

Transnational Maroon Organizing: Honoring Maroon Day and Maroons, in Suriname and Beyond

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Abstract

October 10th, 2015 marked the 255th anniversary of the 1760 acknowledgment of a peace treaty between Okanisi Maroon peoples and Dutch colonial authorities in what is now Suriname. To honor this day as a newly-recognized national holiday in Suriname, called Maroon Day, a delegation of Maroon peoples from around the Americas was convened by a group of dedicated local Surinamese Maroon activists. In presenting a field-report detailing my experiences as a non-Maroon member of this collaborative trip to Suriname, this paper also focuses on one individual's participation in the events—the official North American Maroon representative—and the transnational organizing that facilitated this special guest's inclusion. Along with describing particular circumstances and significant outcomes of what became known as a cultural exchange/peace mission, this account also provides brief contextual histories of some Maroon peoples in the US, as well as Maroons in Suriname. An essay of photographs follows after to accompany the field-report, providing some visual context illustrating the trip and its participants and settings.

This past October I spent ten days in Suriname, participating in what I came to appreciate as a cooperative feat of monumental significance, spanning cultures, continents, and histories. A new national holiday called Maroon Day was established in 2011 in Suriname, commemorating the October 10th, 1760 treaty acknowledged between Okanisi (also referred to as Aukaners or Ndyuka) Maroon people and the Dutch colonial government. Maroons are formerly-enslaved people who won their own freedoms through fighting against and escaping slavery, establishing their own societies separate from those of European colonists and planters.

Okanisi Maroons, one of six Maroon polities in Suriname (and French Guiana), achieved their 1760 treaty for peace through forcing the colony's Dutch authorities to recognize their autonomous political status, after having first created their own political and social institutions in Suriname's rainforests, away from Dutch plantations on the coast. Maroons' prolonged armed resistances in Suriname lasted over a century. During this era of "Maroon Wars," different Maroon groups continuously struggled against Europeans' slavery and colonial systems, with Dutch colonials eventually choosing to honor the treaties instead of awaiting the ruin of their exploitative systems of labor and domination. This group of once-enslaved people then, established for themselves a rare form of colonial autonomy, realized over one hundred years prior to the abolition of slavery for other Black people in Suriname and other parts of the Americas. Although Okanisi, and the five other Maroon peoples in Suriname, have marked the date of this original treaty with celebrations for over two centuries, this year was only the fifth year during which October 10th was respected and celebrated on a national level.

In honoring this newly-recognized national Maroon Day holiday, leaders of a number of local Surinamese Maroon organizations made arrangements for a transnational component to their new annual commemorations. Part of these leaders' plans included inviting other Maroon delegates from around the hemisphere to participate through representing their own communities and heritages during Suriname's national events. A small group of dedicated individuals organized a cultural exchange/peace mission to honor Suriname's Maroon communities' histories of valiant struggle against slavery and colonial oppression. Drawing on their organizations' previous efforts building relationships between Maroon peoples of the Americas, these Maroon activists and organizers were able to put together an incredible program connecting people from far-off places through their shared histories. In the past few years their work has united different Maroon communities within Suriname, but also created partnerships with Maroons in Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica, Colombia, the Virgin Islands, and now the US. I played a very small part in facilitating the latest manifestation of these efforts, but am now inspired to share some of what I learned with a wider audience, spreading much-needed knowledge about Maroons and their descendants

living both in Suriname, as well as here in the US and elsewhere wherever people were enslaved.

Maroons throughout the world were formerly enslaved people, and now their descendants, who took their own freedom through escaping slavery and forming their own communities away from plantation or colonial settlements.¹ Wherever slavery was practiced, people who were subjected to its inhumanity resisted, and often fled however they could. Throughout the Americas there are many examples of communities established by formerly enslaved African people through their own efforts of resistance to enslavement. Some Maroon communities were short-lived, or small in scale, and so less remembered through time. Yet others emerged as significant societies in their own right, in some cases waging decades-long wars against colonial planters in their respective locations, greatly helping to end slavery as an institution. For this courageous resistance to slavery and their role in its ultimate demise, Maroons have often been vilified and their histories erased from popular narratives. Honoring Maroons' histories of fighting Black slavery on a national level in Suriname, and through Maroons creating new public narratives of their own histories then, is essential in Maroons' current struggles with representation in Suriname, and the US, as well as around the world.²

While a majority of people in the US are not even aware at all of Maroons and their histories, in Suriname that is not the case, due simply to their being such a significant proportion of the population. Suriname, a country of just over half a million people, is home to more than 120,000 Maroons³ who comprise six separate cultural groups, with their own political organizations, languages, and other cultural ways.⁴ Okanisi people, who I mentioned above and with who I primarily stayed during my trip, are one among these six Maroon cultural and political groups. At roughly one quarter of Suriname's population, Maroons or their descendants, such as Okanisi people, play a significant role in Suriname's society as a whole. However Maroons remain overwhelmingly stigmatized in Suriname for a number of complex reasons, but partly from their status as descendants of "runaways" who were forced to give-up on helping still-enslaved Africans to escape.⁵ As a result of their treaties with the Dutch, Maroon groups agreed to stop helping any other enslaved people from freeing themselves, and for this the descendants of the remaining enslaved

people are said to hold an enmity against Maroons.⁶ These people of African descent, whose ancestors were enslaved in Suriname and did not free themselves escaping to the interior communities, but remained on the coastal plantations, are now referred to as Creoles, and they number around 100,000 people today.⁷

Starting in the mid-1980s and lasting through the early 1990s, these centuries-old animosities raged into civil war, and what can be rightly described as genocide, primarily perpetrated against Suriname's Maroon peoples.⁸ Many Maroons were killed in this prolonged, state-sponsored terrorism, and many more were brutalized and/or displaced from their homes to neighboring French Guiana, or to as far away as the Netherlands.⁹ During my trip this past October memories of those affected by this war were still fresh and haunting, with my hosts pointing-out entire abandoned villages as we passed along the river in our canoe. People expressed an ongoing-eagerness for reconciliation and increased-understanding between Surinamese people generally, but mainly in regards to how Maroons, and indigenous people, are overwhelmingly still de-valued in society. Other Maroon people I spoke with on my trip, especially younger ones, were also positive about changes they felt already taking place in Suriname whereby Maroons' statuses were quickly shifting, with what they described as increased social recognition and equal respect.

In the US there is much less general awareness about maroon communities and their descendants, who have also played profound roles in shaping that nation's past. Education and knowledge about histories of resistance to slavery in the US often focuses on the "Underground Railroad" and incredible efforts by enslaved and formerly enslaved peoples' to escape to freedom most commonly in Canada.¹⁰ Yet these narratives often leave-out the communities of once-enslaved African-descended people who resisted slavery and remained in the US, or what became the US, forging their own communities, often in collaboration with existing indigenous Native Americans.¹¹ There are countless communities who began this way throughout the histories of slavery in the US, but many are no longer remember as such, unlike in Suriname, where rememberings of Maroons' pasts are significant to the national consciousness. Of all the Maroon communities in the US, the Seminole Maroons have perhaps remained the most salient in terms of their representation and awareness among a

general public.¹² And for Maroon Day in Suriname in 2015, this transnational network of Maroons and Maroon-descendants organized to host a Seminole Maroon-descendant as their North American representative.

Seminole Maroons have a fascinating and underappreciated set of histories, starting prior to US independence, and extending from what was then Spanish Florida, to Indian Territory—or what became Oklahoma, and into Texas and northern Mexico. Very briefly, Seminole Maroons descend from enslaved African people in the pre-US thirteen colonies, who had escaped British slavery by fleeing to Spanish Florida, where they lived with indigenous Seminoles and other Native American peoples.¹³ These Seminoles and Seminole Maroons defended their lives and freedom against violence and re-enslavement brought by the US's incursion into Florida in what are now known as the Seminole Wars. These series of decades-long wars fought by the US military against Seminole Maroon people, and other African and Native Americans, concluded in the 1850s with the result of massive forced removals of those who had not already fled or been killed in the wars.¹⁴ These expropriations of Seminole lands to the US and their forced migrations established Seminole and Seminole Maroon communities in what are now the US states of Oklahoma, Texas, and in northern Mexico. It was a descendent of these valiant “freedom-defenders” who was asked to attend Suriname’s Maroon Day events on behalf of all of North America’s Maroon descendants, and it was that noble Maroon representative who I accompanied on this life-changing trip.

Leaders within Suriname’s Maroon Women’s Chamber of Cooperation and other organizations decided to invite Los Angeles-based activist, artist, and educator Phil Pompey Fixico to come to Suriname to participate in their transnational cultural exchange/peace mission. Most prominent among these organizations’ leaders were two Maroon activists working within their communities and throughout the world, Dr. Cynthia Alendy and Drs. Fidelia Graand-Galon. Dr. Alendy is a physician and public health specialist who serves as president of the Maroon Women’s Chamber of Cooperation, and Her Excellency Drs. Fidelia Graand-Galon is Suriname’s Ambassador and Plenipotentiary to the nation of Trinidad and Tobago. Both women are Okanisi Maroons who are dedicated to promoting public understanding

of their ancestral heritage, and are two of the first Surinamese Maroon women ever to receive doctoral degrees. After much research and networking throughout the hemisphere, Alendy and Graand-Galon learned about Fixico through his Maroon-related activism and his various awareness-raising campaigns. Through establishing this initial relationship, a wonderful inter-continental Maroon partnership was born.

Alendy and Graand-Galon first heard about Fixico (aka Philip Vincent Wilkes and Pompey Bruner Fixico) through his social media presence and informative blog, which he uses as one of his many platforms for spreading awareness about issues related to Maroons, African Americans, Native Americans, and especially, intersections of those three identities.¹⁵ Introducing himself on a recent radio interview following-up on his trip, Fixico, speaking about himself, told listeners that “to the people of America who see me on the street, I’m just another flavor of Black.”¹⁶ Despite what others may see in him, as well as what Fixico thought of his own familial background for the majority of his life, he now considers himself to be African-Native American, as well as a descendent of Seminole-, Creek-, and Cherokee-Maroon peoples. Over the past decade or so, in conducting his own extensive archival and oral historical research, Fixico uncovered a past hidden from him by family members, that revealed his Maroon and Native American ancestry. He has since embraced these new features of his identity and heritage, becoming a dedicated champion for recognition and awareness for Maroons and Black Indians worldwide. Fixico’s own historical research into his familial background was corroborated and further analyzed by professional historians, leading to his own personal family histories’ inclusion in the Smithsonian Institution’s major touring exhibition titled *indivisible: African-Native American Lives in the Americas*.¹⁷ The organizers of Suriname’s Maroon Day commemorations chose Fixico to represent North America’s Maroons for this noble work he has undertaken and the considerable recognition he has received. Furthering his work in immeasurable ways then, Fixico heeded their call to action, and began preparations for this incredible trip to Suriname.

The Smithsonian Institution had also previously developed a program aimed at providing a much-needed platform for public education about Maroons in the US. For the Institution’s 1992

Festival of American Folklife in Washington DC, a number of Maroon communities from throughout the Americas came together to present their own histories and cultures at this premier national venue. Through the event, contemporary Maroon people, working with professional scholars, curators, and the Smithsonian's resources, were able to provide a wide public access to knowledge about their own Maroon cultures. Political and cultural leaders, artists, and other community members from Maroon groups in Jamaica, Florida, the Texas/Mexico border, French Guiana, and Suriname all participated in the Festival in various ways. Among this array of New World Maroon peoples however, both Okanisi and Seminole Maroons were prominently represented, perhaps providing a precedent for relationships later solidified through Suriname's 2015 Maroon Day proceedings. Among the most celebrated guests at the Festival of American Folklife that summer in 1992, was the Okanisi peoples' head-of-state, Gaaman Matodja Gazon, whose grandson Fixico and I would have the opportunity to be introduced to during our trip to Suriname's interior in honor of Maroon Day 2015.¹⁸

I had met Her Excellency, Ambassador Drs. Sa'Fidelia Graand-Galon, the previous year in 2014 during fieldwork I conducted in Trinidad and Tobago, which contributed to my master's thesis. In preparing for more extended doctoral field research, I had spent that summer and the next in Guyana, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago, establishing and securing further community connections and following leads as to my various still-developing research questions. A theme that emerged out of my work that summer involved examining particular ways that people have built connections between Suriname and Guyana, specifically through Guyanese understandings of Maroon peoples and their roles in representing regional histories in public events. Graand-Galon, a close friend and colleague of two of my dearest academic mentors at UCLA, remembered my research involving Surinamese Maroons, and acquainted Fixico and I, inviting me to accompany him to Suriname on his upcoming trip. Honored to be asked, and thrilled at the chance to follow-up on exploring issues central to what had intrigued me in my past field experiences, I jumped on the opportunity to join the cultural exchange/peace mission.

Fixico and I spent ten days in Suriname, for most of which we travelled with a delegation of local Maroon activists, educators,

artists, and historians, who warmly welcomed us to their country. Led by Graand-Galon, we were toured around both the capital city of Paramaribo, and the interior reaches of the Amazonian rainforests, where most Maroon villages are located. In Paramaribo we attended a number of important functions organized surrounding Maroon Day, at many of which Fixico was formally introduced and his presence honored. These events included a conferences on Maroons' internal governance within the context of national politics; presentations by government officials and academic specialists; a multi-ethnic public parade commemorating Maroon Day; public cultural performances; and many other exciting activities. Outside of the city, Fixico and I, along with other delegation members, were honored to be welcomed to many Maroon villages, primarily those of Okanisi Maroons.

A highlight of the entire trip, for both me and perhaps for Fixico as well, as he told me, was an invitation extended for us to have an audience with the Kondemasa Gaaman Da Bono Velanti and his royal cabinet of chiefs and *basiyas* (royal dignitaries). Kondemasa Gaaman Da Bono Velanti is the "paramount chief," or political head, of all Okanisi villages, lineages, and people.¹⁹ The Kondemasa Gaaman resides in the Okanisi's "capital" village of Diitabiki, located along the Tapanahoni (or Ndyuka) River, where we were honored to be housed for our visit with him and his royal dignitaries. In all, Fixico and I visited about a dozen different Maroon communities throughout the country, mostly in their welcoming villages along the rivers of the Amazonian rainforests of Suriname's interior. We spent time in most villages meeting with the local chiefs and other community members, where Fixico was instrumental in facilitating inter-generational, inter-continental, and inter-cultural bonding, more often than not, inspired through impromptu music sessions and enlightening personal history lessons. Alendy, Graand-Galon, and other local Surinamese involved in selecting Fixico to come and be a premiere player in this inter-cultural exchange/peace mission, could never have chosen a more passionate and charismatic collaborator. And I was just so glad to participate.

Along with playing certain logistical roles in coordinating the trip and Fixico's participation, most of which Alendy and Graand-Galon covered, I also served as the trip's (stand-in) primary documentarian. While conducting field research contributing

to my own doctoral project was a major focus for me during this trip, I also devoted particular attention to documenting our experiences through audio, visual, textual and other recordings. Out of this role has emerged the beginning of a collaborative film²⁰ and internet project that Fixico and I have undertaken, the first fruits of which have already benefited presentations we both have made in our scholarly and community-based organizations. Fixico and I have begun sharing our experiences about the trip, Fixico, bringing this new exciting episode into the fold of his already valorous repertoire, speaking and displaying images and footage at various venues such as the Compton public library, on local and international radio programs,²¹ at UCLA conferences, and many other events already. We also have begun submitting previews of our film to different film screening opportunities, such as Los Angeles's Pan African Film Festival, but these are developments for the near future, with much work still to be done as of this writing.

Displaying images and clips of our footage in conjunction with speaking and writing about our experiences has proven beneficial to both Fixico and I in expressing the significance of these intercultural exchanges of peace and goodwill, and the histories such exchanges embodied for the participants. For this reason, I have chosen to include here an accompanying essay of photographs, which serves to visually illustrate some of what I have discussed above. Fixico also has other future plans in which I am honored to be included, involving his partnering with fellow Seminole Maroons living in Nacimiento, Mexico on a similar cultural exchange aimed at raising awareness locally there in Mexico about Seminole Maroons and other Indigenous-African Mexican heritages. In many ways then, the dedicated workers of these transnational Maroon networks, such as Alendy, Graand-Galon, and Fixico, are inspiring similar efforts of Maroon activism and awareness-raising programs throughout the hemisphere, as they had initially hoped and planned. All this work helps in spreading knowledge about the courageous and admirable contributions of Maroons to all of Americas' histories, and, shows continued recognition of the significance of these histories of resistance shared by descendants of formerly enslaved African people throughout the Americas, and the world.

Notes

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¹ Richard Price, [1973] 1996, "Introduction: Maroons and Their Communities," in *Maroon Societies: Rebel Slave Communities in the Americas*. ed. Richard Price. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press. p. 1-30.

² For a highly-informative and easily-accessible resource on Maroon communities throughout the Western Hemisphere see the Smithsonian Institution's Education Resource Guide website accompanying their 1992 Festival of American Folklife exhibition entitled "Creativity and Resistance: Maroon Culture in the Americas," curated by Diana Baird N'Diaye, Thomas Polimé, and Kenneth Bilby for the Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage, Washington DC, URL: <http://www.folklife.si.edu/resources/maroon/presentation.htm>, Accessed 21 December 2015.

³ "Censusstatistieken 2012" (Statistical Census 2012), *Algemeen Bureau voor de Statistiek in Suriname (General Statistics Bureau of Suriname)*. Presentatie Definitieve Resultaten Census 8 Volume 1, p. 42. URL: <http://www.statistics-suriname.org>, Accessed 21 December 2015.

⁴ André R. M. Pakosie, 1996, "Maroon Leadership and the Surinamese State (1760-1990)" in *Journal of Legal Pluralism* 37-38, p. 263-278.; Richard Price, [1983] 2002, *First-Time: The Historical Vision of an African American People*. Second Edition, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, p. xiii.; Dirk van der Elst, 2004, "On Suriname's Maroons," in *The Shadow of the Oracle: Religion as Politics in a Suriname Maroon Society*, H. U. E. Thoden van Velzen and W. van Wetering, Long Grove, Illinois: Waveland Press Inc., p. 1-15.

⁵ Rosemarijn Hoefte, 2013, *Suriname in the Long Twentieth Century: Domination, Contestation, Globalization*, New York: Palgrave Connect, p. 196.; also Richard Price, 1995, "Executing Ethnicity: The Killings in Suriname," in *Cultural Anthropology* 10:4, p. 440-442.

⁶ Ineke Phaf-Rheinberger, 2008, "The Maroons and the Creoles as Narrative Tropes," in *The "Air of Liberty": Narratives of the South Atlantic Past*, Amsterdam: Rodopi, p. 85-86.

⁷ "Censusstatistieken 2012 (Statistical Census 2012)," *Algemeen Bureau voor de Statistiek in Suriname (General Statistics Bureau of Suriname)*. Presentatie Definitieve Resultaten Census 8 Volume 1, p. 42. URL: <http://www.statistics-suriname.org>, Accessed 21 December 2015.

⁸ Richard Price, 1995, "Executing Ethnicity: The Killings in Suriname," in *Cultural Anthropology* 10:4, p. 442.

⁹ Ibid. p. 437-471. See also Albert Helman, 1987, *Blijfeven staan! De Situatie in Oost-Suriname, Just a moment! Report from East-Suriname*, no publisher information, p. 17, 19, 23.

¹⁰ As part of new legislation passed in the United States in 1990, the US National Park Service (NPS) began a program researching new potentials for interpreting and commemorating histories associated with the Underground Railroad. The NPS's Underground Railroad Network to Freedom program, under the direction of Diane Miller, has embraced an inclusive conception of the Underground Railroad, seeing it as encompassing all "resistance to enslavement through escape and flight," not only to Canada or through a singular "system" with distinct leaders, like Harriet Tubman. In helping scholars and the public move beyond the standard narrative of US maroonage, the NPS's annual Underground Railroad Network to Freedom conference in 2012 met in St. Augustine, Florida, where a number of Seminole Maroons, including Fixico, and other maroon-descendants came together from as far-off as Texas, Mexico, the Bahamas, and Georgia's Sea Islands. Personal communication with Phil Da'Pompey Fixico and Diane Miller, 04 January 2016. See also URL: <http://www.nps.gov/subjects/ugrr/index.htm>, Accessed 04 January 2016.

¹¹ Scholars and popular narratives of maroons in the US have tended to over-emphasize the role of white Quaker collaborators' roles in the success of the Underground Railroad, while also downplaying enslaved Africans' or maroon peoples' own self-determined action in resisting and escaping slavery, most often unaided by whites. See Larry Gara, [1961] 1996, *The Liberty Line: The Legend of the Underground Railroad*, Lexington: University Press of Kentucky.

¹² Kevin Mulroy, 2007, *The Seminole Freedmen: A History*, Norman: University of Oklahoma Press; Kevin Mulroy, 1993, *Freedom on the Border: The Seminole Maroons in Florida, the Indian Territory, Coahuila, and Texas*, Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press.; William Loren Katz, [1986] 2012, *Black Indians: A Hidden Heritage*, New York: Atheneum Books for Young Readers.

¹³ Aside from Mulroys' and Katz's works, also see Richard A. Sattler, 1996, "Remnants, Renegades, and Runaways: Seminole Ethnogenesis Reconsidered," in *History, Power, and Identity: Ethnogenesis in the Americas, 1492-1992*, ed. Jonathan D. Hill, Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, p. 36-69.; and William Sturtevant, 1971, "Creek into Seminole: North American Indians," in *Historical Perspective*, eds. E. Leacock and N. Lurie, New York: Random House, p. 92-128.

¹⁴ Most Seminoles, along with other Native American groups comprising the "Five Civilized Tribes of the Southeast," had removed to Indian Territory, or Oklahoma, between 1838-1842 in what is referred to as the Trail of Tears. Aside from formerly enslaved Maroon peoples of African descent who lived freely among these Native American groups, they also kept their own enslaved Africans, who they brought with them as property to Oklahoma through their forced migration. Personal communication with Diane Miller, 04 January 2016. Also Diane Miller, "Frontier Freedom: The Underground Railroad in Oklahoma," unpublished paper, p. 5.

¹⁵ See Phil Pompey Fixico's blog here: URL: <https://refixico.wordpress.com>, Accessed 23 December 2015.

¹⁶ Phil Pompey Fixico, William Katz, and Lesley Gist, 13 December 2015, "Pompey Fixico Maroon Descendant and William Katz author of *Black Indians*" on *The Gist of Freedom*, URL: <http://www.blogtalkradio.com/thegistoffreedom/2015/12/13/pompey-fixico-maroon-descendant-and-william-katz-author-of-black-indians>, Accessed 23 December 2015.

¹⁷ The exhibition, curated by Gabrielle Tayac, was accompanied by the publication of a catalog by the same title with a chapter dedicated to Fixico's family's histories. See Kevin Mulroy, 2009, "Behind the Rolls: Pompey Bruner Fixico," in *indiVisible: African-Native American Lives in the Americas*, ed. Gabrielle Tayac, Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution, p. 133-137. See also Kevin Mulroy, 2011, "Mixed Race in the Seminole Nation" in *Ethnohistory* 58:1, p. 113-141.

¹⁸ The 1992 Festival of American Folklife was also transformed into a traveling exhibition, as well as an online resource, which was referenced above. URL: <http://www.folklife.si.edu/resources/maroon/presentation.htm>, Accessed 21 December 2015. A catalog created for the festival can also be found online here, URL: <http://library.si.edu/digital-library/book/1992festivalofam00fest>, Accessed 11 January 2016. And for information on both the traveling exhibition and the original festival see, Kristy Feldhousen, 2008, "*Creativity and Resistance: Maroon Cultures in the Americas*. An online exhibition of the Center for Folklore and Cultural Heritage, Smithsonian Institution," in *Museum Anthropology*, 29:1, p. 64-67. Gaaman Matodja Gazon's grandson, Matodja Jopie, can be seen in image number 2. Jopie serves as Chief of Protocol for the current Okanisi Gaaman, Kondemasa Gaaman Da'Bono Velanti.

¹⁹ André R. M. Pakosie, 1996, "Maroon Leadership and the Surinamese State (1760-1990)" in *Journal of Legal Pluralism* 37-38, p. 263-278.

²⁰ In order for Fixico and I to use in our presentations and to begin sharing with a wider audience, including with those delegation members in Suriname and others who want to view, we have pre-released a preview of raw footage from our trip, which can be viewed here, URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nrZCFL-uwQ4>, Accessed 23 December 2015.

²¹ While in Suriname, Fixico was interviewed on a radio program that is broadcast throughout the Caribbean, and with Drs. Graand-Galon serving as translator/interpreter, Fixico fielded listeners' questions calling from near and far. One recent US radio interview featuring Fixico speaking about this trip can be heard online here: Phil Pompey Fixico, William Katz, and Lesley Gist, 13 December 2015, "Pompey Fixico Maroon Descendant and William Katz author of *Black Indians*," on *The Gist of Freedom*, URL: <http://www.blogtalkradio.com/thegistoffreedom/2015/12/13/pompey-fixico-maroon-descendant-and-william-katz-author-of-black-indians>, Accessed 23 December 2015.

Accompanying Essay of Photographs



1. Phil Da'Pompey Fixico in Diitabiki, Suriname.



2. Maroon Day delegation members arriving on the airstrip at Diitabiki, Okanisi people's "capital village." Matodja Jopie (left) serves as Chief of Protocol for the current Okanisi Gaaman and is the grandson of the previous Gaaman, Matodja Gazon. Here Jopie is greeting Dr. Cynthia Alendy (left center), Drs. Sa'Fidelia Graand-Galon (right center), and Phil Da'Pompey Fixico (right) as they disembark from their flight into interior eastern Suriname.



3. Maroon Day delegation members preparing for their flight to Diitabiki from Paramaribo. Jeremy Peretz (left), Dr. Alendy (left center), Drs. Graand-Galon (center), Pompey Fixico (center right), and Brenda van Daal (right), a board member of the Maroon Women's Network and member of the Maroon Day delegation.



4. Drs. Graand-Galon, Pompey Fixico, and an unidentified Maroon woman gathered before the start of the national Maroon Day parade in Paramaribo.



5. Poet Orsine Walden (aka Hanse Mujeamba, a Saamaca Maroon), Drs. Sa'Fidelia Graand-Galon, Elisa Membre, and Phil Da'Pompey Fixico, on a street in Paramaribo at the national Maroon Day parade on 10 October 2015.



6. Youths and other community members preparing for the start of the Maroon Day parade in Paramaribo.



7. Youths waiting for the start of the Maroon Day parade in Paramaribo.



8. Indigenous Surinamese participating in honoring Maroon Day by marching and performing in the parade.



9. Pompey Fixico joining in the Maroon Day parade action.



10. A group of Igbo men from Nigeria who live in Paramaribo participating in the parade honoring Maroon Day.



11. Paramaribo residents look-on from their balcony as this Igbo group passes by during the Maroon Day parade.



12. An Igbo masquerade on the streets of Paramaribo during the national Maroon Day parade.



13. Pompey Fixico in Paramaribo's city square in front of the parliament building.



14. Kondemasa Gaaman Da'Bono Velanti and Pompey Fixico meeting in the Okanisi royal Kintie, or "meeting house." Kondemasa Gaaman Da'Bono Velanti is wearing the Semiroon Peace Belts around his neck that were ceremonially gifted to him by Fixico.



15. Her Excellency Ambassador Sa'Fidelia Graand-Galon and Kondemasa Gaaman Da'Bono Velanti.



16. Graand-Galon and Fixico pose together in front of the royal Kintie.



17. Peretz and Fixico pose too.



18. Members of the Maroon Day delegation stand with royal dignitaries who display their newly awarded certificates of honorary membership in Fixico's Semiroon Historical Society.



19. Fixico in the royal Kintie meeting house in Diitabiki.



20. Pompey Fixico and Kabiten Da'Wettipai in Lantiwei village on the Cottica River.



21. Kabiten Da'Wettipai of the Okanisi village Lantiwei on the Cottica River.



22. Kabiten Da'Umanati Daniel, Head Kabiten of the Okanisi village of Wanhati/Agitii-ondo, with Fixico and Maroon Day delegation member Kinte Abena, who interviewed Fixico on his Surinamese radio program.



23. Sa'Moengolina (left), Chairperson of the Wanhati/Agitii-ondo foundation "Waati Uman U Sa Du," stands with Theresia, wife of the Head Kabiten of Wanhati/Agitii-ondo village, who is seated at center, with Fixico and Graand-Galon to his right.



24. Fixico and members of the Maroon Day delegation in a canoe on the Cottica River, after a full day visiting people in a number of different Maroon villages.



25. A canoe rushing by on the Tapanahoni River.



26. Drs. Graand-Galon's welcoming family spending some intimate time with Fixico at their home in Paramaribo.



27. Pompey Fixico, Fidelia Graand-Galon, and Tiffany Galon, Ambassador Graand-Galon's niece.



28. Pompey Fixico with a Maroon drummer at a Maroon Day conference in Paramaribo.



29. Maroon activist, artist, and poet Obed Kanape Aboodiyeh and Pompey Fixico at a conference in Paramaribo.



30. Members of a local Maroon organization, Royal Fiiman Paansu, Obed Kanape Aboodiyeh (below), and Marlene Malobie (right) honoring Fixico for his contributions to their Maroon Day delegation.



31. Members of Royal Fiiman Paansu, including Graand-Galon and Fixico, gathering by Paramaribo's waterfront.



32. Fixico walking down a street in Paramaribo past a colonial Dutch white timber building.



33. An older two-story home in Diitabiki constructed of local timber.



34. A timber home in Diitabiki with door painted in older traditional Maroon style.



35. Another example of a local timber home in Diitabiki.



36. A chicken running past a home in Diitabiki.



37. Okanisi Maroon ancestral altar under a kapok, or cotton silk tree, located beside the royal Kintie in Diitabiki.



38. Ancestral flag altar in Diitabiki, where it is also known as their “high altar,” or as *faaka tiki* in Okanisi language.



39. Local youths in Paramaribo playing in a tree outside Ambassador Graand-Galon's home.



40. A man and young boy sitting together on a bench in the Okanisi village of Loabi.



41. An Okanisi Maroon woman preparing a meal of cassava.



42. Some dancing fun in honor of Maroon Day in the village of Pikin-Piisii, with the Tapanahoni River in the background.



43. Fixico, Graand-Galon, an unidentified colleague, and Alendy standing outside a home in Loabi, the matrilineal village of Ambassador Graand-Galon, which was first founded in the 1760s. The home behind the group was once the residence of late village chief, Kabiten Da'Edua.

