



Janine da Silva

Interviewer:

It's now recording, so this is Michael Lapidés here with Jan Da Silva. Thank you for coming in, Jan, and maybe at the beginning you could say your name and maybe your association, and then you could tell us your story. I think today is October 20th, 2023.

Janine da Silva:

Yep, it is.

Interviewer:

The day we had the big oak tree hanging over our house trimmed some so it wouldn't feel dangerous.

Janine da Silva:

With all the Nor'easters they're promising for this winter.

Interviewer:

So good. So Jan, do you want to maybe introduce yourself and then tell us your story?

Janine da Silva:

Sure. I'm Jan da Silva. Currently, I'm the program manager of visitor experience and resource stewardship at New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park. I've worked for the park since 2008, so I hit my 15-year mark, which is exciting to me.

I just wanted to take a little bit of time to talk about how I came to New Bedford. I grew up in New York City and lived in New York City until 1996, and I moved to Fall River, Massachusetts, in 1996. The reason why I came to Massachusetts was to attend Roger Williams University.

I have a degree in history, and I decided I wanted to really work with architecture and I found Roger Williams University had an adult learning program, so made it easy for me to make up my mind to say, "I'm going to come there." I went to school predominantly at night for three years and graduated in 1999, but got my diploma in 2000.

At that point, I was trying to find jobs in the preservation field, which is a very small field across the country. Usually, you have to figure out how to know somebody, and I had always anticipated moving back to New York. But I met my life partner here in New Bedford, and so we are still together after 1999, which is a long time. But he and I used to work together and so we live here in New Bedford.

But for me, my career started when I worked as a consultant for the city of New Bedford. I worked with Derek Santos in the planning department, and so I just want to mention his name, and the other people I want to talk about who made my career possible would be Jeannie Costa.

I met Jeannie when I was over at the Office of Community Development, and she suggested I contact the Historical Society because they had a new historic house and they were looking to have somebody work with them on planning and conservation and construction. So, I wound up being the preservation consultant for the New Bedford Historical Society for about three to four years.

My office was in the Johnson House. I was there when they had the National Historic Landmark Ribbon Cutting.



They had the Director of the Park Service, Robert Stanton, come, which was an exciting day for everybody, and it set the trajectory for the historical society to be who they are today.

At that point, Jackie Hall-Smith was President. Joan Bobian was Vice President. Carl Cruz was an officer. Jeannie Costa, Jean Gruby Smith, they were all officers of the... Lee Charlton, I don't want to forget Lee Charlton. They were all officers of the Historical Society, officers and board members, and worked really hard to get the building on the track to where it is today, a National Historic Landmark that people come to see because it's the first free home of Frederick Douglass.

If I hadn't met those people, I don't think I would've gotten my next job, which was with the Massachusetts Historical Commission in Boston. So I worked there five years and then heard about a job back in New Bedford with the National Park. I applied for that job, and I was able to work for the National Park Service starting in 2008. I will say I feel grateful to have met all those people who helped me on my path and my way forward in preservation, and I just wanted to honor some of them in this common ground.