

# originss

heritage. culture. identity.



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# A NEW ERA

**EDITOR-IN-CHIEF**  
**LUDMILA DUNCAN**

A few years ago on St. Maarten, when I watched Jonathan van Arneman's amazing film *'Atlantis Rebirth'*, I remember thinking "whoa... we have entered a golden era"; a golden era of expression, where stories, art, and activism are uniting to reshape our world. You can feel it throughout the Dutch Caribbean. It is intense, enlightening; empowering.

The birth of Originsss is a manifestation shaped by this time in our history. By passion, resilience and an unshakable love for our people and culture. More than just a magazine; this is a platform that unapologetically embraces our heritage, our struggles and our triumphs across time and space.

The people of Saba, St. Eustatius and St. Maarten/St. Martin share a profound heritage that is deeply rooted in rich cultures and a history that deserves to be recognized and celebrated. Our stories are often undiscovered or untold and this magazine aims to change that. Here is where our narratives, our literature, our photography and our creativity will come to thrive—a place where our words will inspire, inform, educate, heal and unite.

And for those of us in the diaspora, living abroad in the Netherlands, France, the United States and everywhere else, Originsss is a way of staying connected; a bridge between here and there; a red thread, a conduit.

In the Dutch Caribbean and around the world, we are witnessing paradigm shifts—a collective awakening to our history, an embrace of our truths and a resurgence of heritage through research, art, literature, and activism.



**Welcome to a space where we celebrate, challenge and embrace who we are.**

This first issue captures it all—the tension and triumphs, the pride and pain, the longing and love.

Like the beautiful smile on our cover model Melina's face, a bright and shiny welcome dear reader. Welcome to a space where we celebrate, challenge and embrace who we are. I hope you see yourself in these stories, feel inspired and informed.

This is just the beginning. This is Originsss.

Enjoy our first issue!

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“A man without his history is like a tree without roots— it teaches us who we are”

# ALFONSO'S LEGACY

BY TRACY BLIJDEN

**Alfonso Blijden** was more than a historian—he was a visionary and a cultural guardian. Though born in Aruba, his path led him to St. Maarten, where his search for stability transformed into a deep passion for preserving the island’s history and culture. It was as though fate had quietly guided him toward a mission much larger than himself.

His work with St. Maarten's Monuments Council exemplified this mission. He played a key role in raising awareness about the island’s historic landmarks, such as the Great Salt Pond, once central to the economy, and Mary’s Fancy Plantation, rich with colonial history. Alfonso believed these monuments, like so many others, were essential pieces of the island’s identity, and he worked tirelessly to ensure their preservation for future generations.

His efforts connected people to their heritage, reminding them of the importance of safeguarding these cultural treasures. Beyond his local contributions, Alfonso’s influence extended across the Caribbean. His appointment to UNESCO’s Regional Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean for the Memory of the World Programme demonstrated his stature as a cultural ambassador.

His meticulous documentation of St. Maarten’s enslaved persons, spanning from 1816 to 1969, earned international recognition through UNESCO, affirming his role in preserving a shared heritage.

Alfonso’s dedication went beyond just preserving history; he believed that stories shaped our sense of self. In his final years, even while battling illness, he began compiling his first book: “T’is All About Us” — a deeply personal project. This work was more than a historical document; it was a testament to the resilience and strength of the people of St. Maarten, but also of him. Though unpublished, its impact is already felt, as it hopefully will serve as a bridge between the past and future.

As my father often said, “A man without his history is like a tree without roots—it teaches us who we are.” His belief in the power of history drove him until his last days. While his passing left a void, it also handed us the responsibility to continue his work, preserving the stories that define us.

May his legacy remain an enduring source of inspiration for us all.

*Memory of the World Programme officially recognized St. Maarten’s slave registry. The submission was done by Blijden before he passed away in 2022.*



# HISTORY OF THE GREAT SALT POND, FOGA and Francois-Auguste Perrinon

From Alfonso Blijden's Online Journal Series

Photos courtesy of Wereldmuseum Collection



The salt factory or 'FOGA' as it is called, was built by Dutch engineer Slotemakers and his Italian colleague Ademante in 1852. Over the years there has been some debate as to what it was used for. Some say it was used as a pump house whilst others say a salt factory. For clarity's sake, I will describe the process the factory was intended for according to the documents in the archives and the process that was actually used.

The salt production on Sint Maarten was characterized by very variable salt yields due to the variable rainfall on the island. Only a long dry period allowed salt production (the annual salt season). According to documents retrieved from the archives, the intention of the factory was to counteract this fluctuating salt production by a process known as the seething of salt, as brine could be boiled here all year round. This plan was discontinued because it was not financially sustainable.

### PROCESS I

A salt solution (brine) would be poured into flat trays made of steel or cast iron. A coal, wood or peat fire was then lit under the trays, which heats the brine to over a hundred degrees Celsius. During heating, some of the impurities from the brine would float to the surface as a film. Shortly before the boiling point, this membrane is skimmed off as much as possible. During cooking, the water evaporates, after which crystals are formed. This evaporation process by boiling was called salting.

### PROCESS II

During the warm months, the water in the pond would evaporate and leave a thick crust of salt behind. That crust would have to be about 4 to 5 cm before it could be gathered. It was then said that the salt was 'ripe'.



Pieces of the crust would then be broken off by hand and any dirt would be removed/washed off. The clumps were then put in shallow boats called flats that carried them to the edge of the pond. This was referred to as 'picking salt'.

Once on shore, the salt workers who were mostly women, would occupy themselves with filling trays which they would carry on their heads to the salt heap. Once by the salt heap they would shout to the foreman "Mark meh" because they had to measure how many barrels they had picked.

Once measured, the salt would be packed into bags of 14 to 15 kilos and loaded onto ox-carts. Depending on if there was a schooner in port, the carts would take the salt to the pack house or to the beach. Besides the carts you would also see children running from the salt heap with bags of salt on their heads to the beach.

These same children would wade out into the water with bags of salt on their heads and pass them on to older boys who would load the bags of salt on smaller boats called lighters and they would pull/push these loaded lighters out to the schooner.

### **Francois-Auguste Perrinon**

Francois Perrinon was born on the 28th of February 1812 in Martinique from a free black mother and a white father.

In 1833 he arrived in St. Martin where he became involved in operations in the salt pans. In 1842 he requested and was granted concession to exploit the salt basins of Grand case, Chevrise and Orient. On June 18th 1844 he established a company to exploit the salt basins of Saint Martin.

In order to exploit the Great Salt Pond in Philipsburg, Perrinon established a company in Amsterdam called "Maatschappij tot Zoutwinning op het eiland Sint Maarten" (Salt Processing Company of St. Maarten) on the 20th of May 1858. He was granted concession by Royal Decree of June 21, 1858 N°. 12 for a period of 80 years. Work on the Foga factory was completed in 1862, one year after Francois Perrinon's sudden death. After this the company fell into financial difficulty because of mismanagement and changed ownership several times.



Although he did not speak English, Perrinon's undertaking was considered a success, and it served as the basic argument for his stand against slavery. Perrinon employed free blacks and enslaved, whom he paid equally, and put them to work side by side.

Francois Perrinon died on January 2nd 1861 in Saint Martin at the age of 48 years. His tomb can be found in the Marigot cemetery.

After being in relatively continuous production from the 17th century, salt production ended in the Great Salt Pond of Philipsburg in 1949, but struggled on until the 1960s in Grand Case.

### The End of Salt

St. Martin's salt was awarded the 'Diplome de Grand Prix' as the Best Product in the Brussels Universal Exposition of 1910. It was exported to France, Guadeloupe, Martinique, Nova Scotia, but mostly to New England in the U.S.A. to be used for the preservation of meat and cod fish. For a short time some was shipped to Canada for use on the roads in winter.

After being in relatively continuous production from the 17th century, salt production ended in the Great Salt Pond of Philipsburg in 1949, but struggled on until the 1960s in Grand Case.

### What is Left Now?


The ruins of Foga are located in the northernmost part of the salt pan. On the west side is the Great Salt Pond. The whole complex consisted of eight basins of different sizes next to each other with the boiler room in the middle of the complex with two additional reservoirs.

Both FOGA and the Northeastern section of the pond (the salt pans) were designated as National monuments in 2008.



# TRIBE

BY LYSANNE CHARLES

A woman wearing a light pink long-sleeved dress and a patterned headscarf is walking away from the camera on a dirt path. In the background, there is a simple building with a thatched roof and a stone wall. The scene is set in a rural, hilly area under a clear blue sky.

I come from a tribe  
And while our matriarch is no longer alive  
We watch as new matriarchs rise  
Always steady  
Often wise  
Though they never replace her  
They embrace us  
And transmit to us her legacies  
Flowers that grew from seeds she planted long ago  
Though winds may blow us near and far  
They remind us who of who we are  
A clan of warriors, rebels, workers  
Descendants of a woman so fierce  
Life could bend, but not break her  
Who believed that each person had a one room house, which was the  
mouth  
And no one could prevent any of hers from speaking up or speaking  
out  
Devout, she preached and believed that family stuck together  
That with God and prayer we could weather anything that came at us  
Even as we scattered to corners and crevices across the earth  
And one daughter holds space in the place where we, as a collective,  
was birthed  
Ensures that when we return we can walk our earth and feel  
Below the Gap grounded  
Surrounded by the breath of our ancestors  
See when she died she left a family tree which descended vertically  
from 15, to 50+, to 100+, and...beyond  
And we still going strong  
Growing on  
And maybe that more than land is her gift to us  
A family, that while so diverse, so big, so expansive  
Has at its core a matriarch so magic  
That we must always contract again  
Come back again  
Connect again  
Become a clan again  
Born of a woman unafraid to descend  
and climb stairs  
So that her tribe would rise



**SMAATN NATIONAL CULTURAL PARADE**  
**PRIDE + CULTURE**  
**IN COLOR**

**PHOTOS BY RTGH PHOTOGRAPHY**



The SMAatn National Cultural Parade was founded in 2015 by Mr. Urmain Dormoy, who saw the need and importance of recognizing and highlighting Sint Maarten/Saint Martin heritage and culture. It is an incredible event held annually for St. Martin Day on November 10/11.



The parade is not only a moving work of art but a collective success because of the collaboration between the SMNCP Foundation and other cultural organizations on the island. Only local music is played by bands and djs during the parade.





**Colorful floral prints against white fabric** can be seen as the unofficial national dress/costume of St. Maarten. They represent, perfectly, the vibrant personalities of our people.

Since 2015, the parade has inspired the full creative expression of designers and seamstresses and have also challenged the more traditional silhouettes to be reimagined.





In addition to floral wear, the parade features representations of other cultural components; the fishermen and women in the villages of long ago and the salt pickers. It's wonderful to see schools; teachers, staff and students participate in the parade.





This photo is by Laito Duzanson

The Yellow Sage group created by SMNCP board member Karen Cadogan displays the national flower of St. Maarten, the Yellow Sage. Local flowers are often illustrated in the festive costumes worn in the parade.



In the SMAatn National Cultural Parade you can see and celebrate, in the most exuberant way, the Unity Flag which was created in 1990 to represent the island as a whole. The Unity Flag is now recognized as a national cultural symbol by the Governments in the North and South and flown throughout the island.



**“All I see  
before me is  
one island, one  
people, one  
destiny.”**

Lino Hughes  
'St. Martin is My Home'



# WILL WE STILL BE ONCE OUR LAND NO LONGER IS?

BY STEPHIE GUMBS

“Isn’t it one of the islands that will be submerged by water?” – asked a former colleague when I shared with them that I would be moving back to St. Martin. Despite their commitment to eat less meat, and to avoid fast fashion, my colleague had the intuition, the inner conviction, that whichever island I had called home would not survive the rise in water levels caused by climate change. Yes, despite their personal commitment to only buy organic food (“bio” as the French labels said).

I had already been too accustomed to this patronising tone and simply answered: “one more reason to enjoy the place before it’s gone!” Good old sarcasm, one of my favorite weapons, sharpened by years of slightly uncomfortable interactions.



## Are we acting as the future ancestors that we are? Will we be locked in collective nostalgia or collective amnesia?

To be frank, I couldn't say if they were right or wrong. I just couldn't agree with their implied conclusion: that it wasn't worth going back to. To the contrary, the impending environmental catastrophe gave me a sense of urgency, a crave to go back before it is too late, to salvage whatever we have and keep it safe from the threatening tides.

Upon embarking on this journey, I realized that the elders that I interacted with had seen waves of change that had swept away parts of us. Although we still existed, there used to be customs and traditions that had sunk. As a matter of fact, it seemed like to that generation, our treasure chest, full of our most precious belongings had become waterlogged before I was even born.

I understood their point of view, because each generation believes that they are the most peculiar, which explains both their nostalgia and my sense of duty: my generation has an important role in the preservation of our history for future generations.

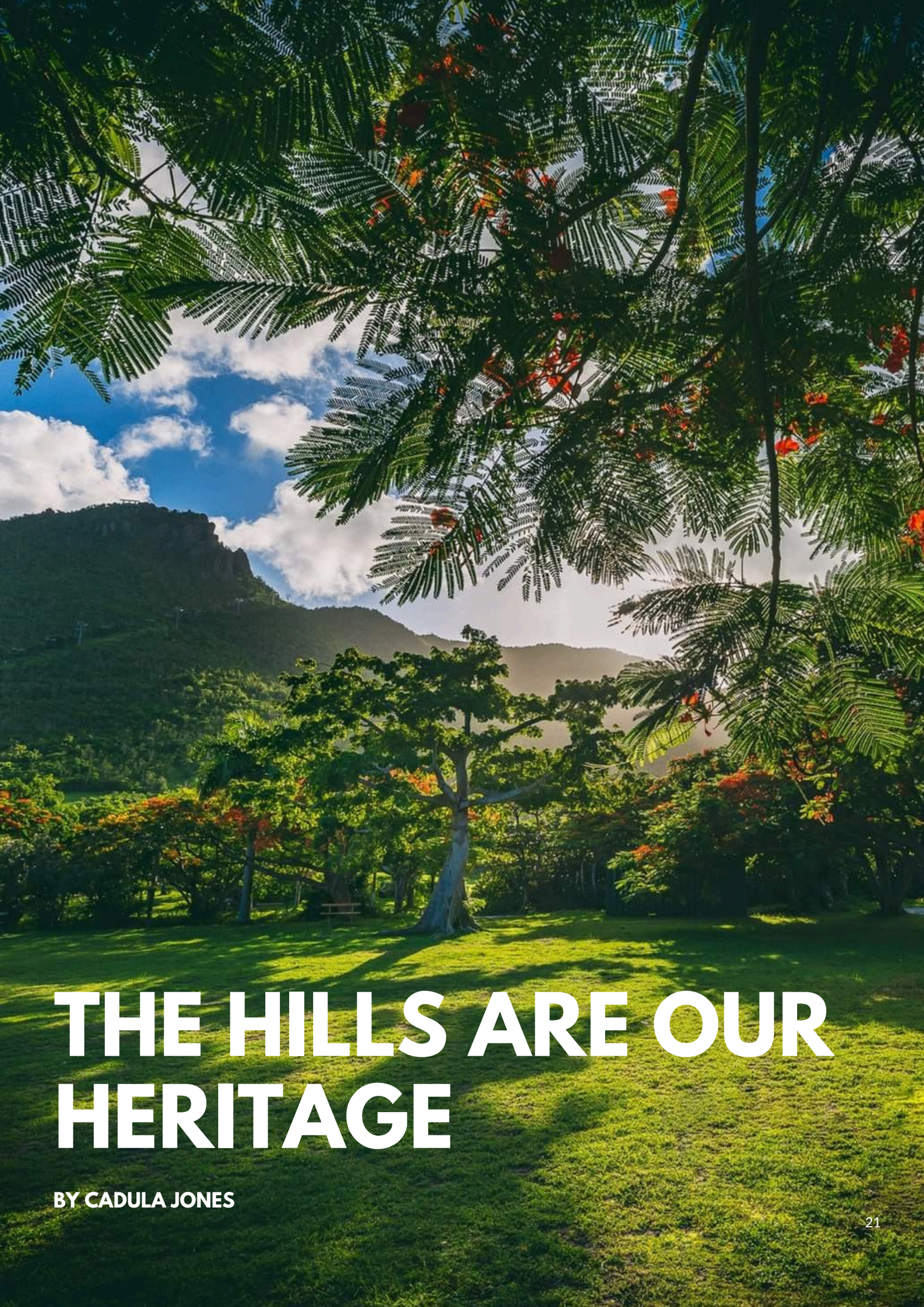
So I listen(ed) to the stories about our island, placing back the borrowed memories on old photographs. The same ones that had sparked my desire to understand these glimpses of the past.

And I wonder, what will we have to show? HD pictures explained by our fading memories? Will we have done a better job in preserving, saving? Are we acting as the future ancestors that we are? Will we be locked in collective nostalgia or collective amnesia?

I have more questions than answers, but if one day, we no longer have a land to go back to, the exiled will be responsible for our survival. They will have to learn to be the type of diaspora that acts as a safe. The kind that crystalizes the traditions from back home to keep them alive abroad. The tides are still rising but the path exists already. Have you had to go to Haiti, Ethiopia or India to catch glimpses of their cultures?

There must be a way to be from here while not being here. Yet, some consider that our people abroad are less "from here". In the 20th century, the St.Martiners who emigrated to places like Aruba, Curaçao and the States remained St.Martiners and many of them came back regularly or "for good". Our history shows that our identity has never resided solely in the tangible experience of being "here" and "from here". We have always found the essence that survives through space and time.

I too, have bought my fair share of "bio" food but I am sure that as a St.Martiner, wherever I am, my part goes beyond that. So, what will we put in our treasure chest?



# THE HILLS ARE OUR HERITAGE

BY CADULA JONES

## THE HILLS OF ST. MARTIN IS WE HERITAGE, WE LIVING WAGE, WE LEVERAGE, THE HILLS ARE WE.

One of the signature landscapes of St. Martin is the beautiful hills in the center of the island. Approximately 70% of these hills are owned by grassroot families who are descendants of enslaved Africans that were wise enough to create generational wealth during the late 1800s to early 1900s. This was done by purchasing land on both sides of the island. Our ancestors resolved to ensure that their offspring will never be homeless and hungry again. Research also shows that hiking in hills provides positive benefits for physical and mental health.

## COOPERATION ALLOWS EVERYONE TO RESPONSIBLY ENJOY THE HILLS.

In 2018, on the Dutch side of St. Martin, Mrs. C. Jones in cooperation with EPIC started the still existing project of clearing and maintaining hiking trails. Hikers in St. Martin can be further assured that each trail with EPIC or Collectivité signage, has the landowner's consent to use the specified paths for hiking activities. These efforts have allowed several families and friend groups to create their own hiking groups to enjoy the beauty of the St. Martin hills together.

In 2024, the way we the people of St. Martin utilize our hills is undergoing a spirited, public discussion. This author laments that the discussion lacks sufficient structure and not all facts are being shared with critical stakeholders.

## THE HILLS ARE OUR FUTURE AND SHOULD REMAIN AFFORDABLE FOR WE.

A round table conference – involving representatives of landowners and their lawyers, officials with decision-making authority from the Ministries of VROMI and TEATT, real estate developers and executives from local banks - is a fair and sustainable solution. These stakeholders should, at minimum, collectively discuss that:

- Grassroot landowners should be included and given the opportunity to participate in hillside eco-tourism opportunities. When foreign investors approach the government, all landowners should be able to bid.
- Future hillside development plans should include middle class housing and not only focus on wealthy foreigners.
- Succession rights were created by our ancestors to protect generational wealth and ownership. Therefore, current landowners cannot be expected to grant the government free access to construct roads and housing for others. Funding should come from groups like the NRPB or others to formally purchase land.
- Hillside policies should not only be applicable to grassroot-owned land. In 2024, allegedly, high-class developments were granted building permits that are not in accordance with the hillside policies. Grassroot families are allegedly declined when submitting these same requests.
- Opportunities for earning money within real estate should include grassroots owners as well as foreigners.
- Building permits for grassroot owners should be issued within the same time period as those for foreign developers.

- The alleged 2030 High Rise agenda should not be imposed on the island. Landowners should be able to choose if they want multi-family structures on their flat or hillside land. The culture of St. Martin includes the right of owning, living in and enjoying a single-family unit house. High rise structures, and all the negatives that come with them, cannot be forced on the grassroots owners. Additionally, government policies regarding population growth, zoning and subsequent housing issues on island St. Maarten require a separate and intensive public discussion.
- Grassroot owners should also receive the opportunity and permits to participate in the profitable agricultural sector that is growing by leaps and bounds.
- Stakeholders merely agreeing to and upholding these points is not enough. Legal protections must be created to ensure that guardrails are firmly put in place with plans for strict enforcement of landholder rights and entitlements.

Moving forward, our primary focus should be making St. Martin affordable again for grassroots people, both Dutch and French. It should be our decision how our land is developed. It should be our choice to allow people to enjoy hiking our hills if they do so respectfully. It should be our right to profit from the land that our forefathers wisely protected to ensure we would always be provided for. This is the meaning of succession land. Exploitation and degradation for the benefit of a selected few should not be forced upon us. We need all stakeholders on board to protect and enforce these natural rights.

The time is now for respect, fairness and accountability. The time is now for protective laws and economic policies now.

*“The St. Martin hills are we then, we now and we in the future. Done right, economic development and progress can co-exist with culture in a win for all.”*





# HEART & SOUL THE ST. MAARTEN MUSEUM

BY AMARIS RICHARDSON

Nestled within vibrant Great Bay, the Sint Maarten National Heritage Foundation & Museum serves as a custodian of the island's soul. For over 30 years, it has been the gatekeeper of the island's history, identity, and heritage. But, like many small museums, it faces challenges that require community and international support to continue its vital mission.

The museum's core mission is to protect and promote the island's rich cultural heritage, which encompasses the tangible—like historic artifacts and sites—and the intangible, such as oral histories and traditions. It offers an authentic experience for visitors, allowing them to explore exhibits that range from indigenous artifacts to colonial-era documents and maps. It also showcases local flora and fauna, promoting environmental awareness alongside cultural appreciation.

Through its various programs, such as guided tours, workshops, and exhibitions, the museum not only educates but also connects the people of St. Maarten to their roots. For school children, these visits are more than a field trip—they are lessons in identity, stories of resilience, and glimpses into the island's past that shape their sense of belonging.

The museum is more than just a repository of artifacts; it is a living, breathing part of the community's efforts to define and preserve its cultural identity. Since St. Maarten became a country in 2010, the museum has been crucial in shaping the island's narrative, helping citizens and visitors alike understand the depth of its history and the significance of its heritage.

By documenting and exhibiting everything from the island's earliest settlements to its colonial plantation era, the museum emphasizes the need to remember and celebrate these stories. This is especially important now, as historical landmarks face threats from development and the elements, and as many elders, who are keepers of the island's oral traditions, grow older without having passed on their knowledge.

Despite its successes, the museum faces significant hurdles. Limited funding, staffing shortages, and the absence of a permanent, disaster-proof facility all threaten its future. Currently, the museum operates with a small but dedicated team of professionals and volunteers, but more expertise and hands are needed to manage and expand its collections effectively. The museum's space is insufficient for housing its growing collection, much less protecting it against natural disasters like hurricanes, which are becoming increasingly frequent in the region.

The museum also dreams of repatriating artifacts that are scattered in collections around the world, an endeavor that requires funding and specialized skills. Such efforts would help piece together St. Maarten's fragmented history, giving the island's people a more complete sense of their past and identity.





### How you Can Help

Do you value St. Maarten culture, history and identity? Here's how you can contribute:

- **Volunteer Your Time:** Whether you are a history buff or simply passionate about heritage, your expertise and enthusiasm can help expand the museum's impact through project work.
- **Donate:** Financial contributions are essential for the museum to someday build a more secure, spacious facility and to implement its plans. Email [st.maartenmuseum@gmail.com](mailto:st.maartenmuseum@gmail.com).
- **Advocate for Preservation:** Raise awareness about the importance of preserving St. Maarten's heritage. Join local initiatives aimed at protecting historical sites and contribute to conversations about our culture.
- **Collaborate:** The museum is open to partnerships with organizations and individuals who share its goals. Together, we can ensure the island's history is not only remembered but celebrated and integrated into the island's development.

### A Legacy Worth Preserving

The Sint Maarten National Heritage Foundation & Museum is a beacon of cultural pride and education. It tells the story of an island that, despite its small size, boasts a rich and varied history. It offers residents a sense of continuity, linking generations of St. Maarteners and fostering a sense of identity that is vital for nation-building. As the museum continues its work, we must be reminded of the fragility of history and the importance of safeguarding it!



# THE ORIGIN OF ME: JUST HUMAN

BY MASSIMO

I was born on the island of Sint Maarten/St. Martin—that’s where my story begins. But where I’m from? That’s much bigger than any island, any nation, or any single history. My blood carries the strength of Africa, the resilience of the Carib Indians, the deep roots of the indigenous tribes of South, Central, and North America who moved and lived across these lands long before borders existed, and the undeniable connection to Europe through the transatlantic slave trade. These histories, these origins, they all flow through me—but they do not define me.

Growing up, I never questioned who I was. Doubt was never part of my upbringing. I was raised to stand firm, to know my worth, to never hesitate in my own existence. But that doesn’t mean I didn’t see the questions—the ones society placed on people like me, the quiet expectations, the way history tried to fit us into categories. Even if I didn’t personally doubt myself, the world around me made sure those question marks were there. Subtle, unspoken, but present.

Growing up, I never questioned who I was. Doubt was never part of my upbringing. I was raised to stand firm, to know my worth, to never hesitate in my own existence. But that doesn't mean I didn't see the questions—the ones society placed on people like me, the quiet expectations, the way history tried to fit us into categories. Even if I didn't personally doubt myself, the world around me made sure those question marks were there. Subtle, unspoken, but present.

And when you grow up seeing that, it starts to create a conflict. Not because you don't know who you are, but because the world tries to convince you that you have to fit into something specific. That you have to explain yourself. That you have to choose a side.

But I never accepted that. Instead, I always questioned why—why things were structured this way, why the world set invisible boundaries between people, between cultures, between identities. Why was I expected to follow rules I never agreed to? Why should I accept limits when I've always felt allowed? Allowed to be fully myself. Allowed to exist freely. Allowed to claim my space wherever I stand.

For a long time, I carried a name exactly as it was given to me—out of love, out of tradition, out of respect for the people who came before me. But something deeper was always there, unspoken yet present. A sense of self that existed before I could even put it into words. Looking back, I realize it wasn't about breaking away from anything. It wasn't about making a statement. It was about recognition. Recognizing that, without fear, without hesitation, I could fully step into who I was always meant to be. Because identity is not about choosing one thing over another—it's about owning all of it. Every origin, every history, every moment that has shaped me into who I am.

And that's what I help others see. Because I know that I am not alone in this. I know there are many people—maybe even you—who have spent years carrying silent question marks, absorbing expectations that weren't truly theirs, feeling the pull between who they are and who the world tells them they should be.

This journey isn't about fighting for a place. It's about realizing you've always had one. It's about understanding that before history, before labels, before expectations, you are human. And that alone is enough.

When you fully step into that truth, everything shifts. Life is not about fitting in. It's about being. It's about finding balance in your happiness, health, wealth, relationships, and most importantly, in yourself. Because when you are fully aligned with who you are, you stop seeking approval. You stop hesitating. You stop carrying doubt that was never meant to be yours.

I am African. I am Carib Indian. I carry the blood of the indigenous tribes of South, Central, and North America. I am connected to Europe through history. I was born on the island of Sint Maarten/St. Martin, but I belong wherever I stand.

But more than anything, I am human. And so are you.

**And when you fully embrace that truth, you realize—you've always belonged.**



## **GYC INITIATIVE: REDEFINING TOURISM THROUGH CULTURE AND COMMUNITY**

Glenda York is the founder of GCY Initiative; a destination marketing initiative based on the island of Sint Maarten. GCY Initiative aims to showcase the uniqueness of Sint Maarten and its people to visitors and locals alike.

Fresh from her studies, Glenda York returned to Sint Maarten with the aim of enhancing the island's tourism sector. With a degree in Hospitality and Tourism Management, she was eager to apply her knowledge whilst further developing her understanding of the specific needs required for the island to maintain its status as a premier Caribbean destination. When her initial plans did not unfold as anticipated, Glenda decided to chart a new course, focusing on destination marketing.

This aspiration led to the establishment of GCY Initiative, formerly known as GCY Travels. The concept emerged from Glenda's desire to showcase the island beyond the traditional highlights of sun, sea, and sand that have long dominated promotional efforts of the Caribbean. During her Bachelor studies, Glenda recognized the distinction between hospitality and tourism. It was through this realization that she found a new focus. As she pursued her Master's degree, she became fascinated by the various niches within the tourism industry, particularly Cultural Tourism. This resonated deeply with her. She saw significant advantages in promoting cultural tourism over a more generalized tourism approach.

GCY Initiative was designed to present St. Maarten in a fresh light by offering insights from the perspective of a local resident. It aimed to highlight local experiences, lifestyles, and the appeal of visiting the island.

Initially, the initiative served as a broad showcase of the island; however, Glenda soon realized that to effectively connect with her target audience, she needed to refine her focus. Responding to inquiries from fellow content creators and consumers, she adopted the tagline “Travel, Lifestyle, Culture.” This encapsulated her vision, allowing her to integrate the quintessential elements of Caribbean life—sun, sea, and sand—while also emphasizing the cultural aspects that educate both locals and visitors about St. Maarten's rich heritage.



Over the years, Glenda continues to see the importance of the work to be done. Going into 2025, GCY Initiative anticipates a promising future. Despite a challenging nine-year journey, the path ahead has become more clear than ever. The goal remains steadfast: to showcase Sint Maarten in its truest and most favorable light. Glenda can be contacted via email, [gcytravels@gmail.com](mailto:gcytravels@gmail.com) or through Facebook, Instagram or Youtube, GCY Initiative.

Glenda uses Facebook, Instagram and Youtube to get her message out. She has blogged, vlogged and hosted several interviews on her Youtube channel, GCY Initiative. Additionally Glenda hosts the show “Sit, Sip & Chat” where she has a “chat” with persons within the community that have a message they want to share.

Glenda believes that while she is not one of the more well known figures on the island, you never know who is paying attention. With that thought in mind, she hopes that she is able to provide someone with a smaller voice than her own the opportunity to shine.





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