the freedman had improved. He observes that the ex-slaves earned around 80 cents per day while the cost of food and durable consumer products amounted to 30 cents a day. Also, the increase in the value of imports into Suriname is another sign of the increased buying power of the freedmen, according to Emmer. However, he does not completely disagree with Slootweg's findings. Emmer mentions that contemporary observers also notice a strong reduction in the supply of wage labor by women and children. For the elderly, only a limited number of jobs were available, which paid less than regular tasks. Also, after emancipation, the average number of work days was calculated at 30 percent less than the full workload of 300 days a year. This means that the yearly income of one laborer, working for a daily wage of 0.60 to 1.00 guilders, amounted to an income of 126 to 210 guilders a year, while food costs amounted to (365 times 0.30 guilders) 109.50 guilders per person per year. From this income, many freedmen also had to provide for their family and old-aged relatives. The conflicting evidence regarding the welfare level of the freedmen suggests, according to Emmer, that the difference in income among the ex-slaves must have increased.¹¹⁷ With this, he seems to agree with both Slootwegs' and Buschkens' findings. This leads to conclude that for some ex-slaves freedom brought welfare while for others it brought poverty, due to an increase in income inequality.

2.2 Housing, Social and Medical Care: The social safety net of Suriname

During slavery, the planter bore the costs for the care of the slaves. This included not only food, clothing and shelter but also the costs for the care of the sick, the young and the elderly. After emancipation, this situation changed. The planter gained no economic benefit in taking care of the sick and elderly. If someone was unable to work, they received no income. In the early days of emancipation this new situation was not yet clear to everyone. The ex-slaves expected the colonial government to take care of those who were not able to earn a living. Once the situation was explained to all

¹¹⁷ Emmer, "Between Slavery and Freedom," 95-97.

freedmen, they managed to support most of their relatives who were unable to work. Only children and aged ex-slaves who had no family ties were supported by the colonial government. Most of those who had lived on a plantation stayed there. For support, the state commissioner paid the plantation owner one guilder a week. Those who did not have a place on a plantation could live on government plantation “Boniface”. Funding for this social safety net came from annual and income taxes paid by the freedmen and the plantation owners. From July until December 1863, 700 people were helped already. This amounted to 19,797.93 guilders.¹¹⁸

During the first few years of State Apprenticeship, many work contracts were signed with disabled individuals. In this way, the planter tried to prohibit healthy workers from moving away by keeping their old family members on the plantation. Because the planter had to pay wages and taxes for these persons and did not receive a maintenance fee, many planters did not see advantages in this after 1865. When the period of State Apprenticeship came to an end, the poor relief system was centralized. All aid recipients came under the supervision of the board of “Boniface”.¹¹⁹

The Emancipation law and the subsequent regulations stipulated that plantation owners had the obligation to provide adequate medical assistance for their workers and their families. This was not the case in the cities. Here, the government was responsible for founding hospitals. This was a difficult task, since it was not clear where exactly the greatest need for hospitals would be after emancipation.¹²⁰ On top of that, many freedmen refused to be treated in the plantation hospitals. They preferred their own medical traditions over the white, modern way. For this, they were sometimes punished by the district commissioner.¹²¹ Despite these attempts from the government, the level of health care remained low. Statistics show that the mortality rate of the former slaves showed a light increase compared to the last five years of slavery. Another problem was the health of children. During slavery so-called “Creole mothers” took care of the children. These were older female slaves who could no longer perform the hard plantation work. After emancipation, the planter had no interest in taking care of the

¹¹⁸ Colonial Report of 1863, *Archief van het Ministerie van Koloniën 1848-1939* (code: 2.10.01).

¹¹⁹ Slootweg, “Het Staatstoezicht in Suriname,” 87-88.

¹²⁰ *Ibidem*, 88.

¹²¹ Emmer, “Between Slavery and Freedom,” 98.

workers' children and no longer provided child care. Since mothers were obligated to work during State Apprenticeship, many children were forced to fend for themselves.¹²²

When it came to housing little changed after emancipation. Klinkers describes that during slavery, the slaves first lived in slave huts. In the nineteenth century, they moved to cabins, which they shared with four to seven people.¹²³ Van Stipriaan describes these cabins as long, wooden buildings, usually resting on a stone floor, covered with a wooden shingle roof and divided into several dwellings of one or more rooms. When considering hygiene and health, the transition from slave huts to block housing was favorable. The huts had been moist, smoky and lacking windows, while the cabins were airy and solid. However, the new houses did not offer much privacy; socially, the row houses were a setback.¹²⁴ After emancipation, those plantations that could afford it improved the housing for the ex-slaves by replacing the row houses with one-family units. Separate housing was also built for the new immigrant workers from Asia. Eviction was something that was not employed by the planters. This was probably due to the three-month period between emancipation day and the beginning of contract labor, during which the plantation owners were obligated to let the freedmen live in the houses. Only after State Apprenticeship had ended and massive immigration from Asia had started, eviction was employed to bring back the number of freedmen who did not work full-time on the plantation.¹²⁵

2.3 Community and Family: From slave society to family units

The Dutch historian Gert Oostindie once called the world of the Surinamese slaves "the lost past". This is due to the unavailability of sources on the lives and thoughts of the slaves. Unfortunately, the Surinamese slaves did not leave any memoirs, letters or other documents. All available documents were written by missionaries, planters and civil servants. This has led to a

¹²² Slootweg, "Het Staatstoezicht in Suriname," 89-90.

¹²³ Klinkers, "Op Hoop van Vrijheid," 83.

¹²⁴ Alex van Stipriaan, *Surinaams Contrast; Roofbouw en Overleven in een Caraïbische Plantagekolonie, 1750-1863* (Leiden: KITLV-Press, 1993), 361.

¹²⁵ Emmer, "Between Slavery and Freedom," 99.

clouded picture of slavery, since these people were of higher rank than the slaves and thus could not tell the slaves' story.¹²⁶

What is known about family and community life of the Surinamese slaves? First of all, there is a difference to be made between the African slaves and the so called "Creoles". Creoles were slaves who were born in Suriname. Unlike the African slaves, Creoles had a strong connection with the plantation they were born on; they had grown up there and their families lived there. After emancipation, most Creoles moved back to or remained on their plantation of origin.¹²⁷ The slave communities on the plantations were mainly important in socio-cultural terms. Here, the slaves tried to keep their ancient African traditions alive by dancing, singing songs, making music and practicing their *Winti* religion. Although singing, dancing and practicing *Winti* was forbidden at most plantations, even punishment from the white overseers did not stop the slaves from expressing their culture.¹²⁸ Even though the slaves shared their fate and culture, the slave community was not an equal one. Slaves who worked at a higher position, such as foremen or artisans, enjoyed a higher status. Besides power and better material conditions on the plantation, these slaves could expect distrust and envy of the other slaves. This could lead to tensions and conflicts, but were no real threat to a society. During slavery, the slave societies were strong and stable socio-cultural communities.¹²⁹

Buschkens describes that after the abolition of the slave trade, more emphasis was put on family life. Missionaries tried to convert the slaves to Christianity to promote morals along the slave community. Furthermore, the planters hoped that the slaves would reproduce so that the slave population could grow naturally.¹³⁰ Still, family life was hard during slavery. Privacy was scarce, and the fear of being sold separately made the slaves reluctant to engage in long term relationships. Marriage was not acknowledged by law and neither were family connections. The only relationship that was

¹²⁶ Gert Oostindie, *Roosenburg en de Mon Bijou: Twee Surinaamse Plantages, 1720-1870* (Dordrecht: Floris, 1989), 13-15.

¹²⁷ Gert Oostindie, *Het Paradijs Overzee: de 'Nederlandse' Caraïben en Nederland* (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 1997), 98-99.

¹²⁸ Klinkers, "Op Hoop van Vrijheid," 29-67.

¹²⁹ *Ibidem*, 29-67

¹³⁰ Buschkens, *The Family System*, 75.

recognized by the colonial government and the planters was that between mother and child.¹³¹ For this reason, most slave families were matrifocal. In 1782, and repeated in 1828 and 1849, the colonial government adopted laws that prohibited the sale a mother separate from her child. Still, planters found ways to circumvent this. For instance, hiring out a child separate from its mother was allowed, and selling a child separate from his or her mother was allowed in the case of punishment of either party.¹³²

How did family life change after emancipation? Since little is known about the lives of the former slaves, it is difficult to outline the changes in family and community life. Due to the period of State Apprenticeship, much remained the same. Yet, some general changes can be distinguished. First of all, as stated before, many Creoles moved back to their plantation of origin. Here, they formed close family networks after reuniting with their families. Secondly, family life was now encouraged by more privacy and the fact that the ex-slaves could choose where they worked; they could no longer be forced to work apart from their family members. Furthermore, marriage between freedmen was now recognized by law, although statistics show that very few of the ex-slaves legally married during State Apprenticeship. No clear reason for this can be found. Thirdly, as the focus shifted from the broad slave community to the nuclear families, these communities lost their importance.¹³³

Within families, traditional roles can be discovered. Klinkers argues that already during slavery, slave households divided the tasks in a traditional way: the man took care of wood, fish and other supplies while the woman did the household chores and prepared the meals. After emancipation, more freedmen started to live in nuclear families. Women had always lived quite independent from men during slavery. After emancipation, they tried to become as dependent as was allowed by the laws of State Apprenticeship. Whenever they could, women stayed at home to take care of the children, cook meals and clean up. The white plantation mistresses were a great example for the freed women: being dependent on their husbands

¹³¹ Klinkers, "Op Hoop van Vrijheid," 95-97.

¹³² Okke ten Hove, "Surinaamse Slavernij: De Gescheiden Verkoop van Moeder en Kind(eren)," *Oso, Tijdschrift voor Surinamistiek en het Cairibisch gebied* 15 (1996): 41-55.

¹³³ Buschkens, *The Family System*, 124-125.

was a sign of freedom and luxury.¹³⁴ Finally, several missionaries describe a strong spirit of freedom among the freedmen. The ex-slaves were aware that they could choose their own path, which they preferred over the “white way”. Churches were visited less and more focus was put on the Winti religion as a counterpart to white culture.¹³⁵

2.4 Religion: an expression of freedom

The previous subchapters have shortly mentioned the traditional Winti religion of the Suriname slaves. This subchapter will provide an extra focus on religion since it was used as one of the main ways to express resistance to the white population during State Apprenticeship.

Before missionaries came to Suriname, most slaves practised the Winti faith. Winti was a combination of several African religions combined with new elements. Winti mostly expressed itself in the *wantramama* dance. The dancers became so entranced by this dance that the spirits of Gods (Wintis) could take possession of their bodies. Although the dance had been forbidden since 1776, most plantation owners turned a blind eye and permitted the ceremony. However, the planters preferred that the slaves converted to Protestantism, because of the strong work ethic rooted in its preaching. From 1826 on, missionaries were constantly present in Suriname and in 1830 they received permission from the colonial government to preach the gospel among the slaves. The missionaries were quite successful. The Moravians especially converted many slaves. They traveled from plantation to plantation, establishing churches along the way. By 1863, they had established churches on 190 plantations and their church counted 27.500 members.¹³⁶

According to Maria Lenders, Christianity appealed to the slaves because the missionaries treated them as people and proclaimed that all men were equal before God. Also, the Moravians built schools and, since the Moravians were German and did not speak Dutch, they learned the language of the slaves so they could preach to them in their native tongue. Even

¹³⁴ Klinkers, “Op Hoop van Vrijheid,” 82.

¹³⁵ *Ibidem*, 132.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 56-57.

though Christianity increased in popularity among the slaves, Winti did not disappear. Most slaves practiced both faiths alongside each other.¹³⁷

After emancipation, the colonial government forbade Winti as part of its assimilation policy. As discussed in chapter one, the government was concerned about the lifestyle the ex-slaves would pursue after emancipation. Through Christianity they wanted to promote a lifestyle that was based on work and family. Unfortunately for them, the ex-slaves had a very strong spirit of freedom, and more and more freedmen openly expressed their belief in Winti faith. Ex-slaves now refused to be baptized because it clashed with their funeral rituals. During State Apprenticeship, the Moravians lost almost four thousand church members.¹³⁸ Because so many freedmen participated in Winti ceremonies, it was difficult for the government to implement an active policy against it. The complaints made about freedmen participating in Winti ceremonies were nothing compared to the number of ceremonies held. According to Emmer, most notifications were made in 1772, when twenty-two people were charged with participating in pagan rituals. The punishment for this was forced labor or a fine of 2.50 guilders.¹³⁹ This low number of complaints can be seen as a victory for the slaves. The massive participation in Winti ceremonies made it impossible for the colonial government to prosecute everyone. Due to this, religion can be seen as a successful tool for resistance.

¹³⁷ Maria Lenders, *Strijders voor het Lam; Leven en Werk van Herrnhutter-broeder-en-zusters in Suriname, 1735-1900* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 1996), 115-119.

¹³⁸ Klinkers, "Op Hoop van Vrijheid," 134-142.

¹³⁹ Emmer, "Between Slavery and Freedom," 109-110.

Socio-economic change in the United States

2.5 Rebuilding the South: Wage workers and Sharecroppers

The English scientist Thomas Huxley concluded in a lecture on natural selection right before the end of the Civil War that “no slavery can be abolished without a double emancipation, and the master will benefit by freedom more than the freed-man.”¹⁴⁰ The socio-economic features of American Reconstruction clearly underline this statement. Even though the freedmen had acquired equality before the law and could no longer be deprived of their rights according to the Constitution, the socio-economic situation of the freedmen left much to be desired during Reconstruction.¹⁴¹

The Civil War had left the South in total destruction. Although it had freed the slaves, the war had upset the social and economical order of the South completely. The release of four million persons from bondage had serious implications for the economic structure of the South at a time when it could least afford to be disturbed.¹⁴² Moreover, when the slaves were informed of their freedom, either by their master, federal agents, or by rumors, their most general and immediate response was to pick up their things and go. For the freedmen, freedom meant, first and foremost, the right to move. The moving about of African Americans was primarily a means of testing their freedom. No matter how well they had been treated, the freedmen felt that they could not realize their actual freedom unless they had tasted the sweet privilege of walking away from the plantation without repercussion.¹⁴³

While on the move, most of the ex-slaves were not seeking employment. Some were looking for family members, others just wanted to see the ocean. During this period, many freedmen moved to the cities. They felt that they did not have a chance to rise from the position of a beggar in

¹⁴⁰ T.H. Huxley, “Emancipation-Black and White,” in *T.H. Huxley, on Education: a Selection from his Writings*, ed. Cyril Bibby (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971): 69.

¹⁴¹ John Hope Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom: A History of American Negroes* (New York: Random House, 1969), 293.

¹⁴² E. Merton Coulter, *The South during Reconstruction, 1865-1877* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1947), 1-3.

¹⁴³ Donald H. Henderson, *The Negro Freedman*, 1-3.

the rural South, since the whites still owned all the property and capital. As a result of the ex-slaves leaving the plantations, the black population in Southern cities grew by 75 percent in the 1860s. Those who did work immediately following their emancipation did this irregularly to great distress of the planters, for emancipation happened right before crop season and the planters were in desperate need of laborers. Henderson describes how in August 1865, nine hundred freedmen assembled in Alabama to discuss their experiences. After long and careful deliberation, they came to some general conclusions. Firstly, after a trial of freedom for three months they had found that in reality it was far from being what they had imagined it to be. Secondly, the freedmen came to realize that they could not live without work, or be comfortable without homes. Thirdly, they felt that the northerners had not taken steps to make provision for their existence in their state of freedom as they had expected. Finally, they experienced that their old masters had ceased to take any interest in them or care for them and that their new state was worse than the old. This led them to conclude that in order to survive, they should return to their old homes and work again for their former masters. By the end of August, most African Americans were working on plantations again.¹⁴⁴

Once the freedmen were back on the farms, they were paid either in monthly wages or a share of the crop. Sharecropping became very popular in the South since the Civil War had destroyed the southern economy and emancipation had not included compensation for the planters. Therefore, most planters had no money and could only pay their workers at the end of the year. Sharecropping was a system in which individual black families rented portions of a plantation and split the crop with the land owner at the end of the year. It offered blacks considerable day-to-day autonomy in their working and social lives for they no longer labored directly under overseers.¹⁴⁵ Henderson writes that the ex-slaves began working in their chosen field under the guardianship of the Freedmen's Bureau. They required all labor agreements to be made in writing and copies to be filed with the sub-commissioner, whose approval was necessary for their validity. This was to prevent dishonest employers from taking advantage of the

¹⁴⁴ Henderson, *The Negro Freedman*, 5-10.

¹⁴⁵ Foner, *Forever Free*, 164-165.

freedmen's ignorance. In the contracts, the employers promised to provide free quarters, rations, fuel and medical attendance, with any agreed wages. Just as in Suriname, no fixed rate of wage was prescribed.¹⁴⁶

According to John Hope Franklin in *From Slavery to Freedom*, plantation wages ranged from \$9 to \$15 a month for men and \$5 to \$10 for women, in addition to food, shelter, and fuel. Where the sharecropping system prevailed, freedmen were allowed from a quarter to half of the cotton and corn; they were also provided with a house, fuel, and in some cases food.¹⁴⁷ Roger L. Ransom and Richard Sutch write that the wages offered to the freedmen varied considerably. In their book *One Kind of Freedom, the Economic Consequences of Emancipation* they report blacks working for food and rations alone. The Freedmen's Bureau noted wage offers as low as 2 dollars a month in Georgia during 1865. By contrast, in the delta areas along the Mississippi River, Ransom and Sutch describe that twenty dollars a month with food, shelter and fuel was a common offer and that some offers went as high as twenty-five dollars. This shows an increase in income inequality, just as in Suriname.¹⁴⁸

According to Franklin, Henderson and Ransom and Sutch, most freedmen were provided with free housing, food and fuel by the former plantation owners. This implies that the economic situation of African Americans had improved due to the fact that besides this they now received wages or a part of the crop. But is this true? There can be no question that the majority of freedmen worked, despite the southern doubts of their efficiency as free workers. The ex-slaves had no other choice but to cast their lot with their former masters and assist them in restoring economic stability to the rural South. According to Franklin, African-American farm workers contributed greatly to the economic recovery of the South. However, as free workers they gained but little. Franklin states that the wages paid to freedmen in 1867 were lower than those that had been paid to hired slaves. In the sharecropping system, the cost of maintenance was so great that at the end of the year the freedmen was indebted to his employer for most of what he made, and sometimes it was more than he made. Franklin

¹⁴⁶ Henderson, *The Negro Freedmen*, 11-12.

¹⁴⁷ Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom*, 306-307.

¹⁴⁸ Ransom and Sutch, *One kind of Freedom*, 60-61.

concluded that the South generally recovered much faster than the freedmen.¹⁴⁹ Takaki underlines this vision. Forced to buy goods from their planter, Takaki concludes that the freedmen were trapped in an economic cycle in which they barely made enough to pay off their debts.¹⁵⁰

The economic historian Robert Higgs, on the other hand, states that despite the efforts of whites to control the freedmen through intimidation, violence and Black Codes, blacks made significant economic progress after the Civil War. Their per capita income rose at an annual rate of 2.7 percent and their housing, diet, living standard and material wealth rose significantly. Also, their ownership of real property increased. Even those who worked as sharecroppers and tenant farmers experienced material progress. Higgs claims that competition prohibited discrimination in wage payments and farm rental agreements. As a result, economic progress did occur during the first fifteen years after the war. Higgs concludes that despite white coercion, those who employed the competitive model, blacks made significant economic advances during the Reconstruction era.¹⁵¹ However, the contemporary observers who mention the poor financial situation of the freedmen indicate that Higgs might be right when looking at the situation statistically; reality however, shows that very few freedmen financially improved due to emancipation.

2.6 Shelter, Sickness and Charity: the living conditions of African Americans

Freedom did not only bring rights and liberties for the ex-slaves. It also came with duties and responsibilities. Although the privileges of freedom were quickly understood by the freedmen, the responsibilities were a little more difficult to comprehend. Comparable to Suriname, the freedmen and women in the U.S. expected the federal government to care for them after emancipation. They felt that their long service in slavery had won them the right to refrain from work, to enjoy all aspects of freedom, and that it was the

¹⁴⁹ Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom*, 306-311.

¹⁵⁰ Ronald Takaki, *A Different Mirror: a History of Multicultural America* (New York: Back Bay Books, 2008), 125-126.

¹⁵¹ Higgs, *Competition and Coercion*, 95-105.

duty of others to support them.¹⁵² During and after the Civil War, the Freedmen's Bureau tried to take care of the ex-slaves as best as they could, since it was charged with the task of providing the social and economic aid to make freedom a reality. Helped by the Union army and numerous charity organizations from the North, such as the Rochester Ladies' Anti-Slavery Society, the Bureau supplied food and shelter to many freedmen.¹⁵³ From June 1865 until November 1868, the Bureau issued approximately 20.3 million rations of food in thirteen states. Both the Freedmen's Bureau and the federal government stressed that their help was temporary, emphasizing the notion that the freedmen were not to be dependent upon the federal government for their care and that they were to resume the full responsibilities of freedom, including the care of their elderly or disabled family members and their children.¹⁵⁴

As the previous chapter indicates, most freedmen who remained to work in agriculture received, besides their wages, food, housing and medical care from the planters. Yet, not all freedmen enjoyed these privileges. Especially, those who lived in the city and those who engaged in sharecropping had to learn how to provide for themselves. This did not go without its problems, since freedmen, just as in Suriname, tended to spend their money on luxuries rather than basic necessities.¹⁵⁵ What did not help the situation of the freedmen was the understanding that all the ex-slaves would receive 40 acres of land and a mule from the government, as a compensation for slavery. Due to the Civil War, this was no longer possible because all the land was needed to restore the South's economy. But the freedmen would not believe this and kept on waiting and asking for their land. This prevented them from buying their own land and making a new start. The Freedmen's Bureau and Charity organizations from the North tried to teach the freedmen that instead of entertaining notions of government bounties, they should cultivate habits of frugality, temperance, honesty and hard work; if they did so, they might not only accumulate the savings to

¹⁵² Henderson, *The Negro Freedman*, 10.

¹⁵³ Carol Faulkner, " "A new Field of Labor": Antislavery Women, Freedmen's Aid, and Political Power," in *The Great task Remaining Before Us: Reconstruction as America's continuing Civil War*, ed. Paul A. Cimbala and Randall M. Miller (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), 89-90.

¹⁵⁴ Campbell and Fraser, *Reconstruction: People and Perspectives*, 11-12.

¹⁵⁵ Ransom and Sutch, *One Kind of Freedom*, 5-6.

purchase land but would derive greater personal satisfaction from having it earned this way.¹⁵⁶ Apparently, this paid off, because by 1870, a total of 168.034 blacks were property holders in the South compared to 16.172 in 1860.¹⁵⁷

As in Suriname, in the U.S. the government was charged with the task of providing healthcare. The Medical Department of the Freedmen's Bureau focused on the health of the freedmen and organized hospitals, dispensaries and urban sanitation programs in the southern states.¹⁵⁸ Henderson describes how the Bureau made heroic but limited efforts to tame the crisis of health among the ex-slaves. Medically speaking, the first year of freedom for the African Americans can be defined as a year of disease, suffering and death. As in Suriname, where the mortality rate increased after emancipation, Henderson states that partial census reports indicate that between 1865 and 1866 the African-American population lost as many by disease as the whites had lost in the war. Because they were ill-fed, crowded in cabins, or sometimes entirely without shelter, and unaccustomed to caring for their own health, the freedmen were an easy prey to ordinary diseases and epidemics. Mortality rates among children were especially high. In some crowded, unhealthy communities of the South one-fourth or even one-third of African-American children died during the first years of readjustment.¹⁵⁹ The Freedmen's Bureau did all it could: it established hospitals and dispensaries, providing free medical care and drugs. But just as in Suriname, due to lack of money, the level of healthcare for the freedmen remained low.¹⁶⁰

Because most freedmen remained on the plantations, housing did not change much. Some planters reported that after emancipation the freedmen moved, rebuilt, refurnished and expanded the old slave quarters more to the liking of the black families.¹⁶¹ Most families, however, lived in poverty during the first few years and were not able to improve their houses. The ordinary

¹⁵⁶ Litwack, *Been in the Storm So Long*, 394-403.

¹⁵⁷ Schweninger, "Black Economic Reconstruction," 183.

¹⁵⁸ J. Thomas May, "A 19th Century Medical Care Program for Blacks: The Case of the Freedmen's Bureau," *Anthropological Quarterly* Vol. 46, No. 3 (1973): 160.

¹⁵⁹ Henderson, *The Negro Freedman*, 154-155.

¹⁶⁰ Foner, *Reconstruction*, 151.

¹⁶¹ Ransom and Sutch, *One Kind of Freedom*, 5.

slave cabins in the South were comparable to the slave quarters in Suriname. It was a small hut of pine logs or rough boards, roofed with shingles split out with an ax. It contained only one room, with a rude fireplace that terminated in a stick and mud chimney, a door in front and another in the rear, and one or two square holes for windows, closed at night in cold weather with wooden shutters. As the years of freedom advanced, the housing conditions of the African Americans changed. In the early 1870s, most freedmen spend their savings on houses that were far superior to the old cabins. All over the South, African Americans bought tiny frame houses of a story and a half high. The house consisted out of a hallway, a little sitting room with a window and a fireplace, in the family bedroom, ventilation was furnished by an open fireplace and a window.¹⁶² Some planters did improve the slave houses for their employees. These planters clearly understood that housing could be used as a benign technique of coercion. Surely, the happier a freedman was with his conditions, the harder he would work.¹⁶³

2.7 Family and Society: The strengthening of the Black Family

In contrast to the Suriname slaves, much research has been done on the African-American family in slavery and freedom. Yet, most of these studies focus on local communities and families, making it difficult to form a general and clear picture. So what can be said, in general, on African-American family and community-life after emancipation?

Strong family ties seem to have existed under slavery, although they were vulnerable to disruption. During slavery, many slaves were sold and dislocated. Especially between 1790 and 1840, huge numbers of slaves were moved from the Upper South to the Lower South. Consequently, many families were torn apart.¹⁶⁴ When sold away from family, many slaves had to rely on the slave community on the plantation. Many historians have defined

¹⁶² Henderson, *The Negro Freedmen*, 51-54.

¹⁶³ John Michael Vlach, ““Snug lil’ House with Flue and Oven”: Nineteenth-Century Reforms in Plantation Slave Housing,” in *Gender, Class, and Shelter: Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture*, ed. Elizabeth Collins Cromley and Carter L. Hudgins (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1995): 118.

¹⁶⁴ Foner, *Reconstruction*, 79-80.

these slave communities as a resilient haven that helped black people survive the oppression of slavery. But according to Dylan Penningroth, this description is not complete; emphasizing the struggles between black and white can make the black community by contrast seem more or less homogenous and harmonious. Penningroth correctly argues that even though the slaves shared their fate and hardship, their community, like in Suriname, was not an equal one. There are many reports on conflicts between slaves, and, like any other community, some slaves were jealous of the black drivers and overseers who were promoted to exercise authority over the others. There are even stories of neglect of parentless-children and loneliness in the slave quarters.¹⁶⁵ However, slave families and communities still blunted slavery's sharp edges, providing crucial support and an alternate social sphere where slaves could let go and be themselves. Within the slave quarters, away from their masters, slaves laughed and cried, expressed their frustrations and their hopes for the future, working together to undermine the worst aspects of slavery. Singing, dancing, and sharing old stories were, equal to Suriname, very important aspects of the slave communities. By allowing the slaves to see themselves as something other than just slaves, families and communities nurtured a strong tradition of resistance.¹⁶⁶

Just as in Suriname, after slavery the focus of the freedmen shifted from community to family. Of all the motivations for black mobility after emancipation, none was more important than the effort to reunite families. In their eyes, the work of emancipation was incomplete until families, which had been separated during slavery, were reunited. Many freedmen asked agents of the Freedmen's Bureau to write letters for them while trying to locate family members. As late as the turn of the century, newspapers still carried advertisements for ex-slaves in search of their family.¹⁶⁷ Emancipation allowed blacks to reaffirm their family connections and most African Americans seized this opportunity. When the Freedmen's Bureau

¹⁶⁵ Dylan C. Penningroth, "My People, My People, the Dynamics of Community in the Slavery South," in *New Studies in the History of American Slavery*, ed. Edward E. Baptist and Stephanie M.H. Camp (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2006), 166-168.

¹⁶⁶ Laura F. Edwards, *Scarlett doesn't live here anymore: Southern Women in the Civil War Era* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 50-56.

¹⁶⁷ Foner, *Reconstruction*, 78-84.

and state government made it possible to register and tie slave unions, many families, in addition to their kin, adopted the children of deceased relatives and friends, rather than to see them apprenticed to whites or go to black orphanages. By 1870, a large majority of blacks lived in two-parent family households.¹⁶⁸

While emancipation made the stabilization of preexisting black families possible, it also transformed the roles of its members and the relations among them. The most important change, just as in Suriname, was that families could now live together without the fear of being involuntarily separated. Many ex-slaves took the liberty to register themselves as married, something the Freedmen's Bureau stimulated. This, because they preferred the ex-slaves to live in nuclear families and support one another. A result of this, a shift in power arose. During slavery, just as in Suriname, families had been mostly matriarchal, since men were not able to provide for their families. With freedom came developments that strengthened patriarchy within the black families and institutionalized the notion that men and women should inhabit separate spheres. Although slavery more or less imposed upon black men and women the equality of powerlessness, among the slaves themselves, however, labor seems to have been divided along gender lines. As in Suriname, men chopped wood, went hunting, and assumed positions of leadership, while the women washed, sewed, cooked, quilted, and assumed responsibility for the care of children.¹⁶⁹

During Reconstruction, however, labor became even more divided among sexual lines. From 1865 on, whites throughout the South complained about the difficulty of obtaining female laborers. Women withdrew from field labor en masse to set up house and limit their work to household chores only. According to Henderson, it was the ambition of freedwomen to live like their former mistresses, a reaction also occurring in Suriname. The women wanted to wear fine clothes and go to church often.¹⁷⁰ It is not clear whether black men or black women were responsible for this phenomenon. According to Kolchin, the men were responsible, because they wanted their wives to

¹⁶⁸ Gutman, *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom*, 8-9.

¹⁶⁹ Nancy A. Hewitt, "Beyond the Search for Sisterhood: American Women's History in the 1990s," in *Unequal sisters: a Multicultural Reader in U.S. Women's History*, ed. Vicki L. Ruiz and Ellen Carol DuBois (New York: Routledge, 2000), 6-7.

¹⁷⁰ Henderson, *The Negro Freedmen*, 3.

stay at home just like white women did.¹⁷¹ Foner argues that there is no question that many black men considered it a badge of honor to see their wives working at home and believed that, as head of the family, the man should decide how its labor was organized. Yet, according to Foner, many black women independently desired to devote more time than had been possible during slavery to caring for their children and domestic responsibilities.¹⁷²

The shift in focus of black women from field labor to the home proved a temporary phenomenon. The rise of sharecropping made each family responsible for its own plot of land and required all family members to labor. On the plantations, communities lost their importance. In the city, however, community gained new territory. The next subchapter will focus on this. All over the country, black men and women shared a passionate commitment to the stability of family life as a badge of freedom and as a solid foundation upon which a new free black community could develop.¹⁷³

2.8 Religion and Education: resisting the white supremacy

Just as in Suriname, religion in the U.S. was used by the freedmen as a way to express resistance to white supremacy during Reconstruction. After emancipation, second only to the family as focal point of black life stood the church. With the death of slavery, African Americans seized control of their own churches. In antebellum southern Protestant congregations, free blacks and slaves had had enjoyed a kind of associate membership. Subject to the same rules and disciplines as whites, they were required to sit in the back of the church during service. In the aftermath of emancipation, blacks withdrew en masse from biracial congregations. Two causes combined to produce the independent black church: the refusal of whites to offer blacks an equal place within congregations and the black quest for self-determination.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷¹ Peter Kolchin, *First Freedom: The Response of Alabama's Blacks to Emancipation and Reconstruction* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1972), 62.

¹⁷² Foner, *Reconstruction*, 85-86.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 86-88.

¹⁷⁴ Foner, *Reconstruction*, 88-89.

After the Civil War, the African-American church organizations of the North invaded the South. The 20.000 members of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in 1856 leaped to 75.000 in 1866 and 200.000 in 1876. The black Baptist church, with 150.000 members in 1850, had required half a million members in 1870.¹⁷⁵ Throughout the South, the ex-slaves combined their resources to purchase land and erect churches of their own. Before the buildings were completed African Americans held services in places such as railroad boxcars and outdoor bush arbors. White ministers from the North, who tried to convert the southern blacks, quickly learned that the freedmen preferred to worship in churches with ministers of their own race. By the end of Reconstruction in 1877, the vast majority of southern blacks had withdrawn from churches dominated by whites.¹⁷⁶

W.E.B. Du Bois describes the black church as the first social institution that was fully controlled by black men in America. Its multiple functions proved its central place in the black community. Besides a place of worship, the black church housed schools, social events, and political gatherings.¹⁷⁷ Frazier regards the black church as the basis of social cohesion in the black community whose functions included social control, the development of economic cooperation, and the provision of refuge in a hostile white world.¹⁷⁸ The rise of the independent black church embodies a striking example of the separate and self-sustaining community the blacks created in the aftermath of emancipation.

For the ex-slaves, second in importance to churches was education. African Americans saw schools as integral to achieving racial uplift and self-advancement. For southern African Americans in particular, literacy was seen as a means of liberation. Barred from learning to read by the Black Codes passed by southern and Border states prior to emancipation, literacy, and education in general, emerged as a priority for the freedmen. Until after the war there was no system of universal schooling in the South. Some free blacks attended private schools, but slaves were forbidden to attend schools.

¹⁷⁵ W.E. Burghardt Du Bois, "Reconstruction and its Benefits," *The American Historical Review* Vol. 15, No. 4 (1910): 781-782.

¹⁷⁶ Foner, *Reconstruction*, 89-92.

¹⁷⁷ Du Bois, "Reconstruction," 781-783.

¹⁷⁸ Edward Franklin Frazier, *The Negro Church in America* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1964), 50-51.

After the war, white southerners barred black children from schools, trying to prohibit biracial education. This situation changed when the northern charity organizations sent teachers to the South. These organizations, together with the Freedmen's Bureau, and after 1868 with state governments, provided most of the funding for black education during Reconstruction. But the initiative often lay with the ex-slaves themselves. Throughout the South, African Americans founded societies and raised money among themselves to purchase land, built schoolhouses, and pay teachers. By 1870, African Americans had spent over one million dollars on education.¹⁷⁹

It is clear that Reconstruction witnessed the rise of the modern black community. Born out of resistance to white supremacy and the need for self development, the freedmen established churches and schools as social institutions, that would carry the black community to a higher level. All in all, the months after emancipation can be seen as a period of remarkable accomplishment for the southern blacks in means of self-development against white resistant.

When considering the similarities and differences of the socio-economic aspects of abolition in Suriname and the U.S., it is clear that there are more similarities than differences to be found. However, both countries did have their unique aspects as well. The most important difference between Suriname and the U.S. lays in the fact that after emancipation a system of sharecropping arose in the southern states of America, where in Suriname most freedmen were paid in cash for plantation work. Another difference between the freedmen in Suriname and the U.S. was that in Suriname the Colonial government established a social safety net, which acquired its funding from annual and income taxes of both planters and freedmen. In the U.S., the freedmen were more dependent on charity organizations for extra help. A third difference is that after emancipation the ex-slaves of Suriname

¹⁷⁹ Robert C. Morris, *Reading, Riting and Reconstruction: The Education of Freedmen in the South, 1861-1870* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 90-98.

retreated from Christianity and openly expressed their traditional *Winti* religion, while in the U.S. Christianity remained extremely popular.

Besides these points of difference, the similarities are striking. Firstly, the first reaction of the freedmen on emancipation in both countries was to leave the plantations and move around. In both countries this transition period lasted around three months; after this the majority of ex-slaves was back at work on the plantations. Also, in both countries, many freedmen moved to the city after emancipation. Consequently, the population of cities grew tremendously after emancipation, leading to a rise in income inequality due to the unequal distribution of labor. Another resemblance is that the freedmen in both Suriname and the U.S. expected the government to take care of them. Both the Suriname and the U.S. government pointed out that with freedom came responsibilities and that if the freedmen did not care for themselves, no one would. Once the ex-slaves understood this they took full responsibility, even caring for disabled and elderly family members and children of diseased friends. The new economic situation of the freedmen is also more or less the same. Economic historians claim that statistically speaking the economic situation of the ex-slaves improved due to emancipation in both countries. However, this observation is not supported by all historians. Another similarity can be found in the health of the freedmen. In both Suriname and the U.S. the mortality rate increased during the first years of freedom. The level of healthcare for the ex-slaves was very low. The shift in focus from community to family life can also be mentioned as a similarity. During slavery, life on the plantation centered around community. Yet, communities were not equal during slavery. A last resemblance lies in religion. The ex-slaves of both countries used religion as one of the main ways to express resistance to whites.

Conclusion

When considering the agreements and differences concerning the political aspects of the abolition and the reconstruction period of both countries, the political history of abolition in Suriname and the U.S. seem very different at first sight. In the Netherlands, as described by Willemsen, the plans for reconstruction were debated extensively before emancipation occurred. Dutch politicians brought every aspect and problem into consideration. Both the Conservatives and the Liberals were able to debate their pros and cons and this resulted in a well thought-out compromise that incorporated the rights and obligations of both the government and the freedmen before actually emancipating the slaves.

American politicians on the other hand, did not have time for this. While politicians tried to debate possible emancipation, eleven states seceded. This shifted the focus from abolition towards a war to preserve the Union. During the war, reconstruction plans could not be formulated due to the uncertainty of the outcome. During Reconstruction, however, not all attention could be paid to the status of African Americans; reconciling the Union was, in political aspects, more important. David Brion Davis underlines that the debates on reconstruction and equal rights included, besides Conservatives (Democrats) and Radicals (Republicans), a third party: the president. According to Davis, this third party made it more difficult for the American politicians to compromise than for the Dutch politicians. First, because of the veto power the president possessed, and second because the president had to be diplomatic in order to preserve the Union. His argument is strong and underlines the reasons why the reactions of both North and South were so extreme. Black suffrage was also a big issue in the American political debates. In the Netherlands this was not an issue, for Suriname was a colony that was governed from the mother country. As explained by Franklin, suffrage would guarantee full citizenship for African Americans. Therefore, the Radical Republicans made it their mission to make sure voting rights for the ex-slaves were anchored in the U.S. constitution.

When looking beyond this different political course, it can be concluded that the political aspects of abolition and reconstruction in the U.S. and Suriname actually have many similarities as well. First, and most importantly, the motor behind abolition in both countries was economical.

As argued by Siwpersad, Kuitenbrouwer, Willemsen, Foner, and Lowance, for both Suriname and the United States, the main goal of abolition was to implement a system of free labor, while keeping the ex-slaves at work on the plantations. Plantation culture in both countries was economically still fruitful, as stated by Emmer and Ransom and Sutch, and emancipation was not directed at ending the plantation economy. This is evident in the laws and regulations passed by both governments on the obligations of the freedmen. In Suriname, a period of State Apprenticeship was implemented for a maximum of ten years. During this period, the Suriname freedmen were obligated to sign work contracts. Those who did not sign a contract were forced to labor on public works. Also, the movements of the former slaves were restricted and idleness and vagrancy became forbidden by law. In America, most southern states adopted so called "Black Codes". These codes obligated the freedmen in most states to sign work contracts. Also, the movements of the freedmen were restricted and idleness and vagrancy were forbidden by the Black Codes.

Next, the political debate in both countries rested heavily upon the assumption that black people were inferior to whites, that they did not have the self discipline to work and that after emancipation the freedmen would lead a life of indulgence. Glenn Willemsen describes that both the Dutch politicians as well as the Suriname planters did not expect the freedmen to go back to work voluntarily. They were afraid that, unless they were pushed, the black population would return to a "state of nature" where they would live in cabins in the woods. According to John Hope Franklin, in America, this same notion was dominant in political debates. Southern planters feared that the freedmen were inherently indolent and would only work under supervision and coercion by whites. The above mentioned laws of both countries prove that Willemsen and Franklin are right: the State Apprenticeship laws and the Black Codes clearly incorporate these thoughts.

A third major similarity between Suriname and the United States appears in the rights granted to the ex-slaves. Both the Apprenticeship law and the Black Codes allowed the freedmen to own land, to legally marry, to sign contracts, to negotiate wages, and to gain access the legal system. For a restricted period, some form of police-law was applied to the freed in both countries. This degraded the political status of the ex-slaves to a sort of children were the government had to provide for. This underscores another

similarity: the governments of both the U.S. and Suriname took responsibility for this and tried to help the ex-slaves. As Sloomweg's research shows, the Dutch government did this by providing medical care, improving education, and by intervening in disagreements between planters and freedmen. Foner describes how in the U.S. the government established the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, which was charged with the task of providing the social and economic aid to make freedom a reality. It, among other things, provided medical care, education, food and assisted the freedmen when in need of legal aid.

The last political similarity between Suriname and the U.S. lies in the accomplishments of the advocates of equal rights. Although the Dutch Liberals and the American Radical Republicans were both a minority within politics, they managed to stretch the law and implement many rights for the freedmen. In both countries a conservative majority was not very willing to grant rights whatsoever, but the Dutch Liberals and American Radicals fought hard and defeated the majority. In the Netherlands, due to the work of the Liberals, the Suriname slaves were allowed to buy and work on their own land, State Apprenticeship was changed from ten years to a maximum of ten years and theoretically, it became possible to be released from State Apprenticeship. In the U.S. the Radicals, a minority within the Republicans, managed to push through the Thirteenth Amendment, which abolished slavery throughout the Union, the Fourteenth Amendment, which guaranteed all African Americans full citizenship, and the Fifteenth Amendment, which forbade disfranchisement based on race, color, or previous conditions of servitude. Due to the hard work of the Dutch Liberals and American Radicals, the freedmen in Suriname and the U.S. could enjoy a better future.

When considering the similarities and differences of the socio-economic aspects of abolition in Suriname and the U.S., more similarities than differences can be discovered. However, both countries did have their unique aspects as well. The most important difference between Suriname and the U.S. lies in the fact that after emancipation a system of sharecropping arose in the southern states of America. According to Foner, this offered blacks a more independent way of working, since they did not have to labor directly under overseers. Another difference between the freedmen in Suriname and the U.S. was that in Suriname the Colonial

government established a social safety net, which acquired its funding from annual and income taxes of both planters and freedmen. In the U.S. the freedmen were more dependent on charity organizations for extra help. For example, The Freedmen's Bureau, together with numerous charity organizations from the North, tried to help the ex-slaves wherever they could. A third difference is that after emancipation the ex-slaves of Suriname retreated from Christianity and openly expressed their traditional *Winti* religion, while in the U.S. Christianity remained extremely popular. However, as pointed out by du Bois, the freedmen in the U.S. did establish their own black churches to worship independently from whites. A last difference between Suriname and the U.S. was the extreme enthusiasm for education of the African Americans after emancipation. In Suriname, the government implemented compulsory education. In the U.S. black education was obstructed by white southerners. However, according to Robert Morris, the freedmen managed to establish many black schools during reconstruction. The difference in enthusiasm for education can be explained by the fact that in Suriname the white suppressors obligated the blacks to go to school. In the U.S., white southerners tried to ban blacks from school. So for African Americans, establishing schools can also be regarded as a form of resistance.

Besides these four points of difference between Suriname and the U.S., the similarities are striking. Firstly, the first reaction of the freedmen on emancipation in both countries was to pick up their things and go. The ex-slaves felt that freedom could best be experienced by moving around. In both countries this transition period lasted around three months; after this the majority of ex-slaves was back at work on the plantations. Also, in both countries, many freedmen moved to the city after emancipation, as described by Buschkens and Henderson. Consequently, the population of cities grew tremendously after emancipation, leading to a rise in income inequality due to the unequal distribution of labor.

Another striking resemblance is that the freedmen in both Suriname and the U.S. expected the government to take care of them. They felt that their long service in slavery had won them the right to refrain from work, and that it was the duty of others to support them. Both the Suriname and the U.S. government pointed out that with freedom came responsibilities and that if the freedmen did not care for themselves, no one would. Once the ex-

slaves understood this they took full responsibility, even caring for disabled and elderly family members and children of diseased friends.

The new economic situation of the freedmen is also a fascinating similarity. Economic historians claim that statistically speaking, the economic situation of the ex-slaves improved due to emancipation in both countries. Pieter Emmer states that the freedmen of Suriname earned more than their food costs. Therefore, their economic situation should improve. Robert Higgs states that the per capita income of American ex-slaves rose at an annual rate of 2.7 percent and their housing, diet, living standard and material wealth rose significantly. This observation is not supported by all historians. Slootweg states that after emancipation the numbers of food robberies went up in Suriname and this may indicate an increase in poverty. Also, Slootweg argues that contemporary observers describe the poor financial situation of the freedmen. Some children came to school on an empty stomach or without clothes. John Hope Franklin states that in the sharecropping system, the cost of maintenance was so great that at the end of the year the freedmen was indebted to his employer for most of what he made, and sometimes it was more than he made. These different views on the economic condition of the ex-slaves can be explained by a rise in income inequality and the fact that both Emmer and Higgs look at the situation on paper, while Slootweg and Franklin base their arguments on both the situation on paper and contemporary observers. Therefore, their argument is more substantiated and probably closer to the truth.

Another similarity can be found in the health of the freedmen. In both Suriname and the U.S. the mortality rate increased during the first years of freedom. The level of healthcare for the ex-slaves was very low. In both countries the government tried to improve this, but due to a lack of resources failed to accomplish.

The shift in focus from community to family life can also be mentioned as a similarity. During slavery, life on the plantation centered around community. The fear of being sold to another plantation made the slaves reluctant to engage in long term relationships. Yet, communities were not equal during slavery. Both Klinkers and Penningroth describe the tensions within slave communities due to jealousy and neglect. Also, families had been matrifocal during slavery. However, labor outside fieldwork was divided among gender lines in both countries. Emancipation strengthened

patriarchy. Freedwomen in both Suriname and the U.S. wanted to become like their former white mistresses. The housing situation of the ex-slaves stayed mostly the same after emancipation.

A last resemblance lies in religion. The ex-slaves of both countries used religion as one of the main ways to express resistance to whites. Even though the slaves had other faiths, their expression of religion showed that the ex-slaves had a need for self-development and a strong sense of freedom.

After evaluating all the agreements and differences between Suriname and the U.S., an answer can now be formulated on the question to what extent was the U.S. unique in their abolition and Reconstruction period when compared to the Dutch colony of Suriname. The above outlined conclusion shows that the U.S. did, in some ways, have a very specific political course; a war erupted and plans for reconstruction had to be formulated in an ad-hoc manner. However, the American debates centered around the same assumptions as the Dutch debates, the reason for emancipation was similar and the rights and obligations of the freedmen are very comparable. Also, the equal rights advocates in both countries accomplished a great deal.

The American socio-economic aspects of abolition are very similar to those in Suriname. The only difference that is worth mentioning is the system of sharecropping that developed in the U.S. South, but this was a consequence of the political course; the war had destroyed southern economy and therefore planters could not pay their employers until the crop was harvested and sold. The reaction, experience, and socio-economical situation of the freedmen after emancipation are strikingly alike. This could indicate that the experience and new situation of persons all over the world who were freed from slavery are very similar. Further comparative research will be needed to confirm this. For now, this study has shown that the U.S. did have a unique political course in some ways, but that when compared to the Dutch colony of Suriname the resemblances are striking.

Further research on this subject could, for example, reveal that slavery in the Dutch colony of Suriname and in the United States of America have more similarities than previously thought. This study has contributed to breaking the image of uniqueness surrounding America's past and has hopefully triggered an interest in the Dutch colonial history as a comparative model for other nations. Although the Dutch and American

public might have collective amnesia when it comes to their history of slavery, historians certainly have not and hopefully will never lose their interest in this fascinating and diverse topic.

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