



# Dutch Crossing

Journal of Low Countries Studies

ISSN: (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: <https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/ydct20>

## Why My Aunt Was Hiding from the Sun

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To cite this article: Sacha Celine Verheij (2022): Why My Aunt Was Hiding from the Sun, Dutch Crossing, DOI: [10.1080/03096564.2022.2144608](https://doi.org/10.1080/03096564.2022.2144608)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/03096564.2022.2144608>



Published online: 13 Nov 2022.



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## Why My Aunt Was Hiding from the Sun

Sacha Celine Verheij

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to discover to never be the Other  
when the march against racial injustice  
rocked streets in cities big and small  
is a privilege

you find yourself between white peers  
carrying the unseen knapsack for years  
you learn history painted in colours of whiteness  
but the paint is so dry it flakes

we have all known the truth for centuries  
hiding silently between the lines of lies  
the echoes of my ancestors weeping  
my body moulded by their memories

I was born into this light skin  
that might have you fooled  
yet I carry layers within  
a history of oppression  
stored in tones of brutality

how could my school ignore the coloniality of families like mine?

at age nine I asked my mum  
why my aunt was hiding from the sun  
self-preservation, my mother said  
the darker she became  
the more shame she would feel  
the less Dutch she would look  
so the less Dutch she would be

mixed-race me  
a mishmash of the Netherlands, Suriname and Indonesia  
I fight my country's historical amnesia  
by repainting these hidden colonial complexities

the histories that have been lost  
forgotten or deliberately overlooked  
the past absent from the history books  
my family being the restless fruit of such past in the present  
to paint these stories in fair colours, I will continue to write  
so the Other can be human like you

## Notes on contributor

*Sacha Celine Verheij* (1996) is a writer, poet and photographer and holds a Bachelor of Arts in Humanistic Studies (Universiteit voor Humanistiek, Utrecht, 2018) and an interuniversity Master of Arts in Gender & Diversity (Universiteit Gent, 2022), for which she wrote a thesis on Black British lesbian poets. The autobiographical poem 'Why my Aunt Was Hiding from the Sun', which was composed especially for this issue of Dutch Crossing, arose from Verheij's search for her own roots. Her grandfather Paul Louis Wekker, born in Paramaribo (Suriname), and her grandmother Maria Augustine van Enst, born in Ambón (Moluccan island in Indonesia), met during the Indonesian War of Independence (1945-1949). In order to blend into Dutch society, they raised her mother (Esmeralda Wekker) as European as possible, erasing their own cultures whilst creating a white armour hiding their brown skin. As a Dutch-Surinamese-Moluccan lesbian woman caught between many worlds, Verheij aims to do justice to the stories of lives – like her family's – that have been erased from history.