

July 25, 2021

Subject: Response to your email dated July 23, 2021

Dear Jan, Dear Group of concerned Stadians,

We have received your email and would like to highlight some issues. Based on the disrespectful and undignified handling of our ancestral remains, three organizations decided to work together to demand that the excavations in Statia be halted until various issues are addressed. These three organizations are:

- St. Eustatius Awareness and Development Movement (SEAD)
- Brighter Path Foundation
- Ubuntu Connected Front Caribbean

After realizing that a group was formed locally with the intention to also express concerns about the excavation practices in Statia, collaboration with your group was sought. Perhaps the interactions that took place created a false start. Therefore, we thought it prudent to reach out to your group with the intention to organize a zoom meeting with all persons involved, to explore possibilities for working together in areas of commonality, while respecting divergent goals, objectives, and strategies.

In response to your email addressed to Petra and my person, we would like to state the following:

- We find it unfortunate that you chose to respond in a public manner to a private request for a meeting. A request that in our view is common practice among Stadians and an act of professionalism
- In your correspondence to us, you have made your group's objective and preferred strategy, as they relate to the excavations, abundantly clear
- You have unilaterally outlined the conditions by which all forms of communication between the two groups must occur. Again, a strategy that is very much un-Statian
- You made inferences about the motives of our groups' actions, without first having a collective dialogue with us
- You have unilaterally outlined the way in which our seemingly divergent strategies must align
- We have no doubt that your intentions are good, but due to the delicate issue at hand, which is situated within the very complex (historical) reality of the Dutch transatlantic slave trade, colonization, the denial of our right to self-determination and the impact thereof on the people of Afrikan descent, we find it disrespectful and worrisome that you are operating as the spokesperson for the group of concerned Stadians

- In addition, we see your action of sending a copy of your email addressed to us, to other recipients, as an attempt to damage the good reputation of our organizations, as we continue our fight and struggle as Afrikan people fighting against all forms of colonialism

The tone of your correspondence whereby there doesn't seem to be any space for a meeting between the Statian family at home and abroad, to try to work together to bring dignity and respect to our ancestral remains, leave us no other choice but to retract our wish for a meeting currently.

We have decided to solely address your group in this correspondence, while refraining from sending a copy to other recipients, as we consider this a private matter. However, we realize that we have no control over whether you keep this correspondence private or not. We are therefore prepared for whatever is to come.

In closing we want to make it clear that our struggle, our narrative as Afrikans, aim and vision are about the restoration and dignity to our ancestors resting places and spirituality.

Our struggle is also about decolonization and reparatory justice of what has been recognized by the UN as a crime committed against humanity in this case our ancestors.

We wish you much success in your endeavors, as we all fight, in our respective ways, for the voices of the descendent community of Statia to be heard and respected.

Regards,

Xiomara Balentina

On behalf of:

Brighter Path Foundation

Ubuntu Connected Front Caribbean

St. Eustatius Awareness and Development Movement (SEAD)