St. Maarteners Defoe, Garard win prestigious Pearl Awards

Defoe and Garard were two of the three nominees from St. Maarten at the annual ceremony, which serves to highlight and give credit to the positive achievements of people from the Dutch Caribbean living in The Netherlands. Mathias Voges was the third nominee in the Student Pearl category.

A loud applause sounded when jury representative Artwell Cain, Director of the National Institute for the Study of Dutch Slavery and its Legacy NiNsee, called Defoe forward as the winner of the five nominees. Cain said Defoe managed to secure a high level career at a young age. “She never lost sight of her goals.”

Cain used words like “passion,” “patience” and “perseverance” to describe Defoe who came to the Netherlands on her own at age 19 to study. Within four years she graduated with a bachelor’s and master’s degrees in child and youth psychology from Amsterdam’s Vrije Universiteit. Less than five years later she managed to secure a high level career at a young age. “She never lost sight of her goals.”

Defoe is 23 and started working when she was 15 years old. She worked in various fields and positions. After finishing her education she decided to focus on her career. She started working as a social worker and later became a teacher. In 2012 she became a research assistant at the National Institute for the Study of Dutch Slavery and its Legacy NiNsee. She is currently working as a research assistant in the department of youth psychology. Her research focuses on the experiences of Dutch Caribbean youth in the Netherlands. She is also involved in several research projects on the effects of racism and discrimination on the mental health of Dutch Caribbean youth.

In her letter to the 11 coalition members, Van der Pluym-Vrede stated that “contrary to earlier reports- the screening process of the candidate ministers based on the new integrity law had not been completed. At this moment not all the requirements of the national ordinance have been complied with. Only when that’s the case will a date for the appointment and swearing in of new ministers be determined.”

There has been some speculation that Asjes withdrew his resignation from Parliament because he did not pass the screening to become prime minister. He denied such on his Facebook page, however, stating that “former” Glenn Camelia had informed him since May 24 that he had passed the screening.

A potential problem is that the credentials of Asjes’ successor in Parliament Sherwin Leonora have already been approved. As a result, it’s not certain Asjes’ resignation can actually be reversed. The move likely has to do with the continued battle between what’s left of the PS-board and the parliament fraction led by Asjes.