
Abstract

Throughout the Dutch Caribbean, enslaved people were required to undergo a transformation and submit to the wishes of their “owners.” Their fate was absolute subjugation to the master’s authority and forced conformity to the structure and culture of daily life on plantations and in stately homes. Habituation, accommodation, alienation, and resistance were all part of enslaved people’s existence. Driven by the desire to be free, to be liberated from oppression, exploitation, and humiliation, many fled to the South American mainland and nearby islands. Such migration became a normal part of life in the region and later took the shape of seasonal migrant labor and large-scale immigration to economic hot-spots such as the Aruban and Curaçaoan oil refineries.

Keywords: Dutch Caribbean; WIC; Royal Dutch Shell, forced labor; shortages; labor migration