



Eldric Abreu

Hello, everybody. My name is Eldric Abreu. I am a 27-year-old first gen African American man. I was born and raised here in New Bedford, Massachusetts, and I'm here to share my story with you.

There's a few stories I could share with you growing up here in New Bedford, but one that I would like to share most has really fueled my passion and what I've been doing in the community as a community outreach specialist is the historical diversification that has been in New Bedford for over 200 years. There are many cities and communities that have trouble working together due to barriers. Whether it's reaching out to the young adult community, to different diverse communities that have language barriers, or reaching out even to people in different social demographics, whether it's income level, low, medium to high. That's something I didn't get to realize and appreciate until I started working in my role as a community outreach coordinator for Waterfront Historic Area League, WHALE, a nonprofit here in New Bedford based around historic preservation.

I was taught Cape Verdean Creole as my first language growing up and learned English in school. But me being able to learn Cape Verdean Creole, and also being around people of different language speaking entities like Portuguese and Spanish, helped me learn these languages relatively quickly and easily, which was great and helpful for my job now today, but even better for me to be able to relay information to more people in my community on a larger aspect and a larger scale.

Growing up, I thought I knew a fair amount about my history and my community in the city of New Bedford, as well as my heritage as a West African and native Cape Verde and Senegal. But this past year and a half I've gotten to realize how far back the historical ties go with the Cape Verdean community in New Bedford, dating back over 200 years ago with the whaling age and during our whaling industry time when Cape Verdeans had first started coming over, not only into New Bedford but into America as whalers. The integration of Cape Verdean community began and started here in New Bedford, Massachusetts.

And that blows my mind to know that it's been going on for over 200 years and seeing people from all over the country now with different Cape Verdean ethnicities and knowing that it originated or started and was introduced right here in my hometown of New Bedford. It's given me pride, but also passion to want to continue to work and do more in my city and highlighting and engaging the residents of the community on how much New Bedford truly does have to offer. And how for generations, or for centuries you can say, it's been able to integrate a diverse population to help better its community's economic stability.

And that's pushed me to really be able to help relate to people, especially of my age, on the importance of New Bedford and how powerful and proud I am to have been born and raised here in New Bedford. I didn't realize the different diverse challenges, or challenges for a diverse community, until I started leaving New Bedford and Massachusetts more, where I would go out of the state and nobody knew what a Cape Verdean was or what Cape Verdean Creole was, or even Portuguese. And when somebody would meet me out of state and ask me my nationality or ethnicity, and when I would tell them I was Cape Verdean or Senegalese, usually left them with a very confused face. And I was like, "Hmm, there's not one place I feel like I can go in Massachusetts that I could tell somebody I was Cape Verdean and they would not know what that is."

But it was also interesting when I started going down more south during some schooling I did in Florida, and when people would ask where I was from and I would say New Bedford, and they had no idea where that was, so I'd have to describe them that it was a city in New Bedford, Southeast of Boston. And they'd be like, "Oh, I've heard of Boston." And I'm like, "Oh, probably heard of Boston due to its sports franchises, right?" And they were, "Yeah." But I can go across the world to Cape Verdean Islands and they won't know the state or much places in America, but can name New Bedford and have the connection saying, "Oh yeah, no, I have family that's there." Or, "One of my best friend's family has just moved over or has been there for generations." And it's like, "Oh wow. I can go across my country and people won't know where the city is, but I go across the world and they see



the relevance or acknowledge and know where New Bedford is."

And that brought in some connections on the power, the historical ties between different diverse communities and nationalities that integrated and started right in the port of New Bedford. And that's why this day and age as a 27-year-old man, I could say not only am I proud to be of Cape Verdean descent and Senegalese descent, but I'm very proud to be a New Bedford resident because that has made me the man I am today, has made me the caring person that I am today and has gave me the heart to want to help that I have today. Growing around in a community that nobody cared about your ethnicity or your nationality, just cared about what you were doing as a person and was always with open helping hands. And that's something that I think in our community we can take more pride in and illuminate the story of how our diversity has created a unity of our multicultural community for centuries.