Abstract

This article deals with the social, economic and political factors which determined the emigration of poor peasants and low skilled laborers from Madeira, to Curaçao and why they made this choice. A first and massive wave took place in the period of the 1920s until the 1950s and the workers came on a contract for the oil industry. The Portuguese island of Madeira, experienced serious economic problems and social disparities in those days. This was also the period in which the authoritarian Portuguese government controlled the migration of its people. The labor migration for the oil industry came to an end in the 1950s but the Madeirean immigration continued thereafter, because the need of labor for certain specific areas and jobs for which almost no local laborer wanted to apply, such as in agriculture in Curaçao, was an important factor. But it was, on one hand, also the result of persist ing social and political problems in the homeland, conscription for the army in wartime and little perspective for individual progress. On the other hand the pull factors after the oil period were considered strong enough to maintain a considerable attraction to Curaçao.

Keywords

Labor migration, contract laborers, oil worker, remittances, chain migration, multi-ethnicity