

# RECKONING WITH RACE AND SOCIAL INEQUALITIES THROUGH THE MIGRANT COMMUNITIES PROJECT: A CITIZEN SCIENTIST/COMMUNITY SCHOLAR AND SERVICE-LEARNING METHODOLOGICAL MODEL

por

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**Abstract:** This article examines the Migrant Communities Project's (MCP) Cape Cod History Initiative, a citizen scientist/community scholar research project that uses unique methodologies and collaborative partnerships that identify and engage social justice issues among racialized immigrant communities, uncovering hidden narratives, empowering agencies, and creating public educational programs. Developed since 2019, this project convened a working group of citizen researchers in a community of immigrants from the Azores, Cabo Verde, Portugal, and Brazil in New England. Historically marginalized in the context of racialized mobile labor processes, these immigrants are enmeshed in relations that have been both cooperative and sometimes antagonistic. A collective of diverse individuals and several immigrant community organizations were provided training and guidance to conduct historical research, artifact collection, and oral histories, creating an immigrant centered viewpoint, narrating the past and understanding the present. MCP initiatives helped to create a permanent space for a Cape Verdean Museum and applied community engaged service learning and intercultural competence methodologies to develop a community scholar curriculum that generated original research, ethnographic exhibits, public memorialization, and state historical archives recognition of immigrant organizations. The collaborative initiative's innovative historical/anthropological research methodologies brought this diverse community together to create new knowledge examining racialized inequalities, working to improve diversity, equity, and inclusion of immigrant voices in local history and public discourse.

**Keywords:** Community Social Action; Citizen Science; Methodologies for Diversity, Justice and Social Inclusion.

**Resumo:** Este artigo examina o Migrant Communities Project (MCP) Cape Cod History Initiative, um projecto de ciência cidadã, que utiliza metodologias únicas e parcerias de colaboração, que identificam e envolvem questões de justiça social entre comunidades imigrantes racializadas, descobrindo narrativas escondidas, fortalecendo agências de imigrantes e criando programas educacionais públicos. Desenvolvida desde 2019, a MCP Cape Cod History Initiative, reuniu um grupo de trabalho de investigadores

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cidadãos numa comunidade de imigrantes provenientes dos Açores, Cabo Verde, Portugal e Brasil na Nova Inglaterra. Historicamente marginalizados no contexto dos processos de trabalho móvel racializado, estes imigrantes estão enredados em relações que têm sido tanto cooperadoras como opositoras. Um colectivo de diversos indivíduos, e várias organizações comunitárias de imigrantes, foi formado e orientado para conduzir pesquisas históricas, coleção de artefactos e histórias orais, criando um ponto de vista centrado no imigrante, narrando o passado e compreendendo o presente. As iniciativas do MCP ajudaram a criar um espaço permanente para um museu cabo-verdiano, e aplicaram metodologias de *service-learning* e competências interculturais, para desenvolver um currículo académico comunitário que gerou investigação original, exposições etnográficas, memorialização pública e reconhecimento nos arquivos históricos do estado das organizações de imigrantes. As metodologias inovadoras de investigação histórica/antropológica da iniciativa colaborativa juntaram esta comunidade diversificada para criar novos conhecimentos examinando desigualdades racializadas, trabalhando para melhorar a diversidade, equidade e inclusão das vozes imigrantes na história local e no discurso público..

**Palavras-chave:** Acção Social Comunitária; Ciência Cidadã; Metodologias para Diversidade, Justiça e Inclusão Social.

## INTRODUCTION

My research as an anthropologist over the past twenty plus years has focused on how inequalities are structured. In this work I have examined how the state defines classifications of citizenship and racial identity, and how categories of racial and ethnic identity structure privilege, social mobility, place making, and access. In developing this research, I have always endeavored to apply whatever theoretical explorations of themes, literature, and scientific production in my academic inquiries to the practical consequences of these ideas and their applicability in the social contexts studied. As some social scientists approach their relationship to those who they “study” in field settings as “subjects” and “informants”, my work has been rather guided by a principle of collaboration with communities in which I frequently belong. Further, my work is guided by the supposition that it should be the anthropologist that serves and protects the interests of research collaborators, rather than the other way around.

Part of this approach is guided by the topic of research in which I am involved. Examining power inequalities and how they are structured, ethnography has a role, if not a responsibility or goal, to engage with underlying causes. The discipline, ultimately, can be fairly accused of compliance with those causes if it fails to assist with solutions. Such solutions may be as simple as using social inquiry as a tool of reproach and critique. Our work and professional expertise however can also endeavor to more directly assist communities harmed by social inequality and facing marginalization by collaborating on practical solutions to redress such situations.

Section 1 of the article provides a general overview of research literature, theoretical goals and methodological practices behind the MCP’s programs; section 2 examines the

community context and key community themes shaping this case study as an effort to engage social justice; sections 3 to 7 present ethnographic descriptions of different program activities, and how these activities meet project goals; the final section evaluates outcomes and efficacies within the aims of the broader organization and offers suggestions for further engagement.

## **1. THE MIGRANT COMMUNITIES PROJECT (MCP)**

The Migrant Communities Project (MCP), a Massachusetts chartered, federal 501 (C)(3) non-profit civil society organization, of which I serve as Executive Director, and primary humanities/social sciences scholar, was created as an experiment in collaborative social action. Founded in 2019, formalized in 2021, but with earlier roots, MCP is an ongoing citizen scientist, and social and racial justice project in Southeastern New England (predominantly Massachusetts and Rhode Island). The project works to bring the expertise of various scholars and professional researchers in anthropology, education, history, medicine, and healthcare to assist immigrant communities directly affected by social, racial, and other forms of categorical inequality.

Outlining the theoretical underpinning of the project, its objectives, and evaluating program effectiveness, this article presents the activities and outcomes of certain MCP historical recovery and social action programs. MCP programs are varied and include efforts to ameliorate social inequalities in responses to the opioid and addiction crisis through partnerships with policymakers, law enforcement, innovative medical researchers, and community organizations. This article, however, focuses on programs and methodologies developing a community-engaged citizen scientist pedagogic model that stimulate reflection upon the historical causes of social inequality and work to empower immigrant place making agencies.

Undertaken as an applied anthropology project, the MCP was founded with community partners and creates programs facilitating collaboration among a wide range of educators, researchers, and institutions intended to operationalize and engage the scholarship of integration and transformative social action. The MCP's Board of Directors include professional educators, scholars, and those working in the social justice ecosystem. Project partners include a wide range of educational, social justice, humanities, healthcare, and cultural institutions. MCP partnerships and programs use historical materials along with community research and public issues projects to promote social justice and strengthen local institutions directly and indirectly, centering the lived experiences and goals of immigrant participants' experiences. Developed from methodological and theoretical models in

anthropology and history, MCP programs expand beyond these disciplines to rely upon scholarship in education, specifically work conducted on community engagement and institutional transformation, as well as practices that advance intercultural competences—both well-established but growing literatures. Attention to cross-disciplinary approaches guiding such programs, and my own critical evaluation and experimentation with community-based engagement and service-learning curriculum development in Portugal and the United States (US) further informs and validates the approach. Board members have worked in a range of community-engaged, results-oriented programs. This includes a former Director of Amos House, along with the current COO (Amos House is a renowned RI institution creating practical solutions to oppression, homelessness, and poverty) and a former Director of Facing Race and Ourselves, who is now the current Executive Director of the WPS Institute (a training program for innovative community education). Other members of the MCP Board of Directors include important immigrant community figures, such as the current President of the Cape Verdean Club of Falmouth and a community historian. The perspectives of board members and other professional project collaborators have been instrumental in guiding MCP programs that attempt to connect community shareholders, educators, institutions, and the general public in local community contexts<sup>2</sup>.

MCP organized collaborations among professional researchers and partners with varied backgrounds and educational and professional expertise, design community research models that generate new scholarship, help non-academics to inform themselves of existing work that is relevant to their lives and experiences, and create collective bonds that help facilitate the advancement of social justice. As Donald Schon writes, “the scholarship of integration gives meaning to isolated facts, putting them into perspective [...] making connections across disciplines, placing the specialties in larger context, illuminating data in a revealing way, often educating nonspecialists, too”; in these kinds of local engagements, “the scholar asks ‘How can knowledge be responsibly applied to consequential problems? How can it be helpful to individuals as well as to institutions?’” (Schon, 1995: 27). MCP takes local engagement a step further, as Mitchell points out, by relying upon guidance from:

*[...] An emerging body of literature advocating a ‘critical’ approach to community service learning with an explicit social justice aim. A social change orientation, working to redistribute power, and developing authentic relationships are most often cited in the literature as points of departure from traditional service-learning (2008: 52; see also Mitchell, 2007).*

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<sup>2</sup> See discussions about the community engagement and service “movement” in Phinney, 1993; Torres et al, 2003; Fitzgerald et al, 2010; Wijeyesinghe & Jackson, 2012; Patton et al, 2016.

As stated above, the MCP is guided by attempts to embody and operationalize these learning approaches and objectives in an applied anthropology setting. MCP methodologies and curricula work with communities and social actors to articulate goals and design programs that address local concerns. Collaborations gather historical data, recover marginalized narratives, and use research on the past to inform the present. Projects are designed to engage contemporary issues of social justice and facilitate community efforts to address and work to overcome issues of inequality. Based on literature examining citizen researcher and engaged service-learning methodologies, as well as a relationship to Brown University's Swearer Center — especially the center's prominent practical application of state-of-the-art theoretical research related to community service programs — the MCP has created several initiatives that assist the social justice aims of local communities.

Applying these theoretical materials to practical situations, the project has worked with citizen scientist researchers and the general public to explain the political and economic forces behind power inequalities across multiple intersectional categories of difference and identity (Fraser, 1998). As Donahue and Mitchell suggest “critical service-learning practitioners interrogate systems and structures of inequality, question the distribution of power, and seek to develop authentic relationships among” professional researchers and “community partners” (2010: 16-17). MCP has created research and curriculum for experiential and engaged learning that use local institutions and historical research as points of local contact to examine inequality and promote diversity in order to “build a bridge between the sociological and abstract dimensions and the individually lived, personal dimensions” on which these inequalities function (Bell et al, 2008: 9).

Ultimately, these projects help participants to develop an understanding of and directly confront categories of privilege, inequality, and global systems of power. The models emerging from these historical materials and the lived experiences of the community researchers help them to ultimately understand their own individual categories of difference and privilege. These critical and auto-reflective exercises assist participants, the broader public, and professional academics and researchers to engage disparate communities, form partnerships, and develop the historical knowledge and intangible cultural wherewithal to engage and foment social transformation. Through the project, participants' historical research and engagement with contemporary problems has helped them to recover the past and learn about others, but also helps them to better understand their own place and own roles in power hierarchies structuring inequality (Donahue and Mitchell, 2010). The public facing nature of MCP project outputs, including museum and online programs, also help to inform broader audiences of critical social justice and immigrant community issues.

## 2. COMMUNITIES CONTEXT

MCP program models and curricula are designed to be replicable and scalable to any immigrant community context to construct historical narratives and to better understand local issues affecting place-making, diaspora formation, dislocation, temporary or permanent settlement, and how power inequalities, the law, and racialization processes, structure and exacerbate marginalization and social inequality. Although MCP activities include projects and partnerships across Southeastern New England, this article focuses on some of the programs undertaken with immigrant communities on Cape Cod, MA, specifically the Upper Cape (including Falmouth, Mashpee, and the village of Marstons Mills) where the bulk of project activities have been centered and have had their greatest longevity.

Cape Cod is a narrow spit of land jutting 65 miles off the Massachusetts coast into the Atlantic. Comprised of fifteen townships, the Cape (as well as the adjacent islands of Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket) were home to several important 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century whaling ports, including Falmouth, which also housed a prominent whale boat shipyard. As was the case in the prominent port of New Bedford, crews taken on by whalers and merchant vessels from the Portuguese Atlantic archipelagoes of the Azores and Cabo Verde left shipboard life to settle all over Cape Cod and the islands. The number of those settling in the whaling period, however, was dwarfed by those arriving in the region during the second industrial revolution, which, over 1870-1920s would employ hundreds of thousands of low-wage laborers from Cabo Verde, the Azores, and continental Portugal. Tens of thousands of these workers were recruited in the early decades of the 1900s as seasonal low wage agricultural laborers to pick fruit in cranberry bogs and strawberry fields and work on industrial farms and as domestic staff. Over the first decades of the 1900s migrant settlement in the farm towns of Falmouth, Mashpee, Marstons Mills, and Harwich would grow, outstripping the number of immigrants in the whaling and fishing city of Provincetown, which steadily declined (White, 2021). By the early 1900s, 40% of Falmouth's population were settlers from Portugal, primarily the Azores and Cabo Verde (Moniz, 2021). These immigrant populations created social and economic networks that would continue to bring settlers from the Atlantic archipelagoes and continental Portugal, especially during the large immigrant wave from Portugal over the 1960-1980s. The Lusophone community has also grown with the arrival of immigrants from Brazil since the 1980s. As the Upper Cape's economic base transformed from agriculture, to building, to tourism, immigrants from Jamaica arriving since the 1990s (recruited on service industry visas) have formed another prominent immigrant community.

Racialized labor processes over the 20<sup>th</sup> century and social and economic mobility efforts among these migrant communities has led to complex social relations, and layered

racial identities, including well-documented racial discrimination and ongoing social equality challenges (Moniz, 2021, 2023). This includes native American Wampanoag, who share residential and marriage connections with Portuguese and Cape Verdean communities. The racialized marginalization of the Portuguese category as a whole, is further crosscut by arguments over assimilability, self-generated and culturally imposed definitions of whiteness and blackness, and how competing definitions of racial identities, geographic origins, and social class, fit into normative categories and broader state and federal statutes that socially map and legally codify minority status. The complex racialization processes of migrants from Portuguese-speaking geographies in these diverse North American communities are a growing literature in ethnography and historiography with racialized discrimination present in external and internal community relations (Estep, 1941; Harney, 1990; Barker, 1996; Gross, 2008; Moniz, 2009, 2021, 2023; Ramos-Zayas, 2009; Azevedo, 2010; Bastos, 2018).

The MCP is situated at the intersection of these communities' complex social connections, which have shared local histories, residential patterns, community institutions, and economic codependency. Passive and overt antagonisms are expressed through power inequalities structured by intersections of race, gender, labor class, and geographic origin (along with other categories of hierarchized difference). Issues of racial and social inequity, as well as the quality of and access to healthcare, remain ongoing issues in this community.

### **3. INITIATIVE BACKGROUND**

The MCP was founded to consciously assist social issues, with programs created through organic connections among working groups of immigrant organizations. Program design is guided by methodologies developed from state-of-the-art literature, practical field experiments, and evaluations of previous programs. I have various personal and professional connections to these communities and have previously participated in and organized several earlier community engaged initiatives in this and other Luso-phone immigrant locales in New England—my primary field research and archival site. Growing up in Falmouth myself, my connection to Azorean and Cape Verdean communities in the town extends to my childhood and has been a topic of my anthropological research since the 1990s.

This longitudinal connection to the town and region has facilitated activities among the communities with which the MCP engages, working on projects over the years both in my capacity as a researcher and as a member of some of the participating institutions.

This includes the collection of oral histories and artifacts, documentary film making, archival video collection, as well as the production of ethnography and historiography in which community members have been key collaborators on several academic and scientific research studies. Other work informing MCP programs includes experiments and programs in international mobility education among Portugal, the EU, and North America with curriculum and programs connecting outsiders with community institutions, and cultural practices. This work has been guided by extensive literature on cultural competence education and includes curriculum development as part of a training certificate from the Sheridan Center for Teaching and Learning at Brown University.

At its core, the MCP is a community service organization that supports institutional collaboration, works to improve equity, amplifies the voices of underrepresented groups, and facilitates community efforts to accomplish these ends. The MCP relies upon a model of service leadership, a concept that places those with elevated professional knowledge and managerial skills not in a position to tell others what to do, but rather to provide service or assistance to help a group achieve its own goals. While members of the organizations have tremendous cultural and historical knowledge and ideas, they often lack some of the professional capacities and scholastic wherewithal necessary to realize their vision and carry out all aspects of educational and cultural initiatives, such as bureaucratic requirements and especially those that require state-level and foundational fund raising. The project brings these academic and expert level specialized resources to local cultural, humanities and civic and social welfare projects, helping participants and organizers to engage issues of concern, and expand critical vocabularies. Working with participants and organizers, the MCP creates collaborations that center the needs of community organizations, citizens, and citizen scientists.

Current research promoting global learning outcome objectives examines the importance of designing strategic and academic programs that achieve internationalization skills and intercultural competences<sup>3</sup>. Global competences curriculum are important, as “intercultural competences empower the participating groups and individuals and enable them to interact with cultural ‘others’ with a view to bridging differences, defusing conflicts and setting the foundations of peaceful coexistence” (UNESCO, 2013: 6). Recent academic literature on the topic guides educational institutions current learning goals that require their students to develop a broad range of global learning skills, including intercultural competencies, international communication skills, cross-cultural

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<sup>3</sup> See Vygotsky, 1978; Reichard, 1983; Hopf, 1998; Lave & Wenger, 1998; Schoorman, 1999; Lutterman-Aguilar & Gingerich, 2002; Montrose, 2002; Peterson, 2002; Lim, 2003; Knight, 2004; Peppas, 2005; Killick, 2006; McLaughlin & Johnson, 2006; Stohl, 2007; Pagano & Roselle, 2009; Zemach-Bersin, 2009; Hanson, 2010; Slimbach, 2010, 2014; Maliniak et al, 2012; National Center for Education Statistics, 2012; Long, 2012-2013; United Nations, 2013; Gordon, 2014; Tarrant et al, 2014.



conviviality, reflexivity, and critical capacities (Deardorf, 2006; Fine, 2009; Slimbach, 2010, 2014; Tarrant et al, 2014).

Indeed, MCP projects in the region were given an initial impetus through Brown University's Portuguese and Brazilian Studies Department through the development of the mobile educational site visit course "Migrants, Politics, and the Racialization of Labor"<sup>4</sup>, which assisted students with local research projects in immigrant communities in Rhode Island and Massachusetts. As with similar community engaged syllabi I developed in Portugal through the UMass in Lisbon and Study in Portugal Network (Fundação Luso-Americana) programs, Brown students visited and participated in collaborative programs with immigrant institutions in sites throughout the region. They studied theory and regional history to inform their understanding of the forces structuring contemporary power inequalities, including critical reflection on the complexities of the criminalization, racialization, and marginalization of migrant and migrant labor identities. Collaborative projects created between the students and their partner immigrant community organizations directly engaged course themes in practical ways, helping students to better understand and challenge theoretical and historical models. The volunteer work they did with the organizations also ensured that the immigrant communities would not be a passive object of study but would also receive meaningful contributions to their own objectives. This model of service engagement is one that guides MCP programs: facilitating collaborations that serve multiple, synergic, community-wide goals. MCP community programs adapted this model to settings not with university students, but with community scholars.

One of the first MCP programs in Falmouth, as part of the Brown University course, was a day-long public conference held at multiple community institutions in collaboration with Portuguese associations, Falmouth educational institutions, and policy makers that included papers and presentations given by academics, immigrant community members, elected representatives, and other community shareholders. Held in 2019, the mobile conference "From Field to Town: A History of the Azorean, Cape Verdean and Portuguese-Speaking Migrant Community of Falmouth", brought the public and presenters on a site visit tour of immigrant institutions. The collaboration created a dialogue through presentations that explored settlement and contemporary issues among waves of migrants and descendants from Portuguese-speaking geographies in Falmouth. These included the promotion of Portuguese language education in the public-school system, which, after some thirty years of instruction, the school board had recently discontinued. Attending the conference were a legislator from the Massachusetts House of Representatives, the Chairperson of the town's Select Board, and the Superintendent of the Falmouth Public Schools.

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<sup>4</sup> The course was developed as part of my activities as the Brown/FLAD Michael Teague Distinguished Visiting Professor in 2019.

Although the immigrant civic and socio-cultural institutions may be prominently situated in the middle of local communities, for many outsiders they are opaque spaces, the activities of members poorly understood. Members of the Cape Verdean, Azorean and Portuguese communities may share common local histories, but the separation of the institutions often based on geographic origin, crosscut by class, race, and gender inequalities, has often created divisions among groups that might otherwise collectively confront common challenges. To both introduce these organizations to outsiders and foster dialogue among their members, the program put the spotlight on presentations given by the immigrants about themselves. This was achieved through public talks and open houses at community immigrant civic associations including presentations at and by members of the Cape Verdean Club of Falmouth, Fresh Pond Holy Ghost Society, the East Falmouth IDES, the Portuguese American Association, and the Cape Cod Cape Verdean Museum, the latter of which existed at the time as an itinerant artifact collection without a permanent museum space. At the end of the event all of the participating institutions and members of the public participated in a common potluck meal of regional cooking traditions. The meal was an opportunity for officers and members of the disparate organizations to interact, something that was more commonplace in the past, but now occurs with less frequency among the Portuguese and Cape Verdean organizations. The program created connections that directly led to the formation of a working group of interested immigrant citizen historians/community researchers collaborating on what would become the MCP's Cape Cod History Initiative.

#### **4. PROGRAM PROJECT: EMERALD HOUSE AND THE CAPE COD CAPE VERDEAN MUSEUM AND CULTURAL CENTER**

“Emerald (an anglicized version of Amaral) House”, named after the Azorean family that owned it, is an historical farmhouse with relevance to the town's Portuguese immigrant history. Obtained by the Town of Falmouth in 1996, after years of different public uses, in August of 2020 the town's Select Board declared that an RFP would be opened seeking proposals for Emerald House. When formally issued later that year, the RFP stated that favored proposals would, among other goals, “include educational opportunities for town residents, particularly school age children, to learn about the history of the property” and to “honor the history of Portuguese ancestry and farming”<sup>5</sup>. Thinking that the site was well-suited for an historical museum and interpretive visitors’

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<sup>5</sup> Select Board, Town of Falmouth, Request for Proposals, Emerald House, Issued December 4, 2020.

center about immigration from Portugal and other immigrant communities that could also serve as a physical base of operations for Migrant Communities Project activities, MCP officers began to write-up a proposal. In the process of reaching out to community partners, however, it was learned that the Cape Cod Cape Verdean Museum, which had participated in the Field to Town program the year prior, was also hoping to submit an application for the property as a permanent site for their museum and cultural center. According to some of the museum's officers, however, there were several obstacles to proceeding with their application.

The issues voiced by the Cape Verdean Museum board were similar to those frequently faced by immigrant community organizations in general, which have deep seated cultural knowledge, but sometimes lack specific professional capacities to navigate governmental regulations, proposal requirements, and lack confidence and experience putting together professional and competitive proposals. Furthermore, many of these organizations, despite creating extraordinary cultural or humanities resources (as was the case with the Cape Cod Cape Verdean Museum), often struggle to arrange the financial and specific professional capacities necessary to scale up their activities.

In light of the museum's interest in Emerald House, the MCP decided that rather than compete with them for the space, we would drop our own application and help them to win theirs, which they did in February of 2021. Given that one of the goals of the project was to increase the capacities of community organizations to accomplish their own cultural and humanities goals, it was felt that this would reflect the MCP's mission and be a clear demonstration of solidarity, helping to empower efforts to highlight and center narratives of immigrant histories that came from the communities themselves. Over several months, the MCP worked to complete and fulfill the terms of the proposal on behalf of the museum. Working with the board, MCP developed, articulated, and submitted the educational and pedagogical goals of the museum's project which "explores the broad legacy of the town's and region's Portuguese-speaking communities [providing] a resource for research and knowledge dissemination about the history, culture, civic life, agricultural practices, land use development, and challenges of these communities"<sup>6</sup>. Additionally, the MCP worked with the board to create a budget and guarantee financial viability by securing a \$50,000 line of credit for the museum, all necessary aspects of the proposal. MCP wrote proposals and obtained governmental grants and private funds to support activities and arrange for office and bureaucratic equipment, including computers, printers, software, etc.

Winning the RFP, of course, was only the beginning of the process and the museum faced additional obstacles if it hoped to promote a viable operation that could

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<sup>6</sup> Cape Cod Cape Verdean Museum and Cultural Center, "Emerald House RFP", Proposal.

be fiscally solvent in the years ahead. Under any circumstances creating a successful new venture like this is a difficult endeavor. Given the historical context of the community in which the museum was situated and complex and nuanced local discourses around race, ethnicity, and belonging, the museum faced more subtle challenges as well. The Emerald (Amaral) family that owned and operated the farmstead on which the museum (and a separate community farm project) is situated was one of the founding Portuguese families of the community and an important player in the agricultural economics of the town. The original sale of the property to the town intended that the space be used to promote that history. First there was some pushback in the community of the logic of a Cape Verdean Museum being situated at Emerald House. Disapprobation was expressed by individuals in the Portuguese community, but objections to the siting of the museum at that location also came from some in the town's Cape Verdean community as well. Located in a traditionally Azorean immigrant enclave, the museum would not be located in the town's Cape Verdean residential center. Even the local newspaper wrote an editorial in which they welcomed the museum at the site, while recognizing that it was perhaps not the most logical choice for a Cape Verdean historical center given its location and the farmstead's Azorean immigrant history. Other conflicts among personalities in the small community also created dissension. Among the broader immigrant community in general, buy-in for a Cape Verdean museum at Emerald House was not so simply achieved. Overt and more subtle undercurrents of racialized discrimination among some Portuguese and Cape Verdeans was a variable. How racial identities, geographic origins, and arguments over social mobility structured community relations was another contributing factor.

There were several practical concerns as well. The museum has a collection of some 1000 artifacts related to Cabo Verde, Cape Verdean, and other Lusophone migration that includes photographs, textiles, masks, popular and fine art, historical exhibits, original documents, genealogy resources, and a library. As the museum moved into and lost two other physical sites since its' 2012 founding, some of the collection had been temporarily stored in a university archive, as other parts of the collection had bounced from private residences in uncontrolled conditions, uncondusive to artifact preservation. Further, the Emerald House building, originally a private residence before last serving as a thrift shop, was not equipped with climate control, appropriate windows, and other museum quality standards to protect artifacts. The collection was largely lumped at random into uncatalogued boxes, without any indexing, or assessment of content and value. In an effort to assist the museum to meet these practical issues of professional museum management, MCP used contacts with university archival specialists who visited and assessed the collection. A specialist provided recommendations to the board on architectural improvements and worked out appropriate storage facility resources including a highly favorable memorandum of cooperation, that would provide all of the resources of the university

archives — including preservation, assessment, cataloging and digitizing the collection — even as the museum maintained full control and ownership of the artifacts.

The first part of creating community buy-in for the museum's siting at Emerald House was an MCP PR blitz which wrote up and distributed press releases to shareholders in the town, including libraries, museums, historical societies, policy makers, teachers, churches, and the school board. Many representatives of these organizations would later join the MCP History Initiative. Press releases were also sent to English and Portuguese language newspapers and other media outlets to promote the museum's siting at Emerald House. These efforts succeeded in arranging positive local press and word-of-mouth among the cultural and humanities ecosystem about the museum, but a more substantive effort would be required. The aim was not to just generate positive feeling toward the museum's goals, but also to create a model for transformative social action in an attempt to bring the community together in concrete fashion around the project.

Coordinating with the museum board, the MCP re-activated core participants in earlier community projects, including representatives from all four of the towns active Cape Verdean and Portuguese immigrant cultural organizations, members of local historical societies and museums, members of the town's school board, and other interested parties. Dubbed the Migrant Communities Project Cape Cod History Initiative, the MCP used its institutional contacts and previous project partners to assemble a working group which met weekly over a period of five months leading to the creation of an ethnographic and history exhibit.

## **5. MIGRANT COMMUNITIES PROJECT CAPE COD HISTORY INITIATIVE**

The MCP Cape Cod History Initiative brought together around 50 individuals including officers and members of the immigrant civic organizations along with policy makers, members of the town's school board, K-12 teachers, education professionals, representatives from libraries, historical societies and local museums, along with interested citizens from the Brazilian community.

One of the purposes of the group was to assist the museum by collaboratively conceiving and designing an ethnographic, historical, and living history exhibit/fair that was part of the inauguration of the museum, including displays that could be used as part of the permanent collection. The MCP History Initiative however had broader goals in mind, creating a pilot project for a citizen scientist historical recovery and archival data collection intended to: 1. Assist and strengthen local immigrant community civic

organizations through an institutional history program; 2. Help to promote local Portuguese and Cape Verdean history among the region's broader population and among educational institutions; 3. Help provide a vocabulary and create a dialogue among disparate community shareholders over the role of history in shaping racial inequalities. Citizen scientist projects elicit the participation of the public to conduct academic studies, and "refers to the general public engagement in scientific research activities when citizens actively contribute to science either with their intellectual effort or surrounding knowledge or with their tools and resources" (SOCIENTIZE, 2015: 8; ECSA, 2015)<sup>7</sup>.

The interests of the History Initiative working group resulted in several topics of interest for the exhibit and for themes in the citizen science research project. Given the role of farming that brought the Azorean and Cape Verdean residents to originally settle the town, the group wanted to research these and other labor activities in the community. Another area of interest was in understanding the many nicknames used to refer to residents and why Portuguese names were anglicized in the US. Citizen Scientists collected names, which was really an *entrée* into speaking with members of the community about family histories. Data collection was used to examine themes of belonging, immigrant place making, and the power inequalities inherent in these processes. The participation of the immigrant civic organizations led to another interest expressed by the group to collect comprehensive histories of their civil society cultural associations. These were carried out through research into organization archives, oral histories and interviews being conducted with members, and artifact collection. Finally, to meet the requirements of the RFP, it was decided to create a history of the Emerald family, the farm, and the museum site. Other topics on the wish list that would develop outside of the scope of the museum exhibit were to create memorialization and memory plaques and panels at key sites of immigrant history in the town.

To achieve these ends, the MCP designed a citizen science training program that included workshops with skilled professionals and peer-to-peer mentoring to help participants conduct the research necessary to generate exhibits and to recover histories. The project further set out to re-read historical archives and narratives in terms of racialized inequalities. Specific workshops were held to help participants recognize sources of research, identify artifacts, and identify and use archives. The group worked collectively to develop an oral history rubric and questionnaire. Peer counselors, advisors, and mentors were assigned among more experienced researchers and those with specific professional skills to provide feedback and training to less experienced citizen researchers, also occurring on an ad hoc basis. As the History Initiative's director and academic humanities and social sciences advisor, I was also available to assist with all aspects of data

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<sup>7</sup> The MCP was presented at the 2021 Encontro Nacional de Ciência Cidadã.

collection, analysis and presentation, and helped model best practices by conducting interviews and working with participants to collect data and artifacts. As the history displays were near completion, the learning and training process included informal presentations of research at weekly meetings. Through this process, peer-to-peer learning/training about their organizations and town history was reinforced, and individuals who had not known one another prior to the project, became collaborative partners, with a mutual ownership stake in the initiative's outputs. This and other critical/collaborative feedback, augmented research for the final exhibit. The presentations also created models for participants to work on their own projects and promoted collaboration, mutual understanding, and knowledge sharing as each organization shared the history of their civil/cultural association or community, pointing to similarities among the larger group's shared experiences, and discussing distinct challenges faced by different members. This was a key part of meeting the initiative's learning objectives: encouraging critical challenges to well-accepted historical narratives and helping to develop intercultural understanding and competences among participants through settings in which they controlled the conversation.

Outputs and activities included artifact collection, the identification of individuals for oral histories and subsequent interviews, and archival research, which also provided data for display panels presented in the "Communities under Construction/ *Comunidades a Construir*" exhibit. The interpretive panels, artifact displays, and organization presentations were all a part of the exhibit and living history fair accompanying the Cape Verdean Museum's inauguration. The research was also used in other contexts, including as part of an historical lecture series at the Falmouth Public Library about Portuguese and Cape Verdean immigration and other presentations at immigrant civic organizations. Some of the research has also been incorporated into local history projects, as well as larger scientific and ethnographic studies.

## **6. COMMUNITIES UNDER CONSTRUCTION/ *COMUNIDADES A CONSTRUIR* OUTPUTS**

The interpretive panels for the exhibit along with each of the immigrant civic organizations' historical narratives and power point presentations are available online<sup>8</sup>. In brief, the *Comunidades a Construir* living history exhibit took place on the grounds of the Cape Cod Cape Verdean Museum on June 25, 2021, aligning with the *Dia de São*

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<sup>8</sup> <Facebook.com/migrantcommunitiesproject> (provisional site) or <MigrantCommunitiesProject.com> (forthcoming).



*João*, a holiday that has significance for Cape Verdean, Azorean, and Brazilian participants, who all locally celebrate different manifestations of the day in their respective communities, and ran as part of the official inauguration and ribbon cutting event for the museum. The event, celebrating the opening of the museum's permanent exhibits, invited the public into a Cape Verdean maritime room, a Cape Verdean police and military service room, a re-creation of a Cape Verdean immigrant grandmother's kitchen, and other history-minded displays about Cabo Verde and Cape Verdean immigration to the US. Other parts of the inauguration and fair included live music performances by a Cape Verdean singer, a *capoeira* demonstration, and elements of the Kola San Jon Dia de São João celebration including a *mastro*. About a dozen tables with representatives from the immigrant organizations, and other community institutions, created living history booths about their histories and activities. This also included the Marston's Mills Historical Society, which contributed a presentation and power point slide show booklet on Cape Verdean families in that residential village, and the Woods Hole Historical Museum, which produces *Sprintsail*, a history journal that has published numerous articles about Portuguese immigration to Falmouth.

Each table exhibited historical and ethnographic materials including artifacts collected by the history project members, the historical narrative displays about their organizations, and their power point presentations in booklet form. The Brazilian community and East Falmouth Festa do Espírito Santo Irmandade tables offered food items related to their community and organization activities. Additionally, oldest living members of organizations (or in some cases founding members) were present at tables along with newer members and officers who provided living oral histories to fair goers in which they talked about activities and their own lives. Community organizations that created displays for the exhibit were Fresh Pond Holy Ghost Society (founded late 1800s), Cape Verdean Club of Falmouth (chartered 1944, founded as early as 1935), St. Anthony's Club (chartered 1942), Portuguese American Association (chartered 1983), East Falmouth IDES (chartered 1984), Cape Cod Cape Verdean Museum and Cultural Center (2012), along with tables about the Falmouth Brazilian Community, a presentation on the Cape Verdean Community of Marstons Mills (by Marstons Mills Historical Society), Falmouth Portuguese community historical research in the journal *Sprintsail* (by Woods Hole Historical Museum), and the Falmouth Oral History project presentation (by anthropologist Sandra Faiman Silva).

The MCP Cape Cod History Initiative ethnographic and historical narrative interpretive panels were also displayed. These were "Emerald House, Agriculture, Labor, and Immigration" (history of Falmouth agricultural labor and the Emerald Family), "What's in a name: 'Nicknames' and 'The Anglicization of Portuguese Names'" (exploration of place making and how immigrants create agencies to control their own narratives),



and “Early Portuguese and the Founding of the Falmouth Fire Department” (a photographic display of the earliest immigrant inclusion in municipal civic life and a labor occupation that has historically promoted social mobility among Portuguese and Cape Verdean men).

The MCP was involved in all aspects of the inauguration’s organization and planning, as well as raising around 30,000 dollars in funding, equipment, and services to support the event and expenses related to displays including grants from Massachusetts Cultural Council, regional banks, private donors, and in-kind contributions. MCP arranged press for the event, providing interviews, press releases, photographs, and other PR work, and activated informal networks of the MCP History Initiative to circulate word-of-mouth promotion. The inauguration and history fair were attended by 350 people including town officers, state representatives, and an official from the district’s US congressional delegation, newspapers, local television and radio, and a broad town cross-section including exhibit goers from different Lusophone communities and others who had no connection at all to Portugal, Cabo Verde, or Brazil.

After the event, the displays and knowledge generated by the project have been used in other endeavors including a public lecture series given at the Falmouth Public Library and presentations and programs offered by the organizations for their own members as well as open houses for the general public.

## **7. HISTORICAL MEMORIALIZATION: “FORM B” RECOGNITION AND THE COONAMESSETT RIVER PROJECT**

The MCP History Initiative has also been involved in two other projects involving historical memorialization. The first was a collaboration with the Falmouth Historical Commission for work on the Massachusetts Historical Commission and Massachusetts Buildings Archive to create, update and augment current information and entries on “Form B” documentation<sup>9</sup> historical registers in the state. Buildings owned by the civic associations were constructed by the immigrants, with some dating to the 19th century (by local standards considered historically significant). The halls housed the organizations many activities and in earlier times were community centers for broader swaths of the public beyond the Portuguese and Cape Verdean members. The buildings are themselves living

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<sup>9</sup> The “Form B” is an official state document that catalogues architectural features and registers the historical significance of buildings in Massachusetts, a pre-requisite to achieving landmark status and/or to demonstrate eligibility for state funds for the preservation and upkeep of buildings that are deemed to be of historical importance.

archives and museums that house immigrant material culture, with some artifacts dating back over 100 years.

Citizen scientists/community researchers helped to identify historic buildings and provided information on their features. The information provided in Form B write-ups and amendments ensured that the true nature of the material and intangible culture produced by the organizations in these spaces would be registered. Further, the MCP History Initiative association tombstones and power point presentations were provided to the Commission and used by consultants in their assessment and write-ups. In all cases this was information that the state commission evaluators would have been otherwise completely unaware. One goal of the project is to help the organizations access a pool of state funds for upkeep and capital improvements provided for buildings with historic significance. This is not without some compromise, in that accepting state funds comes with some restrictions on future construction and renovations, but the organizations will at least have the option to make the decision, rather than having no record of the important immigrant community landmarks in the state register. Further, there are a number of what are called picker shacks or sheds in which were housed seasonal fruit pickers who worked under arduous conditions. The historically significant dwellings have been all but demolished or enveloped into existing structures. A longer-term MCP project is to identify existing picker sheds and ensure that they are a part of the historic register before they entirely disappear.

Another MCP History Initiative memorialization endeavor involves the redesign of historical signage along the Coonamessett Greenway Heritage Trail. This is a project fraught with multiple intersections of class and privilege, and clearly demonstrates how the goals of the MCP can benefit local communities and ensure that immigrant narratives are protected and divulged. The project involves efforts to create appropriate signage recognizing the immigrant laborers, residents, and entrepreneurs that lived and worked land on cranberry bogs in the 19th and 20th centuries, and that now form part of a massive hiking trail and environmental wetlands recuperation project along Cape Cod's Coonamessett River. Given the river's centrality to farming and cranberry bogs, it runs through the heart of the historic and contemporary Azorean and Cape Verdean immigrant residential communities of Falmouth.

In the 1980s and 1990s many of the old Portuguese owned farmsteads that were founded around the river were sold to a local land preservation committee with the intention that the property would be preserved in perpetuity. Indeed, the purchase of Emerald House farm and lands was a part of acquisitions by the 300 Committee Land Trust (named after the tercentenary of the English charter for the town). Labor on industrial cranberry bogs were among the more prominent agricultural activities of Cape Verdean and Portuguese workers and were a primary impetus that brought them to Cape Cod in the

decades before and after 1900. Of course, resources such as native cranberries and herring running in the Coonamessett River had been a part of subsistence strategies for indigenous people in the region for thousands of years prior to European arrival.

The terms under which the Greenway took control of 300 Committee lands and redesigned the bogs in the heart of what was an Azorean residential community was controversial among many residents, especially as the committee was largely composed of individuals who resided in a more affluent part of the town, or were more recent arrivals, and would greatly affect the landscape of residents of the traditionally Portuguese immigrant community. The project is a wonderful example of environmental recuperation, as layers and layers of sand were stripped away from the manmade bogs to recover wildlife and natural habitats prior to their 19th century construction. The trail also incorporated older bogs and natural habitat from a recuperated US Superfund site where runoff from a nearby US Air Force facility had contaminated the river and ground water with a toxic plume.

Although memorialization signage is present along the trail, much of the display examines the environmental science behind the project. The historical panels tend to recognize prominent figures, farms, and industrial entrepreneurs, with short shrift given to the communities of laborers and immigrants that worked those bogs, and in whose residential community the project was undertaken. A historical memorialization plaque about the native Wampanoag, for example, was created with input from some members of that indigenous community, however the panel is placed in a far-removed and hidden corner of the trail. Interpretive panels about the Portuguese and Cape Verdean community caused much consternation among some members of the community. Completed with little input from historians or immigrant settlers, the memorialization starts off with a grotesque comparison between the migration of eels across the Atlantic to the Cape's marshes to the human migration of laborers from Portugal to the same banks. The tone-deaf comparison creates an inappropriate and inaccurate equivalence between marine biological processes and the political, economic, and racial inequalities and power processes fomenting the transoceanic mobility of human mobile labor migrants. No local historians of Portuguese communities were consulted directly, but the Falmouth Historical Societies' files were used to crib together a random series of decontextualized information, much of which was factually incorrect. A quote was pulled from the author of this article completely out of context and the author's original research was used in the display without attribution, in addition to being decontextualized. Other memorialization along the trail way likewise missed the mark, erasing immigrant labor narratives. For example, a working strawberry farm founded by one of the most prominent Cape Verdean families in the town includes not a single mention of their immigrant origins.

After discussions among members of the MCP History Initiative, I reached out to the officers of the Greenway committee. Through our initial conversations, some members of the Greenway project were adamantly opposed to changing the memorialization, with others more amenable. With some effort I attempted to explain both specific factual errors and provide a basic understanding of community memorialization which is characterized by the tenet of “nothing about us, without us”, a principle the Coonamessett Greenway Heritage Trail memorialization committee largely failed to honor with the Portuguese and Cape Verdean communities. After conversations and consultations, the committee agreed to let the MCP change the panel about the Portuguese and add information to the Cape Verdean farmstead panel. After working to make these changes, a final meeting with the History Initiative for approval resulted in a serious conversation concluding that the Greenway’s agreement to change only two panels would be superficial and by participating the group would be implicitly accepting that the rest of the flawed memorialization along other parts of the greenway was acceptable. It was felt that memorialization along the entire space should be transformed, including rethinking and redesigning other interpretive panels (most of which were written by non-specialists and without any consultation with community members or historical scholars). This far more ambitious proposal has been undertaken by the MCP History Initiative, which is currently fundraising for the project. Other scholars have consulted as well, including an anthropologist who focuses on heritage trail memorialization and who has worked on projects in indigenous and Hispanic communities in the US southwest.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND EVALUATION**

As stated earlier in this article, the goals of MCP projects are to support institutional collaboration, improve equity, amplify the voices of immigrants and underrepresented groups, and facilitate community efforts to accomplish these ends. To this, MCP history projects have had some direct, and some indirect successes. To be certain, the project has helped the participating immigrant communities to raise their own visibility and provided them with material assistance to promote and amplify the narratives that they wish to tell about themselves. This extends not only to group and individual histories, but also to the stories about their important community institutions, institutions that have had such an integral part in community social life, in place-making strategies, and that have provided immigrants with a political voice. The training and professional development, along with institutional and specialist expertise contacts facilitated by the project, have, as the old proverb goes, not given a fish to the participants, but rather has helped to teach them how

to fish. These activities have broadened the opportunities for citizen scientists and communities to have mutually interdependent relations and encouraged mutual collaboration on joint projects that have, in some cases, continued after the MCP projects have long ended. For example, the Falmouth Public School system currently has educational protocols with the Cape Verdean Museum, connections introduced and facilitated by follow up with the Superintendent of Schools and School Board members through MCP initiatives. These educational protocols extend to international collaborations and exchanges among the town, the museum, the Cape Verdean Club of Falmouth and partner organizations in Cabo Verde.

Some lessons learned through the initiatives reiterate the importance of approaches to historical narrative construction that include the guiding principle of “Nothing about us, without us”. How public community histories are created and *how* knowledge originates is critical to the production of knowledge itself. Despite best efforts on the part of those intervening, individuals can, rightly so, be highly sensitive to the stories that belong to them. Professional scholars must be sensitive to such narratives, even when they are seen as ahistorical, and incorporate into our analyses the variables of how communities themselves understand their own stories. In this, the project’s methodologies resulted in research outcomes that would not have been possible otherwise.

Further, citizen scientists were able to collect historical data that would be inaccessible to other researchers. Their deep insider status allowed for a level of engagement with interviewees that even a trained researcher would have difficulty obtaining. This yielded some extraordinary results. In the case of work done by community researchers on the Cape Verdean Club (to which they belonged) narratives were uncovered pointing to a much deeper relationship of the club in the political process of the 1930s, a historical period in which much professional historiography and academic consensus argues was largely apolitical, with immigrants supposedly uninvolved in direct electoral processes. In this collaborative effort, the information from the MCP History Initiative’s citizen scholars, was used as a departure point for professional historical research to assemble broader patterns of direct electoral political participation in communities of immigrants from Portugal, challenging academic consensus and pointing to novel lines of research. The end goal of the initiatives modeled by the MCP are to ultimately serve the ends of the community with which one is conducting the project. Collaborations undertaken in this manner also have an important role in the generation of professional scholarship. Another related outcome of the work of the citizen scientists/community scholars has been the identification of repositories of troves of artifacts, some having significant historical value. The MCP has worked with the University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth library’s historical archives to identify and preserve some of these collections.

There are of course minefields, many unanticipated, when dealing with sensitive subject material, as was undertaken by examining histories of racial discrimination within these communities. How scholars view constructions of race, racialization processes of labor classes, and the situational and woolly nature of categorical identities including race and ethnicity, were often challenged by the self-conceptions of those who rely on such categorizations to make sense of their own social lives. Authoring an obscure academic paper after fieldwork can leave anthropologists largely inured from potential conflicts between theoretical analysis and the perspectives of those that they research. Discussions directly engaging the conclusions of academic scholarship with the understanding of social actors, however, are of elemental importance in assuring that theoretical and historical models expounded by scholars are accountable to the social narratives of those the analyses describe. Such an approach ultimately enriches research findings and strengthens arguments. It is essential, of course, to be honest about project goals, ends, and assumptions in order for service leadership to overcome such challenges. Further, engaging community scholars with the critical theories and analyses of social scientists provides additional vocabularies to empower communities who confront issues of social inequities in their daily lives.

Complicated issues like social equity and engagement of racialized discrimination are simple to grasp when contemplating them from an ethical perspective, but, are obviously complex problems when employed to engage the lived reality of racialized power inequalities. Were there simple solutions, these issues would have already been resolved. Ideally, inequality and injustice would be redressed quickly, like the end of a war after surrender or the changing of a law that ushers in transformative progress in one quick, shining, and enduring moment. If one hopes to eschew symbolic progress for substantive transformation, however, the process is often slow and laborious. Deliberately building trust and commonality among disparate and overlapping social communities through dialogue and finding common purposes may be a less dramatic or satisfactory outcome than the end goal of swift and righteous change. This incrementalism, however, is ultimately necessary to achieve hoped for outcomes. Changing minds and perspectives is indeed a slow and undramatic process, especially when what is being challenged are individuals' own structured and societally embedded privileges. How to encourage individuals to engage those inequalities — without rejecting their own responsibility in perpetuating them — has been one of the more difficult challenges of the initiatives. The dialogue building process and efforts to create common purpose and find common points of experience, however, has assisted in this approach.

What the MCP initiatives, methodologies, and models to engage social justice have demonstrated is that the success of scholastic inquiry as social critique is not solely dependent on asking the right questions, but must also consider the roads that are taken to arrive at the answers.

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