



Contact: Alisha Pina
401-641-0631
alishaapina@gmail.com

MEDIA ADVISORY & REQUEST FOR CALENDAR LISTING

May 23, 2024

Procession to Celebrate the 90th Anniversary of the St. Antonio Association & Cape Verdean Contributions to RI

PROVIDENCE, RI — Cape Verdeans who live, work, play, and contribute to Rhode Island’s rich, ethnic diversity will join together with many from Massachusetts, Connecticut, and beyond on **June 2, 2024** to revive a cherished tradition - the St. Antonio Procession.

The St. Antonio Cape Verdean Association, Rhode Island’s first Cape Verdean beneficent society, provided health and death benefits to its members and is renowned for its 27 Power Street dances and feasts that nurtured the social, cultural, and spiritual needs of their community. It was established 90 years ago in 1934 at the height of the Great Depression by Janencino Mello, Frank Freitas and other Cape Verdean men and women immigrants who lived in the Fox Point area of Providence previously known as Tockwotton.

Tockwotton was the first settlement in Rhode Island for Cape Verdeans, and they were the first voluntary immigrants from sub-Saharan Africa. Their community grew from the late 19th century before being displaced by Route 195, urban renewal and gentrification.

“This procession commemorates our traditions of unity, collaboration and resilience,” said filmmaker and historian Claire Andrade-Watkins, PhD whose grandmother Celestina Andrade was one of the founding members of the association. “Women are the culture bearers of our community, and I am proud to be part of the [Tockwotton Fox Point Cape Verdean Heritage Place](#) (TFPCVHP) team that organized this and past processions. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the last procession was held in 2019.”

Continued Andrade-Watkins, “The Tockwotton Fox Point Cape Verdean experience that we are uplifting is both a uniquely Providence story and one with national resonance. This procession will showcase some of our community’s rich history as well as our significant role as Cape Verdean men and women in the culture, economy and life of Providence and beyond.”

The theme of this year's procession is **Following In Their Footsteps**, and continues the traditions of the St. Antonio Association founders. It starts with the 11:30AM mass at Our Lady of the Rosary Church, 21 Traverse Street. The procession steps off at 1:00PM from the corner of Benefit and Wickenden Streets, then goes up Wickenden Street to East Street, and finally crosses the walkway bridge into India Point Park where we will gather at the proposed site of the Tockwotton Fox Point Cape Verdean Heritage Place commemorative memorial. If walking is a hindrance, procession-goers can join the festivities at the ADA accessible India Point Park.

Many of the Tockwotton Fox Point residents in the mid-70s helped in producing the proof of concept for India Point Park being viable as a park for the community. They worked with others to stand up the first Festival on the River at India Point Park in 1975. The Festival evolved into the annual Cape Verdean Independence Day celebration.

The procession includes spoken word performances, Cape Verdeans who served our country, a military salute, and drummers from the St. Antão Culture and Soccer Club, of Pawtucket, Batukada Otu Level, of New Bedford, and renowned djembefola Sidy Maigi, of Providence. At the park, there will also be a drumming circle to commemorate the ancestors and share reflections.

Also to be highlighted within the procession will be Sheldon Street Church, Local 1329 of the International Longshoremen's Association (I.L.A), and Boys & Girls Club alumni. Sheldon Street Church, established in 1905, was the first Cape Verdean Protestant Church in the United States and is the last remaining Cape Verdean institution from Tockwotton. Tockwotton's many longshoremen were part of Local 1329, founded in 1933, and many of its descendants continue to work in the Port of Providence. The Fox Point Boys & Girls Club, previously located on South Main Street, is the oldest continually operating Boys & Girls Club in the country.

Light refreshments will be served at that club, now at 90 Ives Street, after the festivities conclude. In the event of rain, the India Point Park portion of the anniversary celebration will also occur at the club.

###

More about the organizers:

The Tockwotton Fox Point Cape Verdean Heritage Place (TFPCVHP) is an independent community-based research initiative composed primarily of former residents and/or descendants of the founding Cape Verdean families who settled in the Fox Point section of Providence at the beginning of the 20th century. Beginning in 2007 and incorporated as a 501c3 nonprofit in 2014, the forward-facing mission of the Tockwotton team is to document, preserve, and interpret the lived history of the Tockwotton Fox Point Cape Verdean community. Projects include documentaries, public installations, immersive experiences, conferences, history markers, signage, this procession, and more.