

**“Free Men Name Themselves”:
Cape Verdeans in Massachusetts Negotiate Race, 1900-1980**

by

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A Dissertation submitted to the

Graduate School-New Brunswick

Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Graduate Program in History

written under the direction of

David Levering Lewis

and approved by

New Brunswick, New Jersey

May, 2008

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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This project is about what it has meant to be “black” in twentieth century New England for immigrants from the African Diaspora. In this study, I document the experiences of Cape Verdeans in Massachusetts with brief comparative references to Caribbean immigrants. Specifically, their notions of identity and responses to US socio-cultural beliefs regarding race and immigration are examined during the period 1900-1980. I argue that the consistent choice of most Cape Verdean immigrants to reject the US racial binary by defining themselves as exactly “Cape Verdean” versus “black” or “white” represented a form of strategic resistance—both informal and organized—to both the colonial forces in their homeland and the racist and nativist impulses in their new home abroad. Their choices stood in sharp contrast to the overwhelmingly popular choice of most Caribbeans who for the most part adhered to the Garvey-inspired Black Nationalist strategies of racial protest reflecting differences in the two sets of immigrants’ colonial pasts and ideological influences. Practical differences in terms of class, language, phenotype, literacy and culture—i.e. religion also helped shape these foreigners’ responses and their attendant identity politics. The dissertation is grounded in traditional African-American history and historiographical arguments as well as African Diaspora theory. As members of

overlapping diasporas, Cape Verdean immigrants' inability to choose either one identity or another stemmed from the fact that their heritage reflected a *mélange* of influences, both African and European, simultaneously interacting in the form of multiple, interlocked subjectivities. Within the realm of these overlapping diasporas, the construct of race was not the penultimate marker of one's identity; rather, in keeping with African tradition, one's identity was shaped more by family name or clan. The varied choices made by Cape Verdean and Caribbean immigrants regarding racial affiliation reflects the diversity of experiences in the African Diaspora and within the so-called "black" population of the United States. Thus telling this history represents a challenge to African-American essentialism and pushes the boundaries of African-American history to include little known ethnic groups of people of African descent like the Cape Verdeans of the New England region.

PREFACE

Like so many others, I discovered the concept of race in school. In the fourth grade, I showed a few classmates a family photograph, including my immediate family and my grandmother on my Mother's side who was fair-skinned (and at the time had lost all pigment due to vitiligo). One of the children exclaimed, "I didn't know your grandmother was white!" Innocently, I asked what she meant by that and let her know that I had never noticed it before. At some point, I went home and asked my Mom and Dad, and my grandmother herself, to give me some answers. Aside from the explanation about grandmother's illness, each family member I questioned gave me a different response. The bottom line was that we were *not* "white," I was told. However, being Cape Verdean meant that we were mixed with European (white) and African (black) backgrounds. I asked what each of these categories meant and asked about pigment; I was curious to know what made someone either black or white and why the categories seemed to be fixed yet not based on anything concrete. My grandmother after all, had gone from being Cape Verdean and a woman of color, to being white in her lifetime. The incident planted a seed in me that would grow into a passion for the study of race and identity politics.

That was the more benign of my encounters with race-consciousness while growing up in southeastern Massachusetts. In the small, Catholic elementary school I attended, I was the only "black" girl in all of my classes. I never felt so visible and so different. I quickly picked up the idea that my color and conspicuousness were not positive things. Racial harassment followed soon after the first day of school and persisted until my graduation from the Catholic high school nearby. My only solace lay in watching the "Eyes on the Prize" documentary series my Father introduced me to as a way of teaching me about racial prejudice and the burden of being "black" in America. I was consumed with the history of

the African-American struggle for civil rights and found in those chapters of history, individuals and experiences I could readily relate to. I decided while in the tenth grade that I should go to college in the South, preferably attending an HBCU, in order to get closer to black history and presumably be among people that looked and felt more like me.

I ended up at Duke University in Durham, NC. And the idea of going to college there not only fulfilled that objective, it seemed, to me, to be analogous to the experience of an African-American traveling to the African continent for the first time to go “home.” My homecoming, however, was a bittersweet awakening. School-based collisions with race and identity politics continued when I got to the University. Once again, I found myself to be an outsider. I joined the Black Student Alliance. I made fast friends with as many African-American students (and other students of African descent) as I could find. I joined protest rallies against racism on the campus and found other ways to quench the thirst I had long-held for a way to participate in anti-racist activism. None of it quieted the comments of my peers. “What are you?” they asked. “What do you mean?” I responded. “Are you Puerto-Rican or Spanish? Are you a mulatto? You look different! Your features are too fine!” The questions deeply agitated me and confused me at the same time. Eventually through dialogues with various students, I realized that yet again there was something different about me. After some contemplation, I reasoned that the difference the students were picking up on was probably due to the fact that my Mother is Cape Verdean and my Father is Bajan (from Barbados). I confessed. “What is that?!” they replied. “What is Cape Verde? What is ‘Bajia?’” they asked me. Now, I know that nearly every Cape Verdean is asked these kinds of questions (as is anyone of “biracial” or “multiracial” origin in the US) at some point in their lives—particularly if they live outside of the New England area where they are a considerable presence. It dawned on me that most if not all of my colleagues in the South

had never been exposed to an “African-American” whose family tree could be easily traced back to exactly where the ancestors came from. None of my peers—except for perhaps one Trinidadian, one Zimbabwean, and one Eritrean—came from immigrant families let alone a remote archipelago such as Cape Verde (largely unheard of until very recently). And these issues were a source of tension to some who felt that admitting to a unique ethnicity amounted to a phenomenon that was akin to trying to “pass” for white.

These experiences laid the foundation of my interest in complex questions over race, ethnicity and the diversity of black experiences within the African Diaspora. The dissertation is born out of two concerns: (1) a paucity of historical work on immigrants of African descent with different perspectives on the questions of race and racial identity; (2) a concern over the changing face of the “black” population of college and university students—increasingly representative of immigrants and/or first generation American-born—and whether or not African-American history remains relevant (in the sense of being of interest) to them if they do not find that they are represented in the pages of the history books. According to a Harvard Graduate School of Education study based upon the 1990 and 2000 US Census reports, “there was a 41% increase in the number of foreign born Blacks to the United States; 84% of whom are from Africa and the Caribbean. The resulting impact of this new influx of Black residents in the United States has been felt in the labor and real estate markets, public education and with increasing measure, in higher education.”¹ Inside Higher Ed quoted Lani Guinier’s comments on foreign black students at Harvard at a 2003 Harvard reunion. Guinier, reportedly speaking to a Boston Globe reporter said: “most minority students at elite colleges were ‘voluntary immigrants,’ not descended from slaves. If you look around Harvard College today, how many young people will you find who grew

¹ Anonymous, “All in the Family?: The Changing Demographics of Black Students at Harvard.” Unpublished graduate proseminar paper. Fall 2005.

up in urban environments and went to public high schools and public junior high schools? I don't think, in the name of affirmative action, we should be admitting people because they look like us, but then they don't identify with us." These statements indicate, not only the changes to the population of college students of African descent, but also the wider implications of these changes and the debates around issues of race, representation and affirmative action, to name just a few topics, that their presence on college campuses represents. Arguably, African and African-American Studies, and the field of history in particular, must respond to this transformation. As scholars and educators, it is important consider how to address these issues within the work we produce that is taught and in higher education classrooms where such polemics frequently arise.

The dissertation is an attempt to address these concerns through examining the ways that the presence of African Diaspora immigrants in New England was implicated in 20th century debates over race, immigration and public policy in states such as Massachusetts where many such immigrants settled. Throughout the eight decades examined here, and continuing today, immigrants of African descent presented a quandary to native-born blacks and whites alike in the New England region. The differences between the various groups served to complicate socialization, often affecting the racial solidarity sought for local civil rights struggles and political protest work. It is my hope that the history brought forth in this dissertation will also help bridge the gaps between (traditionally defined) African-Americans and those of the African Diaspora who would undoubtedly benefit from having a greater understanding of one another's histories respectively. Arguably, most people in each population are largely unaware of how their experiences have been shaped by the presence of the other. The stories presented and documented here show that in the New England

region, the juxtaposition of accounts from local African-American history with the histories of New England immigrants from other parts of the African Diaspora reveals just that.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I dedicate this to the following individuals who gave me their unwavering support and unconditional love while I struggled to get through the writing of this dissertation: My parents, Minniet and Jerry Pilgrim (who worked tirelessly and sacrificed so much of their own lives to make sure I had everything I needed to succeed), and my loving sister and brother-in-law, Ayana and Malik, and my dear brother Hasani (who saw more potential in me than I often saw in myself); my extended family members including aunts, uncles and cousins (here, in Cape Verde and in Barbados) particularly those that were interviewed as I explored themes and questions for this project such as my “madrinha” Mary Fontes (keeper of our family history), my Uncle Bill Filkins (a veteran, boxer, funny man and wise man—a gentle hero to us all), my Aunt Auriel, and the late Earl Fernandes, Isabel Fernandes and Peter Fernandes as well as all other living aunts and uncles; a local historian and mentor Raymond Patnaude (creator of The Patnaude Collection of archives on Cape Verdean and African-American history in Massachusetts) and his wife Mrs. Patnaude (they shared their home, their archives, and their French Canadian culture with me); Adilson Cardoso (thanks for coaching me to the finish line); the Thomore family of New Brunswick, NJ who supported me and took me in as their own while I was in residence at Rutgers; Francisco Fontes and family; all of my students (past, present and future) at Umass Boston and at Massasoit Community College (many shared their family histories and provided local contacts for oral history interviews), especially Bethanie Petit-Frere, Sandra Centeio, Gina D’Haiti, Katia DaRosa, Janice Mascarenhas, Inez Delrosario, Nicole Sargent, Kennedy Oppong, Bryan Sullivan and Alliston D. Thomas; my colleagues at Umass Boston—Robert Johnson, Marc Prou, Tony van Der Meer, Choukhouma Azounyé, Jemadari Kamara, and Annie Salmeron, all of Africana Studies, and Shirley Tang, Peter Kiang, Jean Humez, Tim

Sieber, Elora Chowdury, Ana Aparicio, Lorna Rivera, Emmett Schaeffer, Ping-Ann Addo, Denise Patmon, Rajini Srikanth, Judy Smith and Deborah Whaley (friends who supported me during many difficult times and who wouldn't allow me to give up); dear friends and colleagues from the Rutgers history PhD program: Stephanie, Kelena, Amrita, Tiffany and Jelani and others from the fall 1998 entering class; colleagues from Massasoit Community College (where I was able to get part-time work when I needed it, and where I began to learn the Kriolu language)—Peter Johnston, Cristina Ajemian and my sister/friend and writing partner Joyce Rain Anderson; associates from local/community organizations Capeverdean Creole Institute, Inc. and the Cape Verdean Association of Brockton; finally the staff and faculty at Rutgers--particularly Dawn Ruskai, Dorothy and Mary, Barbara Sirman in the Graduate School Dean's Office, Kim Butler and Herman Bennett (my committee members), Jennifer Morgan, Deborah Gray White and Mia Bay (Rutgers faculty I had the privilege of working and studying with), former Rutgers faculty member/committee chairperson, David Levering Lewis and outside faculty/committee member, Irma Watkins-Owens. I want to thank my undergraduate Professors/mentors Raymond Gavins, Karla F. C. Holloway, Peter Wood, Alex Byrd, Paul Ortiz and Blair Murphy. I honor the more than ten loved ones that I lost while enduring the nearly 10 years of graduate study—Isabel, Peter, Earl, Billy, Sharon, Michele Thomore, Carlotta Brownley, Carl Pilgrim, Emerson Clark, “Taia” and “Vovo Lilin” (two of my earliest oral history interviewees), and Eugenia Fortes. And finally, I thank my Cape Verdean grandmother, Inez, and my Bajan grandmother Hazel. They and my grandfathers were unable to complete school but they excelled in setting examples of hard-work, personal fortitude, generosity and humility. I listened to their stories of the “old country” and took each one to heart. They suffered in order to give me the life and the opportunities that they could never have and that I now enjoy.

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Chapter One Introduction

‘Not Black Enough...’ African Diaspora Immigrants and the Problem of African-American Identity

Discussions over the meaning of race, blackness and intra-racial/ethnic tensions within the African Diaspora are as old as the Diaspora itself. These ideas have continued to be pervasive in scholarly literature though the tenor of the debate seems to be changing. Recently, Debra Dickerson, author of The End of Blackness, wrote the following in an editorial essay on 2008 Presidential Candidate Barrack Obama:

Black, in our political and social reality, means those descended from West African slaves. Voluntary immigrants of African descent (even those descended from West Indian slaves) are just that, voluntary immigrants of African descent with markedly different outlooks on the role of race in their lives and in politics. At a minimum, it can't be assumed that a Nigerian cab driver and a third generation Harlemit have more in common than the fact a cop won't bother to make the distinction. They're both "black" as a matter of skin color and DNA but only the Harlemit [...] is politically and culturally black as we use the term. We know a great deal about black people. We know next to nothing about immigrants of African descent[...]¹

These comments reflect the discourse that this dissertation responds to. Contributing to filling in that gap in the knowledge about people of African descent in the United States begins with building upon existing critiques of black essentialism and deconstructing narrow ideas of black identity and experience using African Diaspora theory to push the boundaries of traditional African-American historiography.

Consider the following excerpt from W.E.B. DuBois's classic, The Souls of Black Folk, in which the search for African-American identity is described in existential terms.

¹ Debra Dickerson, "Colorblind: Barrack Obama would be the great black hope in the next presidential race—if he were actually black," Salon 22 January 2007
<<http://www.salon.com/opinion/feature/2007/01/22/obama/print.html>>.

To the tired climbers, the horizon was ever dark, the mists were often cold, the Canaan was always dim and far away. If, however, the vistas disclosed as yet no goal, no resting-place, little but flattery and criticism, the journey at least gave leisure for reflection and self-examination; it changed the child of Emancipation to the youth with dawning self-consciousness, self-realization, self-respect. In those somber forests of his striving his own soul rose before him, and he saw in himself some faint revelation of his power, of his mission. He began to have a dim feeling that, to attain his place in the world, he must be himself, and not another.²

Cape Verdean immigrants discovering ‘Caboverdianidade’ (Capeverdeanness) can also be described as a journey to self-actualization. Their transition was similar to that which was experienced by generations of African-Americans after emancipation from slavery, described in DuBois’s words. Just as many African-American sharecroppers and others on the southern stage fled for northern and Midwestern cities, individuals and families from Caribbean islands like Antigua, Barbados and the Dutch Antilles, and from countries in and around Africa like the Cape Verde Islands, entered the New England states with similar intentions to find ways to realize their most basic aspirations. They wanted to be adequately paid for their hard and honest work. They needed to do more than just try to survive, and they wanted more for their children. They needed to be self-sufficient and to have extra in order to help those that they left behind. They were not abandoning their traditions. In fact, they desired the freedom of expression to define who they wanted to be.

In this study, I document the experiences of Cape Verdeans in New England during the period, 1900-1980. Specifically, I examine their notions of identity and their responses to the US racial and nativist ideologies. I argue that the choices of most Cape Verdean immigrants (throughout this period) to reject the US racial binary—defining themselves as exactly “Cape Verdean” versus choosing the categories of “black” or “white”—represented a form of strategic resistance, both informal and organized, to both the colonizing forces at

² W. E. B. DuBois, The Souls of Black Folk (1903; New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 2005) 12.

home (the Portuguese metropole) and the racializing forces in their new home abroad in the States. Their choices stood in sharp contrast to the overwhelmingly popular choices of most Anglophone Caribbeans, who tended to adhere to the Garvey inspired black nationalist strategy of racial protest (reflecting differences in the two sets of immigrants' colonial influences with regards to race and race-mixing, and practical differences in terms of language, religion, literacy, class and even phenotype). The dissertation is grounded in traditional African-American history and historiographical arguments as well as African Diaspora theory.

For the African-American, the project of confronting race and (re)discovering self was one rife with aspects of spirituality and psychology. DuBois's The Souls of Black Folk, (and his entire body of work) has framed just about every study of African Americans in the US and his ideas about race and identity have helped readers to expand their fundamental understanding of the journey one undergoes when encountering the concept of racial difference and/or racism for the first time. As DuBois himself recalled of his childhood days in western New England and his earliest experience with "the shadow" of race and race prejudice, "being a problem is a strange experience[...]"³ This same idea is explored here among the darker skinned immigrants of DuBois's home region in an attempt to document the yet unfolding saga of how some, so-called "black immigrants" came to terms with foreign and racial identity in the United States. To invoke the words of DuBois, these immigrants often experienced being a "problem" within a problem. Thus this history of immigrants of African descent in New England reveals many of the tensions within the African Diaspora that exist along ethnic and national lines. Through exploring this and other fissures in the larger "black" population in the US, the dissertation attempts to unravel

³ DuBois, Souls 8.

problems within the very category of “blackness,” the category by which all people of African ancestry in the US become defined.

The dissertation expands upon existing historical depictions of black New England communities, many of which have not represented the ethnic diversity of the population. For instance, historians have written about antebellum free blacks and their descendants, black Brahmins and the militants or activists like William Monroe Trotter and W.E.B. DuBois. Monographs have concentrated on the revolutionary era, Douglass’s time during the maritime heyday, antebellum New England free blacks, those blacks that participated in the Civil War (namely the famed 54th Massachusetts regiment), and with little exception after the late 19th century, the 1970’s school desegregation drama.⁴ This historiography has tended to focus on the capital city of Boston, and with few exceptions, not on other important cities such as New Bedford and the rural Cape Cod towns. Few have included in their sketches of black Boston and its surroundings the various immigrants that were also often conflated within those communities. Perhaps due to the fact that immigrants of African descent in New England mostly settled outside of Boston, and did not make up large percentages of the communities where they chose to live, historians for the most part (with the exception of Marilyn Halter) failed to document their roles in the development of the commonwealth. Their stories, however, afford an occasion for scholars to take a glimpse of “black” life beyond the racial veil. In addition, they provide us an occasion to question what it means to be “black” within the larger African Diaspora, and to foreigners in a country where skin color has circumscribed individual lives dramatically yet failed to do so universally.

⁴ Here I am referring to works such as: James Oliver Horton and Lois E. Horton, *Black Bostonians: Family Life and Community Struggle in an Antebellum City* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1979), and Adelaide M. Cromwell, *The Other Brahmins: Boston’s Black Upper Class, 1750-1950* (Fayetteville: Univ. of Arkansas Press, 1994).

Racial politics aside, the history of immigrants of African descent in New England deserves to be told due to their longstanding presence in the region and the contributions they have made to its economy, politics and culture. The relationships formed between Cape Verdeans and North Americans began way before the first Cape Verdean immigrants landed on Massachusetts shores to stay. The same may be said for relations with the British Caribbean isles. These interactions started during the final years of the 17th century and during the 18th century slave trade when wealthy New Englanders participated in and benefited from that industry. The exchanges continued on the Cape Verde Islands during the slave era and in the seas during the era of whaling. ‘Cape Verders’ as they were often called by sailors held a special place within the New England maritime economy. When Nantucket whalers traveled there in the mid-eighteenth century for exploratory trips, they often negotiated with the skilled Cape Verdean fishermen eventually bringing them aboard. The fact that these interactions started on the Atlantic seas and in transition between the islands and US ports is an appropriate metaphor for how fluid Cape Verdeans’ interactions with New Englanders were and how flexible their place has been within New England society.

Cape Verdean people began to migrate to the New England states in the late 19th century in small numbers relative to the population of the CV Islands and compared with other immigrants from the African Diaspora, namely Caribbeans who migrated to the Northeast at the same time. According to the Cape Verdean historian António Carreira, the first voluntary emigrations from Cape Verde were in small groups of all men. In 1890, the Cape Verdean population was numbered at 130,000. It reached 147,000 by the turn of the twentieth century. Between 1891 and 1900, there were just 2,340 Cape Verdean immigrants that came into the US (concentrated in New England states), 8.5% of all immigrants of

Portuguese origin. The immigrants traveled in groups of about 140-398 per year.⁵ They represented (if we can assume these numbers are accurate) a slight portion of the region's black population overall.

The total black (or “colored” as it were) population in New England states in 1900 was also small. It is well known that approximately ninety percent of blacks lived in the US South at this time. There were 35,582 blacks in Massachusetts at the turn of the century and fewer than 10,000 blacks in the state of Rhode Island. Due to ambiguities in the federal census, and especially in records of Cape Verdeans at the time, it is difficult to estimate what percentage of the black population was Cape Verdean—or even if the immigrants were considered/included in the black population count at all. Of the total black population of Massachusetts and Rhode Island, Caribbean immigrants were only counted for Massachusetts, estimated to be a little over 1,000 out of the estimated 35,582 blacks in the population—a very small percentage of the whole (equal to roughly 3%).⁶

Among the many groups of immigrants to enter the US from other countries in the African Diaspora or European countries, Cape Verdeans and Caribbeans had little representation in the total population, yet the place of these immigrants in the history of the region, particularly that of the state of Massachusetts, should not be ignored. The total Massachusetts population was 2.8 million in 1900 and grew to 3.5 million by 1915 due to the influx of immigrants.⁷ There were approximately 117,000 immigrants in Massachusetts from Italy, 109,681 French Canadians, and about 92,000 Russians who entered the state in those

⁵ Immigration Statistics from: António Carreira, The People of the Cape Verde Islands: Exploitation and Emigration, Marilyn Halter, Between Race and Ethnicity

⁶ The numbers listed here account for people living in the state, most likely transient workers with visas that permitted them entry into the state. However, there is no specification on their citizenship status. Demographics taken from the following: “Metropolitan Commonwealth, 1900-1950,” Population Study for the State of Massachusetts held in Stoughton Public Library.

⁷ “Metropolitan Commonwealth, 1900-1950” (Stoughton, MA Public Library), 39.

years (nearly 60% Russian Jews).⁸ Nearly 15,000 immigrants from the Caribbean came to the Bay State in the first half of the twentieth century. Of them, 2,877 settled in Boston in 1920 and 5,000 were living in Boston by 1950.⁹ By comparison, the nearly 9,000 Cape Verdean immigrants that came into the region between the years 1891 to 1910 might have had a slight presence. However, within the overall black population of the state this was a significant number.

As the historian Violet Showers Johnson has documented (in one of the only studies to concentrate on people of Caribbean descent in Boston), in 1920, blacks made up only 5% of the state's population (about 4 million) and there were 16,350 in Boston alone; a third were Caribbean immigrants. By comparison, the numbers of Cape Verdeans spread across the various cities and towns were in the hundreds. For instance, in the first twenty years covered here, 1900-1920, there were 293 Cape Verdeans documented in Massachusetts in the 1900 and this number gradually rose to 1,506 by 1920. The places where Cape Verdeans created isolated settlements spanned the area from Massachusetts to New York including the following cities: Nantucket, Wareham and Onset, Falmouth, Harwich, New Bedford, Boston and Cambridge in Massachusetts; Providence and Pawtucket in Rhode Island; Bridgeport and Hartford in Connecticut; and Brooklyn, New York. This project is concerned with Boston, New Bedford, the Cape Cod area, and Providence, Rhode Island. In spite of their limited representation, these immigrants from the African Diaspora made their presence felt through their contributions to the states' wealth. They were part of the New England labor market, beginning with maritime occupations, agricultural work, the construction of state

⁸ "Metropolitan Commonwealth," 39.

⁹ Violet Mary-Ann Johnson, "The Migration Experience: Social and Economic Adjustment of British West Indian Immigrants in Boston, 1915-1950," dissertation, Boston College, 1992. Johnson's dissertation was recently published as the following: *The Other Black Bostonians: West Indians in Boston, 1900-1950* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana UP, 2006).

highways, bridges and railroads and they worked in homes as domestics and day laborers.

Their roles in the states' cultural history is less well known; this dissertation will continue the work of documenting these immigrants' lives—building upon the work of Marilyn Halter, Violet Johnson and others whose work brings this history to light in an effort to redress the images of black and immigrant living in these northern cities and towns.

“Free Men Name Themselves” is a response to the body of work on African-American families and communities which has reinforced essentialist notions of black American identity. The writing of this thesis represents various challenges in the process of documenting diverse people of the African Diaspora—groups which are often unrepresented (or misrepresented) in traditional historical sources. The previously listed demographical statistics recounted, and the small numbers of immigrants that this reflects, speaks to this difficulty. In the time this project will cover, from the turn of the century to 1980, the number of Cape Verdean immigrants in the US grew to over 12,500 by the year of the republic's independence (1975). In the phase between 1946 (period that Portuguese forcibly sent Cape Verdeans to São Tomé and Príncipe for plantation labor) and 1973 (beginning of the end of the war for independence led by revolutionary Amílcar Cabral), well over 114,000 people left the country (forced and voluntarily) for various locations including the US, Italy, Portugal, Brazil, Argentina, and their fellow Portuguese colonies such as Mozambique and Angola. These figures, however, do not include clandestine emigration which always coexisted with legal migrations out of the islands. From the start, for example, frequently passing whale ships that traveled in and out of Cape Verdean ports made clandestine voyages that much easier to take place.¹⁰ Whether forced away from home and emigrating with documents or illegally, the foreigners entered the US for many of the same

¹⁰ António Carreira, The People of the Cape Verde Islands: Exploitation and Emigration, trans. Christopher Fyfe (1977; United Kingdom: C. Hurst & Co., 1982).

reasons—drought, famine, lack of money to pay for legal passage or desires to escape military service. Such patterns continued late into the century and persist until today; they present formidable challenges to scholars of immigration and social history who seek to humanize the stories of these people.¹¹ In many ways, documented immigrants remain just as invisible to the historian as do the undocumented.

The numbers of Cape Verdeans remained uncertain due to all of these reasons and others that have to do with the ambiguities of race and the problems with racialization. By 1980, there were about 400,000 Cape Verdeans in the US—more than the actual population on the Islands themselves, yet this number could be misrepresentative of the actual count. During the period prior to independence, Cape Verdean migrants were designated as “Portuguese” and “Black Portuguese”, “Black Male or Female” born in Portugal, and “Portuguese Negro.” They were listed as white, black or mulatto, or given an identity based on the island of most frequent origin in the early period such as all of those who were called “Bravas.” Many surnames were changed (to reflect phonetic spellings and or Spanish surnames that may have seemed similar and/or were more recognizable); for example, there was “Noons” which was actually *Nunes*, and Santos which was actually *Centeio*. Similarly,

¹¹ There are many things that could be said about the problem of sources and the methodological challenges presented by this undertaking. Here I briefly comment upon the irregularities in the census descriptions of Cape Verdeans’ racial identity. However, even before one finds listings of Cape Verdeans, Caribbean or other African Diaspora immigrants—any immigrants in fact—the conundrum of nomenclature becomes evident. In the Boston Public Library special collections and (newspaper) archives, I searched for “immigrants” with no success until I realized they are still categorized as “aliens.” This ought to have been obvious perhaps, yet as a social historian seeking to portray the human nature of a marginalized group of people (within the larger marginalized groups they represent), this proved to be significant. It spoke to me of the importance of this work, and of the critical need for expanding our fields of research and social scientific practices—incorporating “diversity” not only within academia and its products but into the very archives we base our historical inquiries upon. It also spoke to me of the validity of challenging the paradigm of blackness and the need to push other powerful constructs that shape our thinking about people in the US such as that of viewing the immigrant as “alien”—an idea that tends to transcend their attaining citizenship. This project, then, is about many of the same universal concepts that our pioneering forefathers and fore-mothers in the field of African-American history were writing about in order to define: citizenship, culture, identity, resistance.

Fernandes became Fernandez, and *Graça* became Grace. As the years progressed, these disparities lessened as Cape Verdeans became more known as a unique ethnic population. The twenty-first century struggle of Cape Verdeans to challenge these and other problems with the census and their documentation therein represent just one illustration of how they asserted their collective nationality and demanded recognition and representation.

Part of the aim of this project is to forge the inclusion of Cape Verdeans and other immigrants of the African Diaspora living in the US in African American historical studies. In this way, the dissertation will contribute to historiography on underrepresented 'black' ethnics in order to form a more complete and true rendering of the African Diaspora in the United States. Historical narratives informed by narrow conceptions of race and racial identity—informed by the proverbial “one drop rule” and the essentialism that stemmed from it—must be disrupted in order to expand the field and make it more viable to current and future students of the discipline. In spite of the advances in African-American historiography which deconstructed the notion of essentialism, much of the collective understanding of black identity in the US is still rooted in older constructs. The idea that an African-American/“black” person is definable by certain properties—usually having to do with his/her phenotype (nature) or other qualities that make up the essence of the black race—shaped most studies of African-Americans across the disciplines.¹² Studies of the African-American past that did not incorporate differences between people based on

¹² In general, I am alluding to historical works that defined the races (particularly the black-white dialectic), written about in Matthew Guterl's *The Color of Race in America, 1900-1940*, such as Ridpath's *Great Races of Mankind*, Madison Grant's *Passing of the Great Race*, and Stoddard's *The Rising Tide of Color*. Within traditional African-American historiography, I refer to foundational sociological studies such as E. Franklin Frazier's *The Negro in the United States*, and *The Negro Family in the United States*, St. Clair Drake's *Black Metropolis*, and DuBois's groundbreaking historical survey *Philadelphia Negro; A Social Study*. It is of course well-known that Frazier's studies (among many, many others) influenced social policy, for instance particularly with Daniel Patrick Moynihan's infamous report, *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action*; this underlines the necessity for studies of underrepresented groups (within the larger black population) that more adequately/accurately portray their cultural practices and other social characteristics.

ethnicity and cultural experience have only helped to reify these notions in the reader's imagination.

Stuart Hall offers a critique of essentialism rooted in thinking about the phenomenon of Diaspora. In an article on Caribbean cultural identity, he explained two ways of defining cultural identity, one based upon sameness and one based on difference. Hall uses the Caribbean experience to explain the idea of essentialism saying "this oneness underlying all the other more superficial differences is the truth, the essence of [Caribbean cultural identity]" versus the differences that exist among various islanders.¹³ He uses Derrida's concept of difference (the French *différance*) to illustrate the contrary—difference being 'the marker which sets up a disturbance in our settled understanding or translation of the concept.'¹⁴ This is the idea that informs this work—the idea that the difference between the various populations that comprise the African Diaspora (like Cape Verdeans, Trinidadians or US-born blacks) is the thing that unsettles or disturbs our understanding of black identity simultaneously expanding our knowledge and appreciation of how social constructs like race, nation, gender, class and citizenship actually operate in individuals' lives. bell hooks' argument in "Postmodern Blackness" supports this notion of why such work is of critical importance. In this article, she wrote:

Employing a critique of essentialism allows African-Americans to acknowledge the way in which class mobility has altered collective black experience so that racism does not necessarily have the same impact on our lives. Such a critique allows us to affirm multiple black identities, varied black experience. It also challenges colonial imperialist paradigms of black identity which represent blackness one-dimensionally in ways that reinforce and sustain white supremacy. This discourse created the idea of the "primitive" and promoted the notion of an "authentic" experience, seeing as "natural" those expressions of black life which conformed to a pre-existing pattern or stereotype. Abandoning essentialist notions would be a serious challenge to racism. Contemporary African-American resistance struggle must be rooted in a

¹³ Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990) 222-237.

¹⁴ Hall, "Cultural Identity" 229.

process of decolonization that continually opposes reinscribing notions of “authentic” black identity.¹⁵

The dissertation addresses two of the points that hooks raises: “multiple black identities” and “colonial imperialist paradigms of black identity.” I argue that the immigrants’ challenges to US racial denominations represent what hooks calls: “contemporary African-American resistance struggle...rooted in a process of decolonization.” As hooks infers, acknowledging multiple versions of “black” identity and experience is affirmative scholarship as well as subversive practice. In addition, with regards to African-American historiography (and scholarship based in other disciplines), infusing traditional studies with Diaspora theory advances the scholarship forward in a way that keeps up with current transformations in the changing student population.¹⁶

Herman Bennett’s idea of “black structuralism” has also informed this work by providing a theoretical basis from which to look at how dominant notions of blackness exclude certain individuals or groups while affirming certain forms of experience as racial in nature. Such scholarship theorizing the African Diaspora laid the foundation for the themes that are presented here. The ‘formula’ suggested here for assessing the patterns and processes necessary for understanding African Diaspora identities, comes out of the work of literary scholar Brent Edwards. Edwards’ concept of *décalage* (French/ loosely translated as ‘a gap, something missing’...and the process of adding back something that is missing which

¹⁵ Bell hooks, “Postmodern Blackness,” *Postmodern Culture* 1.1, Sept. 1990
<http://www.africa.upenn.edu/Articles_Gen/Postmodern_Blackness_18270.html>.

¹⁶ Recent surveys have begun to reveal how today’s black college (and graduate school) population is becoming increasingly diverse with many if not most students being first generation American-born or being immigrants themselves from various countries in the African Diaspora. The approach to African-American history I am suggesting here (using more Diaspora theory) would seemingly make the historiography more representative and thus more accessible to these kinds of students. In addition, this work will help challenge what Orlando Patterson refers to as “the new black nativism” (discussed in a recent article published in *Time*/CNN news bulletin, Feb. 2007).

was there in the first place) is most useful here.¹⁷ This project takes up Edwards' challenge to apply the notion of *décalage* to studying the African Diaspora in the US. Similar to the work of Michael Gomez who explored the origins of the first Africans brought to the New World as slaves in *Exchanging Our Country Marks*, the dissertation reveals how the diverse immigrants in New England clung to their separate cultures and only gradually came to terms with how to negotiate their place within the US racial maze. Gomez's Africans were an assorted bunch whom did not immediately connect along racial lines. They instead experienced a gradual process of adaptation and finding solidarity based on mutual African descent. He described this as follows:

With the African antecedent in view, it becomes possible to more fully comprehend the change, the transition, from a socially stratified, ethnically based identity directly tied to a specific land to an identity predicated on the concept of race. ...[T]here were specific mechanisms in each phase of the African's experience—the initial capture and barracoon, transatlantic trek, and seasoning—through which he was increasingly nudged toward the reassessment of his identity. ...Clearly, the very process of enslavement directly informed the restructuring of the slave's identity. The slaveocracy attempted to define the African's condition for its own purposes, manipulating cultural symbols with such efficacy that in some cases the slave ultimately adopted and embraced the perspective of the slaveholder as her or his own. On the other hand, many slaves understood the objective of the enslaver and often opted to resist.¹⁸

Similarly, Cape Verdeans (and Caribbean to a lesser extent) underwent a gradual process of defining their place in New England and their collective identity vis-à-vis other groups. The twentieth century saga unfolded in stages as the immigrants participated in everyday work and family life. They later established organizations as fully-formed citizens and as they witnessed (and at times took part in) various historical watersheds, their notions of individual and group identity transformed in many ways. Thus historicizing Cape Verdean immigrants in New England in the context of looking at the African Diaspora in the US (and in

¹⁷ Brent Hayes Edwards, "The Uses of Diaspora," *Social Text* 19.1 (2001): 45-73.

¹⁸ Michael Gomez, *Exchanging Our Country Marks: The Transformation of African Identities in the Colonial and Antebellum South* (Chapel Hill: University of NC Press, 1998) 154.

comparison with other groups like the Caribbeans) is an experiment in processing how individuals and groups within the African Diaspora in the US have defined racial/ethnic identity on their own terms in spite of and in response to the racial ideologies that so-often confined them.

According to many Cape Verdeans that came to live in New England around the turn of the twentieth century, the US category of 'blackness' (the category of African-American ethnicity) was inadequate for describing their true identities. As members of overlapping Diasporas these immigrants thought differently about identity politics and attempted to hold on to their individual nationalities as a way of resisting the US ideas on race. Their thinking was informed by the fact of their mixed racial heritage; on the contrary, most immigrants from the English-speaking Caribbean—many having roots in the Garvey tradition—embraced this category and were more easily assimilated into the African-American communities. Whether looking at Cape Verdean immigrants or those from the various Caribbean countries, each represents a transnational Diaspora that is part of the larger/meta-African Diaspora where the tensions that exist over ethnicity, family clan, class, gender and other differences have always been present. These differences reflect the complexities within so-called African-American communities. To the outsider looking in, these communities may appear monolithic (monolingual and monocultural that is) yet they are ones that consist of many diverse networks exemplified within the New England region.

In Massachusetts, Cape Verdeans not only joined immigrants from various Caribbean islands, they mingled with foreigners from Finland, Armenia, Portugal, the Azores, and of course the Irish and Italians that had a longstanding presence in the area. Since it was the era in which foreigners were identified as members of distinct races, it was

understandable for them to see themselves along this continuum.¹⁹ It resonated with them as it was more alike the social system in place in their homeland. In this period, it would have been clear to them that there was the possibility of being other than black or white. They were keenly aware of the differences between themselves and others—some more obvious like language and religion—and immediately began to see where they could and could *not* fit in. So while some African Diaspora immigrants, such as those from the British Caribbean, assimilated into the African-American communities where they lived, most Cape Verdeans of the early 20th century resisted this. The reasons for this were complicated, some isolated in part due to aspects of their culture that made it nearly impossible to acculturate. The language barrier alone meant that Cape Verdean people felt more comfortable separating themselves in order to communicate and find ways to function in their new surroundings.

The framework that defined race and race relations in the US was as foreign to many of these immigrants as the language of the new country was. After all, within their circles, it was not race that formed the ultimate marker(s) of one's identity—it was one's family and one's culture. At first, the idea of being “black” corresponded to skin color and thus was not something that applied to all. Nevertheless, as it became clear that the American “blackness,” was more a political category and a pejorative at that, it was found to be lacking as a way of describing the immigrants' true character. For many of these émigrés, the black population was synonymous with an oppressed people—a people without culture or dignity. They left their homelands in part to escape oppression and now wanted no part of it. The practical difficulties of learning a new language and new customs were oppressive enough. Always, simultaneously situated within various, global communities, the mostly mestiço Cape

¹⁹ Maria Luisa Nunes, A Portuguese Colonial in America: Belmira Nunes Lopes, The Autobiography of a Cape Verdean-American (Pittsburgh, PA: Latin American Literary Review Press, 1982) 202-203.

Verdeans living in the US understood themselves to be both, and yet neither, African and/or Portuguese. They thus understood themselves to be uniquely Cape Verdean—part of three Diasporas: the African, the Lusophone or Portuguese, and the Cape Verdean Diaspora which they helped create. Thus the US racial binary which would force them to choose one or the other—according to the “one-drop rule” and other seemingly (to them) random rules—was irreconcilable.

The work of anthropologist Deidre Meintel revealed that the years of slavery and exile of Cape Verdean people after Portuguese colonization produced “a tripartite classification of the people into three categories: *branco* (“White” settlers, exiles and colonizers), *mestiço* (racially intermediate enslaved and/or free persons) and *negro/preto* (“Blacks” believed to be ‘pure’ African and who were usually enslaved).”²⁰ Each group was distinguished by phenotype and degree of assimilation to Portuguese culture.²¹ These distinctions resulted in racial and class tensions among islanders and between residents of various islands who adopted “the idea that the people of a certain island, with certain skin color and/or phenotype were superior to another.”²² These ideas around class, social status and skin color were internalized by Cape Verdeans and carried with those who migrated to the US. As anthropologist Gina Sanchez Gibau observes, they were then “reinforced within the US environment of racial hierarchy.”²³ This is understandable since the first significant groups of Cape Verdean immigrants came to the United States in the era immediately after

²⁰ Deidre Meintel, Race, Culture, and Portuguese Colonialism in Cabo Verde (Syracuse, NY: Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, Syracuse University, 1984).

²¹ Meintel (1984); Gina Elizabeth Sanchez, “Diasporic [Trans]formations: Race, Culture and the Politics of Cape Verdean Identity,” diss., UT Austin, 199.

²² Marilyn Halter, Between Race and Ethnicity: Cape Verdean American Immigrants, 1860-1965 (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993) 144.

²³ Sanchez, diss. 21.

Reconstruction, at the height of Jim Crow when blacks were at one of the lowest points in US history.

For most if not all of these immigrants, one's identity could not be fixed in the same way. Their identity formation was a complex process. Here, again, the words of DuBois in The Souls of Black Folk are apropos. He wrote of the spiritual nature of this course:

The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife,--this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self. In this merging he wishes neither of the older selves to be lost. He would not Africanize America, for America has too much to teach the world and Africa. He would not bleach his Negro soul in a flood of white Americanism, for he knows that Negro blood has a message for the world. He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American, without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without having the doors of Opportunity closed roughly in his face.²⁴

As is suggested here, the problem is one of an existential nature. It is an effort to find one's self and one's place in the world and it is a political question of race and representation, nation and citizenship, and a cultural dilemma as well. The sense of "strife" of the American Negro, as DuBois defined it, is shared by the immigrant of African descent and perhaps is the thing that is shared universally by those seeking self-determination. What is not shared, however, is this sense of merely a "*double*-consciousness," for the immigrant—particularly the *mestiço*—feels multiple subjectivities, and the struggle is to integrate these for a sense of singular belonging. The one place that the immigrant can refer to as home then becomes a critical reference point, although all the while they remain cognizant of their colonizer's origin and their newly found place of residence. It is argued here that the denial of the label "black" by many immigrants of Cape Verde and elsewhere is a form of resistance and self-definition *not* a rejection of African ancestry or shared experiences with African-American people. In some ways, the Cape Verdean point of view on these matters relates to the

²⁴ DuBois, Souls of Black Folk 9.

conflicts within the “African antecedent” Gomez wrote about, which was divided along ethnic lines and origins tied to particular locations. With the birthing of new generations, the maturity of a Cape Verdean-American population and with the post-independence trends within the archipelago itself, ideas about Cape Verdean identity and race evolved significantly. Individuals’ understandings of themselves changed in accordance with historical trends.

The immigrants’ efforts to articulate their own subjectivities in relation to African-American identity represent a challenge to US racial ideologies and to the structural racism they confronted while settling in their respective New England communities. Attempts to negotiate and rationalize United States racial categorization among immigrant populations on these shores have a long history. It is something that African-Americans themselves have debated intensely in the process of trying to define themselves. Critiques emanating from the African-American community have taken many forms. One example is captured in this quote from a 90 year-old man who was written about in Drylongso:

Now you must understand that this is just a name you have. I am not black and you are not black either if you go by the evidence of your eyes...Anyway, black people are all colors. White people don’t look all the same way, but there are more different kinds of us than there are of them. Then too, there is a certain stage at which you cannot tell who is white and who is black. [...] Looks don’t mean much. The thing that makes us different is how we think. What we believe is important, the ways we look at life.²⁵

Arguably, we know more about the history of how blacks in America have been looked at and treated by outsiders than we know about how blacks in America ‘look at life’ to quote the nonagenarian written of in Drylongso. “Free Men Name Themselves” contributes to the body of knowledge produced on the latter.

These discussions on blacks’ naming of themselves have a history all their own.

²⁵ John Langston Gwaltney, Drylongso: A Self Portrait of Black America (New York: Vintage, 1980) 96.

One of the most controversial examples was in the work of the Barbadian activist/bibliophile, Richard B. Moore, in his book The Name Negro: Its Origins and Evil Uses, wherein he wrote the often quoted exclamation: “Dogs and slaves are named by their masters; free men name themselves.”²⁶ Moore’s statement reflects one side of the debate over black identity which African Diaspora immigrants have always participated in. When African descended immigrants have chosen to ‘name themselves’ they did not always want to assimilate or “pass” but rather to preserve their “older selves” (using DuBois’s idea) and maintain the integrity of their cultures.

For many of the Cape Verdeans, “blackness” came at a price similar to the price Jewish immigrants felt they would pay in exchange for becoming white. In the monograph The Price of Whiteness, Eric J. Goldstein discussed the dilemmas faced by Jews at the turn of the century as they tried to determine a place for themselves in US society. He argued that they wanted the security and privileges of whiteness and tried to prove themselves part of the white population, yet they were committed to maintaining a separate, unique identity. Jewish immigrants felt a need to set themselves apart from blacks yet they didn’t want to be guilty of the same type of persecution that they themselves had faced. Ultimately, they faced a complex “emotional process.”²⁷ Cape Verdeans and Caribbean immigrants underwent similar emotional adjustments no matter what identity/ racial or ethnic category they ultimately chose. In the case of most Cape Verdeans (prior to CV independence in particular), the process was one that led them to conclude it was best to hold tight to their own national identity and cultural character. For those born under the Portuguese flag, it was not an issue—they had no choice under the strict rules of the Salazar regime. However,

²⁶ Richard B. Moore, The Name Negro: Its Origin and Evil Use (1960; Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1992).

²⁷ Eric J. Goldstein, The Price of Whiteness: Jews, Race, and American Identity (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 2006) 1-10.

later generations' responses to the question of how to identify were more flexible, determined by factors such as: the era in which they came of age or when they immigrated; how much time they spent in the US; whether or not they were born here; phenotypical characteristics; family patterns and opinions; political choices (such as the desire to gain civil rights and access to affirmative action) and other factors.

The background of the concept of race and the history of black/white race relations in the US has been widely documented, however many scholars in this field agree that ethnicity—particularly ethnic differences within black America—has not been given enough attention. Historian of the Cape Verdean community in Massachusetts, Marilyn Halter, recognized this in her work which was situated in immigration studies as well as US history. She wrote:

A further limitation of the ethnicity paradigm when applied to foreign-born blacks in particular is the absence of recognition of the diversity of cultures among racial minorities in the United States. African Americans are seen within this construct as simply another ethnic group, an undifferentiated population. Like the larger society itself, the discourse of ethnicity theory reveals a biracial rather than multicultural mode of analysis. Ethnic differences within the black population are too often overlooked in the scholarship on race relations as well. The peculiar but widely held belief that whites—whether Anglo-Saxon, Polish, or Greek—are defined by ethnicity, while blacks are defined by the color of their skin alone, persists.²⁸

Halter's work paved the way for studies such as this one that add to the previous narratives of Cape Verdean experiences in southeastern Massachusetts. Similarly, Irma Watkins-Owens study of Caribbean immigrants in New York also addressed ethnic tensions within the black community of Harlem. She stated: "more recent investigations [of New York City]

²⁸ Halter, Between Race and Ethnicity 9.

rarely emphasize Harlem's diverse origins, or explore the intraracial ethnic dimension as an important dynamic in African American community life."²⁹

This dissertation is an attempt to do this work for the region of New England and for the history of the state of Massachusetts in particular. The organization of the dissertation is as follows: This, the first chapter, serves as the introduction; chapter two is an explanation of the (1) the positionality of Cape Verdeans as a population that occupies overlapping Diasporas, and (2) major interventions of this project, revealing where the dissertation fits within previous explorations of similar topics: race, ethnicity, immigration and immigrant life, African Diaspora patterns, etc. I further explain how the collective story of Cape Verdeans expands our understanding of what it means to be "black" and what it means to get beyond that category to see African Diaspora processes around identity and assimilation in a different light. Chapter three is organized around the theme/question of how these immigrants fit themselves into New England society using family networks. For Cape Verdeans, much like most other immigrant groups, the institution of family served a critical role in the migration process. Families were often the impetus for émigrés leaving home or for long-time immigrants returning to the homeland. Families served as buffers for the trials and tribulations of adjusting to life abroad. Family was also the site for many discoveries about race and gender politics in the lives of individual Cape Verdeans and their progeny. In sum, the stories of Cape Verdean families reveal many of the intricate details and complexities of the larger narrative of this community. Chapter four explores the themes of work, education, organizational life, identity, and protest politics. I also explore intergenerational relationships wherein conflicts often arose. Similarly, as the immigrants had increasing contact with people outside of their community, identity politics changed or

²⁹ Irma Watkins-Owens, Blood Relations: Caribbean Immigrants and the Harlem Community, 1900-1930 (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1996) 1.

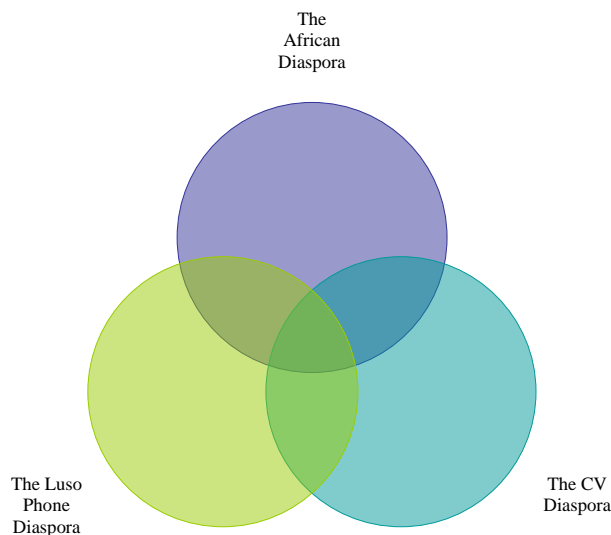
took on new meanings distinct from those within the insular Cape Verdean circles. Here, I am very interested in the public/private contrast between how these African Diaspora immigrants negotiated issues of race within environments where they were with each other or where they were with others and in the position of being outsiders. Specific cases where Cape Verdeans dealt with racial and nativist discrimination in school systems are detailed, as well as the well-known narrative of the (post)Civil Rights Movement era Boston bussing controversy. The opinions of many Cape Verdeans in that situation are very telling of the status of identity politics within the group. Similarly, various labor trends and strikes reveal how Cape Verdeans dealt with race, gender, and class and how they interacted with other immigrant groups—namely the Finns, Azoreans and other Portuguese, and Jewish New Englanders whom they often worked side by side with or for in various menial professions.

Chapter five looks closely at Pan-Africanism and black nationalism. For instance, it is interesting to consider the Garvey era and the participation or non-participation of Cape Verdeans as opposed to Caribbean immigrants. Why did the majority of Cape Verdeans reject Garvey's "race first" brand of protest? What was the Cape Verdeans' version of a 'back to Africa' movement? These and other questions are explored. Finally, the conclusion raises important questions regarding the Civil Rights Movement, and considers the Black Power era which overlaps with the emerging independence of Cape Verde Islands. The political movements in the various locations of the African Diaspora beginning with the Cold War and continuing up to this time, greatly influenced Cape Verdean intellectuals and activists in the newly forming Republic. These ideas also affected the Cape Verdeans in the

US, who came away from this exciting period with a newfound sense of identity and empowerment as a distinct entity within the US and the African Diaspora generally. These are areas for further research and development.

Chapter Two

Overlapping Diasporas / Multiple Subjectivities



The Cape Verde Islands and its people never neatly fit into one particular racial or geographical construct. Debates over whether the archipelago should be considered Portuguese or African date back to the time of discovery and continue to present. Similarly, discussions of the identity of the mostly mestiço population reflect this tension over which continent influences the culture most—the European or the African. Regarding historiography, Cape Verdeans have at times been documented as part of the African-American community; yet Cape Verdeans have also been included in Portuguese Studies and in various other categories within histories of US and other nation's immigrants. Nevertheless, although Cape Verdeans are a people of African descent, their complex history does not always easily reconcile with the narratives of African-Americans or other black ethnics that were historically counted as part of the African-American community. These multi-racial islanders are members of three overlapping Diasporas. The three Diasporas that

the population evolved out of each contributed to defining the identity and historical role of these immigrants.³⁰ Whether in the US, the metropole or at home in the Islands themselves, the Cape Verdean was ever aware of how his/her very being was the product of this overlap, both literally and figuratively. It is necessary to understand this context in order to justify or adequately contextualize the history of Cape Verdean immigrants in New England, particularly the history of Cape Verdeans' negotiation of race within the quagmire of US identity politics.

The archipelago is best aligned within the context of the Portuguese Atlantic system. For instance, the country and its majority mestiço population share more in common with the Lusophone islands of Sao Tomé and Príncipe than they do with most countries on the African continent. Therefore, Cape Verdeans can be better understood in terms of what scholar Miguel Vale de Almeida calls the "Brown Atlantic," which he describes as "the world created under the Portuguese imperium" distinct from the "Black Atlantic," defined by Paul Gilroy as centering on the English-speaking center and norm of 19th century colonialism.³¹ This world was characterized by the pattern of the Portuguese explorers which was marked by interracial sex and unions between the colonizers and their subjects (African, Indian, etc.), a fundamental part of Cape Verdean history and a factor common of most Portuguese colonized nations. The original people born there were part African, European, and even South Asian (Indian), a *mélange* of the various ethnic groups within each continent that truly represented the effects of the Portuguese maritime exploration. The twentieth century immigrants to the United States further complicated this evolution of the people. The socio-cultural history of Cape Verdeans in New England must then be informed by not only

³⁰ Kim Butler, "What is African Diaspora Study? An Epistemological Frontier," Unpublished Paper delivered at Black Atlantic Seminar. Rutgers University.

³¹ Miguel Vale de Almeida, "O Atlântico Pardo. Antropologia, poscolonialismo e o caso 'lusófono,'" C. Bastos, de Almeida, et al, eds. *Trânsitos coloniais: diálogos críticos luso-brasileiros*. Lisbon 2002

African-American history and New England regional history but also immigration studies and Diaspora theory.

Until very recently, trends within traditional African-American historiography reinforced many of the mainstream ideas that are held about who black America is and what the people look and act like. The first trend or trope suggested that African-Americans are a monolith (united across differences by a common experience and background). This stood in contrast to the fact that there was never any single black American community; instead there were always many communities or groups within the one perceived group. Immigrants of African descent, whether from the Caribbean, Latin America or African nations, represent one facet of the tremendous diversity that has always existed within the black population of the United States. Hundreds of biographies, autobiographies and family histories, such as that of the Hornes (Lena Horne's family), reflect this panorama of phenotypes, cultural traditions, languages, religions, and other characteristics that add texture and tone to the black communities of the US. Nonetheless, what Herman Bennett calls "black structuralism" persists. He defines this idea as follows:

Despite recent invocations of identities being hybrid, performed, situational, contingent, context specific, fluid or oppositional, the hegemonic representation of the slave and racial past alongside the contemporary black condition still renders identities as authentic and fixed. Indeed the pervasiveness with which contemporary black experiences continue to be read into a monolithic past, structures our historical imagination, especially with regard to the foundational category: slavery. ...Characterized as the problem of slavery, this conceptual dilemma influences how scholars and non-scholars alike approach the past, present and possibly even the future. The emphasis on experience—with the slave experience constituting the master trope—structures the black historical imagination. ...Thus the normative assumptions about the experiences of blacks—usually asserted not proven—reinforce the dominant depiction of a timeless, ahistorical, epiphenomenal black cultural experience—a form of representation I identify as black structuralism.³²

³² Herman L. Bennett, "Writing into a Void: Slavery, History and Representing Blackness in Latin America" (unpublished essay distributed for the Black Atlantic Seminar at the Rutgers Center for Historical Analysis), see pages 1-3.

The dominance of the US South, and Southern slavery, in the historical imagination with regards to blacks is in part the underlying reason why many narratives reinscribe the idea of a monolithic black identity and community. The scholarship that defined race in terms of the black/white racial dichotomy set the tone for early historiography. Work on northeast African-American communities followed similar themes. Although diverse immigrants from all over the African Diaspora had a presence in northeastern states beginning before the twentieth century, they remained invisible within the scholarship until fairly recently. The neglect of these immigrants' histories in major works about African-American history in the north meant that notions of black northern experience were based only on partial truths.

One example of the idea of a monolithic black America exists within slavery studies. Until revisionist historians edited the narratives of American slavery (in 1970's), it was largely agreed upon that the middle passage and peculiar institution had—according to historian Stanley Elkins' renown thesis—wiped African-Americans' slates clean of the recollections of their cultural origins. Revisionist historians (such as Ira Berlin, Peter Wood, David Barry Gaspar and many others) expanded and negated that view adding to the discussion the African and Caribbean origins of the institution and of the slaves themselves. Feminist historians (Nancy Foner, Deborah Gray White, Kathleen Brown, Jennifer L. Morgan, etc.) added further nuance to these studies of slavery with theoretical advancements in the consideration of race as a construct that progressed from ideas around gender differences. Recent advancements in the field, by Africanists like Michael Gomez, further enhanced our knowledge of slavery by pinpointing more accurately the country and ethnic origins of various slave populations and by detailing their cultural practices as well—providing information about Muslim, Christian and native worship, warrior traditions, artisanry,

methods of food preparation, living arrangements and the like. These advancements opened up newer strains of scholarship that have begun to explore black ethnicities, however not at the same rate that whiteness studies have educated us about European ethnics in the US.

The issues of cultural specificity and knowledge of national origins are ones that have both eluded and yet divided the US black population throughout its history. For example, there were always attempts to repatriate to the African ‘homeland’ or to reclaim black America’s African roots (the idea of ‘African’ made monolithic here as well). Also for instance, in the same ways that African-born slaves experienced a sense of cultural separation from their American-born offspring dating back to the seventeenth century, immigrants of African descent and their African-American counterparts have differed in their innate sensibilities of whence they came and have separated themselves because of that.

Cape Verdean immigrants’ experiences in Massachusetts illustrated this. One source of tension between African-American New Englanders and Cape Verdean immigrants in the region was the fact that Cape Verdeans (especially in the years approaching and after their independence in 1975) insisted upon recognizing and expressing pride about where they hailed from. The sentiment often voiced by black Americans in response was that these immigrants were “confused” and did not accept their black identity; underlying this was the idea that Cape Verdeans’ ideas presented a barrier to racial solidarity. Similar comments were made about Haitian immigrants and other Caribbean émigrés that pronounced their distinct cultural backgrounds. It was as if the African-Americans who embraced this view were saying ‘it does not matter the exact place in the African Diaspora that you came from, what mattered was that infamous one drop, how it colored one’s skin, and ultimately the collective struggle for racial equality.’ One local activist (from Boston) of Caribbean descent who embraced African-American identity as his own expressed the following:

As far as white teachers and white students were concerned, people who were Black were of American or Italian or Irish descent. We resisted that by insisting we were West Indian. At the same time, folks of West Indian descent resisted identifying with people who were Black and from Africa because of all the stereotypes and negative connotations. There were people around, for example, called Portuguese who rarely admitted to being from the Cape Verde Islands. It was a long time before they put together the fact they were African, because their identity was Cape Verdean.³³

These ideas somewhat mirror Bennett's arguments that the shared history of oppression that black people experienced in the US due to skin color, and ideas about race beginning with the Trans-Atlantic African slave trade and slavery itself, overwhelmingly clouded blacks' self-concepts. Most Cape Verdeans and some Caribbean immigrants wrestled with embracing this version of blackness due to the fact that although they shared a history of slavery, they did not want to be associated with negative stereotypes of African-Americans.

There were also other factors that brokered their willingness or unwillingness to accept the collective memories or passion for race-based struggle. In the example Boston activist Mel King spoke of, (referring to the passage) the perception of pre-independence generation Cape Verdeans' identifying as Portuguese is misinformed (which in part calls into question the importance of the language barriers between some in the Diaspora—that exacerbate ethnic divisions between groups in the US). It does not account for the harsh political conditions experienced by *kriolus* (CV creole peoples) during what they refer to as *tempu portuguêz* ("the time of the Portuguese" during Salazar's regime). What appeared to be attempts to "pass" as Portuguese were in fact reflections of the conditioning of Cape Verdeans in colonial times. Not only were the Cape Verdeans not yet free from Portuguese colonialism and thus still subjects of the crown, their every expression of cultural identity

³³ Mel King, Chain of Change: Struggles for Black Community Development (Boston: South End Press, 1981) 10.

was scrutinized and restricted. For example, they were forbidden to speak their native *kriolu* language in all public spaces and institutions and they were barred from explicitly identifying as anything other than Portuguese.³⁴

Mel King represents just one facet of the Boston Caribbean population. The Caribbean immigrant presence in the United States dates back to the seventeenth century; slaves from Barbados were present among the early black populations of Virginia and South Carolina.³⁵ In addition, the majority of slaves in the late eighteenth century north were Caribbean-born. DuBois cited the Caribbean presence in Boston, dating back to before the twentieth century. It was written in a 1920 issue of the *Crisis* that Prince Hall, a Barbadian, had established black freemasonry in the US and was an established leader among black Bostonians during the eighteenth century. Barbadians and other Caribbeans constituted approximately 20 percent of the black population in Boston at the time.³⁶ According to historian Winston James, the list of the Caribbean immigrants and descendants who contributed to African-American history, culture and political movements is quite extensive but has been largely underemphasized. The aforementioned ‘southernization’ of African-American history may have contributed to this, as well as the hyper-attention to the construct of race and the power of the idea of race itself (what Evelyn Higginbotham alluded to in her seminal article, “The Metalanguage of Race”).

The trend in the historiography toward presenting an un-complicated black identity, one in which cultural distinctions are *not* problematized for how they affected and shaped

³⁴ These facts of Cape Verdean life under the Portuguese flag are well-documented in the oral histories and in the literature, such as in the following sources: Amílcar Cabral, Return to the Source; Carreira, Cape Verdean Emigration; Richard Lobban, Cape Verde; Meintel Machado, Race, Culture, Colonialism; and in oral histories with Jose Fontes, Eugenia Fortes, Manuel Gonçalves, Georgette Gonçalves.

³⁵ Winston James, Holding Aloft the Banner of Ethiopia: Caribbean Radicalism in Early Twentieth-Century America (New York: Verso, 1998) 9.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p.11

identity politics, has been disrupted by recent scholarship on black immigrants in various parts of the US. Monica Greenbaum's anthropological study of Afro-Cubans, More Than Black, demonstrates the constructs of blackness and the typical responses of these Spanish-speaking immigrants of African descent. Like their Lusophone counterparts, their conceptions of their own identity were far more complex than the concepts of race or (US-defined) ethnic categories would allow; and yet the racial and ethnic categories they fit into shaped their lives in inescapable ways. Greenbaum wrote:

Afro-Cubans were assigned a place in [the Jim Crow/Florida] hierarchy that was largely, but not entirely, based on their color. That discrepancy, the difference in their condition compared with African Americans, marks the significance of ethnicity. Because they were Cuban, they had access to privileges and resources not available to native-born African Americans. To this extent, ethnicity mitigated Afro-Cubans' racial status, entitled them to a niche that offered relatively more advantages and protection than could be gotten by most African Americans. Moreover, Afro-Cubans shared a strong bond of nationhood with white Cubans, alongside whom they lived and worked in Tampa's cigarmaking enclave. The significance of ethnicity, as opposed simply to race, is inescapable in this example.³⁷

The situation Monica Greenbaum describes is the same situation that was experienced by Cape Verdeans in the New England area and this study will reveal how the Lusophone foreigners also underwent a similar process of "[e]thnogenesis, the unfolding process of group identification."³⁸ Having visible traces of African ancestry determined their social, economic and political status in the US, yet their determination to define their own individual and group identities were equally as important in affording them ways of circumventing race-based discrimination in some instances.

Watkins-Owens summarized a similar history for many of the Harlem Renaissance era Caribbean immigrants. The islanders were treated differently depending on their native

³⁷ Susan D. Greenbaum, More Than Black: Afro-Cubans in Tampa (Gainesville, FLA: University Press of FLA, 2002) 8.

³⁸ Greenbaum, More Than Black 8.

accent, or whether or not they spoke other languages besides English. She posed the questions:

Do these examples of selected treatment illustrate more about the functioning of racial caste in America than the actual experiences black immigrants had with discrimination?...What new perspectives on the idea of race can we gain by examining the experiences of foreign-born blacks?³⁹

The ways that some African Diaspora immigrants like the Afro-Cubans, some Caribbean immigrants and many Cape Verdeans were able to create opportunities for themselves outside of the strict limitations imposed on US-born African-Americans is significant because it proves what so many Diaspora scholars that examine race have tried to theorize--that not all blacks' experiences were the same. It also suggests how whites perceived differences among blacks that meant they would not be treated in the same ways. Furthermore, in answer to Watkins-Owens' questions, foreign-born blacks' histories (particularly those of African descent that are mixed or influenced by various cultures) do three things: first, they underscore the fictions inherent in the idea and functioning of racial caste; they reveal the agency of individuals and groups of black immigrants in resisting the US racial system; and finally, these histories help us to get beyond the damaging idea of race in order to see the African-American and other African Diaspora populations and their institutions in better light.

Another trope within traditional African-American studies that this dissertation challenges is what Vincent Harding has named "the river of black protest"—the legacy of struggle for racial equality and the collective protest to racial oppression that began the moment the African slaves boarded the slave ships and eventually landed on American

³⁹ Irma Watkins-Owens, Blood Relations: Caribbean Immigrants and the Harlem Community, 1900-1930 (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1996), 5-6.

shores.⁴⁰ The diversity of black leaders' uplift ideologies, political approaches and philosophies on self-determination is well known. What is less known is the extent to which these historical figures differed in their ideas on the concepts of race and ethnic identity. For instance, the turn of the century debate between Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. DuBois, and the later debates between DuBois and Marcus Garvey revealed the tensions over this problem, yet the differences were based on the ideologies themselves, not about whether an approach was less desirable for various groups of African-Americans because of ethnicity, language, culture or religion. It was assumed that all African-Americans—though different in terms of economic class, participation in mutual aid organizations or regional perspective—might benefit from one approach since they seemed to share one common issue (though manifest in many ways). What the story of Cape Verdeans in New England reveals, however, is that not all groups within the African Diaspora employed the same strategies for attaining full citizenship rights, community development or political advancement. Nor did they all benefit from existing strategies for uplift in similar ways. Not all groups approached the processes of adaptation (post-migration or immigration) and assimilation in the same ways.

Perhaps the best demonstration of this can be seen in two of the most important chapters of black history in New England (and African-American history generally thinking)—diverse blacks' participation in the Garvey movement in the region in the 1920's (and beyond), and the mid-1970's civil rights turmoil over legally sanctioned bussing in order to desegregate schools. Examining the inner world of New England "blacks" and revisiting these local histories unveils that there was more dissension among the ranks than may have previously been thought. For instance, oral histories with Caribbean elders—some of whom

⁴⁰ Vincent Harding, There is a River: The Black Struggle for Freedom in America (1981; New York: Vintage Books, 1983).

recalled their parents (or themselves) participating in local UNIA meetings—showed that, as we already knew, many Caribbean immigrants in the US were active members of that organization or were at least likely to sympathize with the Garveyite position on race. One Cambridge, MA centenarian remembered that her grandfather had been a prominent Garveyite in their hometown in Barbados. He taught her, and her aunts and uncles whom she was raised with, one of the UNIA anthems or protest songs. She proudly exclaimed that the youngsters were taught that when they came to the US, “they should not take any crap off of nobody...as they were free-born British subjects!”⁴¹ Newspaper articles from the time, whether Boston’s *Guardian*, Garvey’s own organ *The Negro World* or other local publications such as the *Standard Times* of the city of New Bedford, MA, affirmed the Caribbean population’s pride in their culture(s) and in figures like Garvey. This is reflected in frequent notices that documented meetings, parades and advertisements for UNIA events in New England, New York or elsewhere in the northeast. There is little evidence (next to none) that Cape Verdeans in the area at that time had any involvement in UNIA meetings or events. Here again, several variables probably came into play (such as English language literacy, socialization patterns, and others) but the circumstances suggest important differences in the immigrants’ expressions of identity politics.

In the Boston bussing controversy of the early 1970’s, local Cape Verdean educators who taught in the Boston Public Schools system at the time were divided as to how to respond to this debate or whether or not to participate. The divisions existed along generational lines, linguistic lines, and of course political lines as well. Dr. Georgette Gonçalves, one of the first Cape Verdean educators to earn a US Ph.D. and a young high school teacher at the time (1974) reflected on the tension of the moment. She shared that

⁴¹ Mildred Howard Interview (Cambridge, MA)

she and many other Cape Verdean and Cape Verdean-American teachers and students were actually weary of the idea of being bussed away to other schools and being grouped together with black Americans who they felt were very different from them. Gonçalves recalled:

[S]o when the school department came along and they got sued by the federal government for not having enough black administrators and black teachers, they changed all the Cape Verdeans to 'black' no matter what you looked like...so we [went] through that kind of ignorant passage... Every year [other Cape Verdean] teachers came up to me and said, 'Georgette, what are we going to do about this? This is not who we are! They took advantage of us and we helped them get the judge off their backs.'⁴²

Many of these same educators ultimately refused to acquiesce with the federal mandate for bussing. Instead, these teachers (Gonçalves among them) joined ranks with some Cape Verdean doctoral students (emerging leaders in the community and in the schools) including Manuel Monteiro and Manuel DaLuz Gonçalves in order to begin developing their own strategies for improving Cape Verdeans' experience in education. Rather than pursue integration which was the strategy sanctioned in the African-American communities by the NAACP and prominent civil rights leaders at the local and national levels, these particular Cape Verdean community activists and educators agitated for unique educational practices for the immigrants—this was the start of the bilingual education movement in the New England states.

As these examples show, not all groups of people who appeared 'black' fit the mold; this raises questions about how such racially ambiguous groups' experiences may be historicized within the context of US history. And what do we do with those who do not fit our molds for historical documentation? When we consider Cape Verdean immigrants, and the many other African Diaspora immigrants in the US such as Brazilians, Angolans, Nigerians, Somalians and Ethiopians it becomes reasonable to argue that the stories of black

⁴² Georgette Gonçalves Interview

life in the US may be best documented, read and historicized in the context of the African Diaspora, looking at these narratives as the manifestations of the African Diaspora in the US while simultaneously considering the tropes of traditional African-American history (as these themes and the historical events that shaped the lives of, and were shaped by, African-Americans are the same things that affected these foreign-born ‘blacks’ living in the US).

The idea that Cape Verdeans do not ‘fit the mold’ for looking at African-Americans in the US requires a brief overview of background information on the history of the country and its people. Portuguese explorers set foot on Cape Verde in 1455 or 1456 although it is possible that one or some of the twenty-one islands and islets were visited at one time by Phoenicians, Moorish Arabs and Lebou (Lebu) or Wolof fisherman from Senegal.⁴³ Portugal’s first sighting was made by either António da Noli or the Genoan explorer Cadamosto who were traveling courtesy of the Portuguese crown of the time. The official date of the finding of Cape Verde Islands is recorded as 1460 and this also marks the start of settlement and colonization by the Portuguese. It is said that the largest island, Santiago, was settled first, followed by Fogo (a then inactive volcano named the Portuguese word for “fire”) in the few years that followed.⁴⁴ Among the first islands reached of the ten main islands were Boa Vista, Santiago and Fogo. Boa Vista is among the six *Barlavento* (northern/windward) islands along with Sal, São Nicolau, São Vicente, Santo Antão, and the uninhabited Santa Luzia. The other island grouping is the *Sotavento* (southern/leeward) group which includes Santiago, Fogo, Maio, and Brava. The country was named not for its abundant plant growth but for its close proximity to Cap Vert (French for “green cape”), the geographical cape jetting out from the coast of Africa into the Atlantic from near to where

⁴³ Ibid., p. 16

⁴⁴ Carreira 4

the volcanic islands sprung up.⁴⁵ Though the islands share geological origins, each evolved to have very different physical environs and in some cases, different populations as well—illustrative of the complexities and ambiguities inherent in studying this population.

Beginning with the discussion of location, the debate around the identity and politics of the Cape Verdean Diaspora is clear. The country is located approximately three hundred to four hundred nautical miles off of the west coast of Africa, particularly Senegal. However in many Portuguese records the location is emphasized as “being located 1,900 miles south-southwest of Lisbon.”⁴⁶ For many, the question of whether the country is more near Portugal or Africa has strong implications on the heritage of the people, their claims to culture as well as their political future. Nevertheless, since the population evolved from mixing between both African ethnicities and Portuguese (and other Europeans), it is fitting that this historical debate engages with both continents, and all of the influences on its rich culture.

The strategic significance of the islands to Portugal in the age of exploration is vital to understanding Cape Verdean history; however it is also important to examine the place the islands have occupied within world history, particularly in the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade. The threads of Cape Verdean society and culture link three continents: not only Europe and Africa, but America as well. These sites include the points of origin of the people, their historical struggles, environmental disasters, cultural traditions, and the sites where Cape Verdeans migrated over the years. The Portuguese maintained strict control over the islands, their politics and economics beginning at the time of discovery and stretching for most of the young nation’s history. The severe droughts that caused cyclical famines which destroyed large percentages of the population had lasting effects that were in part made

⁴⁵ Lobban, Richard

⁴⁶ Ibid., p.4

worse due to the neglect and apathy of the Portuguese crown toward its colony. Forced migrations out of the islands were linked to these unbearable conditions. Cape Verdeans were forced to leave the homeland through sanctioned and clandestine means, going to the metropole, to other European countries such as France and Italy, to places in Latin America and to the US. Within the United States, as mentioned in the previous chapter, immigrants from Cape Verde played an important part in the New England economy beginning with the slave trade in Africa and spanning the era of whaling and maritime trade. During the slave trade, Cape Verde was the Portuguese command center for rule of the Upper Guinea coast spanning the 15th century until the 1800's⁴⁷ The historical, political and cultural links between Cape Verde and its shared continental homelands—Europe and Africa—shed light on the lives and identity politics of Cape Verdeans on the islands and those that migrated to New England.

Cape Verde's original settler population was made up of the various West African slaves brought by the Portuguese, the Portuguese themselves as well as small numbers of Castilian and Genovese explorers. They were intermittently joined by French and English traders who were in fierce competition with the Portuguese, and "occasional pirates, and political exiles or *degredados*" who were banished to the island by the Portuguese crown as a form of imprisonment.⁴⁸ The history of slavery on the islands determined the nature of each island's populace. Cape Verde's period of slavery lasted over four hundred years, from 1462 to 1869 (and illegal slavery until 1878). In addition, a period of indentured servitude, with laborers from west-central Europe, Asia and Brazil also marks the nation's history. Its '*Kriolu*' (Creole) people are a result of these periods of colonization, enslavement,

⁴⁷ Lobban, Richard, p.3

⁴⁸ Ibid.

miscegenation and Portuguese socio-economic policies.⁴⁹ The population remains to be more than seventy percent mulatto, having origins in Western African tribes such as the Beafadas, Biokus, Fulas, Wolofs and Mandinkes, European peoples such as the Portuguese, Iberian Jews, Spanish and French, and South Asians (Indians).⁵⁰

Most of the early Cape Verdean immigrants entered the New England maritime economy when they jumped aboard Nantucket and New Bedford ships to work on the sea in whaling and other types of fishing. They were desperate to escape the deadly famines that were plaguing Cape Verde intermittently throughout those years, and for over half of the twentieth century. Later when these pioneers settled down and became accustomed to the new homeland, they sent for their wives and sometimes their children as well. Turn of the century (1900) census records provide insight into these patterns. For instance, one family documented as living in Harwich, Massachusetts (a small town on Cape Cod with a long history of presence of Cape Verdeans) had different years of arrival into the country/state in accordance with the general trend. The head of household, father Lewis Noons (Nunes) arrived in 1874 and his wife Mary arrived in 1892. His six children were all born in Massachusetts after the time when he and his wife were reunited. The family's census entries reinforce the aforementioned ambiguities in records of Cape Verdeans. All are listed as "Black"—Lewis as Black Male, Mary as Black Female—and their birthplaces are listed as Portugal and/or Brava (one of the Cape Verde Islands). With such apparent discrepancies and the differences in recorded birthplaces, and racial classifications, many of the early migrants may have gone unrecorded and certainly may have been left out of secondary sources based on these scant records. Other factors contributing to the difficulties inherent

⁴⁹ Sources on General Cape Verde history: Carreira (1982); Davidson (1989); Duncan (1971); Foy (1988); Lobban (1995); Meintel (1984); Pap (1981) and Sanchez (1999).

⁵⁰ Carreira, Lobban, Jose dos Anjos et al

in researching Cape Verdeans' presence in the country are the immigrants' naturalization status and trend towards frequently traveling back and forth between the US and Cape Verde Islands; clandestine immigrants could have avoided being written up in census records (hiding if necessary) and those New England residents (even citizens) who could have been visiting family members back home would not have been included at all.

Going back home was always a pressing matter for immigrants from the African Diaspora—Cape Verdeans, though hailing from all the way across the Atlantic, were no different. Many of the initial *Kriolu* migrants always kept the idea of returning home in the back of their minds. This was expressed in myriad ways, from the ever common “inkumendas” (money or gifts sent home/ English-care packages) to classic song lyrics captured in the most celebrated traditional musical genre, the “morna.” Perhaps the most recognized morna to express the Cape Verdean sentiment about a strong, almost indescribable connection to home is “Morna de Despidida” (Morna of Departure).

Hora de bai (Hour of departure)
 Hora de dor (Hour of grief)
 Ja'n q're (Would that it)
 Ja el ca manche (Might never dawn!)
 De cada bez (Every time)
 Que 'm ta lembra (That I remember it)
 Ma'n q're (I want to)
 Fica 'n more (Stay/ Lay Down and die)
 Hora de bia
 Hora de dor
 Amor, Dixa 'n tchora (My love, let me weep)
 Corpo catibo (Captive body)
 Ba bo que e escrabo (Go though, slave)
 'O almo bibo (The Living soul)
 Quem que al lebabo... (Who dares carry you away?)
 Se bem e doce, (If coming home is sweet)
 Bai e magoado (Leaving is bitter)
 Mas, se ca bado, (Yet, if one doesn't leave)
 Ca ta birado (One can never return)
 Se no more (If we die)
 Na despidida (Saying a farewell)

Nhor Des na volta (God, on our return)
Ta dano bido... (Well, give us back our life)

The emotions expressed in the classic song not only capture the Luso-Africans' connections to home, they allude to the sense of overlap between Diasporas and the fact that ties to the various locations (here—home and abroad) are inextricable and constant. The complex cycle of transition back and forth between locales that this inflicts upon the immigrant underscored many immigrants' choices regarding settlement and the possibility (or impossibility) of assimilation. In the first half of the twentieth century, most Cape Verdean migrants came from either Fogo or Brava and settled in communities that were apart from whites or any other groups; the reasons for this were many including the barriers created by language and cultural differences, poverty, exclusion on the basis of race or foreign origin, and a kind of communal defense mechanism used to protect them against strange US customs (including racial politics).⁵¹ These trends were also undeniably influenced by the immigrants' inability or unwillingness to choose between the various Diasporas of which they were a part. Not until Cape Verdeans began to come into their own sense of nationality, did the immigrant begin to have more clarity on the subject of how to identify one's self in a society where individuals were forced to choose for the sake of socio-political categorization.

With the 1930's Cape Verdean intellectual renaissance known as *claridade*, a literary and cultural movement around the *kriolu* language and identity, and eventually the successful fight for independence (established in 1975), gradually a newfound sense of national identity as "Cape Verdean" was solidified. This sense of nationalist pride was

⁵¹ António Carreira, The People of the Cape Verde Islands: Exploitation and Emigration (Lisbon: Libra Press, 1977), 47-48.

transported all over the Cape Verdean Diaspora helping others to ascertain who and what this group was. Similarly, Cold War era political movements within the wider African Diaspora took hold in Cape Verde and the archipelago's intellectuals, literary figures and budding revolutionaries were heavily influenced by what they learned. For instance, Richard Lobban has said:

Given the extent and power of these global movements, it was inevitable that the famous 'winds of change' would finally buffet the Cape Verde Islands. For those of African origin and self-identity, these movements were telescoped with the rise of the great spokesmen of nationalism, socialism, and pan-Africanism such as George Padmore, W.E.B. DuBois, Kwame Nkrumah, Sekou Touré, Leopold S. Senghor, Julius Nyerere, Jomo Kenyatta, C.L.R. James and Nelson Mandela.⁵²

In the context of studying Cape Verde and Cape Verdeans in the US as part of the African Diaspora, it is of great importance to consider that Cape Verdean intellectuals and activists were affected and influenced by so many of these well known figures from the US, the Caribbean and various African nations—all of whom have been studied and recognized for their contributions to the Diaspora and to our contemporary understandings of race, nation, colonialism and cultural resistance. That said, an exploration of Cape Verdeans in the US, as compared with Caribbean immigrants, with respect to race, nation, general identity politics and strategies of cultural adaptation or resistance is warranted and helps further the discussion of these issues by presenting a little known chapter in the wider story of black America.

The Cape Verde Islands were liberated from Portuguese fascism in 1975 (together with Guinea-Bissau) after the successful military revolution led by Amílcar Cabral. Cabral founded the PAIGC (Partido Africano da Independência da Guiné e Cabo Verde) in 1956—which waged the more than twenty year fight for independence. Cabral is the most well-

⁵² Richard Lobban, Jr., Cape Verde: Crioulo Colony to Independent Nation (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995), 85.

known figure to emerge from Cape Verdean politics and intellectual life. He offered an argument about culture as a determinant of history which is useful for this consideration of the cultural history of New England and its African Diaspora residents. An agronomist, he metaphorically described the process of culture shaping history as being similar to the biological processes of planting and flowering. He said: “Just as happens with the flower in a plant, in culture there lies the capacity (or the responsibility) for forming and fertilizing the seedling which will assure the continuity of history, at the same time assuring the prospects for evolution and progress of the society in question.”⁵³ Arguably, the social and cultural history of the African Diaspora is incomplete without broadening the narrative to include those underrepresented groups of people of African descent—particularly those, like the Cape Verdeans, that deny (our familiar) categories. In terms of scholarship, this cultural history insures the evolution of our field of study. In terms of understanding black communities in the US, and specifically African Diaspora cultures of New England, and what Matthew Guterl calls the “different notion of racial difference” that emerged in Northeast, this story is of great significance.

Thus this is an attempt to analyze the cultures and experiences of the African Diaspora immigrants, who in essence, planted themselves in New England soil, and put down roots—all the while shaping the racial and political landscape of these small states. These immigrants interacted with various groups of native born New Englanders, the various ethnic groups, immigrants and other classes present, and all of these cases reveal interesting insights into the diverse understandings of identity, race, and sociopolitical movements during the twentieth century. In fact, to paraphrase Cabral’s words, the culture

⁵³ Amílcar Lopes Cabral, “National Liberation and Culture,” Speech Delivered for the Eduardo Mondlane Memorial Lecture Series, Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY. February 20, 1970. The speech was translated from the French by Maureen Webster.

of race relations of New England is at once the fruit of its long history of a rich African Diaspora presence (adding to the American Indian and European immigrant presences) and the factor that continues to shape its present and its future. This dissertation chronicles one segment in the cultural history of New England, by presenting the experiences of Cape Verdeans (with comparative notes on Caribbean immigrants) in order to broaden the concept⁵⁴ of what black life looked like in the twentieth century Northeast.

Chapter Three **Cape Verdean (and Caribbean) Emigration to New England**

This chapter will provide an overview of the groups' emigration to New England states and begin to recreate the communities (urban and rural) in which the immigrants settled. It explores reasons why they came, conditions that they faced and other factors that are necessary to contextualize their migration. Renowned historian of the Cape Verde Islands, António Carreira, wrote that the story of Cape Verdean immigrants who were forced to leave home, and whence they came, could be summarized "[i]n one sentence—everything in these islands combines to impose of man a hard, difficult and wretched way of life."⁵⁴ He described the intermittent periods of drought and famine that (motivated) the beginnings of Cape Verdean out-migration this way:

The inevitable irregularity of the rains, witnessed by so many droughts over the years, caused a grave lack of basic subsistence foods—maize, beans, manioc, sweet potato—and of fodder for cattle. Hence there was endemic, or at least latent, famine. When it broke out, it brought catastrophic mortality of men and domestic animals, from lack of food and water. 'Crisis years' as they were called when 10-30 percent of the population died, and livestock was reduced to derisory numbers. ...Droughts were recorded in several two or three year periods/cycles, including 1896-1904, 1918-1921, 1939-43, and 1945-48. In those from 1903 to 1947-8 more than 80,000 deaths occurred.

The conditions described aptly contextualize the choices of many Cape Verdeans to migrate. Yet as many oral histories with the immigrants and their descendants reveal, their physical displacement from island homes did not bring emotional or psychological disconnection from place (including politics) and people, particularly immediate and extended family members. As previously mentioned, their experiences were not much different from those of the thousands of Caribbean immigrants who made the same journeys to the U.S. in the same period. The traveling was torment, yet it did not break the individuals' ties to home and

⁵⁴ António Carreira, *The People of Cape Verde Islands: Exploitation and Emigration*. Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1982, 15-16.

homeland—these were kept up via groups living apart from others, and through social networks within the US and across the Atlantic, that linked dispersed family and friends.

As one scholar has argued, “New England has been a posted territory, where certain people, places and historical experiences have been excluded or relegated to the cultural margins.”⁵⁵ These stories from the margins of New England history—the unnoted conversations about race, ethnicity, nation and cultural complexity within immigrant communities there (particularly those of African descent)—reveal the nature of race in New England, simultaneously undoing the neat, Puritanical narrative about the region’s collective identity. Revisiting the history of New England in this way demonstrates the importance of the black immigrant in critical aspects of the region’s history.

These narratives have much to tell us about race and nativism in the region, yet also have national significance as well. For instance, as one pioneering New England historian argued, “the New England heart pumped its peculiar ideas through the intellectual veins of the nation.”⁵⁶ The statement refers specifically to Boston Brahmin thought on immigration which, during the second half of the nineteenth century, had powerful social and intellectual implications for the whole country. For the elite Brahmins, immigrants (and ‘immigrants’ here refers mostly to Europeans) provoked already growing angst. They “were visible reminders of the strangeness and unpredictability of the US after the Civil War, [and f]rom these perspectives came a new chapter in the intellectual history of old New Englanders.”⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Joseph Conforti, Imagining New England: Explorations of Regional Identity from the Pilgrims to the Mid-Twentieth Century (Chapel Hill, NC: UNC Press, 2001). Conforti historicizes the concept of “New England” in a discussion of region and imagination. He argues “regions are not only concrete geographic domains but also conceptual places. Humans define regions; they are not geographic entities that define themselves. Regional identity is not simply an organic outcome of human interaction with the physical environment...of a particular place. Regions are real places but also historical artifacts whose cultural boundaries shift over time” (1-2).

⁵⁶ Barbara Miller Solomon, Ancestors and Immigrants: A Changing New England Tradition (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1989), vii.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, viii.

After all, the traditions of ‘old New Englanders’ were based on a delicately woven foundation, one made up of threads of mythology like those of the story of Thanksgiving. The metaphor of the Thanksgiving table, a place of congenial relations between Pilgrim settlers and Native Indians concealed a larger story that is now well-known to progressive scholars of United States history who have laid bare the truths of that painful chapter in New England past. The Thanksgiving story has had national significance for the country’s narrative of national identity. For example, the image of pioneering English Pilgrim’s who bravely entered a new land and laid the foundation for the region’s and country’s moral standing serves to support many of the ideals which the republic was built on. What is often missing from this history of the republic and the myths that reinforce it are some of the problematic chapters between the European settlers and the people of color that they came into contact with—either those Native Americans whom they found here or the many, different groups of immigrants that came to shore over the years. Stories of immigrants like Cape Verdeans are not known nationally, they do reflect political trends and attitudes towards the foreign-born in US society across the twentieth century.

The social history of free black Massachusetts is relatively well-known, with the narratives of famed residents and migrants like Paul Cuffee and Frederick Douglass making up some of the more familiar ones. In many of these stories, there appears the frequent suggestion (implicit if not explicit) that the Northern sites, Massachusetts towns and cities in particular, held some magical quality associated with freedom and opportunities for better living for people of color. For example, Douglass recorded the following sentiments in one version of his autobiography:

I could have landed in no part of the United States where I should have found a more striking and gratifying contrast, not only to life generally in the

South, but in the condition of the colored people there than in New Bedford... I saw in New Bedford the nearest approach to freedom and equality that I had ever seen. I was amazed when Mr. Johnson told me that there was nothing in the laws or constitution of Massachusetts that would prevent a colored man from being governor of the state, if the people should see fit to elect him. There too the black man's children attended the same public schools with the white man's children, and apparently without objection from any quarter.... Mr. Johnson assured me that no slaveholder could take a slave out of New Bedford; that there were men there who would lay down their lives to save me from such a fate.⁵⁸

Such opinions of the New England state are echoed in many monographs, including family histories. The family of John and Emma Bond, for instance, whose history penned by Adele Logan Alexander spans 1846-1926, was convinced “that New England might offer them better opportunities in a less hostile environment.” As Alexander further explains, they “packed a few belongings, scooped up [their son] Percy, and much like the freedom-seeking slaves who for many years had followed the North Star, left Hampton Roads [Virginia] to create fresh lives in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, self ordained and widely acclaimed as ‘freedom’s birthplace.’”⁵⁹ The state may have offered free blacks and newly freed slaves a haven where they found race-based discrimination to be muted, but the Bay State was a more complex site to the black immigrants who settled there. For those who came to the region from the various locations in the African Diaspora, specifically the Caribbean and Cape Verde Islands, race relations were complicated by nation, religion, culture and language.

The population of immigrants from the African Diaspora in Massachusetts is particularly diverse. With people hailing from all over the Caribbean, including the Netherlands Antilles, Barbados, Jamaica and Haiti, as well as various Luso-African countries,

⁵⁸ Frederick Douglass, Life and Times of Frederick Douglass: His Early Life as a Slave, His Escape from Bondage, and his Complete History (New York: Gramercy Books, 1993 edition), 192.

⁵⁹ Adele Logan Alexander, Homelands and Waterways: The American Journey of the Bond Family, 1846-1926 (New York: Vintage, 2000), 180.

the state has had a long and rich history of foreigners mixing and interacting with New England-born residents, including the African-Americans, Native American tribes present and the early European settlers and their descendants. Emerging from Massachusetts past then is a much more complex portrait of what race has meant in New England.

Similar to the ways New England intellectuals grappled with defining the values that the region would be shaped upon after the Civil War and at the turn of twentieth century, the country as a whole strived to define for the world American nationalism. The immigrants of color who arrived here at that moment were also grappling with “nation”—most hailing from countries that were not yet free from their colonizing powers. Their political identities, then, were in transition and not yet fully developed. However, they did carry with them very clearly defined cultures, traditions and in some cases, their own languages, religious styles and approaches to the land. This aspect in particular, the relationship of the people to their environs, would remain an important factor in the immigrants’ adjustment to new lives in a new country.

Cape Verdeans, still under the Portuguese flag at the turn of the century, defined “home” as the place where family remained. This was underscored by traditions that marked a literal and symbolic tie to place and land, such as the burying of a newborn baby’s umbilical cord near the home. Similar traditions (no doubt reflecting surviving Africanisms) abounded in the various islands of the Caribbean. Indeed, as one scholar of the Caribbean wrote: “The physical geography [of the Caribbean islands] has been, from pre-Hispanic times to the present, one of the dominant and inescapable influences on the pattern of life and society in the region. Islands, especially small islands, produce powerful influences on

people.”⁶⁰ The power of these cultural influences would not be lost on the immigrants who left their homes and found their way to New England; they would shape their identity politics and strategies for social adjustment for years to come.

In the first half of the twentieth century, there were three locations where most of the immigrants of color to make homes in Massachusetts came from: the British Caribbean (specifically islands of Barbados, Jamaica, Trinidad and Antigua); the Netherlands Antilles; and the Cape Verde Islands (principally the islands of Brava and Fogo and later other islands such as Saint Vincent and Santiago).⁶¹ Island life in each locale differed for the people of African descent depending on landscape, climate, historical relationship to metropole and attendant economic conditions. Each region will be explored briefly in order to gain a sense of what Franklin Knight termed the “powerful influences” on each group of island people, influences that would in effect, shape their reactions to New England politics and living conditions.

Caribbean Islands

The islands of the former British-occupied Caribbean include nineteen islands and islets, scattered between the Caribbean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean, all small in size ranging from less than 100 square miles to less than 100,000 square miles. Among these are Anguilla, Bermuda, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Montserrat, and the Turks and Caicos Islands. These are still under British governance. The term “British West Indies” (associated of course with Columbus’s blunder) was also once extended to the following islands, now independent islands in the region known as the “Anglophone Caribbean,” they are: Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, Jamaica, St. Kitts

⁶⁰ Franklin W. Knight, *The Caribbean: The Genesis of a Fragmented Nationalism* (New York: Oxford UP, 1990), 3.

⁶¹ Turn to pages 77-79 for maps of both the Caribbean and Cape Verde Islands.

and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent, the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago, as well as the British territories of British Guiana and Honduras. All of these are marked by a tropical climate and plentiful rains, which together make for a healthy living environment. The economies of the Caribbean isles, however, have not been as beneficial for inhabitants. The history of the Caribbean has been shaped by both of these forces—land that has been rich for production, cultivation and trade of natural resources, and economic strife that has led to a largely impoverished population. Both factors have shaped both the lives of native inhabitants and internal island politics, as well as the historic relationship of the islands to other countries (the very discovery and settlement of the islands speak to this). To illustrate this point, Franklin Knight writes: “The physical geography of the islands conditioned and circumscribed their societies and their cultures as it would those succeeding them. Responding to external forces, these island peoples have been especially vulnerable to influences from the outside, and their societies have been more a reflection of eclectic adaptation than original creation.”⁶² We will see how these circumstances help explain the conditions which would lead to mass migration out of the islands to various places across the globe for mostly economic reasons.

Renowned Caribbean historian/economist Eric Williams has written the following about the poverty and population of the islands and their strategic relationship to the rest of the world:

The Caribbean islands are, in fact, a vital link in the chain of hemispheric defense. The Caribbean has become for the United States ‘our sea,’ the ‘American Mediterranean’...An island, however, is more than a naval or aerial base; it is home for many thousands who teem on it as ants on an anthill. It is a scene not only of military activity; it is the stage for the struggle for survival of people living in dire poverty. In these poverty-stricken areas the overwhelming proportion of the population is Negro or mulatto. Pure

⁶² Knight, The Caribbean: The Genesis of a Fragmented Nationalism (New York: Oxford UP, 1990), 26.

Negroes are estimated at over 90 percent in Haiti, 77 percent in Jamaica, 74 percent in the British Windward Islands.⁶³

Williams's statement sheds light upon the racial composition of some of the islands. For instance, he continues, explaining that the presence of whites in the British Isles has been historically less than it is in the Spanish Caribbean. Among the British colonies, the number of whites was greatest in Barbados, where it was only seven percent. The presence of other groups is also cited: "A few Chinese are to be found in places, as well as some Jews; Indians, introduced after emancipation from British India, and Javanese from the Dutch East Indies, constitute about one-third of the population of Trinidad [and] two-fifths of British Guiana..."⁶⁴ Throughout the islands, this mixed population is organized according to color, caste and class—social stratification that had its beginnings in the slavery that, as Williams wrote, "introduced the African Negro to the Caribbean stage."⁶⁵

Caribbean migration has formed an important characteristic of the islanders' lives since the end of slavery in the Caribbean which came with emancipation in 1835. The abolition of sugar slavery gave way to a similarly treacherous system in which the "plantation and the plantocracy remained" and newly emancipated Caribbean slaves were still forced to bear the burden of producing sugar. Islands such as Grenada and Saint Vincent, as did the other colonies, instituted a system of apprenticeship. These were bi-products of the abolition acts and carried with them the same degree of hardship. Historian Edward Cox writes: "The police nature of slave laws carried over in the post-emancipation society, and was reflected in the apprenticeship system."⁶⁶ Ensuing migrations became so continuous

⁶³ Eric Williams, The Negro in the Caribbean (Greenwood, CT: Greenwood Press Publishers, 1969), 8.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁶⁶ Edward L. Cox, "From Slavery to Freedom: Emancipation and Apprenticeship in Grenada and St. Vincent, 1834-1838," Crossing Boundaries: Comparative History of Black People in Diaspora. Ed. Darlene Clark Hine and Jacqueline McLeod. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1999. 367-390.

that some scholars have referred to the mid-nineteenth century emigration as a Caribbean “institution.”⁶⁷ A desire to shed the strictures of post-slavery bondage was just one factor among a few that propelled Caribbean residents to move, first among the many Caribbean territories and eventually outside. As historian Violet Johnson summarized, “the newly freed slaves were anxious to be rid of all the vestiges of slavery. Therefore, they moved away from plantations to seek occupations and environments which did not bear resemblances to their previous lives.” Ironically, however, they often moved from their own plantation-based economies to work on plantations (or former plantations) in other colonies.⁶⁸ For instance, laborers from Barbados or Grenada moved to newer colonies like Trinidad or British Guiana. These internal Caribbean migrations took place between 1835 and the 1860s.

While post-emancipation conditions marked the migration that took place during this earlier period, later migrations, including those that would eventually be to the U.S northeast, and particularly New England, would be more a result of demographic and economic factors. Violet Johnson’s oral histories confirm this. For example, she includes one Barbadian man’s comments on the over-population and crowding that led to his coming to live in Boston. He told her: “I am here because there is no place, I mean, no physical space for me in Barbados. Some of us just have to move out for the country to keep going. If I hadn’t come to Boston, I would have gone some place else.”⁶⁹ If not forced out by lack of physical space, emigrants were forced or helped to leave the islands by the economic conditions and by government contracts. Barbados governors passed legislation, dating back to 1873 that essentially formed an immigration act. It allowed the Barbadian government to

⁶⁷ Violet Mary-Ann Johnson, “The Migration Experience: Social and Economic Adjustment of British West Indian Immigrants in Boston, 1915-1950.” Diss. Boston College, 1993.

⁶⁸ Ibid., Johnson’s dissertation explores this trend towards migration, in a discussion of what she calls the “West Indian dream.” She sees the migration of Caribbean immigrants to New England as existing in a continuum that began with this post-slavery movement between island territories.

⁶⁹ Johnson, p.18.

assist those who wanted to migrate by arranging labor contracts in some cases.⁷⁰ Perhaps one of the best examples of external developments with other countries that led to contractual labor and served as a great factor for Caribbean out-migration was the construction of the Panama railway. The digging of the canal by the French Universal Inter-Oceanic Company was the catalyst that sparked mass migration out of the Caribbean after 1880. The migration of Caribbeans to Panama, particularly led by Barbadians and Jamaicans, lasted until after the canal was opened in 1914.⁷¹ Many of the immigrants that would come and settle in New England were migrants that were a product of these events (and thus were twice migrating out of the Caribbean to new locations). In fact, the involvement of the United States in the Panama Canal Zone brought about many profound changes in the Caribbean region, not the least of which was migration. In a discussion of Taft/ Roosevelt foreign policy in Latin America and the issue of what he calls “enlightened colonialism,” Walter LaFeber writes: “...Roosevelt’s belief that the United States had been entrusted with a ‘civilizing’ mission which it should bear proudly...seemed particularly applicable to the Caribbean, including Panama, where the people were largely a mixture of Indian, Spanish and black.”⁷² This assessment raises questions around the country’s history of difficulty politicizing and/or intellectualizing populations of people of foreign nationality—and perhaps particularly those reflecting mestiço cultures.

Just as the history of slavery underlies the stories of British Caribbean migrations, so, too, is it connected to the patterns of immigration among those from the Netherland Antilles. Evidence of the immigrant population from the Netherlands Antilles in New

⁷⁰ Ibid., also G. W. Roberts, “Emigration from Barbados,” *Social and Economic Studies*, Vol. 4, 1955, 245-288.

⁷¹ Johnson. For more information on the Panama Canal, see also, Walter LaFeber, *The Panama Canal: The Crisis in Historical Perspective* (NY: Oxford UP, 1978).

⁷² Walter LaFeber, *The Panama Canal: The Crisis in Historical Perspective* (NY: Oxford UP, 1978), 56.

England is clear dating back to the mid to late nineteenth century. For example, in Massachusetts, reports abound in the local newspapers of the state's major cities. One local organ in the city of New Bedford, where many Antillean immigrants settled beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, published accounts of town celebrations of the "Emancipation of the British West Indies" in New Bedford, Boston and other parts of the state. The celebration was linked to commemoration of the U.S. emancipation of African-American slaves. The front page headline of the July 29, 1899 edition of The Evening Standard read: "First of August: Anniversary of Emancipation in British West Indies. How the Day Has Been Commemorated in New Bedford. Prominent Men Participated, and Stirring Scenes were Enacted." Significantly, the names of the 'prominent men' cited also reflect their Antillean roots, raising questions around the settlement process of these Caribbean men and women who were able to make names and successful lives for themselves in New England towns and cities.

The Netherland Antilles are an archipelago region formerly made up of six islands divided into two groups that are separated geographically by the Caribbean Sea. The first group, the southern or Leeward Islands included Aruba, Curaçao and Bonaire; these are located north of the coast of Venezuela. Since 1986, however, Aruba has been independent under the terms of its "status aparte." Five hundred nautical miles northeast of the Leeward Islands lies the smaller cluster of islands which includes Saint Maarten, Saba and Saint Eustatius, forming the northern or Windward group located near Puerto Rico. The two sets of island nations are culturally and linguistically different. For instance, inhabitants of the Windward Islands most commonly speak English or Spanish, whereas residents of the Leeward or southern islands are either tri- or quadri-lingual, speaking Dutch, Spanish and English, as well as *Papiamentu*, a creole language made from a mix of European languages

(with elements of Dutch, English, Spanish and Portuguese) and African dialects.⁷³ The majority of the population of these islands is Christian, specifically Roman Catholic. In Curaçao, however, there is a sizeable Jewish population, made up of descendants of Portuguese Sephardic Jews that came from Brazil in 1654.⁷⁴ An issue for future consideration is how the population of immigrants of the Netherland Antilles—with their different languages and Catholic traditions—had significant similarities with those of Cape Verdean ancestry. This aspect of the history of these African Diaspora migrants raises questions around the role of religion as a cultural force shaping the identity politics of the immigrant. For example, what was the adjustment strategy of black, Catholic immigrants versus Protestant migrants who may have had more in common with the Puritan New Englanders that shared their religious traditions and ideas or values? Conversely, how might the Puritan ethic have affected local (native born) New Englanders' observations and understandings of the immigrants of color that not only spoke different tongues but worshipped differently as well?

Cape Verde Islands

The Cape Verde Islands, known today as the Republic of Cape Verde, are comprised of ten islands and eleven islets clustered approximately three hundred nautical miles off of the westernmost tip of Africa, near Senegal. Europeans first discovered the islands in 1455 when Italian navigator, Antonio da Noli happened upon the archipelago while sailing with a

⁷³ Fenzi, Jewell (1971)

⁷⁴ Cornelis Ch. Goslinga, The Dutch in the Caribbean and on the Wild Coast, 1580-1680 (Assen, Netherlands: Van Gorcum & Company, 1971).

Portuguese expedition.⁷⁵ Prior to the Portuguese discovery of the islands, they were probably known to and possibly inhabited (although not permanently) by Africans, particularly African fisherman, and may have also been known to Arabs traveling the Atlantic.⁷⁶ For instance, “[o]ne legend says that the Wolofs, an ethnic group from the coast of Guine, West Africa, visited the islands before Europeans...The story has it that small groups of Wolof had taken refuge from their tribal enemies on the coast. If this was so they probably took advantage of the rich fishing grounds around Cape Verde.”⁷⁷ The historiographical debate over the origins of the islands is appropriately suggestive for questions of whether to claim Cape Verdeans as African or Portuguese are woven into every aspect of the history of Cape Verde and its people. Until the Republic gained independent status in 1975, as a result of the successful, combined political struggles fought with the people of Guinea Bissau, they were under the control of the Portuguese empire. The islands share a history of colonization and political and economic exploitation by Europeans with other African countries, and share vast cultural and linguistic characteristics as well. However, throughout the continent, there are few countries which parallel Cape Verde in terms of racial composition and racial politics. Places that *do* share similar patterns include other provinces of Portugal such as São Tomé and Príncipe, Madeira, the Azores and Brazil.

⁷⁵ Colm Foy, *Cape Verde: Politics, Economy and Society* (London: Pinter Publishers, 1988); Duncan, *The Atlantic Islands: Madeira, the Azores and the Cape Verdes in Seventeenth-Century Commerce and Navigation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971): 18-19.

⁷⁶ Marques, *História de Portugal*, p. 136.

⁷⁷ Almeida and Nyhan, *Cape Verde and Its People. A Short History, Part I* (1976): 12. In addition to sources such as this, there is much oral folk lore about the presence of West Africans on the Cape Verde Islands before the Portuguese presence. For instance, up until present day, there are stories about “rocha skrêbeda”—a formation of rocks on the island of Saint Vincente/Saint Nicolau, where there are carvings in hieroglyphics that supposedly date back to the early fifteenth century that mark the presence of West Africans (probably fisherman) that visited the islands before the Portuguese (For one example of documentation of this folklore, see film, *The Journey of Cape Verde*, by Gueny Pires, released 2005).

Comparative historian A. J. R. Russell-Wood emphasizes the characteristics that comprised this Portuguese world during the ‘age of discoveries.’ These include deep oceanic traffic and trade across the Atlantic, a mingling of populations creating new groups of often mixed-race individuals, and intricate networks across Europe and West Africa which was made possible, in part, because of the ways the Portuguese changed the societies in which they ventured. Central to this argument is the way in which migration facilitates the creation of new and unique populations. For instance, Russell-Wood wrote the following about Brazil, Madeira (and implicitly other former Portuguese colonies):

Be they of European or of African descent, over 93 percent of the population of Brazil was the product of migration from Europe or Africa over the previous three centuries. This would also apply to Madeira, the Azores, Cape Verdes, São Tomé and Príncipe, which were uninhabited or virtually uninhabited before the arrival of the Portuguese. This, indeed, was the world the Portuguese created.⁷⁸

This work highlights the fact that Cape Verde fits within the wider world that came into existence as a result of the Portuguese connection to the continent of Africa. This fact has been left out of the few studies of Cape Verdean immigrants and their homeland. For instance, Marilyn Halter de-emphasizes the Cape Verdean connection to the wider Portuguese world and insists upon the notion of Cape Verde as exceptional. C. R. Boxer theorizes one particular characteristic of Portuguese involvement in Africa which is what scholars like Halter apply to the Cape Verdean case reemphasizing the idea of exceptionalism. Boxer writes that there was “...evidence of the Lusitanian lack of a colour bar and of the Portuguese proclivity for mating with coloured women.”⁷⁹ This supposed lack of color-based discrimination has been further interrogated and tensions among African Diaspora populations rooted in colorism and classism have been revealed, for example in the

⁷⁸ A. J. R. Russell-Wood, *A World on the Move: The Portuguese in Africa, Asia, and America, 1415-1808* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1992): 62.

⁷⁹ Boxer, p. 85.

work of Kim Butler, Herman Bennett and other African Diaspora theorists. Scholars of Brazil have always highlighted this pattern of race mixing and the historiography on Brazil is instructive here for it has brought about an understanding of Brazil's complex and often polarizing racial realities that gets beyond the myth of Brazil as some kind of racial paradise. Yet the importance of these interventions, and their implications for studying mestiço populations such as that of Cape Verde, have not received enough scholarly attention.

Under Portuguese colonial rule, the Cape Verde Islands occupied an important, strategic position. The discovery of the islands represented a crucial boost to Portuguese ambitions to circumnavigate the African continent and set up lucrative trade with the East and Far East.⁸⁰ The islands thus held a strategic position in the trans-Atlantic slave trade and within Western African commerce on the continent itself. Before the discovery of the isles, the Portuguese were forced, like others engaged in colonizing missions, to sail beyond the relatively well-known North African coast and make the long and treacherous voyage along the coastline within potentially dangerous sight of the mainland and close enough to feel the effects of its debilitating climate. With the discovery of Cape Verde in the mid-fifteenth century, the journey was made both safer and more profitable. For instance, with the presence of the islands in their newly mapped Atlantic African geographies, it was possible to take advantage of the strong south-westerly winds that blew directly from Portugal, via Madeira, helping push ships over to the Cape Verde Islands and then to the mainland. Then from the islands, one could either trade with the easily accessible West African coastal residents without having to spend much time on the coast itself. Alternatively, traders could

⁸⁰ Foy, pp. 3-5

continue on to the further islands of São Tomé and Príncipe, giving them access to Angola and beyond.⁸¹

In the most detailed account of the historical importance of the islands during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, T. Bentley Duncan explains that before the advent of radio and radar, the islands were crucial for travellers' orientation. In the Cape Verdes, which are mountainous islands with volcanic origins, flames from the volcano on Fogo (which means "fire" in Portuguese) provided a natural beacon for ships passing through the night. Sailors thus came to depend upon the islands as markers of the West African coastline, as sources of supplies and as places of refuge from inclement weather. For all these purposes, the Portuguese seamen who had named the archipelago after the westernmost cape of Africa became familiar with "Cabo Verde," and the islands secured their place in the annals of navigation history.⁸²

Historians seem to agree that initial, organized settlement on the islands began in 1460.⁸³ Enslavement on the isles began almost immediately. The first group of settlers included the Portuguese, Africans, Castilians and Genoese. And these were followed by later arrivals from France and England, occasional pirates and seamen who, it has been assumed, married into the local population and remained there to make a living.⁸⁴ At least twenty-

⁸¹ Ibid., 6.

⁸² Meintel, pp. 15-16; Duncan, pp. 2-3

⁸³ Some secondary sources on the initial settlement of Cape Verde and the role of the archipelago during the era of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade include: Luis de Albuquerque and Maria Emilia Madeira Santos, Eds. Historia Geral de Cabo Verde, Volume 1 and 2 (Lisboa: Centro de Estudos de Historia e Cartografia Antiga, 1991); George Brooks, Landlords and Strangers: Ecology, Society, and Trade in Western Africa, 1000-1630 (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1993); Antonio Carreira, The People of the Cape Verde Islands: Exploitation and Emigration (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1982); Philip Curtin, The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969); Colm Foy, Cape Verde Islands: Economics and Society (London: Pinter, 1988); C. Fyfe, "The Cape Verde Islands," HT 31: 5-9.; M. Klein and P. E. Lovejoy, "Slavery in West Africa," in H. A. Gemery and J. S. Hogendorn, Eds. The Uncommon Market: Essays in the Economic History of the Atlantic Slave Trade (New York, 1979); Deirdre Meintel, Race, Culture, and Portuguese Colonialism in Cabo Verde (1984); Caroline Shaw, Cape Verde: A Bibliography (Denver, CO: Clio Press, 1991).

⁸⁴ Meintel, p. 23; Blake, *Europeans in West Africa*, p. 27.

seven African cultural groups are represented in the genealogical make-up of the original population, including groups ranging from those represented in present-day Senegal to Sierra Leone.⁸⁵ An 1856 census and an anthropological study done the same year revealed the presence of at least nineteen of these groups including Wolof, Bambara, Lebu, Tucoro, Fula and Mandinka. Indeed, as early as 1565, Wolof and Fula slaves were relied upon to serve as interpreters for colonizers involved in slaving expeditions based in Santiago (or São Tiago as it is called today). Enslaved Wolof women were valued for their expert weaving skills as well as for their fine physical attributes, often being described as “handsome and noble”—a common detail ascribed to Cape Verdean women by travelers to the islands and in general literature on the archipelago.⁸⁶ Descriptions of highly desirable and attractive Cape Verdean beauties raise three sets of questions for further analysis: first, how do these descriptions compare with now familiar descriptions of other “primitive” African women and their female descendants? and what may these white, male travelers’ observations of Cape Verdean women have to tell us about the opinions of mixed-race people in general? Lastly, how are variations in skin color, language, and other markers of ethnicity captured in their descriptions if at all, and what is said about this aspect of difference if anything?

Deirdre Meintel details the politics of gender and racial differences in the context of the history of slavery and Portuguese colonialism in Cabo Verde. The complex system of race relations in the archipelago is perhaps the most complicated legacy that remains from Portuguese colonial rule. Meintel suggests that the ideologies of Cape Verde fall within the

⁸⁵ Carreira, *Formação*, pp. 316-334.

⁸⁶ Lessa, “O Homen Cabo-Verdiano” in *Coloquios*, pp. 122-26; Meintel, p. 23; Carreira, *Formação*, p. 13; also records of Diego Carreira’s slaving expedition in Avelino Teixeira da Mota’s article from *Boletim*. Jennifer L. Morgan’s article, “ ‘Some Could Suckle Over Their Shoulders’: Male Travelers, Female Bodies, and the Gendering of Racial Ideology, 1500-1770,” (*WMQ*, LIV, 1997, pp. 167-192), begins with a reference to one such description of a Cape Verdean woman, which appeared in Richard Ligon, A True and Exact History of the Island of Barbados (London, 1657): 12-13.

general pattern of “Lusotropicalism,” which is characteristic of Brazil.⁸⁷ In this formulation, the racial caste system in Cape Verde “is a consequence of Lusotropicalism; that is, the unique and relatively benign character of Portuguese colonialism and slavery...Lusotropicalism was the result, on the one hand, of the Catholic religion that unified slave and master, and on the other hand, of the Moorish influence that predisposed the Portuguese to intimate contact, including sexual relations, with dark-skinned peoples.”⁸⁸ For an analysis of Cape Verdean society and culture, the concept of “Lusotropicalism” may be inadequate. Indeed, the idea tends to oversimplify the problems and patterns of racial thinking and potential colorism, and most importantly, the system and legacy of slavery.

The symptoms and remnants of slavery in the Cape Verde Islands translate into a three tiered system, including blacks, whites (a small number which included priests who were trained in Portuguese seminaries on the islands) and mulattos or mesticos. This system has both advantages and disadvantages in the eyes of the archipelago’s natives. As one author wrote with seeming pride (similar to those who believe in the myth of Brazilian racial democracy): “[t]he Cape Verdean phenomenon refutes the theory expressed by many, including Aime Cesaire, that a harmonious non-racial culture cannot result from the meeting of European and African peoples.”⁸⁹ Conversely, in the words of one recent migrant to the U.S. from the Republic, discrimination is evident on the islands and has always been. “On

⁸⁷ This is outlined by Brazilian scholar Gilberto Freyre among others.

⁸⁸ Meintel, *Race, Culture, and Portuguese Colonialism*, p. 74. See also, sources on Brazil that include: Gilberto Freyre, *New World in the Tropics* (New York: Knopf, 1959); Freyre, *The Portuguese and the Tropics* (Lisbon: Exec. Committee for the Commemoration of the Death of Henry the Navigator, 1961); Anani Dzidzienyo, “Brazilian Race Relations Studies: Old Problems, New Ideas?,” *Humboldt Journal of Social Relations* 19:2, 1993, pp. 109-129; A. doNascimento, “Racial Democracy” in Brazil: Myth or Reality? (Ibadan, Nigeria: Sketch Publishing, 1977); H. Winant, “Rethinking Race in Brazil,” *Journal of Latin American Studies* vol. 24, 1992, pp. 173-192. See also, comparative studies such as Jeffrey Lesser, *Negotiating National Identity: Immigrants, Minorities, and the Struggle for Ethnicity in Brazil* (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 1999); Anthony Marx, *Making Race & Nation: A Comparison of the USA, South Africa, and Brazil* (1998); Leo Spitzer, *Lives In Between: Assimilation and Marginality in Austria, Brazil, West Africa, 1780-1945* (NY: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1989).

⁸⁹ Burness, *Fire*, p. 75.

the islands, we have had different names and beliefs about the people on each of the islands...For example, the black people in Praia were looked at as what you call 'bums'...They are called '*badius*' in *Kriolu*. Those of us from Fogo believe they are lazy and poor. They were slaves in the past and now they do not try to better their lives. The people from Fogo have a lot of class, a lot of culture. You see it in our homes, our clothes, everything."⁹⁰ The sentiment expressed here captures the typical prejudices harbored on the Cape Verde Islands, biases based upon island-identity, skin tone, historical role or position and class or social status. 'Father of Cape Verdean Independence,' Amílcar Cabral, consistently critiqued the notion of Lusotropicalism, encouraging scholars and activists to fully probe the harsh system of Portuguese colonialism and its effects. In his 1968 foreword to Basil Davidson's No Fist Is Big Enough to Hide the Sky, he characterized this theory. "A powerful propaganda machine ...put to work at convincing international opinion that our peoples lived in the best of all possible worlds, depicting happy Portuguese 'of colour' whose only pain was the yearning for their white mother-country... A whole mythology was assembled. And as with other myths, especially those concerning the subjection and exploitation of people, there was no lack of 'men of science,' even a renowned sociologist, to provide a theoretical basis—in this case, *luso-tropicalismo*."⁹¹ In this passage, Cabral strongly urges us, and I argue this has yet to be done, to further problematize Gilberto Freyre's vision of a Portuguese-extracted Luso-tropical paradise.

The racial politics of the archipelago was very different from the ones in existence in the United States at the turn of the century during the age of Jim Crow.⁹² African influences

⁹⁰ Quote from Conversation with the Author, Cape Verdean Immigration Discussion Group, Brockton, MA, May 2000.

⁹¹ Amílcar Cabral, Foreword, *No Fist Is Big Enough To Hide the Sky* By Basil Davidson (Lisbon, 1968).

⁹² Obviously, the historiography on race, and race as a social construct in the United States, is very expansive. Some sources referred to for this paper include: W. E. B. DuBois, 'Races' in *The Crisis*,

on the Cape Verde Islands can be traced through cultural traits such as words of Mandinka origin that are found in *Criolu*, the pidgeon language spoken in the Republic along with the official, national language of Portuguese. In addition, various personal and place names, (such as that of the Cape Verdean man who appeared in a colonial Connecticut courtroom, called Jonah, discussed earlier), can be traced to Fula and Mandinka cultures. Various modes of food preparation, weaving and fishing are also said to be West African in origin as well. One might expect to find vestiges of Islam since some of the Africans enslaved on the islands were Muslim yet no trace of the religion remained after the seventeenth century, undoubtedly overcome by the overwhelming influence of Portuguese Catholicism. According to Meintel, nearly all slaves on the Cape Verde Islands converted to Catholicism or were coerced into doing so.⁹³ The Portuguese influence on the islands was a natural extension of the history of settlement and colonial rule. Most of the Portuguese settlers to the islands came from the South of the metropole, specifically from the provinces of Algarve and Alentejo, and also from Madeira and the Azores.

Today, the Cape Verdean population reflects this rich, complex mixed heritage, a veritable *mélange* of all of the aforementioned influences, a fossil-like imprint of the island nation's slave past. In his historical dictionary of Cape Verde, Richard Lobban explains the unique groups that comprise this people's genealogy:

August 1911; DuBois, *Dusk of Dawn* (NY: Harcourt Brace, 1940): 116-117, 137; DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (NY: Washington Square Press, 1970); Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the US from the 1960's to the 1980's* (NY: Routledge & Kegan Paul Press, 1986); Barbara Fields, "Ideology and Race in American History," in J. Morgan Kousser and James M. McPherson, eds. *Region, Race, and Reconstruction: Essays in Honor of C. Vann Woodward* (NY: Oxford UP, 1982): 143-176; Henry Louis Gates, Jr., "Introduction: Writing 'Race' and the Difference It Makes," in Gates, ed. *'Race,' Writing, and Difference* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1986): 1-20; also in the Gates' anthology, A. Appiah, "The Uncompleted Argument: DuBois and the Illogic of Race," pp. 21-37, and Tzvetan Todorov, "'Race,' Writing and Culture," pp. 370-380; Evelyn Higginbotham, "African-American Women's History and the Metalanguage of Race," in Joan Scott, ed. *Feminism and History* (NY: Oxford UP, 1996).

⁹³ Meintel, *Ibid.* Above, p. 32.

The centuries of slavery brought many Guineans, and Senegambians in general, to the Cabo Verde Islands to work on slave plantations. The small Portuguese population mixed extensively with the slaves... Settlers from Algarve and the Madeira Islands as well as Iberian political exiles (such as those of Jewish extraction, adventurers and criminals) made up a large portion of the earliest Portuguese population...in addition to the Portuguese administrators and clergy. Trading and slaving activities on the coast created unique groups of Luso-Africans (e.g. Ladinos, Mestiços, and Tangomaus) and Afro-Portuguese (e.g. Degredados, Feitores, and Lançados); these groups were also represented on the islands.⁹⁴

Africanist, George E. Brooks expands our understanding of the Cape Verdean population, as do Richard Lobban and others who have documented the history of the Cape Verde Islands. Brooks provides a detailed description of the three-fold, social structure which has been present there. He attributes the development of this color-based caste system, one that was transferred to the US within the communities making up the immigrant population, to the economic exploitation of the archipelago during the sixteenth century onward. Individuals born on the archipelago, (for example those who might be categorized as Afro-Portuguese and particularly those known as *lançados*), especially in the maritime communities, gained invaluable knowledge of West African languages and institutions and often served as “middlemen” or translators between West Africans and Europeans involved in the trade.⁹⁵ These roles often corresponded with color and/or caste and were transferred between generations of *kriolus*.

Such highly differentiated racial politics (which took into account differences of skin color and class and allowed for a separate category of mixed race individuals) formed the basis of what may be called Cape Verdean “ethnocentrism” (as in the tendency to view other ethnic groups or cultures solely from the perspective of one’s own). It is reasonable to assume then that many of the immigrants found the strict racial binary in place in the United

⁹⁴ Lobban, *Historical Dictionary of Cape Verde*, pp. 3-4.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

States inadequate and unable to accommodate their peculiar differences. Thus, Cape Verdeans—unwilling to deny their historical peculiarities and distinct culture—often chose to isolate themselves from other racial/cultural groups within the United States, and to adopt ethnocentric attitudes that allowed them to maintain social/political/cultural identities defined along the lines of ethnicity or nationality.

Overall, the project of reconsidering New England's history and place within the larger African Diaspora world is a significant intervention in modern African & African-American Studies. Interestingly, the “founding text of African-American studies” is widely considered to be the work of Massachusetts' most famous black son, W. E. B. DuBois.⁹⁶ In the words of Levering Lewis, DuBois was “very New England.”⁹⁷ Of the importance of the icon's regional bias, Lewis writes: “[T]he importance of the Great Barrington period, its imprint upon all that Willie DuBois grew to be, was deep, and certainly singular. His sense of identity or belonging was spun out between the poles of two distinct racial groups—black and white—and two dissimilar social classes—lower and upper—to form that double consciousness of being he would famously describe at age 35 in *The Souls of Black Folk*.” Perhaps it is appropriate to add to considerations of DuBois's work this very sense of bi-regionality as well, in other words how his writings were infused with his conception of the different regional identities that existed within the country in similar ways that different racial and class identities operated. One could re-read the classic *Souls* as an expression of this very aspect: the observations by a Northern black of Southern blackness, considered to be essential blackness. Through considering anew the history of race in New England, and particularly the region as an important site in the African Diaspora, we may, in effect, reverse

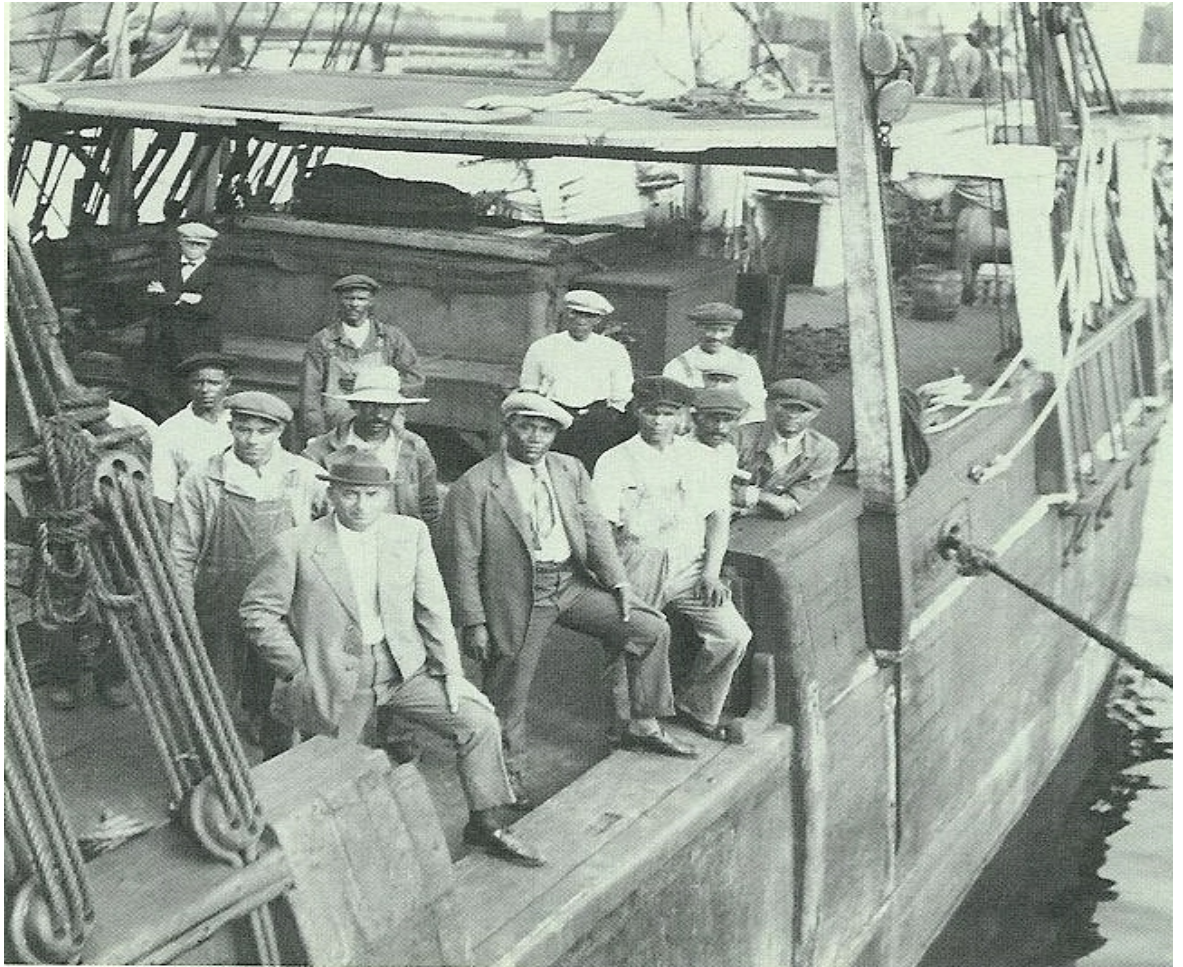
⁹⁶ Farah Jasmine Griffin, “Introduction,” *The Souls of Black Folk* (Barnes & Noble Classics Edition, George Stade, Consulting Editorial Director), 2003 edition.

⁹⁷ David Levering Lewis, *Biography of a Race*, p. 15.

the gaze of traditional Africana studies to look again at DuBois's Massachusetts and what it has to teach us about differing regional, racial sensibilities. Movement was critical in DuBois's process of documenting black life in the U.S. His transition from North to South led him to make historically pioneering discoveries and studies that gave way to our fundamental understanding of race and race relations in the country. This study is both timely and necessary to further the study of race and, in similar ways, movement—in this case south to north—will henceforth open our minds to new considerations of how migration and place affect identity formation for immigrants in the African Diaspora.

Immigration and settlement patterns of Cape Verdeans and Caribbeans in Massachusetts followed economic patterns and labor demands. The so-called Bay State had connections to the 'Black Atlantic' world, as previously discussed, dating back to the 17th century. The most famous of these connections came during the maritime era. The state's maritime supremacy was centered in its largest cities and towns, including some of the same places where we will see concentrations of African Diaspora immigrants throughout the twentieth century: Nantucket; Martha's Vineyard; New Bedford and Boston. The state's revenue based on maritime-related imports valued more than ten million per year—an incredible fortune that would not have been possible without the labor of hundreds of immigrants (especially Cape Verdeans) who served as the workforce and support staff for most, if not all, maritime ventures.⁹⁸ The first Cape Verde islanders to come to New England as immigrants originally came as maritime workers. The image on the following page depicts a group of the earliest seamen who arrived on Massachusetts shores.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 18.



19th Century Cape Verdean Whalers, Courtesy of *Spinner Publications* Photo Collection

An 1886 editorial, entitled “The Gees,” that was published in Harper’s Weekly Magazine, was instrumental in shaping mariners’ opinions of Cape Verdeans and their decisions to pursue hiring them. The piece featured a colorful caricature of a typical Cape Verdean whaleman, replete with details about his “bronze skin” and fine features which made him and other ‘Gees (short for Black Portuguese) “quite different from the Blacks of America Negro stock.” Statements such as these reflect the difficulty of many European mariners, and New Englanders generally, in classifying these black immigrants around the turn of the century. The author continued, advising owners of whaling ships and ship captains that the ‘Gees’ ignorance of appropriate wages for maritime work would make him

a ripe candidate for use in whaling, not to mention his eagerness to work. The 'Gees were noted to be good workers, unlike the stereotypically, lazy American Negro. The following excerpt from this important piece reveals the process undergone by the unidentified author as he/she attempted to categorize the Cape Verdean whaler and his race in line with the logic of the era.

The word 'Gee (g hard) is an abbreviation, by seamen, of *Portuguese*, the corrupt form of *Portuguese*. As the name is a curtailment, so the race is a residuum. Some three centuries ago certain Portuguese convicts were sent as a colony to Fogo, one of the Cape de Verds, off the northwest coast of Africa, an island previously stocked with an aboriginal race of negroes, ranking pretty high in uncivility, but rather low in stature and morals. In course of time, from the amalgamated generation all the likelier sort were drafted off as food for powder, and the ancestors of the since called 'Gees were left as the *caput mortuum* or melancholy remainder.

Of all men seamen have strong prejudices, particularly in the matter of race. They are bigots here. But when a creature of inferior race lives among them, an inferior tar, there seems no bound to their disdain. Now, as ere long will be hinted, the 'Gee, thought of an aquatic nature, does not, as regards higher qualifications, make the best of sailors... In his best estate the 'Gee is rather small (he admits it), but, with some exceptions, hardy; capable of enduring extreme hard work, hard fare, or hard usage, as the case may be. In fact, upon scientific view, there would seem a natural adaptability in the 'Gee to hard times generally. A theory not uncorroborated by his experiences...

His complexion is hybrid; his hair ditto; his mouth disproportionately large, as compared with his stomach; his neck short; but his head round, compact, and betokening a solid understanding....

Though for a long time back no stranger to the seafaring people of Portugal, the 'Gee, until a comparatively recent period, remained almost undreamed of by seafaring Americans. It is now some forty years since he first became known to certain masters of our Nantucket ships, who commenced the practice of touching at Fogo, on the outward passage, there to fill up vacancies among their crews arising from the short supply of men at home. By degrees the custom became pretty general, till now the 'Gee is found aboard of almost one whaler out of three. One reason why they are in request is this: An unsophisticated 'Gee coming on board a foreign ship never asks for wages. He comes for biscuit. He does not know what other wages mean, unless cuffs and buffets be wages, of which sort he receives a liberal allowance, paid with great punctuality, besides perquisites of punches thrown in now and then...His docile services being thus cheaply to be had,

some captains will go the length of maintaining that ‘Gee sailors are preferable, indeed every way, physically and intellectually, superior to American sailors—such captains complaining, and justly, that American sailors, if not decently treated, are apt to give serious trouble.

The above account may, perhaps, among the ethnologists, raise some curiosity to see a ‘Gee. But to see a ‘Gee there is no need to go all the way to Fogo, no more than to see a Chinaman to go all the way to China. ‘Gees are occasionally to be encountered in our sea-ports, but more particularly in Nantucket and New Bedford. But these ‘Gees are not the ‘Gees of Fogo. That is, they are no longer green ‘Gees. They are sophisticated ‘Gees, and hence liable to be taken for naturalized citizens badly sunburnt. Many a Chinaman, in new coat and pantaloons, his long queue coiled out of sight in one of Genin’s hats, has promenaded Broadway, and been taken merely for an eccentric Georgia planter. The same with ‘Gees; a stranger need have a sharp eye to know a ‘Gee, even if he see him.⁹⁹

This essay documents the long established presence of Cape Verdeans in the maritime trades, and the struggle of some whites to racialize and classify them as a people. Several factors and themes are clear: the anti-Chinese sentiment and xenophobia of the age, racism against African-Americans, and the era’s labor trends towards exploitation of immigrant workers, among other ideas. Also made clear in the piece is the association with New England towns, Nantucket and New Bedford (the principles sites of the whaling industry), with these immigrants of African descent.

Evidence of the well-established history of Cape Verdeans as the “other Africans” (as sociohistorical linguist and Nantucket scholar, Frances Karttunen has called them) abounds in the archives...dating back to the 18th century journals of whalers who passed through and/or stopped at the various islands during their many voyages in the Atlantic. For example, the log book for the Ship Asia, originating in Nantucket, with Master Elijah Coffin and Keeper Sylvanus Crosby (Purpose of sealing and whaling) lists multiple stops in the Cape Verde Islands—“Isle of Sal (Sal Rei), CVI, anchored November 17, 1791;

⁹⁹ “The ‘Gees,” Harper’s New Monthly Magazine (dated c. 1886)/ From the Cape Verde Folder, The Nantucket Atheneum.

Bonavista (Boa Vista), CVI, sighted November 10, 1791; Isle of May (Maio), CVI, anchored November 11, 1791; Saint Jago (Sao Tiago), CVI, anchored November 14, 1791.” The log book keeper wrote “Mail: Wrote letters to send home, Isle of Sal, CVI, November 8, 1791” and later, “Supplies...bought 5 hogs and 19 goats, Island of May (Maio), CVI, November 11, 1791.”¹⁰⁰

Similar records appeared in an 1837 entry in the Journal for the Bark called Coronet. The author includes among events described the following: “The center of Brava (CV) was east distant 15 miles—we have two natives of Brava on board who had been expecting to go on shore and see their friends, having been five years away from them—but when the ship was headed from Brava the poor fellows could not help crying and I felt sorry for them,” June 15, 1837.¹⁰¹

Documents and research on Nantucket maritime exploits also discuss racialization in hiring practices and work experiences on the seas. These affirm the satirical yet real comments included above in the *Harpers* editorial. One young scholar found that “how these Portuguese sailors fit into the communities of New Bedford and Nantucket is less clear. Cape Verdeans seem to have been grouped together socially with other nonwhite since Cape Verdean immigrants (almost all male) often married black or Indian women.”¹⁰² The ambiguity of these African Diaspora immigrants, mostly mestiço, Portuguese (and Cape Verdean creole) speaking, is also discussed. On the ostensible blending of Cape Verdeans into New England communities, and the difficulty of tracking them in census records, Rui-Chong further argues “[e]ither these seamen of color left New Bedford and Nantucket after

¹⁰⁰ Records for the log book for the *Ship Asia*, originating in Nantucket, with Master Elijah Coffin and Keeper Sylvanus Crosby, 1791---. Nantucket Atheneum.

¹⁰¹ Journal for the Bark called Coronet, June 1837. Nantucket Atheneum.

¹⁰² Jia-Rui Chong, “‘Federated Along One Keel’: Race, Ethnicity and the Alternative Spaces of Whaling Ships, 1830-1860,” Harvard College Honors Thesis, 1999. Nantucket Atheneum.

a short period of time or the black-white axis forced them into one of these categories.

...Yet the fate of all of these groups (except for the Azoreans) was tied to the black community since it seems that whites considered them part of the larger 'black' populations".¹⁰³ The work of Kristi Kraemer confirms this idea about the absorption of immigrants from the African and Lusophone Diasporas into the black community in Nantucket... she states: "blacks from America and elsewhere in the world headed for the New Guinea [settlement] when the whalers pulled into shore."¹⁰⁴

What the research on Nantucket reveals is that at the turn of the twentieth century, the old Yankee angst—ostensibly based on years of dealings with the "other," including Native American Indians and a free black population (creating disparities in values amongst themselves and the foreigners they confronted)—gradually gave way to very real debates and legislation that restricted immigration. The ideas Brahmins held about immigration restriction, combined with ideology about race and their old value system gave way to this new intellectual framework which was based on widely held and respected historical and scientific theories of the time.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ Ibid., p. 97.

¹⁰⁴ Kristi Kraemer, "The Background and Resolution of the Eunice Ross Controversy," Historic Nantucket, 29 (July 1981).

¹⁰⁵ The 'old value system' of Boston Brahmins that is mentioned here refers to attitudes of the select gentry (elite group which Oliver Wendell Holmes described as 'the Brahmin caste' coining the famous term) that evolved from such intellectuals as William Ellery Channing (connected with the Unitarian church) and Ralph Waldo Emerson (connected of course with Transcendentalism). Solomon explains that theirs was a "peculiar binding heritage" made up of what their ancestors had believed about themselves, their God, their country and of strangers in that country. Their ancestors, of course, were the original New England settlers, Puritans hailing from England, who felt that they had been ordained by God to find and establish a just commonwealth. They "fostered a rigid community in which dissenting Puritans as well as adherents of other religions were unwelcome" (Solomon, 2). These gentry believed in the moral superiority of New England compared with all other parts of the country and in keeping with this idea, felt that Boston was the "Athens of America" (Oliver Wendell Holmes in Our Hundred Days, p. 100). Solomon summarizes the Brahmin value system as follows: "Respect for the individuality of each man plus faith in the universality of all men added up to the code of values upon which specific Brahmin attitudes were based. Religiously, this code impelled respect for the creeds and consciences of all individuals; intellectually, it stimulated new avowals of cultural independence from England; and socially, the inevitable corollary was that the condition of human slavery was intolerable" (Solomon, Ancestors, p. 4). Barbara Solomon's work here, in

This was the era when, as DuBois articulated in his groundbreaking work *Black Reconstruction*, the idea of personal whiteness became an integral component of post-Civil War and Reconstruction U.S. society. It was an era when (the forty years between 1880 and 1920), particularly in the late nineteenth century, the country met with phenomenal social changes that would effect the development of the notion of race. Specifically, the turn of the century witnessed the power of the idea of bi-racialism. Matthew Guterl described the period as follows:

Millions of immigrants and “Old Stock” Americans were thrown together, crowded into cities; transcontinental railroads crisscrossed the country and steamships traversed shipping lines around the world in growing numbers, facilitating an explosion of economic activity; the frontier closed, cutting off continental expansion; a war over the practical means of empire was begun and won; and the United States was transformed from an uncivil, rough-and-tumble backwater to a world power and the very seat of “civilization.”¹⁰⁶

Key to this nascent “civilization” was thinking about race and the manipulation of a growing immigrant labor force for the purposes of the growing economy. This was by no means unique to the Northeastern region or to New England in particular. Neil Foley documented the similar history of Mexican laborers in the Texas cotton industry and connections between the anti-Chinese campaign of California and the similar treatment of Mexican immigrant laborers in his book, *The White Scourge*.

As Jewish immigrants met with Irish and Italian and Greek and so on, one of the problems faced by social scientists examining the problems of modernization and industrialization was that of racial classification. This was particularly vexing for historians who struggled to write the general historical narrative of the nation. Among the architects of

Ancestors and Immigrants, originally published in 1956, made a critical contribution/intervention in American history at the time.

¹⁰⁶ Matthew Guterl, *The Color of Race in America, 1900-1940* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2001), 15.

“Universal History” and race categorization was John Clark Ridpath, author of the encyclopedia *Great Races of Mankind* and designer of one of the most widely used race charts. His work embodies what Guterl described of the time as “[t]he scatterbrained focus on skin color, national history, and the ‘great fact of language’ [which] complicated the task of racial classification...Interrelated demographic and economic factors were, in part, behind this problem of classification.”¹⁰⁷

Critical to notions of American identity and nationalism were ideologies of nativism and white supremacy. Sociologist Orlando Patterson has stated: “those who were visibly or vaguely ‘white’ eagerly sought membership within the Caucasian chalk circle and were usually welcomed as long as they could prove no trace of ‘African blood.’...swarthy Sicilians and Arabs now found themselves one with blond Northern Europeans, Irish Catholics with English Protestants, formerly persecuted Jews with Gentiles—all were united in the great ‘white Republic’ of America by virtue simply of not being tainted by one drop of the despised Afro-American blood.”¹⁰⁸

Asians, however, were “viewed as unassimilable” and were “excluded from the dominant U.S. identity.”¹⁰⁹ Nearly a quarter of a million Chinese entered the U.S. before the 1882 Exclusion Act; they came to perform low paying jobs in manual labor/ day labor services. Many worked as indentured or bond servants with the empty promises of their employers who said they would work for a set limit of time in return for paid passage into America. Chinese, and later Japanese, were resented by whites who felt they posed a threat to them in competing for work, rights and other entitlements as members of the ‘free (white)

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 18

¹⁰⁸ Orlando Patterson, *Ordeal of Integration* (p. 69)

¹⁰⁹ Desmond King, *Making Americans*, (p. 23)

laboring class.¹¹⁰ The Irish participated in the anti-Chinese campaign in CA even though they had worked alongside the Asian immigrants in railroad track labor. They also played lead roles in the NY Draft Riot of 1863, which included violence against blacks, thus demonstrating “their willingness to embrace the values of white supremacy in return for access to white power and privilege.”¹¹¹

The attitudes of Boston Brahmin intellectuals regarding African Americans and the question of immigration restriction reflected these trends. Theirs was a dilemma over the so-called ‘Alien menace’ and their preoccupations, as puritans and nativists, were with the threat of racial contamination and corruption posed by the existence of ‘strangers in their midst’ whom they did not understand. This problem brought about a division between members of the New England elite. Eventually, talk of immigration restriction evolved from their split and their weakened anti-racism stance. Guterl argued that some of this reflected the “southernization” of northern racial discourse—as such intellectuals became conscious of and preoccupied with the so-called “Negro problem.” Arguably, this was a natural progression from the pre-existing anxieties that were held around the immigrant presence. Though largely undocumented in the canon of Brahmin intellectual works, these intellectuals were not only considering the American Negro in their musings and tremblings about those that would disrupt their inbred communities. One needs only to refer to Melville’s *Moby Dick* as an example of quintessential New England literature with its character [Pip?] (the Negro mariner) representing what Toni Morrison would call “the Africanist presence” in that famous novel. As Morrison wrote in her book, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*: “Race [is] metaphorical—a way of referring to and disguising forces,

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Foley, p. 44; See also Roedigger and Ignatiev, et al

events, classes, and expressions of social decay and economic division far more threatening to the body politic than biological ‘race’ ever was.”¹¹² It is quite likely that Melville and most other New England writers, thinkers and the general citizens alike held some internal questions about not only the European strangers in their midst but also the immigrants of color (some of whom spoke other languages no less) who had been in their presence as well for decades. And yet since utopian values such as universality and equality for all was part of the established intellectual terrain of New England scholars, it makes sense that they would have considerable difficulty reflecting openly about some of their fears. Perhaps anything that represented a break with their glorious tradition, such as their own sins (against Negro foreigners for instance), given their proud anti-slavery beginnings, would have to be obscured and dealt with privately.

The stories presented here, however, represent a glimpse into that private terrain. Examining “Old Stock” New Englanders’ relations with immigrants of color, beginning with a second look at the environments they shared and the meeting of geographies that this symbolizes, is a part of the process of re-mapping the region. In re-mapping the region, it is clear how central the presence of immigrants from the African Diaspora has been geographically, politically, socially and culturally. Indeed, if one includes the ‘human geography’ of a place in studying its environment, then the visitors present who help contribute to shaping the atmosphere of that space must be factored into the equation. The following pages include maps of each group of islands from where the African Diaspora immigrants discussed here came.

¹¹² Tony Morrison, Playing in the Dar: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination (New York: Vintage Books, 1992), 63.

APPENDIX A

MAP OF BRITISH & ANGLOPHONE CARIBBEAN ISLANDS



(MAP OF THE ENTIRE CARIBBEAN REGION)



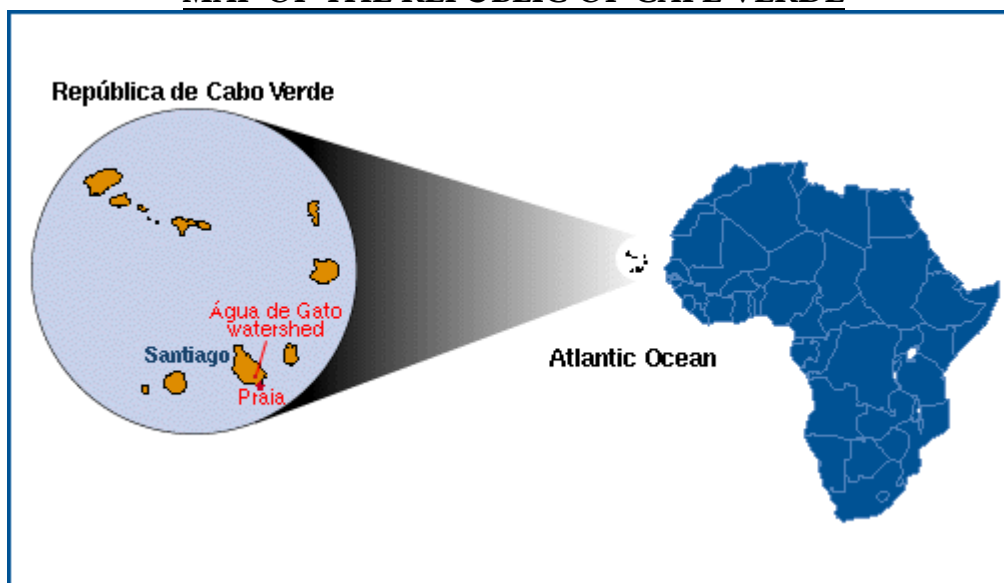
APPENDIX B

MAP OF THE NETHERLAND ANTILLES



APPENDIX C

MAP OF THE REPUBLIC OF CAPE VERDE



Chapter Four **Figuring Out How and Where to Fit In**

Exploring the ways that immigrants from Cape Verde and other locales within the African Diaspora fit into the human geography of New England in the first half of the twentieth century and beyond begs the question of what their community lives were like within in their own inner circles. There, they attempted to recreate home and although they could never remain in complete isolation, they did manage to make spaces all their own where outsiders looking in would not understand the peculiarities of the *kriolu* ways of life. Over the course of the century, their individual and group experiences at work, in organizations and churches, and at schools reveal these ways of life and how they often conflicted with the trends of the society in which they found themselves. These clashes illustrate the emotional aspects of their journey as immigrants and the mental adjustments that were made in trying to establish homes away from home.

As one scholar noted, one aspect of the Cape Verdeans challenge in emigration was the choice US society would seemingly pressure them into which was having to choose where to fit in, in the larger social scheme of race, class and ethnic categories. The resistance to that choice resulted in a complex process of forming a distinct Cape Verdean identity.

Greenfield writes:

Capeverdeans were presented with the implicit choice of being assimilated into the dominant American culture, or of developing an ethnic identity that would bind them off and separate them as a distinct group. In contrast with other immigrants, assimilation for the Capeverdeans, since they were of part African ancestry, meant ascription to the Negro, or black segment of the American society and the stigma and restrictions associated with such ascription. But establishing themselves as an ethnic group, again in contrast with the adjustment activities of other immigrants,

required that they first challenge and reject the initial efforts of the members of the larger society to classify and to treat them as black Americans.¹¹³

According to Greenfield's research, Cape Verdeans awareness of the subordinate status of African-Americans in the US led them to reject assimilation into African-American communities. He argues that they eventually decided instead to adopt four different "social identities," which he summarizes as follows:

Again the point must emphasized that these are not social identities but rather strategies being projected by members or segments of a community seeking to have itself defined in a way that the individuals see as being most favorable to them. Four major positions, or strategies may be identified. These may be called: 1) the Capeverdean-Portuguese strategy; 2) the Capeverdean-Black strategy; 3) the Capeverdean-African strategy; and 4) the Capeverdean-American strategy.¹¹⁴

The idea of these strategies supports the notion that Cape Verdeans were engaging in resistance to US racialization. The dictates of the era, however, meant that although Cape Verdeans saw themselves and defined themselves in these ways, not everyone else did. As the stories of encounters between the US-born and Cape Verdeans show, their African ancestry was predominate in observers' impressions of whom they actually were.

Their unique identities and traditions, as Cape Verdeans, were lost on New Englanders who observed them merely as "black aliens" with many of the same negative traits that were noticeable among American Negroes. Evidence of this pattern is given in the many articles published on the subject in local Massachusetts newspapers such as the New Bedford city paper, *The Evening Standard*. In the front page feature of the July 29, 1905 paper, reporter Cooper Gaw gave an account of the conditions on the island of Brava at the time and the connections to 'Cape Verde immigration.' The piece also shed light on

¹¹³ Sidney M. Greenfield, "In Search of Social Identity: Strategies of Ethnic Identity Management Amongst Capeverdeans in Southeastern Massachusetts," *Luso-Brazilian Review* 13:1 (Summer 1976): 3-18.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 10.

the following key aspects of this New England story: (1) importance of New Bedford as a site of Cape Verdean settlement and other places they flocked to, (2) how the immigrant residents affected local work and living conditions in the townspeople's eyes, (3) the ways their lives were circumscribed by race and racism, and (4) how they were viewed in comparison with other immigrants present such as the Azoreans. Gaw wrote:

In almost every case New Bedford has been the destination of the emigrating Cape Verders. New Bedford, through its whalers, was the first city of the United States that these people knew anything about, and while, in later years, some of the little packets have made Providence their port of entry, New Bedford remains the city of the new world to the people of the Cape Verde isles.[...]Not all of the Cape Verders, however, have stayed there. They have migrated to the outlying country districts. They have taken abandoned farms in Dartmouth and Westport; they have gone to the Vineyard; most of all, they have made their way to the cranberry district of the Cape and the towns in Barnstable county. In these places[...] the Cape Verde Portuguese have multiplied until they have become an element that must be reckoned with socially, industrially and educationally. In the minds of many of the old New England stock on the Cape—and the term is used here to embrace the cranberry district in Plymouth county—these black aliens constitute a problem of the utmost gravity.

From Harwich, an old abode of abolitionism, comes a cry for Jim Crow schools—not the cry of unthinking people, but the voicing of conclusions formed by men accustomed to think deeply on civic affairs. Not long ago an article was inserted in the town warrant of Marion directed against the further employment of Cape Verders in town works. A Wareham schoolgirl, unquestionably inspired by the conversation of her elders, has foretold to her schoolmates and teachers the ruin the commonwealth through the black slavery which will result from the influx of Cape Verde Islanders. Everywhere that these people have settled in any considerable numbers their presence is a source of concern. And yet the majority of people are in complete ignorance as to their antecedents, their ethnological status and their habits and customs. The Wareham schoolgirl wrote about the immorality of the “Bravas” in their homes in the Western islands; and it is to be presumed that her teachers[...]saw no errors in [her paper]. Yet the short sentence which begins the paragraph contains many glaring mistakes. It ought not to be, but it is, necessary to state that the Cape Verde islands are entirely distinct from the Azores of Western islands; the two groups are 1,000 miles apart; they are inhabited by peoples who belong to two different branches of the human family, the Azoreans being Caucasians, the Cape Verders Africans with an admixture of Portuguese blood; and they have absolutely nothing in common except that they belong to the kingdom of Portugal. The Azorean considers himself the superior of the Cape Verde, and undoubtedly is his

superior; he no more relishes being confused with his black fellow subject than one of the F.F. V.'s would enjoy being classed with the southern Negro because both happen to be citizens of the United States.¹¹⁵

Gaw continued, at great length, to categorize the Cape Verdean people, their culture, gender dynamics and some of the nature of the islands themselves—as was conveyed to him by two travelers who had recently returned from a long stay there, Nathaniel P. Sowle and Frederick L. Sowle (native-born New Englanders). He also shed insight into the many stereotypes that would come to be associated with the so-called “Cape Verde group.” He described them as “procrastinators,” “[i]ndolent in their own country,” yet “thrifty and hard working” in the US. Furthermore, according to the Sowles’s accounts, and in Gaw’s words:

“The men work, when they work at all, for 30 cents a day; the women for 12 cents. Usually it is the women who do the work. A visitor at St. Vincent recalls seeing two men lift a burden which taxed the strength of both and place it on the head of a woman, who carried it off, while at the same time a baby dangled at her back. Much of the coal passing at St. Vincent is done by women. In Brava, the spectacle of a woman trudging up the mountain carrying the effects of her husband just off a ship, while her lord and master followed behind with a parasol over his head, is typical of the lot of the women.”¹¹⁶

The account, though likely exaggerated, pointed to very real gender disparities between men and women in the islands—gender imbalances that were exacerbated by the immigration trends of the first wave. These were marked by mostly males leaving, and mostly women and children staying behind to wait for fathers, brothers and sons to return. These circumstances formed perhaps the central defining emotional/psychological aspect of Cape Verdean emigration: *sodadi* (*kriolu* for the Portuguese *sodade* or a kind of ‘nostalgic longing’ in the sense of American English). The sentiment was at the center of the Cape Verdean *morna*—perhaps the most famous of the islands’ musical genres, which was born of the immigration experience—and it was the main word and feeling associated with the pain felt

¹¹⁵ Cooper Gaw, “The Cape Verde Islands and Cape Verde Immigration” *The Evening Standard* (New Bedford, MA), 29 July 1905.

¹¹⁶ Gaw, “The Cape Verde Islands.”

by those left behind by the immigrants' absence. In turn, *sodadi* was also used by the *emigranti* when he (and later she) wanted to describe the profound homesickness that was felt, and how they missed family, friends and familiar land. However, when Cape Verdeans talked of *sodadi*, it was not only an expression of homesickness, it was a way to explain their entire way of life, indeed, the very condition of living in a foreign land with your eyes, ears and hearts always somewhere else.

As the many oral histories with the immigrants and their descendants reveal, their physical displacement from island homes did not bring emotional or psychological disconnection from place (including politics) and people, particularly immediate and extended family members. Their experiences were not much different from those of the thousands of Caribbean immigrants who made the same journeys to the U.S. in the same period. The traveling was torment, yet it did not break the individuals' ties to home and homeland. The ties to home had sentimental foundations, sure, but they were also about economics, social customs, family bonds and even nationalism. For instance, Mildred Howard, a Barbadian immigrant, who came to Cambridge, MA as a young teenager. She arrived with an aunt in the 1920's, and recalled how it felt to leave behind the grandparents who raised her since her mother and father had gone to America when she was just a toddler. She mentioned that she regularly received either money or small gifts from her father for years.¹¹⁷ And in this way, though her immigrant father was miles and miles away, his ties to home and to his daughter remained consistent. Cape Verdean families with immigrants overseas functioned in exactly the same way.

Though the residents would debate for generations which island was best and whose people were more pioneering among those first to leave the country, the two tiny islands of

¹¹⁷ Oral History with Mildred Howard, March 25, 2006. Cambridge, MA.

Brava and Fogo shared one important thing: almost every family had chronicles about the (mostly) men who left and the (mostly) women who stayed behind. Angelina Andrade Barros (Vovo Lilin) would narrate the script almost as if it had been dictated to her by the others, it was identical to the testimonies of so many other families and friends on the islands. Her father, and grandfather before him, left to go to America at the end of the nineteenth century for work in maritime trades. His name was Lino Fontes. As Lino's father had done to him, Lino left behind his loved ones, including Angelina—then an infant—and her mother, his would be bride. One of the few memories his daughter had of him was that he was “tall, and handsome, with a calm spirit and a strong work ethic. He was respected.”¹¹⁸ His ambition and desperation to improve all of their lives overcame any desire he had to stay on the islands. In the time of famine and grief, his choice was not uncommon among the young men of his generation. The perspective of the women left behind, however, was altogether different. The example of Isabel Fontes is illustrative of the kind of pain that these women had to bear as their counterparts tried to make homes and lives all the way across the ocean.

With her first born always at her feet, dependent on her and her alone for food, security and warmth, Isabel was confined to a life of longing. Her son's father, Manuel (“Manézinhu), the love in whom she had hopes for marriage, had gone to America in a turn of the century whale ship (“barka da baleia”).¹¹⁹ With little choice, he left his village and family to risk life on the sea; his objective was to earn money for basic necessities and for bread—food that could be sent home to help save others. He was miserable, over tired of seeing people nearly skeletal due to starvation, lying in the dirt roads and cobble-stoned

¹¹⁸ Ibid. (Interview by the author with Angelina Andrade Barros—“Lilin”—Cova Figueira, Fogo, Cape Verde Islands, at her home, December 29, 2002)

¹¹⁹ Oral History Interview with Mary Fontes, November 2002. Onset, MA.

streets. To him and others in his generation, there was no food, no work, no future, it seemed. But in America, things seemed so different and so much more stable. With hard work he managed to save and send home small pieces of his fortune to Isabel and their first born son, Benjamin. He would return only years later, only to take up with another woman with whom he conceived three more boys. The trappings of immigrant life far across the Atlantic ensured these awkward scenarios that complicated the already rich and tangled tales of Cape Verdean families affected by immigration.

According to her granddaughter, Mary's oral history, like so many Cape Verdean women, Isabel remained in a state of nostalgia, "*xeiu di sodadi*" (full of longing), her entire life. She raised her son the best she knew how, until he grew up to repeat his father's destiny. Mary's father, Bonaventuro "Benjamin" Fernandes was born in 1896 in Cova Figueira, Fogo, Cape Verde Islands. At the turn of the century, his village, named ironically for its abundant fig trees, was barren and stark. It was another dry spell in the series of spells and disasters that robbed the islands between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Drought had practically destroyed the agricultural base of the entire archipelago, making the volcanic isle, once dotted with patches of green fruit trees, dry, rocky and gray. Bonaventuro called his island home "a pile of rocks."¹²⁰ It seemed the Portuguese crown had abandoned the rocky bits of land, once an oasis to Atlantic voyagers trading in slaves, as hundreds and thousands of islanders starved and succumbed to the harsh conditions that deprived them of all of the crops they relied upon for subsistence. Ben's father (Fernandes) was one in the first wave of mostly male migrants who came to the US in the late 19th century. Mr. Fernandes was one of the lucky ones. Three of his neighbors who had also ventured to New England as whalers died of disease, most likely hypothermia, due to the severe cold aboard

¹²⁰ Mary Fontes, Oral History Interview by the author, November 20, 2000.

the barks.¹²¹ Ben, as he called himself in the States, came nearly twenty years later, in the same wave of immigrants that included Lino Fontes (who was from the same village), and the young Marcelino Manoel da Graça, who set sail from the flowery Brava in 1903 to land in New Bedford and settle in the small town of Wareham, known as the gateway to Cape Cod. So many of the men in that turn-of-the twentieth century generation of migrants would live in obscurity, resigned to a working class lifestyle, like Ben. Though they saved many lives back home in Cape Verde by their hard work and determination to send provisions home nearly every month, their names are not well-known. Some of them earned reputations as activists, yet only on the local level. It was not so for Marcelino, whose destiny in the US was to grow up and gain fame as a man of the church.

Only sixteen years later, da Graça donned the alias “Sweet Daddy Grace,” anglicizing his surname by taking on Grace instead of the Portuguese equivalent. As is well-known to historians of African-American religious movements, Grace founded the United House of Prayer for All People in 1919, using a modest wooden shack in West Wareham, and later a small, better building near the center of Onset, Massachusetts.¹²² His life, and the lives of the Ben’s and Lino’s (unknown outside of their own villages and clans) represent the different ways Cape Verdean immigrants figured out how and where to fit in among the people and places they found in New England.

As did “*Chiquinho*” (diminutive of a young Francisco) the beloved protagonist of the classic Cape Verdean novel by the same name, the travelers lamented “like [those] who hear a very sad melody,” remembering their common birth-place with much regret.¹²³ The novel is the most famous testimony to the Cape Verde migration experience and its effects

¹²¹ José Fontes, “José di Biloche,” Interview with the author, December 28, 2002.

¹²² Raymond A. Almeida, *Chronological References: Cabo Verde/Cape Verdean American*. See also Mary Fontes, Oral History Interview by the author, and Raymond Patnaude, interview and personal papers.

¹²³ Baltasar Lopes, *Chiquinho: Romance Caboverdeano*. Sao Vicente: Edições Calabedotche, 1997.

on all involved. That sad melody the author wrote of, no doubt, was the echo of villagers' voices (many of them kin) joining in song to say goodbye to the immigrants. "*Hora di Bai*" (Hour of Leaving), a "bittersweet" tune, "was traditionally sung at the docks in Brava as people boarded the America-bound schooners."¹²⁴ As with the examples just given, *Chiquinho* came to America like his father did before him, and stayed. He never returned, except through his letters and barrels sent back to those not as fortunate as he was to have escaped. This is to show how common the experiences of permanent separation were despite immigrants' often-held dreams of one day returning to home.

In all of these accounts, the aforementioned environmental and economic factors pushing men and women to leave were evident. Undoubtedly, the psychological aspect, little discussed among these stoic men, of growing up fatherless in a hard world where they watched their mothers' struggle (or sometimes leave as well) also took its toll. As boys, they likely wondered about the exploits and adventures of their fathers—almost like local heroes that flew to the foreign land of plenty. They also likely wondered about why the rains weren't coming and from where they would get their next meals. It was inevitable that they too would one day leave. The lack of rain on the Cape Verde Islands, and its arid climate due to its tropical location served to be a deadly combination resulting in drought upon drought. Natural disasters and severe conditions also plagued Caribbean citizens in these early years of the twentieth century.

As with the Portuguese colonials of Cape Verde, harsh ecological factors and the lack of work and everyday subsistence resulted in mass out-migration for many in the

¹²⁴ Raymond Almeida, "Chronological References: Cabo Verde/Cape Verdean American" <web-published article, <http://www.umassd.edu/specialprograms/caboverde/cvchrono.html>, March 14, 1997> The song is one of the most famous *mornas* (one of the main genres of music to come out of the Islands, often compared to the African-American blues). The composer, Eugenio Tavares (1867-1930), became a leading musician/composer, champion of the Kriolu language, and romanticized figure in Cape Verdean cultural history.

various islands of the Caribbean. Historian Winston James described it in this way: “The hardship of the people in Jamaica and Barbados was compounded by a series of natural disasters—droughts, floods, and hurricanes—following one another with a speed and intensity exceptional even for the Caribbean, an area familiar with nature’s dreadful wrath. In 1879, 1884, 1885, 1909 and 1912-14 Jamaica was afflicted, to a lesser or greater extent by drought.”¹²⁵ Indeed, the scenes in the two sets of islands across the Atlantic were quite similar.

Drought brought suffering to both rural and urban poor. In the countryside, crops dried up and died and animals often perished; the people expended precious energy in fetching water, frequently walking over twelve miles to the nearest source. Hunger became widespread. ...Hurricanes, storms, and floods visited the island with even more frequency than droughts at the close of the nineteenth and the opening decades of the twentieth centuries.

Nature impacted agriculture, in turn affecting the agrarian-based economies of the islands. The islands of Cape Verde—particularly Fogo, Brava, Santiago and Maio--which previously had been critical to the Portuguese crown and their economic endeavors were not much use as dry, infertile grounds. After the series of storms in the small islands of the English-speaking Caribbean-- specifically Barbados and Jamaica-- those islanders suffered economic dislocation as well. The devastating “Great Hurricane” of 1903 that was followed by an earthquake seemed almost to put the proverbial nail the coffin of the crops that the island economies relied upon. The solid, green trees that had been laden with golden bananas, abundant enough to form the core of Jamaica’s industry now shook bare. Once affordable breadfruit, yams, potatoes and other vegetables that were the staples of the islanders’ foods

¹²⁵ Winston James, Holding Aloft the Banner of Ethiopia: Caribbean Radicalism in Early Twentieth-Century America (New York: Verso, 1998), 32.

became so expensive, many could not afford them and had to succumb to near or total starvation.¹²⁶

These events, traumas on the Portuguese colonial and British colonial stages conspired to bring immigrants from both empires into the northeast (to New York for instance), and to New England. The crises in the American south, the destruction of the boll weevil and rampant Jim Crowism that conspired to limit African-American lives to the brink of despair, led to the migration of African-Americans to this region around the same time. “Both seemingly disparate movements were in part labor displacements influenced by the growth patterns and needs of industry [across the continents] and the expansion of transportation networks making northern cities more accessible.”¹²⁷ It was all connected.

Also connected were the demands for labor forces in the various industries where many (if not most) of these migrants would end up working. Over the course of the period this dissertation covers, the Cape Verdeans in particular went from strictly maritime labor, to agricultural work, factory and construction work, domestic labor, involvement in military careers (and service in nearly all US wars), and much later on, they would work as professionals in education, law enforcement and every other segment of society. As previously described, much of Cape Verdean immigrant life was organized around family. Work was no exception. The “*Kriolas*” (women) and “*Kriolus*” (men) had family patterns and kinship arrangements that were varied and not exclusively based upon blood ties.¹²⁸ A

¹²⁶ Ibid., pp. 32-36. See also Irma Watkins-Owens, Blood Relations: Caribbean Immigrants and the Harlem Community, 1900-1930 (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1996).

¹²⁷ Watkins-Owens, p. 6.

¹²⁸ In the dissertation, I will alternate between using two spellings of the word “Creole” when referring to the language and/or people of Cape Verde: Kriolu or Kriolu. “Kriolu” is the official ALUPEC spelling (ALUPEC is the Association in the Republic of Cape Verde which has spearheaded the fight to officialize the Capeverdean Creole language and alphabet—in which there is no letter ‘C’ only ‘K’). For a resource on ALUPEC and the Capeverdean language, see Manuel Gonçalves and Leila Lomba deAndrade, *Pa Nu Papia Kriolu* (Boston: M & L Enterprises, 2001, 2004).

mother, like that of Belmira Nunes, came to US in the second or third wave of migration from Cape Verde in order to work. Obviously a painstaking decision, she left her children behind in order to be able to adjust more easily and work more hours to send support back. The only thing that eased the process was the fact that the children stayed on the island with their own mother. She was expected to marry (either legally or informally as was the custom) once arriving in the States. The reliance upon immediate and extended family (either biological or chosen) continued in New England. Friends were all referred to as “cousins” and “aunts” or “uncles” if elders. In part, this was revealing of the ways that Cape Verdeans re-constructed the same kin networks they had back home, thus reliving and preserving community while living abroad. It was often the women who designed these strategic networks. After all, it was they who needed them most, as it was they who were rearing children or if they left children behind, it was they who helped other women to do the same.

Nunes’ mother’s voyage was distinct from that of two young women (unrelated) that migrated as girls, who each came to the United States at the request of their fathers. Eugenia A. Fortes came to New Bedford from Cova de Juana, Brava in 1920. Eugenia Fernandes came to Providence, Rhode Island from Fogo in 1948. Fernandes recalled her voyage from the famine-ravaged island at the age of sixteen. She traveled to the US on the tall ship *Madalan*, which left in May. The ship made one stop, in Dakar, Senegal, to allow passengers to obtain visas. It later docked in Providence, RI where the young Fernandes was met by her father. She left her mother behind in Fogo and was accompanied on the trip by an older woman, a family friend, who was arriving to meet her soon-to-be husband. Fernandes remembered:

It was May 18th. There were 12 of us who came...we had one big room, like a hospital ward room... There were twelve of us there. I had a good time on that ship, even though it took us long. One time, we were on one spot nine days—no wind—and the ship didn't have no motor at that time, it was all wind and [took] 9 days. We ate good. We had music, they used to play music every night. We used to go up [to the deck] and listen and dance. Some people danced. Of course, I was [too] young.

When I got here, my Father was already here. He lived in California. He came here to meet me for the first time. That's another story. When my mother and father got married, he left her [in the Islands].¹²⁹

Eugenia Fortes also traveled to the US to meet her father for the first time however, she made the lengthy voyage accompanied by her dear mother. Just nine years old at the time, her first trip across the Atlantic was a memorable one. Her mother's oldest she clung to her side to steady herself against the motion of the ship. Still, every once and awhile, she got a little dizzy and felt nauseous. Fortunately, her mother had managed to sneak some coconut sweets, *doce di koku*, into a bundle that she had tucked into her skirt for just this type of situation. She knew that their voyage was going to be long and they might become hungry or ill. She fed her little, bronze-skinned Brava girl crumbs and pieces of coconut candy until she felt relieved of the symptoms. Eventually Eugenia ate so many that she tired of them and would never want to see the traditional dessert again.¹³⁰ She joked that one of the first things offered to her by the loved ones that they stayed with after they first landed was the traditional treat, *doce di koku*, yet she told the person she couldn't stand the sight of it. Fortes, who would later become one of the most nationally recognized Cape Verdean civil rights activists (for her role as founder of the Cape Cod chapter of NAACP), was interviewed countless times by local journalists for New England towns and city newspapers. Her journey was once summarized in the following way:

¹²⁹ Eugenia Fontes Fernandes, Oral History Interview, (October 2002). Onset, MA

¹³⁰ Eugenia Fortes, Oral History Interview, (October 2004). Hyannis, MA.

[S]he set sail from the island of Brava in Cape Verde for passage to the United States on the three-masted schooner Melissa Trask. She spent 31 days aboard the cramped vessel alongside her mother and several dozen others bound for America before it pulled into the Acushnet River. When fresh food was brought on board the quarantined Melissa Trask, cabbage was the first item served... In New Bedford, she met her father for the first time then began a life that would carry her to Harwich and Hyannis...¹³¹

Eugenia was fortunate that her parents were reunited through the immigration adventure. It was not so for some women, called “*viuvas merkanas*” (American widows) because it was as if their America-bound husbands had died, leaving to emigrate and never coming back.

They would either remain in single status as Isabel, mother of Benjamin Fernandes, did or move on and try to recreate a life and family with someone else.

One Fogo daughter did just that. After a decade of no word, no package and no sign at all of her lover’s return, she decided to take up with another man. It was not easy, and certainly the subject of many gossip conversations among the villagers yet she was determined to find her own happiness again. She began another romance and soon turned up pregnant. Word of the scandal eventually reached all the way to America where her lost and not dead “husband” was shamed into realizing the mistake he had made. With guilt, a heavy conscience, and probably jealous rage mixed in, he planned his return to the island. The boat trip seemed longer than the first trip he took across the Atlantic Ocean to escape the famine. He arrived and soon after, the grapevine spread the news that he was there. His old “wife” was beside herself with shock, confusion, and sadness that unlike him, she had forsaken their promises of love for one another and started a family and life with someone new. Yet he was her true love. Their first glances of one another, even after the treacherous ten years apart, confirmed this. They immediately forgave each other for their sins and

¹³¹ Eric Moskowitz, “Cape Verdean Woman to Share Experiences at Event.” The Standard Times. New Bedford, MA. Friday, October 11, 2002. The article is cited, courtesy of Eugenia Fortes Personal Collection.

decided to give love another try. The poor man out, probably resolved to leave on his own boat to America, to escape the scorn and stigma.¹³²

In the Caribbean, oceans away, Barbadian and Jamaican women (and men) made similar choices to leave spouses and children and other kin that were not so easily justifiable when juxtaposed against the British metropole standards. Victorian ethic dictated that families should follow the rigid nuclear model so children out of wedlock, or unwed parents and/or adult lovers cohabitating was enough to deem Caribbean families “dysfunctional” and “disorganized” by many of the sociologists and students of Anthropology that went there to look at these phenomena. What they observed in the islands was carried over to the new lands where Caribbeans migrated to. In addition, what was carried over was the wrestling with a British/Victorian standard that many Caribbeans upheld as the ideal. Some chose to follow that ideal in their new land, while others remained in the same informally structured family/kin networks.

The overwhelming majority of these men and women were single or in common law, flexible marriages. Between the ages of eighteen and thirty, most of them had at least one child before emigrating. Most of the children were left behind but eventually joined their parents in Boston—usually their mothers—after a few years of the parents [being away]...As for conjugal partners...very few were reunited. Instead new relationships, mostly endogamous unions with partners who were immigrants from the same island or from another West Indian colony, were forged. But in contrast to the more common flexible, unsanctioned unions of the homeland, these new relationships were more permanent and sanctioned western/Christian marriages.¹³³

Whether sanctioned or not, however, the Caribbean families, and their Cape Verdean counterparts, valued family extremely for stability, economic and psychological support during the transitions of immigrant life, and social and cultural continuity. This was the case wherever they settled, in New England and in New York, for instance, where they flocked in

¹³² Vovo Lilin, also Eugenia Fontes Fernandes and José Fontes affirm this story

¹³³ Violet Johnson, diss., p.11

much greater numbers. As Watkins-Owens documented of the population in New York, “[p]arents expected that grown children would keep in touch through a network of family and friends traveling between home and the States. Child fostering by grandparents and other relatives was an important support for working parents in New York.”¹³⁴

The extended family and the strategies like relying upon relatives or others in the village to care for children, widely considered to be old African cultural traits, were perhaps the single most important facets of family arrangements. “Working class West Indian families were close knit extended domestic units which transcended biological relations.” Relatives upheld the old idea that “one hand washed the other” as they virtually traded children in times when sitters were needed while parents—and especially working mothers—had to work in their own at-home gardens, agricultural plantations outside of the home, in white homes as domestics or in other forms of menial employment.¹³⁵ Mildred Howard’s experience demonstrated this. Her mother and father were largely physically absent from her life due to their having left the island when Mildred was about five to migrate and make a better life. In their absence, the young Mildred Gibbons (her maiden name) was raised by her maternal grandparents. Fortunately for Mildred, “The Gibbons from St. Simons [parish],” as they were known, were highly respected and had a great reputation among the island parishes which afforded their children and grandchildren certain advantages and popularity.¹³⁶ Mildred recalled that her “grandfather was well-respected by all; he was a carpenter and a God-fearing man that many said was third in line in power after the judge and the priest.”¹³⁷ The grandfather’s strict adherence to the Bible, and the code of ethics of the Episcopalian religion meant that Mildred and his own two daughters had to grow up

¹³⁴ Watkins-Owens, *Blood Relations*, p. 19

¹³⁵ Violet Johnson, *ibid.*, p. 77

¹³⁶ Interview with Mildred Howard by the author

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

morally righteous—attending church regularly and attending school and studying faithfully in order to have a secure future one day. As young women, they also learned to cook, sew and to play the piano. All of these lessons, and the values instilled in her in her grandparents' home, prepared Mildred for her move to the US several years later.

Her very journey reflects the extended kin network that existed for Caribbean migrants and helped facilitate their transitions to new environs. Mildred traveled the long distance by boat with her elder aunt Estelle, who was directed to take her to see her Mother again for the first time, and to find her father who had since remarried to an African-American woman from Boston. The pair arrived at Ellis Island, New York after an adventurous six day trip. Mildred's mother had migrated again due to the requirements of her job, so Estelle proceeded to telephone Mildred's father at his home on the outskirts of Boston. "The whole thing had been prearranged. It had been planned for me to stay with the father and his new wife, who had long ago agreed that it would be fine for me to go and live with them...Estelle sent a telegram to inform him of our arrival in New York and to tell him when we would arrive in Boston, but the telegram was not delivered. When Aunt Estelle phoned the house, the woman had changed her mind. She wouldn't have me. So my father called my aunt who was in Waverly, Massachusetts. She was an 'old maid,' very independent, and had a room in Cambridge where she'd stay if she needed to [when away from home]." Mildred was in luck as the aunt vividly remembered her young niece even though the two hadn't seen each other for over a decade. She called for someone to fill in for her at work and made plans to go to Boston and meet Mildred and Estelle. She agreed to take Mildred in and to take care of her.¹³⁸ The experience crystallized the relationship with God that Mildred had learned in her grandparents' home, she made up her mind to rely

¹³⁸ Ibid.

on God and resolved that the mishap with her father was meant to be so that she could go to live with her aunt who provided an excellent life for her in Waverly and later in Cambridge. The two worked together in domestic jobs and stayed active in the Caribbean community's Episcopalian church. The experience was an appropriate extension of the life Mildred knew back home. Children such as the teenage Mildred and others acquired these values and an appreciation for the extended family as support network as well. It was understood in both Caribbean and Cape Verdean households, that their close knit families and the ethic of hard work were not only cultural values but economic strategies for survival as well. When family was restructured abroad, it was just one way, albeit the most important way, in which ties to homeland were maintained.

In the first half of the twentieth century, African Diaspora immigrants arrived and often bore witness to the experiences of African-Americans at the height of US racism. Segregation had not yet been overturned in the South nor in the Northern states. Acts of racial violence, particularly savage lynchings by white supremacists seeking to secure power in the southern states, had spawned the Great Migration. The "southernization of northern racial discourse" began to spill into New England.¹³⁹ A 1903 New Bedford newspaper editorial witnessed to the racism of the south and made a comparison between African-Americans and Caribbean blacks to characterize race relations in the North. The anonymous author seemed to suggest that the Caribbeans were somehow more civilized or at least he considered them to be so. The article stands in contrast to the journalistic pieces (such as the one previously cited) that compared Cape Verdeans to African-Americans yet denigrated Cape Verdeans in ways that revealed they applied similar stereotypes to them as they did to American blacks. This difference, in the perceptions of the various African

¹³⁹ The phrase "southernization of northern racial discourse" is borrowed from Matthew Guterl, *The Color of Race*.

Diaspora immigrants, is important for what it tells us about the differentiations made between people of African descent by Euro-Americans, despite the fact that the same differentiations have not been adequately historicized. Entitled, “The Unresolved Problem Of the White Men and the Negro, Ignorance of White Men the Essential Difficulty: A White Booker T. Washington Urgently Needed,” the piece read:

We have had the immigrant problem for 60 years, and a great outcry from Washington down has been made of its dangers. The grandchildren of the immigrant of 60 years ago must wonder what it is all about—or do they join in the outcry?...we have the changed condition of New England rural districts, a great problem, no doubt...”Wanted a white Booker T. Washington.” Nothing is more clear than this. The present condition of the white man is the cause of all the trouble. For proof of this contrast the condition of the Negro in Jamaica and in our southern states. A very readable article by Archibald R. Colquhoun in the May North American Review illustrates my point. “A white woman can walk from one end of the island to the other in perfect safety.” A lady who lived miles away from any white people was asked if she were not afraid to live there. Her answer was: “Oh no! We have plenty of black men about the place.” Imagine a white lady talking like that in the south!¹⁴⁰

The discourse around race and climate of discrimination affected Caribbean and Cape Verdean immigrants to a significant degree, especially with respect to their labor experiences and attempts at securing education. As early as 1905, and extending up until the desegregation era in Boston in the 1970’s, public discussions raged on about what to do with the Cape Verdeans who had by now settled all over Massachusetts, no longer just in Cape Cod, in visible numbers. They had come in through their own Ellis Island in New Bedford, attracted by the increased opportunities for work as a result of the textile industry boom. Yet there were already so many contradictions in the perceived opportunities and betterment and the harsh realities of their abuses as part of the darker skinned race. In 1900, a small fist fight soon turned into a small-scale riot of discontented agricultural workers in the cranberry

¹⁴⁰ Unnamed Author, “The Unsolved Problem,” The Evening Standard (New Bedford Paper), July 9, 1903. Raymond Patnaude Collection

bogs of North Carver.¹⁴¹ An almost twin incident occurred in the Cape Verde Islanders' homeland, when in November of 1910, in the township Rubon Manel, Island of Santiago, women workers were arrested and jailed for the charge of illegally harvesting pulgeira seeds (soap plant seeds). The harvesting of the crop was supposed to be monopolized by the recently overthrown Portuguese government and the treatment of the small group of women inspired enough anger and resentment in the people that an outright revolt, with swords and stones and other makeshift weapons, broke out led by their church leaders. They attacked the Cruz Grande prison where the alleged criminals were held and shouted a slogan that betrayed the gendered, racialized, and classed status of the Cape Verdeans at the time: "Now there is no black, no white, no rich, no poor...we are all equal." They were subdued by militia forces, yet their impact was strong.¹⁴²

Just as strong were the feelings and expressions of the *Kriolu* immigrants in Massachusetts who, in spite of their efforts to distinguish themselves from "*prétus*" (blacks), were being discriminated against in almost every aspect of their lives. In towns on Cape Cod, like Harwich and Falmouth, and Wareham, white residents (some of them European immigrants like the Finns, or Armenians & Syrians, or their descendants not so far removed) began to protest the inclusion of Cape Verdean children in their schools.¹⁴³ At a 1905 Wareham High School graduation, the valedictorian boldly exclaimed in her speech, that she "deplored the influx of cheap labor" into her hometown. She went on to complain that the town's "poor American girls are obliged to labor side by side with these half civilized blacks." A little over a decade later, the Cape Verdean immigrant valedictorian at the same school—young Belmira Nunes—gave a speech in which she defined "The Ideal Town" as

¹⁴¹ Almeida, *ibid.*

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁴³ Earl Fernandes, Interview with the author, November 22, 2000.

one that was free from race prejudice, proving that the color dilemma was on the minds of the Cape Verdeans even if they tried to negotiate their way around it using their “Portuguese” status as colonists under that crown.¹⁴⁴ These examples of the immigrants’ work and education stories, protests over their unfair treatment in cranberry bogs and segregated schools, exemplify the ways Cape Verdeans resisted racialized mistreatment both in the islands and in the US, and the ways they were literally and figuratively a part of the discourse over race and nativism within the New England region.

Meanwhile, as the immigrants negotiated race and the manifestations of Jim Crow in New England, they remained steadfast in upholding their traditions through participation in organizational life. Both Caribbeans and Cape Verdeans did this, though oftentimes in different ways. Both had some system of sending things back home to family and extended kin—for Cape Verdeans it was “*inkumendas*” and for the Caribbeans it was usually remittances sent in letters or packages with gifts; these were essentially the same thing though called different names. The two groups also celebrated dear cultural festivals and holiday celebrations, some private and others public. Nevertheless, they differed in their ways of keeping ties to home by some of the ways that they chose to participate in local politics (or didn’t choose to do so). For instance, as it will be discussed in the following chapter, many Caribbeans had roots in Garvey’s UNIA and continued participation in the nationalist association when in the States. They also joined other protest groups like the NAACP and the Urban League. In addition, Caribbeans’ economic nationalism was manifest in how they formed community banks and supported fellow countrymen in buying

¹⁴⁴ Almeida, *ibid.* For chronological references and a thorough timeline of Cape Verde’s history, see also Richard Lobban and Marlene Lopes, Historical Dictionary of the Republic of Cape Verde, 3rd Edition African Historical Dictionaries, No. 62 (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1995). The story of Belmira Nunes’s valedictory speech is also recorded in the biography written by her granddaughter, Maria Luisa Nunes, A Portuguese Colonial in America: Belmira Nunes Lopes (Pittsburgh: Latin American Literary Review Press, 1982).

homes, securing healthcare and funeral expenses, and sometimes paying for important trips back home. For many of the Caribbeans, whose islands were geographically nearer to the States than the West African coastal archipelago of the Cape Verdeans, it was probably logistically easier to make that a possibility. Cape Verdeans, in comparison, did not participate in UNIA in any significant numbers, though they did participate in the NAACP and Urban League in very little numbers. Their organizational lives were mostly focused on their own, exclusive, mutual aid associations such as charity groups (that collected money and items to send to those suffering back home), school and scholarship committees, sports teams and churches.

Other ways that Cape Verdeans kept close to their beloved “*terra*” (land), and also relied upon culture to help them survive on their meager earnings were not formally established but were just as strategically organized. One example of this was Cape Verdeans practicing what was commonly called by some Cape Verdean Americans, “the Dish” (the English translation for “*pratu*” or plate, the same name for the tradition in *kriolu*). By mid century, many of the Cape Verdean immigrant men had found wives in the States. There were also fully matured generations of American-born Cape Verdeans. Ben Fernandes was one example of them. Some of his countrymen had resorted to ordering for “picture brides,” women that they could send for to meet them in the States where they would marry. But Benjamin met his bride in Onset and they eventually eloped to New York to marry. No doubt their elopement was due to the controversy over their union due to the fact that Benjamin was nearly twice the age of the young Inez Santos. Her father, a former whaler, and mother were well-established in the town and owned one of the first stores that the immigrants in the community relied upon for basic necessities.

The sixteen-year-old Inez's choice to marry Benjamin interrupted any other dreams or plans she or her parents might have had for her life. Nevertheless, the two married and started a family that eventually grew to fifteen children. They had a large home (a house with three bedrooms, a full basement, kitchen, living and dining rooms was nearly a mansion in comparison to the small homes and one room shanties most Cape Verdeans occupied at the time). They had a substantial farm where they raised livestock and grew plenty of vegetables. The house was next door to the Santos family home, which was also substantial, decorated by fruit trees and big enough to sometimes shelter kids from the neighborhood that had been delivered by Inez's mother, who was the local midwife. The living arrangement very much mirrored the way villages were set up in the islands—family members lived side by side, not all families were fortunate enough to have land to grow crops but those that did were relied upon to provide plant foods to nearly all (in exchange for what others had to share or any services they could perform). “The Dish” custom in the Onset village usually revolved around the Santos’ and Fernandes’ homes.

Some single men like Djacinto “John” Gomes couldn’t wait for “The Dish”—a custom that took place around the time of harvest when crops and cooked foods would be shared. According to Earl Fernandes’ (son of Inez and Ben):

Every morning Djacinto would look outside and look up at the roofs of the nearby houses to see which ones had smoke coming out of the chimney. If there was smoke that meant that someone was cooking. ...He timed his visit to that house for when he thought that the “*katchupa*” [traditional Cape Verdean stew] was ready... He would come to [the neighbor’s] house and start [sniffing] because he knew you were cooking! People used to get rid of him by giving him food. And he didn’t just eat a small bowl, he ate out of [what looked like] a serving dish. Oh God! He was a (greedy) hog!”¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., Earl Fernandes Interview

For those more patient than Djacinto, however, there were great rewards to be had from waiting for “The Dish” time of the year. The Santos and Fernandes had an abundance of potatoes, corn that could be milled and “*kotxid*” (ground) for *katchupa*, collard greens, carrots, squash and different kinds of meats. When a pig was killed, as Benjamin’s daughter Mary recalled, “Every part of the pork would be used somehow, from the head to the tail.” Benjamin and Inez called for several of the women (most, if not all, less fortunate than they were) from the neighborhood to come and get bundles of food to take home. If one of them had baked bread or made “*kus-kus*” (a steamed cake of cornmeal), they brought some in exchange, just as they did back on Fogo or the other Cape Verdean islands.¹⁴⁶ Inez and Ben performed many other services for community members. Inez, who was American-born, spoke English and often served as a translator; she and her husband frequently helped their neighbors with matters of obtaining citizenship, transportation (since they had one of the only two cars in the area), and everyday transactions. This type of informal, yet critical, system of sharing and reciprocity helped many in the community survive and become stable until they were able to support themselves.

Caribbean immigrants of course had their own homegrown customs, however, it may have been more difficult to recreate these in the mostly urban settings where they lived and settled after emigrating. In New Bedford, where immigrants of all nations were concentrated, including those from the British Caribbean and many from the Dutch Netherland Antilles, one celebration that became an annual institution, was Emancipation Day. The occasion commemorated the August 1, 1834 date of the emancipation of slaves in the British Caribbean, a natural evolution from the acknowledgement of the declaration that they had formally pronounced on that very day, thirty-one years before the States

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

emancipated their own men and women in bondage. It seemed to be a natural festivity for the city, who shared a long history of supporting abolition and providing a link on the chain of the Underground Railroad. Indeed, as local historian Raymond Patnaude has written: “Many escaped slaves from the south found a place of refuge in this city and welcomed the idea of freedom. There were many who hoped that the movement would lead to eradication of slavery in the US. The anti-slavery attitude of New Bedford was open to fostering the abolition of slavery. When British West India emancipation began to be celebrated in different parts of the country, New Bedford was among the earliest places where demonstrations took place.”¹⁴⁷ Their local hero, the renowned Frederick Douglass, would be proud. The day not only brought attention to the justice of the proclamation but awakened the spirit of brotherhood and dedication to justice that the city of New Bedford claimed for its fame.

Some of the August Emancipation Day festivities almost resembled “The Dish” of the Cape Verdeans in nearby Onset. At one celebration, noted in the local paper, “[t]here was a large parade, but the rain kept some visitors away. ...A three and one half year old steer that weighed 520 pounds along with four pigs, two dozen chickens and supplementary meats were to be cooked on pits but the [poor weather] quenched the fires and spoiled the arrangements. The program was only partly carried out the following day.”¹⁴⁸ If the turn of the century celebration had been carried out as planned, surely it would have resembled the kind of exchange and happy gathering that Cape Verdeans had around the foods at “the Dish” harvest time.

¹⁴⁷ Raymond Patnaude, “Emancipation Day,” unpublished article part of the Caribbean New England folder of the Patnaude Papers.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., Patnaude Papers, and partial unpublished manuscript by Raymond Patnaude, based on a Saturday, July 29, 1899 article published in The Evening Standard.

These and other cultural celebrations were maintained from one generation to the next, though often improvised. As more and more American-born came of age, the incidents took on elements of the US, American culture that the Cape Verdean-Americans and Caribbean-Americans unavoidably acquired. Boston-born Mel King, whose “folks had come from Barbados and Guyana after World War I with the West Indian immigration,” recalled his parents’ involvement in community affairs and the impact of the family’s Caribbean culture(s) upon him. He also recognized the African-American influence.¹⁴⁹ Mrs. King was “involved in the Church and women’s groups [and] “was a counselor to a lot of people.”¹⁵⁰ Mr. King was “secretary for his local union, [and] was involved in organizing workers on the docks...A lot of the union meetings were held in [the King] house.” Through their activism, Mel gained an appreciation for the value of organizing and for the struggles of the working poor, laborers, immigrants and other people of color.¹⁵¹ On his own identity and the conflicting identities of Caribbean-American young people, he said:

I grew up on the one hand feeling positive about being a West Indian and Black; but on the other hand, I had to grapple with the negative imagery of being a Black child in the United States, not wanting to identify with people who were slaves and who behaved in a Steppin Fetchit, Rochester model. Every time one of those movies was shown, we had to fight the next day in school because someone would come up and mock you.¹⁵²

Mel King’s comments shed insight on the intergenerational differences, which sometimes resulted in conflicts between groups and/or within groups of immigrants and between immigrant parents (or grandparents) and their youth. He would later become one of the most important local civil rights figures, who participated in the desegregation struggles in Boston (discussed in the final chapter).

¹⁴⁹ Mel King, *Chain of Change*, p.10

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., p.9

¹⁵² Ibid., p.10

Like Mel King's Caribbean counterparts, New England-born Cape Verdeans had similar comments. Although, in oral histories with Cape Verdean immigrants and their descendants, the question of whether (as one author posed) Cape Verdeans were "Black, White or Portuguese?" was articulated in the context of the history of Portuguese colonialism in Cape Verde. New Bedford, Massachusetts resident, Lucy Ramos, expressed the dilemma over identity politics that has spanned Cape Verdean (American) history beginning with Portuguese colonization and transcending the era of the 1960's Civil Rights Movement and the 1970's liberation of the archipelago. She said:

Being a Cape Verdean is special to me and to my children even more so—because we're a pot-pourri really, we're a mixture of people. I think we have both European and African influence. When I was younger our country was still ruled by the Portuguese government, so we've gone through changes, you know. When we were young we were Portuguese because that was our mother country, and then we went through the Black part of our lives in the sixties. And now I think we finally know who and what we are, which is Cape Verdean and it is something special. And we are different, we're different from the American Blacks and we're different from the Whites...With the kids I remember the first time I knew they were proud of being Cape Verdean was when they had clubs, in high school...When *we* were young we didn't really know that much about Cape Verdeanism. People just classified us as Portuguese because we were a Portuguese colony. Now since 1975 when Cape Verde gained independence, I think it's become much more important to us, and in particular to our children.¹⁵³

Ramos' experience and reflections on her own and her children's choices regarding ethnic identification reveal the importance of history, generation, place (of origin/birth and of residence) as well as context (family, education, work experience, etc.) in shaping immigrants and immigrants' offspring's sense of nationality or cultural character. For example, Ramos distinguished between those born in Cape Verde (newer arrivals) and those born and raised in the US, and also between New Bedford Cape Verdeans and others. She

¹⁵³ "Black, White, or Portuguese?: A Cape Verdean Dilemma," Interview by John C. Reardon, Published in Spinner: People and Culture in Southeastern Massachusetts, Vol. I (New Bedford, MA: Reynolds-DeWalt Printing, Inc., 1984).

highlighted the importance of school and work, describing what happened to many Cape Verdean sons and daughters when they went out into the world.

One of Lucy Ramos' sons "was in the ROTC and they travel[ed] a lot. Everywhere he went he would say...everyone thought he was Spanish and he would [tell them], 'No, I'm Cape Verdean?' 'What's a Cape Verdean?' they would all ask, so it became a thing to be able to tell them where the islands were, that we had our own language and dialect, had our own foods, music and culture."¹⁵⁴ This was quite different from Cape Verdean new arrivals. Many of those of the older generations (including Lucy when she was a child), still identified themselves as Portuguese late into the twentieth century because, she continued, "that is how they were raised. But...the New Bedford Portuguese always objected to [Cape Verdeans] saying [they] were Portuguese." Lucy recalled "they felt we really weren't. And so we always had this slight little conflict." In her words, "the Black Crisis" that Cape Verdeans went through was about them feeling they had to "borrow" from African American culture and identity politics in order to find acceptance in dominant society. She explained that the American Cape Verdeans did not have to deny their unique heritage though newer arrivals might have felt differently. Cape Verdeans who first arrived felt that "identifying as Portuguese...got them more economic security."¹⁵⁵ This further explains Cape Verdeans' resistance to embracing US racial categories early on.

On the other hand, Mel King's exposure to the reality of race and the complexities of Caribbean-American identity mobilized him and many other Caribbean descendants to gravitate to the other side of the (political) spectrum. King decided to embrace the very category that would be used against him in order to contribute to, and benefit from, the racial solidarity and political representation that would come with it. He was right at home

¹⁵⁴ Ramos Interview above (Spinner)

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

in Boston where his parents and others in the community were politically active in the Garvey movement or the NAACP, and kept abreast of national news through reading the *Afro-American*, *Chronicle* or *Guardian* newspapers. However, his own views on these issues were sharpened when he left New England to attend Claflin College in South Carolina, a historically black college. He remembered the controversy that this decision caused in his home. Documented in his autobiography, he said:

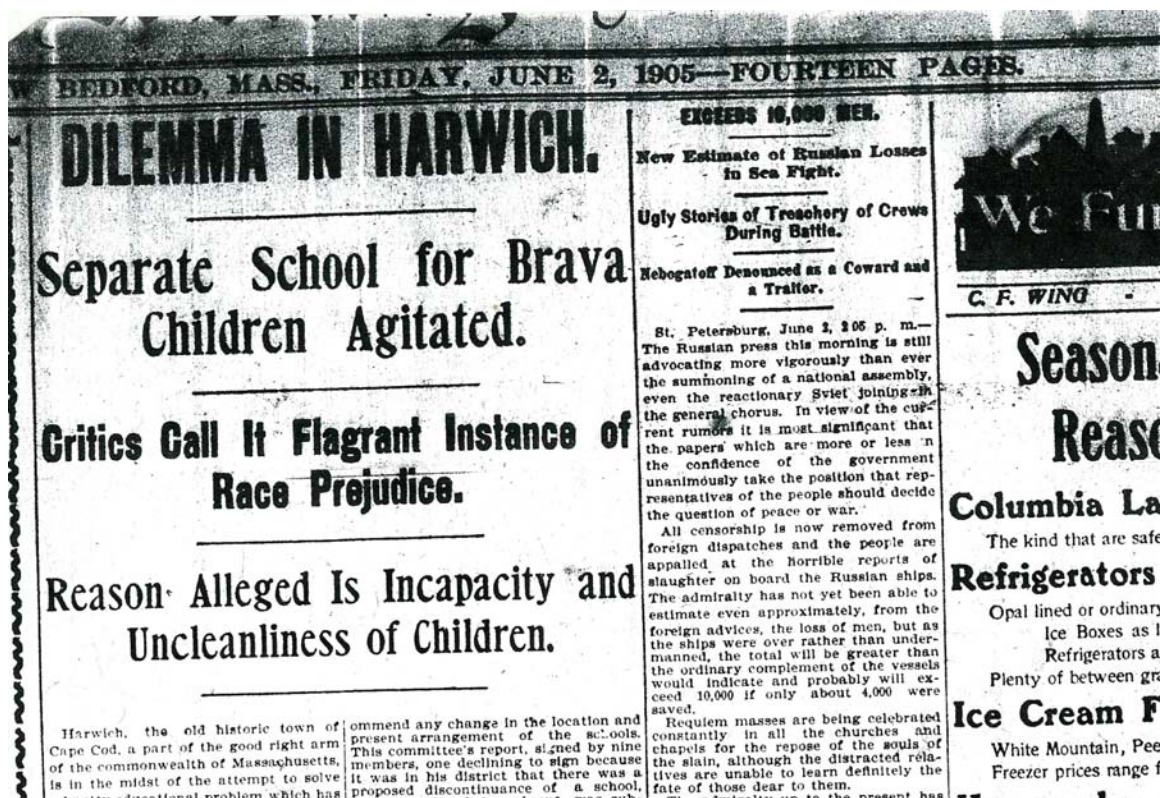
When I was a senior in high school, a close friend suggested that I go to Claflin College, but my folks wouldn't let me go, partially because of Jim Crow and segregation. However, next spring, the football coach from Claflin came North to recruit...He told my mom that he would take care of me, and my mom finally consented....At Claflin...For the first time I was attending schools run by Black people and was made aware of Black people doing things for themselves. I began another process of identifying.¹⁵⁶

Indeed, King's different way of identifying and thinking of race and race-based discrimination would form an important part of his political career in the city of Boston years later. King's and Ramos's comments help explain the transformations that took place in African Diaspora immigrants' communities in the latter half of the century when various changes and movements began to take place in which the foreigners started to reconceptualize nation and nationality within the framework of overlapping Diasporas. The discussions over what it meant to be Cape Verdean in Cape Verde as opposed to in the US, for instance, intensified; it resulted in new articulations of *kabuverdianidadi* (Capeverdeanness) internationally and new ideas about being black and of another ethnicity (other than African-American) within the region and in United States generally.

¹⁵⁶ King, *Chain of Change*, p.11

Chapter Five

The Beginnings of 'Cultural Resistance': Revolutions and Organizational Life



One of the many front page newspaper articles featuring Cape Verdeans and the struggle for equality as immigrants of African descent.

It is critical to understand the kinds of 'education' immigrants experienced both in the private spaces of their own families and homes and in their close-knit communities, as well as the in the public spaces where social interactions revealed the racial and class-based code of US ethnic conduct. Examples of how the Cape Verdeans were racialized (and treated accordingly) abounded in their everyday lives. Their treatment, as compared with the treatment of immigrants of European descent was not lost upon them and they understood in very clear terms where they fit on the ladder of social status. From the time of their labor in the whaling industry, Cape Verdeans experienced discrimination in the work force which manifested itself in their receiving less pay, being housed in poor conditions, and having

limited opportunities for advancement in the employment they got. The cranberry industry, where most of these immigrants labored post-whaling, was rife with examples of this. As Marilyn Halter has written: "...while the economic success of the cranberry industry was completely dependent upon their labors, very few Cape Verdeans themselves became owners of these productive bogs."¹⁵⁷ For example, the following statement by a former cranberry picker indicates what many Cape Verdeans noticed about these patterns.

The Cape Verdeans had a negative feeling about cranberries. For people my age, working on the bog was like picking cotton, so that after they grew up they just moved out of the area. They didn't want any part of it. They went to work in factories and different places. The Finnish people worked on the cranberry bogs like we did, but eventually they ended up buying and building bogs.¹⁵⁸

As the testimony of this immigrant reflects, Cape Verdeans recognized the racial elements implicit in their being restricted to limited opportunities for work—specifically being practically forced into agricultural jobs in the cranberry, strawberry or blueberry businesses—while European immigrants seemingly possessed more privileges and room for advancement. It was clear that although Cape Verdeans identified themselves in distinct terms, to the outside world, they were merely "Negroes" of a different/ foreign character. The 'puzzle' evoked by Cape Verdeans' presence in the region and in the US generally frames the history of Cape Verdean immigrants and their negotiations of American racial politics.

One story that reveals this very well is the so-called "mystery of the Vera Cruz." For nearly fifty years, the story preoccupied the mind and pen of one white North Carolina journalist, and with good reason. The *Vera Cruz VII* was a large vessel sailing from Brava,

¹⁵⁷ Marilyn Halter, "Working the Cranberry Bogs: Cape Verdeans in Southeastern Massachusetts," Spinner: People and Culture in Southeastern Massachusetts, Volume III. New Bedford, MA: Reynolds-DeWitt Printing, Inc., 1984.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

Cape Verde Islands, bound for New Bedford, Massachusetts, shipwrecked in North Carolina on the shores of Ocracoke in 1903.¹⁵⁹ The ship encountered severe weather including “gale winds” and relentless rains and went ashore unable to withstand the conditions. The crew disembarked to fetch fresh water for themselves and for the four hundred or so passengers on board. It was discovered soon after the unexpected docking that the passengers were illegal emigrants from Cape Verde. The ship’s captain, Julio Fernandes, had promised the clandestine emigrés entry into North America with or without the necessary documentation.¹⁶⁰

The appearance of such a large vessel on those shores astonished members of the North Carolina coastal lookout, and similarly, “the assembly of nonwhite passengers who were also non-English speaking [must have] aroused a mixture of chagrin and ridicule” in the Ocracoke onlookers.¹⁶¹ The chief reporter on the incident for the local papers, Aycock Brown, summarized the sentiments of some of the whites who witnessed the landing:

Never in their lives had Ocracoke pilots seen such a spectacle. What might have resembled a deck full of black birds at a distance turned out to be Negroes. A hundred of them so it seemed, in a solid mass, some in the rigging, some on top the hatchways and cabins but most of them packed along the rails, shouting in some foreign language to those aboard the small motor boat.¹⁶²

Days after the ship’s arrival in Ocracoke, the Cape Verdean immigrants were transported to the nearby town of New Bern, where the same reporter recorded his observations of the interactions between them and the black Americans already there. He wrote:

¹⁵⁹ Aycock Brown, “50th Anniversary of Coastal Shipwreck Passes Unnoticed,” *The Citizen* (Ashville, NC). 15 May 1953. Brown also wrote the “original” reporting of the incident in 1903 in *The Morning Mercury* (New Bedford, MA), article entitled: “Vera Cruz Total Loss,” 11 May 1903. He wrote several other articles throughout May 1903, in *The News and Observer* (Raleigh, NC) in 1934, and in *The Durham Morning Herald* (Durham, NC) in 1951.

¹⁶⁰ Aycock Brown, “Vera Cruz’s Free List,” *The Morning Mercury*. 15 May 1903.

¹⁶¹ Marilyn Halter, *Between Race and Ethnicity: Cape Verdean American Immigrants, 1860-1965*, (Chicago: U of I Press, 1993): 53.

¹⁶² Aycock Brown, “Mystery of the Vera Cruz,” *The News and Observer*, 9 December 1934.

An amusing incident of the trip occurred during a stop at Goldsboro, NC [sic]. The Negroes of that place, seeing such a party of men of their own color, crowded from all directions to greet them. When conversation was attempted by the American Negroes and the foreigners came back with Portuguese dialect, there was consternation among the men of Goldsboro. They were afraid of the language they could not understand and thoughts of “conjer” men and “obeah” sent them scurrying away. After that they carefully avoided the people of familiar shade but outlandish tongue.¹⁶³

Brown’s observations provide a glimpse of two different populations, one black and one white, fixing their respective gazes on Cape Verdeans who throughout the twentieth century struggled with outsiders’ perceptions and with the racial discrimination that affected their everyday lives.

The “mystery of the Vera Cruz” and the larger story it represents of Cape Verdeans in America is about how black immigrants experienced “the problem of the color line.” As mostly mestiço people, they existed, literally, along that line. They embodied the proverbial hyphen, as mixed race individuals who were (are) both and yet neither “black” or “white.” Cape Verdeans’ (and other African Diaspora immigrants) self-defined notions of identity have perhaps the greatest potential to reveal, simultaneously, the lack of stable meaning and the persistent power of race in America. Consider the reaction of whites to the “spectacle” of the Cape Verdean “black-birds...” “shouting in some foreign language.” Similarly, consider the surprise that must have been felt by native-born blacks who ran to greet the ship’s passengers, “men of their own color” who turned out to be strangers. To the reader, these are some of the first questions that would likely come to mind. However, the immigrants’ reactions would be just as important to understanding the black foreigners’ differences in perspective and experience of the US racial paradigm.

Whereas some ethnics in the African Diaspora (such as more of the Caribbean immigrants) who migrated to North America *became* “black” in the United States, others did

¹⁶³ A. Brown, “Bread Riot in City,” *The Morning Mercury* (New Bedford, MA), 20 May 1903.

not. For instance, many Cape Verdeans remained “ethnocentric,” choosing to embrace and focus on their ethnicity and nationality, rather than the racial designation of “black” or “negro,” as the principle ways of categorizing themselves and defining and understanding others.¹⁶⁴ This suggests the highly politicized, racialized, gendered and classed, and generational strategies of identification that existed beyond the categories of “black” and “white”—examined in the oral history testimonies shared in the previous chapters.

Members of the African Diaspora in the United States have always used alternative approaches to identification. These efforts at, what Cape Verdean freedom fighter Amilcar Cabral called “cultural resistance,” interrupted the polarizing racial binary that characterized the United States (and still does) despite powerful fantasies of a multi-cultural melting pot.¹⁶⁵

As has already been noted, the years 1900 to 1940 marked peak waves in Cape Verdean and Caribbean immigration to the United States. Undoubtedly the most famous Caribbean immigrant to emerge from this era was Marcus Garvey, the Jamaican founder of the Pan-Africanist/nationalist organization, the Universal Negro Improvement Association. Garveyism, and those that subscribed to it, provides a stark ideological contrast to the ideas held by many Cape Verdeans who came to the US unarmed with pre-held notions of Pan-Africanism as many Caribbean immigrants had done. While under the rule of the

¹⁶⁴ Here, I am using the term “ethnocentrism” to mean the focus on ethnicity (as opposed to race) in defining individual and group identity. Robert A. Levine and Donald T. Campbell, co-authors of Ethnocentrism: Theories of Conflict, Ethnic Attitudes, and Group Behavior (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1972) define this term as “an attitude or outlook in which values derived from one’s own cultural background are applied to other cultural contexts where different values are operative” (1). The authors build upon the definition provided by Herskovits and others who explained this phenomenon as “a person unreflectively [taking] his own culture’s values as objective reality and automatically [using] them as the context within which he judges less familiar objects and events” (1). The authors explain that more complex ethnocentric attitudes exist, which I shall argue many early 20th-century Cape Verdean immigrants exemplified, in which those that maintain this outlook take account of other points of view but often regard those of other cultures as inferior or incorrect. I have found this framework useful for understanding the attitudes of Cape Verdean immigrants in comparison with other black ethnic immigrants, especially many Afro-Caribbean immigrants.

¹⁶⁵ My own ideas about the process of creolisation and the transformation to race consciousness and race-based solidarity and group identity formation from ethnic orientation have been influenced by the work of Africanist Michael Gomez, particularly his book, *Exchanging Our Countrymarks* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1998). Gomez argues that slaves in late eighteenth century U.S., specifically influenced by the politics and revolt of Demark Vesey, made the transformation from identifying themselves in terms of discrete ethnicities and nationalities to broader based, racial identity and ‘blackness’ in particular. See pages 1-16.

Portuguese crown, many Cape Verdeans had no choice but to identify themselves as Portuguese first (and *maybe* Cape Verdean second, though prohibited) even after they arrived in the United States. Meanwhile, lots of Caribbeans easily and almost immediately aligned themselves with black Americans and mobilized behind the socio-political racial identification ascribed to them in the US. These experiential differences are instructive and on the other hand, interesting similarities exist between some elements of Cape Verdean cultural politics and Garveyism. For instance, a brief consideration of the philosophies of Amilcar Cabral, commonly referred to as “father” of Guinea Bissau and Cape Verde independence reveals similarities with the Garvey configurations of nation. Recognition of *all* of the options explored by black ethnics as they adjusted to life in the U.S. allows us greater insight into the historical processes that characterize Diaspora, such as migration, creolization, family formation, and the negotiation of colonial subjectivity.

The study of Cape Verdeans in the U.S. is a useful test case for addressing the challenges set forth by historian, Kim Butler, who has outlined a new framework for African Diaspora studies.

[T]he framework facilitates a close analysis of the three agents in the formation of any Diaspora: the homeland, the hostland, and the Diasporan group itself. It also directs attention to the interrelationships within the various communities of a Diaspora, a key distinguishing feature that often gets short shrift when using conceptual frameworks not designed expressly for Diasporas.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁶ Kim Butler, “What is African Diaspora Study? An Epistemological Frontier,” presented to the Black Atlantic African Diaspora Seminar Series, Rutgers University, October 28, 1999. Other sources on African Diaspora studies include: Robin D. G. Kelley and Tiffany Ruby Patterson, “Unfinished Migrations: Reflections on the African Diaspora and the Making of the Modern World,” presented to the Black Atlantic African Diaspora Seminar Series, Rutgers University, Fall 1999; Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1993); Stuart Hall, “Cultural Identity and Diaspora,” in *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990); St. Clair Drake, “Diaspora Studies and Pan-Africanism,” in Joseph E. Harris, ed. *Global Dimensions of the African Diaspora* (Washington, DC: Howard University Press, 1982); Sidney Lemelle and Robin D. G. Kelley, eds. *Imagining Home: Class, Culture and Nationalism in the African Diaspora* (NY: Verso, 1994).

Butler's emphasis on "interrelationships between various groups in a Diaspora" underscores the significance of considering Cape Verdeans alongside other groups like native-born African Americans and Caribbean immigrants. And it highlights the significance of looking at the moments of interaction between and among these groups, moments such as those forged by the grounding of the *Vera Cruz VII*.¹⁶⁷ It is important to note not only the Cape Verdeans' relationship to the metropole and to new homelands, but also their understandings of the various 'kinds' of Cape Verdean identity within the three Diasporas they represent. In addition, Cape Verdeans' relations to others within the larger African Diaspora shed light on their notions of identity of cultural resistance.

One of the most important ways Cape Verdeans beckoned to Cabral's and other island leaders' calls for cultural resistance was through language. In the native *kriolu* tongue, African influences on the Cape Verde Islands could be easily traced. Linguists documented these cultural traits in words of Mandinka origin and in addition, in various personal and place names. The following poem (published in *kriolu* and English) by linguist and educator-activist, Manuel da Luz Gonçalves, summarizes how language was key to resistance for Cape Verdeans at home and abroad. The poem also documents how the language was suppressed (prohibited) during the era of the Portuguese; yet literary figures who ushered in the era of Cape Verde's cultural-political renaissance, "*Claridade*" (clarity), used the language as a way to affirm and promote Cape Verdean creole identity as exactly Cape Verdean (and not Portuguese).

Kriolu
Instrument of culture
Pastoral letter
Of Cape Verdean dignity

¹⁶⁷ This methodological strategy was suggested to me in a conversation about this project with Kim Butler, April 12, 2000.

Of our identity.
 In Kriolu we mourn
 We romance—the language of love, Kriolu
 Mirror of the people’s thought.
 Soul of the morna,
 Cry of the funana,
 Bedrock of the batuku
 Some love you but do not affirm you,
 Feel you but do not give you voice
 They study “Portugues”
 So they can speak it
 [...]

Radicals would enthrone you.
 A full language, not a dialect

Indeed “radicals” like the author and musician, Pedro Cardoso, wrote in *kriolu* for the first time during the era of *Claridade* in an effort to articulate this kind of statement on the unique aspects of the culture Cape Verdeans in the Diaspora wanted to preserve. Cardoso’s efforts, especially in the 1930’s, were in international dialogue with other African Diaspora cultural revolutions such as the movements around *negritude* and *creolité* in the French Caribbean and elsewhere. Cardoso was also influenced by protest art and literature of the Harlem Renaissance. This underscores the connections—and yet the important differences (such as with language)—between populations in the larger African Diaspora and their branches within the US. For instance, the complex aspects of the islanders’ mixed cultural identity helped justify why many Cape Verdeans did not, once in the US, so easily adapt to African-American race-based politics; Garvey’s race-based Pan-Africanism was even more extreme and uncomfortable to these immigrants who felt they could not choose just one aspect of their identity to organize their lives.

Carreira documented the pattern of isolation which was common for emigrants once they settled. The pattern related to the aforementioned aspects of their identity, as well as other factors like language and economic position in society. Most Cape Verdeans remained

apart from whites and from blacks and other people of color, “either because the whites deliberately distanced themselves from them, or because their low socio-economic status kept them at a distance. Language also raised great barriers to full acceptance and integration into society.”¹⁶⁸ This separation from other cultural groups provided a basis for their strong sense of ethnocentrism. This, too, is highlighted by Carreira who says that these attitudes were born of necessity: “emigrants had to cling to their group spirit and principles of self-help in order to survive and to lessen the shock of social rejection. In any case this group feeling is, so to speak, natural to Cape Verdeans, as to most emigrant peoples, representing a form of defense against unfamiliar ways in a society far from home.”¹⁶⁹

Belmira Nunes Lopes, a Cape Verdean American from southeastern Massachusetts, discussed this experience in her autobiography.

On Cape Cod...the Cape Verdean did types of menial work that insured his ethnic independence from the Anglo-American and simultaneously solved a labor problem for the latter. He gravitated to centers where other Cape Verdeans had gone, and where he could speak his language, hear Cape Verdean music, eat Cape Verdean food, and have an almost exclusively Cape Verdean social life. As long as he maintained his cultural niche, the Cape Verdean had minimal social problems. The moment he moved out of it, he had to adjust to the dualism of the larger society, black or white.¹⁷⁰

Cape Verdeans on Cape Cod and elsewhere benefited from this type of self-imposed exile. In many ways, it reflected their agency in finding ways to adapt independent of the status quo. It not only provided them with a buffer against the binary racial politics outside their communities, but also allowed them to maintain unique culture and strong family ties.

While this pattern was common for many immigrants, of any country or shade, it did not apply to all groups from the African Diaspora living in the US. Caribbean immigrants

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 47.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 47-48.

¹⁷⁰ Maria Luisa Nunes, *A Portuguese Colonial in America: Belmira Nunes Lopes, The Autobiography of a Cape Verdean-American* (Pittsburgh, PA: Latin American Literary Review Press, 1982): 12.

embraced attitudes of Black Nationalism. Indeed, many came to the country already energized as Garveyites. They quickly integrated themselves into communities with native-born African-Americans throughout the period and in many cases, assimilated into African-American ways of life. In many cases, they had no choice in the matter. Irma Watkins-Owens commented on Caribbean immigrants' settlement patterns. She stated: "Caribbean immigrants generally settled in already existing or evolving African American communities. Exclusionary racial and housing practices enforced this pattern."¹⁷¹

These conditions were frequently discussed and contested by Caribbean writers, scholars and activists alike. Jamaican journalist, W. A. Domingo cited the dark complexion of many Caribbean immigrants as one reason that members of the Caribbean community were forced to assimilate. He said they were "too dark of complexion to pose as Cubans or some other Negroid but alien tongued foreigners, [and] they are inevitably swallowed up in black Harlem."¹⁷² In a fictitious dialogue between a father and son, Marcus Garvey wrote the following in 1919 about the matter of being "born black":

My son, to be born black is no disgrace nor misfortune. It is an honour. Nature never intended humanity to be of one colour or complexion, and so there are different races or types and the Negro is one of them. In the history of the world the Negro has had a glorious career. In the centuries past he was greater than any other race, but, unfortunately, today he occupies a position not as favourable as that of his fathers.[sic]¹⁷³

The passage clearly reveals the make-up of Garvey's racial ideology. It also raises a number of questions about the construction of race in general and its attendant political reality. In

¹⁷¹ Irma Watkins-Owens, *Blood Relations: Caribbean Immigrants and the Harlem Community, 1900-1930* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1996): 2.

¹⁷² W. A. Domingo, "Gift of the Black Tropics," in Alain Locke, ed., *The New Negro* (New York: Albert and Charles Boni, 1925): 342.

¹⁷³ Marcus Garvey, "A Dialogue: What's the Difference?" (1919), reprinted in *Marcus Garvey: Life and Lessons (A Centennial Companion to the Marcus Garvey and UNIA Papers)*, Robert A. Hill and Barbara Bair, Eds. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1987): 143.

this configuration, were people *born* “black” and was demography destiny?¹⁷⁴ Garvey’s personal papers, including his fiction and nonfiction writings, revealed his anti-miscegenation stance. It is then interesting to speculate about what he may have thought about the people of Cape Verde and, in turn, what Cape Verdean mestiços thought of Garvey and his platform. In the passage above, Garvey explained to his fictitious son, the existence of different races and “standard types,” of which he says, “the Negro is one of them.” It is probably that the community of Cape Verdeans—not “standard types” and of various colors and complexions—would not fit into Garvey’s early “black” world.

The different ways Cape Verdeans and Caribbean immigrants were socialized (at home and abroad) to think about skin color and blackness in particular obviously affected their choices upon coming to America. During the Jim Crow era, and the Golden Age of Black Nationalism, Cape Verdean immigrants successfully avoided having to “fit in” and avoided categorizing themselves as “Negroes” by their isolation from the majority of blacks, their status as foreigners who spoke another tongue and perhaps even due to their phenotypical characteristics.¹⁷⁵ Yet as the second half of the twentieth century progressed, these strategies and variations in identity politics were further complicated with the rising

¹⁷⁴ See David Levering Lewis, “The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement” in C. Eagles, ed. The Civil Rights Movement in America, pages 3-17.

¹⁷⁵ The Cape Verdean struggles over racial identification have been ongoing since they first entered the U.S. These struggles are perhaps most clearly demonstrated in Cape Verdean attempts at official recognition on the national census and other forms such as education and employment applications. There have been two “waves” of this movement. The first occurred in the early 1970’s, and the second in the late 1990’s. In 1973, The Cape Verdean Recognition Committee was founded in New Bedford, MA by Manuel Lopes after his son failed to qualify for minority funding due to the confusion over his racial classification. Lopes’s Committee worked to have “Cape Verdean” listed by the census bureau as a separate minority group. In the 1990’s, federal aides such as Boston native Licy DoCanto, legislative aide to Congressman Barney Frank (D-Mass), have taken up this issue again with renewed vigor hoping that a change to the federal census will lead to better and more accurate representation of Cape Verdeans in the U.S. A few sources on the census struggle include: Barry Glassner, “The People Without a Race,” Sepia, November 1975, pages 65-71; Samuel Allis, “Politics deepen an old dilemma: Homeland Regime Splits Cape Verdeans in the US,” Boston Sunday Globe, March 21, 1976, page 29; Proclamation of 1976, Issued by His Excellency, Governor Michael S. Dukakis (Published by The Commonwealth of Massachusetts, July 7-9, 1976); William Corey, “New Census will Include Cape Verdeans,” New Bedford Standard-Times, April 4, 1998, page 3; Michael W. Freeman, “Officials Want to Correct Census,” Herald News, April 10, 1998, page A1; “Boycott Now May Carry Over, Backfire in the Federal Census,” Our View, April 10, 1998, page C4; Jose F. Ramos, “2000 Census Critical to Cape Verdeans,” New Bedford Standard-Times, April 13, 1998. Each of these 1998 articles includes bits of the history of the 1970’s attempts to get Cape Verdeans counted.

tide of the Civil Rights Movement and Black Power struggles, as well as fights against European colonialism elsewhere in the African Diaspora, including in Cape Verde itself.

The stark contrasts in these immigrants' political actions—mobilization around the issue of race and the adoption of nationalist ideologies on the one hand versus self-segregation and ethnocentric attitudes on the other hand are important to diversifying definitions of “black” experiences in the United States (and of the very idea of blackness itself). Belmira Nunes Lopes discussed the difficulty of mingling with people of other backgrounds, black or white, in her autobiography. Her recollections revealed the complexities of life as a mixed-race individual in America who is simultaneously a foreigner—dealing with the problems of colorism, and incidences of passing within the black American community as well as the classism and elitism of white America. She recalled an experience dining with a light-skinned, African-American friend while working as a teacher in Washington, DC:

I remember once or twice we went to a Child's Restaurant. There was quite a bit of prejudice in those days about serving colored people, even in restaurants like Child's and Schrafft's in New York. Anna would always say to me, “Bell, speak to me in French.” Now she didn't know any French, but she knew that I knew French, and I had been a teacher of French. At the time, I never thought of it, but afterward I understood why she asked me to speak to her in French. She wanted people to think that I wasn't American, and that she was a white American who was with me because I was a foreigner.

In this instance, interestingly, Belmira's African-American friend saw her friend's foreign appeal and the fact of speaking a foreign language to her own advantage. It seemed that to the African-American, eager to avoid the inconvenience of Jim Crow conditions, knew that there was a difference in Cape Verdeans that meant that race could be manipulated in order to engage in resistance.

On the contrary, *some* Cape Verdeans *did* get subsumed into the category of black—whether intentional or just a coincidence, these situations reflected the fact blackness was certainly a dilemma to Cape Verdeans. “Dadddy Grace” is one illustration. When Bishop Charles “Sweet Daddy” Grace stood at the pulpit of his church, the United House of Prayer for All People, undoubtedly he was the perfect picture of a typical 1920’s black evangelical preacher. His impassioned performances filled the voids, as one scholar said, in the lives of his followers.¹⁷⁶ However, the fervor of Pentecost was not the only thing Grace symbolized; he may very well have performed something else—that is the very idea of blackness. After all, how else would so many of his followers not have realized that his was a culture do different from theirs? Grace was not a typical ‘black,’ but a one time “resident alien” immigrant from the Cape Verde Islands.¹⁷⁷ Yet within the walls of his church, his speech, dress, worship style and traditional Protestant values reflecting “the black church,” were enough to convince believers of his Christian purpose as well as his belonging in the black ethnic category. At times, Grace accepted this identification, remaining silent about his national origin. Perhaps it was more advantageous to the budding evangelist to allow others to assume he was from the same community that his followers were from. Although, at other times Grace explicitly denied that he was an American Negro and instead laid claim to his status as a Portuguese subject. Since not all Cape Verde Islanders chose to embrace black American culture or to coexist within the African-American community, Bishop Grace was unique in this aspect.

As a young boy, Grace performed the same day labor that most other Cape Verdean males his age in New England were forced to do in order to support themselves and family members. He worked as a cranberry picker in nearby Cape Cod bogs, while intermittently

¹⁷⁶ Meier, August and Elliott Rudwick

¹⁷⁷ New Bedford Evening Standard

attending the small segregated school houses created for the children of Cape Verdean agricultural workers. Grace showed signs of entrepreneurial vigor as early as his teenage years. Initially, he worked as a railroad short-order cook like many other immigrant boys. However, he later took on work as a sewing machine salesman, a medicine salesman, and finally the owner of a small grocery store. Then Grace's narrative began to break with those of other Cape Verdeans in New England of his generation. He ultimately settled upon the career that would prove to be the most lucrative. He founded his first church in West Wareham (some say it was actually the village of Onset); the exact year is not certain, recorded as either 1919 or 1921. Rumor had it that he built the church out of unused "rocks," presumably suggestive of the humble beginnings of the mission and also undoubtedly intended to be symbolic of the first church described in the Bible—the church of Peter on the rock. Most of the folklore that surrounds Charles Grace is full of such drama and symbolism that often proved to be the source of controversy.

He was largely disapproved of within the Cape Verdean community. At the turn of the twentieth century and extending nearly up until the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960's and 1970's, it was not a popular trend for Cape Verdean immigrants (who were not freed from the Portuguese flag until 1975) to embrace African-American culture or identity. It is probably for this reason that Daddy Grace's decision to associate more with blacks and with the black church tradition, rather than with his fellow Cape Verdeans, the majority Catholic, led him to be somewhat ostracized within Cape Verdean circles. This undoubtedly contributed to his decision to transplant the church to the US South, particularly North Carolina (then other states), where he would find a much warmer welcome among predominantly black congregations. More is known about Grace's career as a 'black' religious leader than is known about his life as a struggling New England immigrant from

Cape Verde. Most work on “Daddy Grace” was done within African-American religious studies. Within this body of work, many of Grace’s habits have been characterized as unusual or even cast aside as sinful contradictions to the Protestant Christian ethics which he sought to encourage. However, some of Grace’s actions were perhaps customs that were in keeping with his native Cape Verdean traditions. In fact, the narrative of Bishop Grace has completely different significance when studied in the context of Cape Verdean migration to the US.

History has remembered Charles Grace and his cultish church among the pages of the Jim Crow era, Negro church movement past. For example, Grace was called “a Black God,” in the context of discussing black spirituality and black protest.¹⁷⁸ Along with Father Divine and other evangelists, he was even deemed an “incarnation of Marcus Garvey,” for allowing blacks an escape from their worldly oppression.¹⁷⁹ Time after time, race and African American religious tradition literally colored his story, even though Grace himself denied being a member of the colored race.¹⁸⁰ What happens when these aspects of Grace’s story are reexamined in light of considering Cape Verdeans as part of the African Diaspora in the US—immigrants with particular ways of adapting to race relations and identity politics within American society? What happens to the collective understanding of who/what black America looks like when we restore the cultural origins or nationalities of some of the members of the population?

Grace’s “denial” of being colored or black is often overlooked, though it is significant in its suggestion of the struggle over race and (US) identity politics that many early Cape Verdean immigrants—and other immigrants of the African Diaspora in the US—

¹⁷⁸ Baer, Hans

¹⁷⁹ Vincent, Theodore G.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., Ebony

experienced. Cape Verdeans' position as 'subjects of Portugal' (as they were fond of saying) was never in question for them—nor was there any confusion about where they were from in Cape Verde, or their cultural character—yet their claims to this national identity has often been criticized, mostly by African-Americans, as a form of wanting to 'escape the race.' On the contrary, any negotiations of the issue of black/white among Cape Verdeans were never an identity complex or an attempt to "pass." Just as with speaking their native language, and strictly maintaining their country's traditions, negotiating race and identity politics was one more way they attempted to resist society's prejudices.

Cape Verdeans and their descendants often cited the unique aspects of their culture when distinguishing themselves from other members of the African Diaspora in the United States. These not only included their language(s), but also foods, types of dance, poetry and song—the lifeblood of the poverty-stricken islanders' culture. One author compared traditional Cape Verdean song to African-derived music in other cultures. He said, "[t]he most important type of song was the *morna*. African slaves in Brazil shouted and danced to their *samba*. Africans in North America expressed the same spectrum of joys, pains and hopes through the 'Blues' and 'Spirituals'. The *morna* is the window into the soul of the Cape Verdean experience."¹⁸¹ One classic invoked that ever-present sense of the Cape Verdean's *sodadi*. The song that goes by that very name, "*Sodadi*," is one of the oldest and most well known "*mornas*" to come out of the Cape Verde--United States connection. One verse captures the history of Cape Verdean immigration and the painful emotions that have been a part of it.

Quem mostra' bo/ Ess caminho longe?/...
Ess caminho Pa Sao Tome/ Si bo 'screve me/

¹⁸¹ R. A. Almeida and P. Nyhan, "Cape Verde and Its People: A Short History," p. 13.

*Ma ta 'screve be/ Si bo 'squece' me/ M TA 'squece be/ Atedia/
Qui bo volta*

Who showed you That far away path?/ Who showed you
the path to Sao Tome?/ Sodade For my land/ If you write me, I
will write you./ If you forget me, I will forget you./ Until the
day/ We meet again...¹⁸²

The “sentimental geography” that characterized the history of Cape Verdeans coming to the United States is marked by complex racial politics, economic motivations and the kinds of psychosocial and physical migrations made by all members of the African Diaspora. Anthropologist Gina Sanchez argued that the decision to self-segregate was one (sometimes shared) aspect of Cape Verdeans’ and Caribbean immigrants’ experience. She supports the idea of this strategy being a way to elude racist practices. “For many, to identify with African Americans in a racist society would have hindered their chances for upward social and economic mobility. This is also an attitude held by some recent immigrants of African descent, e.g. Jamaicans and Haitians.”¹⁸³

Another example that highlighted the importance of language illustrates this point. Ira De A. Reid observed one Caribbean black who “[did] not suffer much from the American race prejudice,” due to the fact that he spoke either French or Spanish at his place of employment so his white employer would treat him with a bit of preference.¹⁸⁴ In his widely read organ, *The Negro World*, Marcus Garvey editorialized the same issue in an article entitled “The Value of Knowing the Spanish Language.” He emphasized the fact that Spanish-speaking blacks enjoyed increased opportunities freedom in the workplace, and

¹⁸² “Sodade,” (Criolu spelling) written by Luis Morais and Amandio Cabral, recorded in 1992 by Cesaria Evora, album *Miss Perfumado*, Produced for Lusafrica Productions, Studio de la Bastille, Paris, France.

¹⁸³ Gina Sanchez, “The Politics of Cape Verdean American Identity,” in *Transforming Anthropology*, Vol. 6, Nos. 1& 2, pp. 54-71.

¹⁸⁴ Reid, *The Negro Immigrant* (1939), p. 204.

in travel and accommodations.¹⁸⁵ Alternatively, and more commonly, however, most Caribbean immigrants found that it was more advantageous politically to attempt to organize with other blacks and join such causes as their traditional uplift organizations. According to Kasinitz, black Caribbean people in North America had two options. “They could remain ‘birds of passage,’ and consider themselves only temporary sojourners in North American society. Manifestations of this strategy included a propensity to retain close personal and financial ties to the homeland, [and] a reluctance to take out U.S. citizenship. ...The other option was for the migrants to immerse themselves within the North American black community, and to work for the betterment of that community.”¹⁸⁶ Arguably, Cape Verdeans’ “ethnocentrism” could be likened to the first option Kasinitz outlined for Caribbean “birds of passage.” In contrast, Caribbean participation in the Garvey movement falls under the second option. And in one sense, the Garvey movement undoubtedly served as a form of therapy for black immigrants who struggled to adjust to racial polarities and racism in the United States.

Irma Watkins-Owens study of Caribbean immigrants in Harlem documented these things. Garvey and other radicals of Caribbean descent championed the cause of uplift and in doing so, they legitimized the feelings immigrants had about their encounters with racism. Winston James described the conditions that characterized the country when such leaders as Marcus Garvey and Hubert Harrison arrived. Black America had reached its “nadir” in the words of Rayford Logan. Just four years prior to Harrison’s arrival in 1900, the Supreme Court made racial segregation the law under the doctrine of “separate but equal” in the case of *Plessy v. Ferguson*. Within one year of Garvey’s arrival in 1916, the East St. Louis massacre of July 1917 took place, a labor conflict between black and white workers which

¹⁸⁵ *The Negro World*, July 17, 1926.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 34-35.

erupted into savage violence killing black men, women and children and shocking the entire nation into confronting the reality of the race problem.¹⁸⁷ The terrorism of the clan also plagued the nation and with films like *Birth of a Nation* released organizations like the NAACP and UNIA served as prime outlets for blacks of all nationalities of the African Diaspora in the United States to take a stand.

Cape Verdeans remained focused on work and dedicated to the cause of sending remittances to those they had left behind. Issues of race mattered less except for in situations in which they came in contact with outside groups. Their loyalty to home and family there was manifest in the packet trade—the use of smaller vessels, known as packets, to transport both goods and people from the island to the US and reverse.¹⁸⁸ In this way, they continued a legacy began during the maritime era. Maritime historian W. Jeffrey Bolster argued that pre-Civil War black seamen played a major role in the shaping of black identity, “Atlantic maritime culture” and the eighteenth and nineteenth century black worlds in general. This was due to the positions they had, the numbers involved in maritime professions and the very nature of the business which allowed them increased opportunities for social and professional advancement. For example, black seamen were granted access to citizenship long before other blacks, enslaved or free. Bolster states: “[I]n the universe of southern and Caribbean plantation slaves, ships and boats were a pipeline to freedom and a refuge for slaves on the lam.”¹⁸⁹ Cape Verdeans turned the depression in the shipping industry around in order to make it work for themselves. During the late nineteenth

¹⁸⁷ Winston James, *Holding Aloft the Banner of Ethiopia: Caribbean Radicalism in Early Twentieth Century America* (New York: Verso, 1998): 94-96.

¹⁸⁸ Sanchez, p. 57; Leo Pap, *The Portuguese Americans* (1981), p. 133. Other sources on black Americans and Cape Verdeans in Maritime trades include: W. Jeffrey Bolster, *Black Jack*; Briton Cooper Busch, “Cape Verdeans in the American Whaling and Sealing Industry, 1850-1900,” *The American Neptune: A Quarterly Journal of Maritime History*, Vol. XLV, No. 2 (Spring 1985); Waltraud Berger Coli, “Cape Verdean Americans as Maritime Entrepreneurs,” *Cimboa: Revista Cabo-verdiana de Letras, Artes e Estudos*, Vol. 1997; Alexander Starbuck, *History of the American Whale Fishery* (1989); Sonny Williamson, *Unsung Heroes of the Surf* (1992).

¹⁸⁹ Bolster, *Black Jacks*, p. 4.

century, many Cape Verdeans bought and began operating packet boats to facilitate their own passage to and from “the old country” and in so doing, they created ways to maintain work as seafarers and perpetuate their own unique pockets of community. Thus, Cape Verdeans work at sea afforded them opportunities and agency in ways similar to the situation experienced by pre-Civil War black seamen.

In the case of both of groups of New England immigrants, religion provided an outlet and a means for survival as did the various organizations and institutions set up to help community members adjust. Local Catholic churches were some of the first institutions to serve the Cape Verdean community. For instance, Our Lady of Assumption church in New Bedford, Massachusetts had the largest Cape Verdean following and organized clubs such as the Holy Name Society which met regularly to set up fundraisers and various classes for immigrant parishioners. It became known as the *only* Cape Verdean Catholic Church in the country. On February 16, 1916, Felipe Nicolau Soares established a fraternal club for Cape Verdean men in the city when he called the inaugural meeting of the Cape Verdean Beneficent Association, Inc. The club’s two purposes were “to pay death and disability benefits to its members” and “second, to foster the Cape Verdean heritage in the United States.”¹⁹⁰ Other organizations would also emerge in this period. In 1917, a group of men erected a club whose goal “was to organize a band to foster musical education for the men and their families,” it was to be the Cape Verdean Ultramarine Bland Club, Inc.¹⁹¹ In 1937, the Cape Verdean Woman’s Social Club was established, the first of its kind. It originated when Mrs. Maria Livramento called a meeting of her closest friends at her home. The ten women agreed to organize functions such as formal dinners, dances and

¹⁹⁰ The Commonwealth of Massachusetts, His Excellency Michael S. Dukakis, Governor, a Proclamation—1976: “The Cape Verdean.”

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

fund-raising affairs.¹⁹² Cape Verdeans joined local branches of national organizations as well; some like Eugenia Fortes joined the NAACP and a few *may* have joined the UNIA although it is not confirmed. For instance, the records for the Springfield, Massachusetts UNIA chapter contain members with Portuguese surnames.¹⁹³ Although the overwhelming membership of the UNIA in America was African American, the leadership was predominantly Caribbean and Caribbean immigrants joined the association's ranks in record numbers. Winston James has said that "of all the radical projects of the 1920s, the one with the most conspicuous Caribbean involvement was the Garvey movement—the Universal Negro Improvement Association."¹⁹⁴ The organization was and still remains to be the largest and most successful black organization in the world. "It was, for much of the African Diaspora and for masses of people in Africa, a gigantic beacon of hope promising to bring to an end the long night of their oppression. And this counted."¹⁹⁵

Throughout his career as a charismatic leader, Marcus Garvey preached encouraging, energizing words to blacks all over the world. In a 1925 speech, for instance, he asked, why be discouraged? "The world today is indebted to us for the benefits of civilization. They stole our arts and sciences from Africa. Then why should we be ashamed of ourselves?" He urged, "the time has come for the Negro to forget and cast behind him his hero worship and adoration of other races, and to start out immediately to create and emulate heroes of his own."¹⁹⁶ Garvey's message of pan-Africanism dictated that followers join ranks across nationality or tribe and take on the banner of race pride, a message that was obviously very attractive to struggling black immigrants confronting the puzzle of race in America. He said:

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Oral History Interview with J. Lisbon, East Wareham, Mass., May 27, 2000; Lucillia Lima, "Lembrança: Crioulo Memories," *Spinner*, Vol. 1 (1981): 92-95.

¹⁹⁴ James, p. 134.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 136.

¹⁹⁶ Garvey, "African Fundamentalism," in *Marcus Garvey and the Vision of Africa*, pp. 156-157.

“Dash asunder the petty prejudices within your own fold; set at defiance the scornful designation of ‘nigger’ uttered even by yourselves, and be a Negro in the light of the Pharaohs of Egypt, Simons of Cyrene, Hannibals of Carthage, L’Ouvertures and Dessalines of Haiti, Blydens, Barclays and Johnsons of Liberia, Lewises of Sierra Leone, and Douglass’s and DuBois’s of America ...”¹⁹⁷

Perhaps the most tangible evidence of the level of success Garvey enjoyed in his movement can be seen in the widespread popularity of his Black Star Steamship Line. The Black Star Line collected over \$700,000 in its first ten months.¹⁹⁸ It had some 35,000 loyal stockholders, all of whom had took hold of Garvey’s vision of a black owned and operated line of ships with the potential to provide journeys across the Atlantic, fulfilling long held dreams blacks had for some semblance of power and presence. Unfortunately, the Black Star Steamship Line venture failed, however, as a symbol it succeeded in giving black Americans and black Diasporan immigrants in the country a vision to hold on to and something tangible to underlie their hopes. For people all over the African Diaspora, the vast Atlantic sea provided a way out—a way out of restrictive social and economic conditions. The sea transported migrants away from harsh realities and provided a pathway to liberating, sometimes imagined communities where economic and political desires could potentially be realized.

For those that came to these shores, the United States contained those possibilities. For those Caribbean exiles and other blacks who became disillusioned with the United States and embraced Garveyism, the ultimate source of identity and liberation was the continent of Africa. For them, the sea provided a way out through mobilizing around the very issue others sought to escape—the issue of race. Whatever path was chosen, via the symbolic sea

¹⁹⁷ Garvey, “A Talk With Afro-West Indians,” in *Marcus Garvey and the Vision of Africa*, p. 85.

¹⁹⁸ Tony Martin, *Race First* (1976): 164.

or on-land in the myriad political organizations and their endeavors, the fight was ultimately over self-identification. In the words of Cabral, it was “a fight to defend our dignity, our right to have an identity—our own identity.”¹⁹⁹ How each group of immigrants of African descent attempted to rethink their relationship to homeland and nation through participation in local (and national and international) politics, and through organizational life seemed to be the central preoccupation of the African Diaspora immigrants of New England in the second half of the twentieth century. This pattern, however, had a long history dating back to the beginnings of the commonwealth and its first black residents.

As it has already been shown, much of the work of the ‘master narrative’ on race in Massachusetts, focused on African-Americans born in Massachusetts—the first, second and third generation residents, descendants of Black slaves and/or free Blacks in the state.²⁰⁰ That tendency would lend itself to reinforcing already held ideas about Northern liberalism and the legacy of New England’s Puritan moral superiority. For example, in his monograph *Boston Confronts Jim Crow*, historian Mark Schneider wrote the following about the tradition of Black radicalism in the city of Boston:

Although Boston was largely unaffected by the Great Migration to the North during World War I, half the city’s black people were southern migrants for much of this period [1890-1920]. These new arrivals were well suited to urban life and eager to advance economically, but, like second- or third-generation residents, they found their way forward blocked by race discrimination. At the same time, they felt themselves to be [freer] than other African-Americans. The small size of the black community insulated it from the more blatant forms of racism that afflicted other urban centers. In addition, a divided and exclusive upper class, the class that provided the basis for accommodation in other northern centers, was too weak to

¹⁹⁹ Amilcar Cabral, “Connecting the Struggle,” A Speech to Black American Political Organizations on Oct. 20, 1972, in *Return to the Source: Selected Speeches by Amilcar Cabral* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1973): 79.

²⁰⁰ There is a growing body of scholarship on Native Americans in New England, Caribbean immigrants in the region and newer immigrant arrivals from Brazil, and other Latin-American countries. For example, two recent dissertations have helped to broaden the discussion of this topic. See the following: Regine Ostine, *After Intermarriage: Ethnicity and Identity Among Haitians in Boston*. Ph.D. Dissertation, Sociology, University of Michigan, 2001; Violet Mary-Ann Johnson, *The Migration Experience: Social and Economic Adjustment of British West Indian Immigrants in Boston, 1915-1950*. Ph.D. Dissertation, History, Boston College, 1992.

dominate the political life of the community. Finally, black Bostonians developed their own community institutions, enjoyed a favorable political climate, and had a proud history of resistance to oppression. These factors combined to make Boston a hotbed of African-American militance.²⁰¹

In this passage, Schneider suggested, among many things, that African-Americans experienced less race-based oppression in the city of Boston as compared with others in urban centers across the US. He similarly offered a positive outlook on Black Bostonians' civil rights struggles by creating a picture of the city as encompassing an environment in which Black protest—apart from that of the largely accommodationist, divided upper class--thrived. The backdrop of the turn-of-the-century history of the city, Schneider argues, is the legacy of abolitionism—the integrated movement against US slavery in the south (led by leaders such as William Lloyd Garrison and Frederick Douglass) which he argues created a space in the city for open political protest against Jim Crow and other forms of institutional racism.

Schneider's work is reflective of other factors that have also been important aspects of the New England master narrative. In addition to suggesting that African-Americans were freer in Boston than in other parts of the country, he suggests that the small numbers of Blacks in Boston as well as the class divisions within the community also helped make the lives of Black Bostonians better. While these elements are obviously important aspects of the history of African-American life in New England, they often obscure what lies on the other side of the story—the invisible “black aliens” that should have also been counted among the population, and the racial discrimination that *did* plague the lives of these people of color whose stories have only just begun to be told. For instance, Schneider's references to the immigrants of the African Diaspora who were a part of the Boston milieu at the turn-

²⁰¹ M. Schneider, *Boston Confronts Jim Crow* (Boston, Northeastern UP, 1997), 3-4.

of-the-century include a brief mention of the fact that they made up 19% of the Black population (a significant portion), had middle-class aspirations, and were mostly Episcopalian or Catholic.²⁰² He refers exclusively to Caribbeans in Boston. However, one statement he includes about these immigrant citizens ostensibly contradicted the picture he paints of the rest of the Boston African-American community. He stated: “Many men had been construction workers in the West Indies, but were barred from their trade by the lily-white unions in Boston, and found themselves downwardly mobile.”²⁰³ This (perceived) tension reinforces a central question at the heart of this study—how the experiences of Black immigrants have differed from those of New England-born Blacks, thus demonstrating the ways race relations in the region have been complicated by the presence of immigrants from the African Diaspora.

The experiences of immigrants from the Caribbean and from Cape Verde in labor, education, public accommodations, organizational life, and everyday social interactions, when integrated into the existing historiography on New England life and culture, broaden the pre-existing notions of an “imagined New England” (in Maine historian John Conforti’s words). These stories help demystify the question of how race relations, and indeed the construct of race itself, were unique in New England states such as Massachusetts as compared with other states and regions in the nation. Historian Matthew Pratt Guterl described this regional distinction in his recent work *The Color of Race in America*. His book does the important work of chronicling of what he calls the “southernization of northern racial discourse,” providing a cultural and intellectual history of the impact of bi-racialism—the ‘absolute’ white/black sensibility that began in Manhattan, NY and swept the

²⁰² Ibid., 10.

²⁰³

country.²⁰⁴ He says the following about what separated racial discourse in the regions (and which differed in urban versus rural areas): Northern nativists' preoccupations were with the threat of "racial degeneration" posed by the presence of the Irish, Jewish, Italian and Slavic immigrants, and with the possibilities of miscegenation and violence such as that existed in the south.²⁰⁵ Arguably, I argue, Guterl's Northern nativists (with his emphasis being on New York) were also preoccupied with immigrants of African descent. The milieu of the Jim Crow era and the yet to be resolved 'Negro problem' that preoccupied the minds of those that were swept up in the tide of bi-racial thinking made black immigrants' presence that much more bothersome in the eyes of many; this is reflected in the discourse of southern New England journalists sampled in previous chapters.

Immigrants from the African Diaspora were always visible in the New England states, however, specifically in Rhode Island, Connecticut and Massachusetts. Their encounters with New England-born European-Americans (so-called whites/ Wasps as well as second- and third-generation European immigrants), American Indians, and African Americans reveal the ways that their very presence served to complicate the New England racial landscape. In the pages that follow, the experiences of Capeverdean and Caribbean immigrants in Massachusetts organizational life are further discussed, compared and analyzed to assess the importance these stories have and the contribution that they make to our understanding of the broader picture of regional histories of race, and race relations.

²⁰⁴ Matthew Pratt Guterl, *The Color of Race in America, 1900-1940* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2001) 12.

²⁰⁵ Matthew Pratt Guterl, *The Color of Race in America, 1900-1940* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2001) 16. For further histories of the construction of race, see also: David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (New York: Verso, 1991); Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1995); Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1998); Neil Foley, *White Scourge* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998); Grace Elizabeth Hale, *Making Whiteness* (New York: Pantheon, 1998); Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White* (NY: Routledge, 1996). For a history of nativism in the U.S., see J. Higham, *Strangers in the Land*.

The foundation of immigrant participation in politics and in various socio-cultural organizations was whatever respective community they had settled in. It was often the case that the poor living conditions they faced, and experiences with discrimination in schools and jobs, served to motivate individuals and groups of immigrants to take action. A 1913 newspaper article, published as a front page exclusive/exposé in *The New Bedford Sunday Standard* gives a graphic narrative of what one Cape Cod settlement was like. The colloquial name of the village is quite telling of the racialization (via stereotypes) of its Capeverdean residents. A section of the village of Onset was known as “Jungletown.” The article about Jungletown alluded to two things: the patriotic spirit felt among some of the immigrants and the poor conditions the immigrants lived under (though they found them much better than what they would have faced at home), which reflected the ways that race-relations (and the exploitation they suffered as non-English-speaking immigrants) limited their choices at the time. With the same derogatory language that local whites used to refer to Cape Verdean immigrants and their settlement, the author wrote at length in the article entitled: “American Spirit is Strong in Jungletown.”

The abstract of this essay read: “Burning Desire to Become American Citizens and Learn American Ways Strong Among the Cape Verders at Onset—A Settlement of About 40 Houses Occupied by Honest and Industrious People—Liquor Sold There Without a License Yet Place Is Not Disorderly.” Illustrations revealed “the American House,” described as the largest building in Onset, a store with “mixed merchandise,” and a few of the village’s small shanties, peaking out from which were a groups of *kriolu* children. The author speculated about values taught to the kids by their elders. He wrote: “[T]he place is enthused with the one great, burning, dominant desire to become American. The elder folks therefore teach their children that they must mix as much as possible with the English-

speaking white children of the neighboring villages of Onset and East Wareham.”²⁰⁶ The author also documented the work performed by Capeverdeans, saying:

The Cape Verders are the day laborers of the Cape. They are those who harvest the cranberry crops. They toil on the roads. They dig the cellars. They put up cement outhouses or garages. They make walks. They dig for sand. They fish, they go “clamming,” they “farm it,” and always industrious, always saving, they gather money, pay for their homes, have a bank account-- and finally in some memorable fall return to Brava or Fogo in triumph...

In another section, he repeated his praise of the work and work ethic of the Cape’s Capeverdean settlers. He also showed sensitivity to the immigrant community’s poverty and their attempts to adapt and transcend it. His observations reveal the same ambiguity felt among many (and captured in other journalistic pieces used here) when attempting to categorize the Luso-phone islanders in terms of race. There is the constant, clear recognition of an observed African heritage, yet an attempt to simultaneously show the ways that they differed from African-Americans and from whites.

In the passage that follows, the immigrants’ experiences as agricultural laborers were clear. The author wrote:

They are honest, frugal, industrious (sic). They labor cheaply, it is true. They can “live on the smell of a greased rag,” almost, just as an old sea captain once said. But these latter characteristics are their misfortunes, and are not from choice. They live as best they can, eking out a precarious living from soil and sea, planning for the future when they shall become more like whites, when their children shall speak the English language and be wise in American wisdom. Their queer, shedlike houses soon are changed. Year by year they become more American.

The author conflated the Capeverdeans’ desire to speak English with a desire to be white/American(ized), however numerous oral history interviews with *Kriolu* immigrants and their descendants revealed that this issue was not so simple. For the most part, Capeverdeans maintained their culture and very much identified with the Portuguese flag up

²⁰⁶ Author Unlisted. “American Spirit is Strong in Jungletown,” *The New Bedford Sunday Standard*. New Bedford, MA. Sunday, May 25, 1913. Courtesy of the Raymond Patnaude Collection of Sources on Cape Verdean History in New England, Given to the Author.

until the era of independence (not before 1975). In addition, the article does not investigate the behind-the-scenes resistance, small-scale activism and organizational lives the immigrants maintained in order to counteract whatever dire circumstances that they faced. And the passage repeatedly highlighted the meager living conditions that the residents struggled to endure. The document raises questions around class, property ownership, and the ostensible labor discrimination that the immigrants faced. For instance, the article continues:

They do the work which the true American will not do. They save while the American at Onset spends. In this is to be found the true cause of the complaints among Onset whites, because these dusky-skinned men from African islands dare become sufficiently opulent to purchase Onset real estate.

The author went on to say that “the white man has left them alone,” serving as evidence of the fact that the immigrants lived in isolated, segregated communities such as the one that “Jungletown” represented.

It is poignant to note that the aforementioned 1913 newspaper exposé was written against the backdrop of the Jim Crow and reveal that the conditions of Cape Verdean agricultural workers were very similar to those of African-American sharecroppers in the southern states around the same time. The words of former cranberry bog worker turned NAACP agitator, Eugenia Fortes, confirmed this. She said, “cranberry-picking and cotton-picking are like cousins...they were both sharecropping.”²⁰⁷ Wild cranberries are one of three native US fruits; cranberries were originally found on the borders of Cape Cod. The Cape’s surface, with its abundant wet lands, including extensive swamps, provides natural

²⁰⁷ Oral History Interview with Eugenia Fortes, by Aminah Pilgrim, [June 10,] 2004. Location: Hyannis, MA, the home of Ms. E. Fortes.

conditions for the growth of cranberries.²⁰⁸ As one historian of the Capeverdean experience with this crop has written:

Contrary to the popular image of local Yankee families embarking on a Sunday's outing of cranberry picking, the cranberry industry early began to require a large and intensive agricultural work force, particularly during the six or so weeks of the autumn cranberry harvest. The Italians, Poles, and Finns all provided the necessary labor in turn, but by 1910, the Cape Verdean immigrants completely dominated the harvest.²⁰⁹

Anthropologist Albert Jenks credits Capeverdean cranberry pickers with making a significant contribution to North American Thanksgiving celebrations. In a 1925 article in the *Dearborn Independent*, he wrote:

Cape Verders have been working in cranberry bogs for about thirty-five years and today they harvest nine-tenths of the Cape Cod cranberry crop. Consequently, if at a holiday dinner we think of any one group of people as having contributed most of the cranberry part of our repast, the Cape Verder is the one to have in mind. Over and over again, and without contradiction, owners and overseers of cranberry bogs pronounce the Cape Verder, whether he picks by hand, scoop or snap, the very best harvester of cranberries and spreader of sand with the wheelbarrow on the Cape Cod bogs.²¹⁰

The stories of Capeverdean cranberry workers (including those that also picked blueberries, strawberries, apples and other native New England crops) reveal the many ways that Capeverdeans' lives did indeed mirror the lives of African-Americans who suffered in sharecropping.

Fortes, who left Cape Verde at age nine (1920), grew up in Harwich and Hyannis, towns in Cape Cod. She became vocal as a local leader and activist in part in response to conditions like those that existed in Jungletown and in her own hometown of Harwich. She

²⁰⁸ For discussions of Cranberry Harvesting, see: Marilyn Halter, *Between Race and Ethnicity* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1993); *Spinner: Cranberry Harvest*, Albert Ernest Jenks, "Cranberry Bogs of Cape Cod: Their Workers," *Dearborn Independent*, 3 January 1925, p. 14.

²⁰⁹ Marilyn Halter, *Between Race and Ethnicity*, p. 99.

²¹⁰ Jenks, *Ibid.*, p. 14.

was inspired by what she knew of African-American protests and their successes; she had moved to Boston in her early twenties to find better work and when she met with discrimination, it changed her entire perspective. She became a US citizen in 1940 and shortly thereafter became active in the political and civic life of the area. An article in *The Boston Globe* reported on Fortes's observations of racism in Cape Cod and her own choices to be an activism early on:

Even before becoming a US citizen, Fortes would sit in the back of Barnstable town meeting[s], silently absorbing the rules and tactics of small town political engagement. Once she became a citizen, her voice could not be muted. [In Fortes's own words]: "I talked about affordable housing for the poor and bringing water to minority sections of the town, a lot of things. [...]Throughout the 1950's, the NAACP was scoring civil rights victories. But progress was slow, Fortes [said]. ...Fortes and a dozen blacks and whites organized the Cape NAACP chapter in 1961, and Fortes served as the group's second president."²¹¹

She said that she "was black when most Cape Verdeans were white!"²¹² The attitude, controversial within Cape Verdean circles, and the stance Fortes took on race alienated her from many *Kriolus* who felt that this was a rejection of her unique identity as Cape Verdean (as opposed to African-American). The life of Eugenia Fortes is a living testament to the complex, social history of Capeverdeans in the United States. Much of her work continued long after she helped to start the Cape Cod NAACP chapter. She was instrumental in starting several scholarship committees to support minority students in pursuing their education. She also pioneered the Mississippi Box Project, a charity effort to help poor families in the US South. She said:

Everything was segregated...People [talked] about the South. Well, the North was just as bad. More subtle, that's all. There were no burning crosses,...or separate drinking fountains or whites-only window signs. Stores would take your money, but that's about it. They wouldn't pay any attention to you. And if you went into a

²¹¹ Isaac Rosen, "Activist's life creates a Cape legacy," *Boston Globe*, July 7, 1995.

²¹² Eugenia Fortes, Oral History.

restaurant, some of them would tell you to leave, but others would just ignore you. We understood what was going on, sure we did, even though the North was trying to play it cool.²¹³

While Cape Verdeans like Fortes were rare, there were a few that established themselves at that time and affected change for those around them.

Judge George Leighton was another activist, a contemporary and friend to Eugenia Fortes, who was American-born. He was born in New Bedford, Massachusetts, on October 22, 1912 to his parents, Anna Silva Garcia and Antonio Neves Leitaó. He was born into very humble means and due to his family's need for money Leighton was unable to attend high school. Instead, he was forced to spend his time working in the cranberry industry. However, he spent his free time reading and won a \$200 scholarship to college in an essay contest. Leighton gained conditional admittance to Howard University in 1936 and graduated magna cum laude four years later, going on to study at Harvard Law School. Judge Leighton's academic accomplishments were not his only successes. He was drafted into military service in 1940 and became an infantry captain before being relieved of active duty in 1945. He returned to his Harvard education and worked hard to earn the law degree by 1946. He passed the Illinois bar exam the following year. In Chicago, he got involved in city politics. Leighton served as chairman of the Legal Redress Committee of the Chicago NAACP. Between 1947 and 1952, Leighton also served as president of the Third Ward Regular Democratic Organization. Appointed assistant attorney general of Illinois in 1949, Leighton served two years in this post. In 1951, he co-founded one of the largest predominately African American law firms in the country and the next year, he served as Chicago Branch NAACP president. Leighton was elected a Cook County Circuit Court judge in 1964 and began teaching at the John Marshall Law School the next year. During his

²¹³ Ibid.

civil rights tenure, he frequently met with Martin Luther King, Jr. at his law firm. The two interacted in the work that Leighton did as a civil rights lawyer. In 1969, Leighton was assigned to sit as a judge on the US Court of Appeals in Illinois' First District. After six years (1976), President Gerald Ford nominated Leighton to serve as a US District Court judge. He was confirmed February 2, 1976, and took office one month later. He retired from the US District Court at the age of seventy-five. The nearly eight decades-long career of Judge Leighton marks one way that Capeverdeans have touched and indeed, helped to shape US history.

Conclusion
The Immigrants' "Black Crisis:"
Civil Rights, Black Power and Independence Change Identity Politics

The African-American represents an amalgam of the ethnic matrix; that is, the African-American identity is in fact a composite of identities. In certain areas and periods of time, the composite approached a uniform whole, as the transition from ethnicity to race was more thorough-going. But for other times and locations, the composite was fragmented and incomplete. When incomplete, differences having their origin in ethnic distinctions were in instances carried over into differences of status, thus transforming the original ethnic divide without ever having grappled with an effective reconciliation.²¹⁴

In the above passage, Gomez discussed African-American identity and the various trends that occurred in its development in the context of slavery. The process illustrated therein is appropriate for shedding light on a study of Cape Verdeans in New England. Perhaps it can be concluded (borrowing Gomez's idea) that in the New England region throughout the twentieth century, the "composite" black community was fragmented in ways similar to what Gomez described. The breakdown or fragmentation within the black New England population worked to the advantage of Cape Verdeans whose identity was yet evolving and could not easily be reconciled with that of African-Americans—also continuously evolving and fluid.

The Civil Rights Movement years and the Black Power era are perhaps the best years in which to examine this issue and how it affected Cape Verdeans in the US. In the period of twenty years between the mid-1950's and the mid 1970's, Cape Verdeans experienced what one woman called their "black phase."²¹⁵ This could be summarized as the period in which Cape Verdean identity matured, in the sense that immigrants in the US felt a stronger

²¹⁴ Michael Gomez, *Exchanging Our Country Marks*, 13.

²¹⁵ Lucy Ramos Interview (Published in *Spinner*, New Bedford, 1983).

sense of identification with the homeland (in the context of impending independence and revolt against the Portuguese), a greater sense of acceptance with their African heritage as well as a greater sense of identification with African-Americans and others also re-examining and awakening to the beauty of their own culture.

Much of the stories that comprised this drama took place within the realm of education. Oral histories with pioneers in Cape Verdean bilingual education reveal that more research in this area should be done to revise what is currently known of the saga of Boston schools desegregation history. One Cape Verdean educator, Georgette Gonçalves, who was instrumental in pioneering the Cape Verdean bilingual programs in Boston, looked back at this period with some resentment. She described that the African-Americans (mostly migrants to Boston from the South) “used [Cape Verdeans] to make their numbers greater in order to gain political clout.” She mentioned that “we did not associate with one another on a regular basis because we were so different—our language, our customs, everything was different—yet they needed us so then all of a sudden we became ‘black’.”²¹⁶ Her comments speak to ethnic divisions within the African-American community at the time as well as illustrate the fact that Cape Verdeans were increasingly becoming more aware of their position within the “black” population and their unique identity as Cape Verdeans with a distinct language and history from others though they shared African descent. It was out of this situation, according to bilingual education activist Manuel Gonçalves, that Cape Verdeans were able to establish their own niche within the public education system.

Adding the African Diaspora immigrants’ stories to the narrative of Boston’s civil rights struggle over school segregation is just one example that suggests that there is much research and scholarly work to be done to more accurately document the “black”

²¹⁶ Georgette Gonçalves, Oral history interview.

experience(s) in the city of Boston and in New England overall. The debates over education in New England—specifically school desegregation in Massachusetts—must be continually revised to include immigrants of African-descent. The debate reflected the national and regional attitudes about race, often reflecting internalized and deeply-held racism and xenophobia among the US-born, and revealing the agency and resistance of immigrants in response to US racial ideologies. Early 20th century attempts to integrate schools by Cape Verdean parents who sent their children to local schools in Massachusetts (and Rhode Island) similarly reveal the ways that racist and xenophobic sentiments were used to rationalize excluding immigrants of African descent from schools. Second generation immigrant youth, who were finally admitted to public schools in New England, were taught that becoming “educated”/“American” meant abandoning their first language(s) or island accents and/or also abandoning the notion that they could be excluded from racial identification—they were asked to make a choice. As one oral history revealed, “either you were Negro/Colored/Black...or White or you were invisible”.²¹⁷ In general, Civil Rights era resistance on the part of diverse African Diaspora immigrants in Massachusetts varied. Cape Verdeans did not identify with AAs and therefore rejected/ignored the movement. However, others, such as Eugenia Fortes & George Leighton (MA) and John Lisbon, Sr. (of Rhode Island) joined national civil rights organizations in an effort to join ranks with US-born blacks for political reasons and for uplift for people of African descent on the whole.

This project has been about attempting to expand our understanding of what it means to be “black.” There are many populations, like the Cape Verdeans, which become visible when we challenge the ‘paradigm of blackness’ as we know it. Recognizing these

²¹⁷ Huntley Nicholas, Oral history interview.

diverse experiences and points of view expands our collective knowledge of the black community in the US thus opening up new avenues for historical exploration.



Illustrations

Brava Men and Women Arriving in New Bedford

Photograph courtesy of Spinner Publications, New Bedford, Mass.



Family Photos from “Jungle Town”

Photographs courtesy of the Fernandes Family Collection



Barbadians enter Ellis Island

Photograph courtesy of the Schomburg Center



Carver Cranberry Picker and Her Family

*Unidentified woman, Carver, MA/Photograph- Spinner Publications, New
Bedford, MA*

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