



American Caboverdeano: The Life and Times of a Cape Verdean Activist

Eduardo Alberto Antonio Andrade

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On July 5, 1975 the New York Times ran a small article on the front page announcing the Independence of the Republic of Cape Verde. Upon reading that article, I began my journey as a Cape Verdean American. I began to recognize my heritage in a major way and, with great pride, I adopted the attitude of a Cape Verdean American. Although I knew I was of Cape Verdean heritage, I had always identified publicly as a black American of black Portuguese heritage because Cape Verdeans were virtually unknown. Now I had a nation of my heritage that was part of the larger international community, and it was a great feeling. I had come home! In 1980, I made my first visit to Cape Verde. I left the United States as a “Cape Verdean American,” but I returned as an “American Caboverdeano.” I was changed. The trip caused me to realize for the first time how much I had inherited the personality and culture of Cape Verde during the course of my lifetime. Years later, in 2009, I was awarded the honor of a school named for me in New Jersey: the “Edward Andrade School of Social Change.” I mentioned to a friend how humbled I was with the honor, and she said, “You have a legacy!” It was an unexpected comment. As I thought about it, I happened to see an old photo of me at age five. Looking at that photo, I wondered how I could have achieved any sort of legacy from where I started; therefore, it made me think of my past. Reviewing my life’s seventy-five years of experiences, I realized that as the child of first generation Cape Verdean Americans, raised by my immigrant grandparents, I had a beginning with no expectations, with no plans for a future, with few career options, and with limited opportunities. Yet, I became involved in extraordinary adventures; I benefited greatly from significant relationships; I reached an acceptable level of education; I achieved substantial public recognition; overall, I learned to make my way in a society that prizes individual effort; and, taking everything into consideration, I have led a unique life of noteworthy accomplishments. I realized that my legacy, if I have one, is not a school named for me but instead it is my life story – above all, my life as an activist. My story begins in a segregated, working class, ethnic (Cape Verdean) Massachusetts community and, thus far, brings me to a diverse, middle class, “Posh” coastal Florida town. But, it’s not a tale of class differences or financial standings; it’s about the unexpected, the unpredicted, and the “Who would have guessed?” Many life-stories tell about going from a “Log Cabin” to the greatest heights in politics or in business, but my story fits in between those extremes; it’s about a common man of Cape Verdean heritage – a Caboverdeano, and, optimistically, it is unique.

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George Foulds:

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