

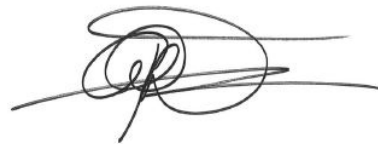
On Friday evening 8 November 2019 activists violently attacked participants in a Kick Out Zwarte Piet gathering in The Hague. The Royal Netherlands Historical Society (KNHG) of history professionals is deeply concerned that the attackers are invoking Dutch history and traditions to justify violence.

History and traditions are subjects of ongoing debate, and views of the past or manifestations of traditions change over time. This case, however, involves more, including actual violence. The KNHG therefore urges broadening the scope of the political debate announced beyond Section 7 of the Constitution concerning freedom of expression and respect for each other's sphere of debate. The attack on Kick Out Zwarte Piet does not reflect different insights on and identification with our common history; it is a violent manifestation of racism against black people targeting the physical integrity of largely black activists.

In the ongoing struggle against racism, the United Nations, with support from the Netherlands, has declared that the decade 2015-2024 will be dedicated to people of African descent. On 26 March 2019 the European Parliament specifically expressed its commitment toward eradicating racism against black people. May the political authorities perceive invoking Dutch history to justify violence as encouragement to take a firm stand in favour of freedom of expression, to acknowledge the acts of violence in the history of racism and to continue raising historical democratic awareness.

Susan Legêne (chair), Antia Wiersma (director) on behalf of the Board of the KNHG

Susan Legêne

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'AW', with a large, stylized flourish that loops around and underlines the letters.