

Soon our 8-year stay on St Eustatius, "Statia" will end.

The first two years were years of exploration, finding place, finding out what society is like.

You talk with people on the street, go to social events and attend church services regularly.

Born in 1954 in a neighborhood in Katwijk where many Indonesian people lived. Used to other smells, colors and sounds than the purely European Dutch. Most of my elementary school time I lived on Curacao, mostly as the only white child in the class.

All in all I considered myself quite multicultural.

Yet - here on Statia - I kept having the feeling of walking along the edge of coexistence and missing what was really going on or smoldering.

At the time someone suggested that I should attend the meetings of the Island Council. That was a good tip. Gradually I learned a lot.

The Island Governor at that time once said to me that he found it so wonderful to see me looking and listening so stoically to everything. Only much later did I confess to him that at first I really didn't understand a thing because I couldn't follow Statian English very well and lacked relevant background knowledge.

Dr Teresa Leslie organized the "Raising the Curtain on Race" conference on Statia in 2015. During that conference, I came to realize that white ignorance, white privilege, does exist.

Later, during discussions with her - while floating in the sea - I asked at one point what is so difficult about getting the rules set from European Netherlands after 10-10-10 implemented.

"That's because you are white and you are Dutch".

That comment got me thinking. But it is true. Many rules and laws are self-evident for us as white people but are culture-bound and not always applicable for others.

Much has been written about colonialism, influences, changes. "My Island in the Sun" by Alec Waugh describes coloniality on a fictional island. Admittedly in the 1950s, from a white perspective.

In this book, there are attempts at change from the governor, but this creates division and resistance. Fear of losing achievements and of increasing power from the unknown. In that context, the empowered governor is replaced by a more straightforward one.

Wide Sargasso Sea, by Jean Rhys, about the struggle of coming from 2 cultures and not really belonging anywhere. There is a lot of literature from Suriname (by Cynthia McLeod and Raoul de Jong, among others) that deals with that and with the escape from (the consequences of) slavery.

Maya Angelou also pays a lot of attention to it and I could go on like this for a while.

And then when it comes to Statia specifically, the contemporary book by the aforementioned Dr Teresa Leslie "Eight Years on Statia, Race, Coloniality and Development": the book is worth reading.

Sunday morning (July 17) Jan Meijer and I are interviewed by Glen Schmidt in his program Homeland Defense, Live on Radio Statia (this can be followed via Facebook, PJB50 Radio Statia, 1:00 pm Statia time).

About ten days later we left but I will certainly take care of one more column. Of course we will continue to follow Statia closely.