

### **“This is not my land!”**

Ellis Island is the place where millions and millions of lives and fates crossed and nearly missed, they found themselves here to be controlled and selected, first step towards the realization of the legendary American dream. According to the vademecum for newcomers, "the poor, the illiterate, the elderly, the deformed, the blind, the deaf and those who suffer from contagious diseases, mental aberrations and any other infirmities are inexorably excluded from the American soil."

Since the end of the nineteenth century until after World War II, landed at Ellis Island adventurers and artisans, but most farmers were forced to leave their homeland in search of a better future. In fact, in times of crisis, and the crisis is always a constant in migration, these people are forced to choose between work and rights, even between work and health. They are forced to give up their rights in order to work: that is what unites the migrants of the time with those of today.

The violation of the human rights, which are the result of the sufferings and struggles of the work, have contributed to the democratic context that everyone enjoys today. The history of emigration is a warning: that despite the crisis, the job cannot go back to being a simple performance, an offer of goods on the market. The work must have a value of overall growth and dignity. It must be a precondition of freedom, equity, security, improvement.

In Italy, a number of factors (the unification of markets, the drop in prices of goods and wages, rapid population growth followed by a series of famines, the Unification of Italy and the socio-political changes that ensued) determined the departure of millions of peasants, forced by hunger and misery, but also convinced by the heroic tales of expatriate countrymen of large profits.

Starting from 1861, for the next century were recorded over twenty-four million departures. Usually we consider that almost all emigrants come from southern Italy, however this phenomenon interested all Italian regions. Subsequently after the first emigrants, it developed the phenomenon of migration chain: relatives, friends and neighbors reached the first countrymen looking for their turn of luck.

Soon it occurred profound changes in the original culture of immigrants and this caused generational divisions within the immigrant family. The traditional Italian patriarchal family entering in touch with the American society witnessed a deep crisis.

According to estimations of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in 1986, Italians abroad amounted to 5,115,747 of which 43% in the Americas and 42.9% in Europe.

The extent of the communities of Italian origin was however tens of millions, including immigrants' offspring in the various countries:

- 1 - in first position there is Argentina with 15 million people;
- 2 - then the United States with 12 million people;

- 3 - Brazil with 8 million people;
- 4 – Canada with 1 million people;
- 5 - ultimately Australia with 540,000 people.