

**Low fees for journalists, lacking laws protecting journalists, and a heavy dependence on advertisers. Do you take a critical stance as a journalist? That could mean many doors closing, both professionally and privately. According to journalist Ephrayim Odor, who made the documentary *Lagando bo Neishi (Leaving the Nest)* with support from the Dutch Fund of In-Dept Journalism, these are some of the factors that stand in the way of independent journalism in Aruba.**

“We need more investigative journalism on the island, but the circumstances make journalists afraid of challenging the status quo. In my opinion, a lot of things go unchecked without asking the questions that should be asked.”

In addition, the island is struggling with young Arubans leaving the island to the Netherlands after completing secondary school. And that exactly is the subject of the documentary that Odor and his team made with a grant from the Dutch Fund of In-Dept journalism.

“Aruba is facing a brain drain. A lot of the smartest people leave, do not come back and make their lives elsewhere. We are losing our talents, intelligence and culture. That’s one of the biggest problems we have on the island.”

Why do young people leave Aruba and why don’t they return? With these questions as starting point, Odor interviews young people and their families in Aruba, as well as the Aruban Minister of Education. Odor continues his research in the Netherlands where he interviews Mariana and Eduardo, an Aruban couple who have built their lives in the Netherlands. What challenges do they face and how do they deal with them?

With a project grant and accompanying coaching sessions with journalist Milouska Meulens, Odor is working on his documentary for an extended period. Through the project, he is expanding his network in both Aruba and the Netherlands and learning new skills. Leaving your own country behind for a better future in the Netherlands comes with worries and emotions. One of the skills that Odor developed through this project is how to interview people about sensitive topics:

“During the interviews on the airport I realised: “There is emotion here. How can I guide them best in this moment?” Letting them forget about the camera, not focusing on how the shots will look like or caring about the views. In that moment it was only about them. I wanted to make them feel comfortable. This project was my first realisation that being in the moment is the strongest thing for true honest storytelling. I will carry this insight with me for all my future projects.”

After the documentary was released, he not only received many phone calls and emails with positive reactions, three Aruban schools also invited Odor and his team to watch the documentary with their students to discuss it more in-depth. The film will be part of their mentoring programmes and will serve as a starting point for an open conversation about what moving to the Netherlands entails

In addition to raising awareness of social issues in Aruba, Odor wants to attract and train new journalism talent with his foundation Djis Pa Hari (<https://djispahari.com/>). Besides developing journalism skills he also wants to make new talent aware of the responsibility you have as a journalist. How can you tell real stories that are relevant and how do you convey them in such a way that they stick?

“There are so many stories untold on the island. People are afraid to tell them, but we are not.”

