

Rhode Island College

Digital Commons @ RIC

IPLWS Elected and Appointed Officials Project

IPLWS Research Portal

7-7-2017

"First woman to lead R.I. State Police attributes her achievement in part to Portuguese-American ancestry"

Sabrina Brum

IPLWS at Rhode Island College

IPLWS RIC

Rhode Island College

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.ric.edu/iplws_eaop



Part of the [Arts and Humanities Commons](#), and the [Law Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Brum, Sabrina and RIC, IPLWS, "First woman to lead R.I. State Police attributes her achievement in part to Portuguese-American ancestry" (2017). *IPLWS Elected and Appointed Officials Project*. 2.
https://digitalcommons.ric.edu/iplws_eaop/2

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the IPLWS Research Portal at Digital Commons @ RIC. It has been accepted for inclusion in IPLWS Elected and Appointed Officials Project by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ RIC. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@ric.edu.

The Herald News



First woman to lead R.I. State Police attributes her achievement in part to Portuguese-American...

By Sabrina Brum

Posted Jul 7, 2017 at 8:42 AM

Updated Jul 7, 2017 at 8:56 AM

PROVIDENCE — Colonel Ann C. Assumpico was sworn in by Rhode Island Governor Gina M. Raimondo as the Superintendent of the Rhode Island State Police on Jan. 30, 2017, becoming the first woman to ever hold the position.

With over 40 years of law enforcement experience, the colonel is thrilled to take on the new position, and she attributes her achievement, in part, to her Portuguese-American ancestry.

The granddaughter of Portuguese immigrants, Colonel Assumpico shines with cultural pride. Both of her grandparents emigrated in the early 1910s her grandfather from Lisbon, Portugal, and her grandmother from Brazil.

“I’m very proud of where I come from,” she said.

Being a Portuguese-American woman wasn't always easy in the 1960s and 70s, Colonel Assumpico explained. She was often criticized for her culture and gender, but the challenges she faced only encouraged her to work harder.

"You learn from your failures, and you use them to motivate you," Colonel Assumpico said. "You have to defend yourself."

Despite the difficulties she encountered, she says, "I've never been ashamed of who I am. I'm Portuguese and I'm proud of it."

Last November, Assumpico joined Governor Raimondo at the Amigos da Terceira Community Center in Pawtucket for a public viewing of the documentary film "Portuguese in New England." She described the overwhelming sense of honor and happiness that she felt when surrounded by other members of the Lusophone community. "I just felt so at home. It was a great feeling."

Colonel Assumpico explained how her strict Portuguese background motivated her to be the very best at everything she could be, elevating her to lead the Rhode Island State Police. The quality she admired most in her father and grandfather was their rigor and determination. She said, "We were raised very strict and we had to be better at everything. That's from my strict Portuguese background."

The discipline her family instilled in her allowed her to overcome obstacles and become a leader.

“Opportunities for women were very limited in the 70s,” she said, but through her hard work and perseverance, she was able to rise above and conquer those obstacles. She started working as an officer at the Rhode Island Adult Correctional Institution, put herself through college, and later went on to climb the ranks in the Rhode Island State Police, ultimately leading her to achieve the position of superintendent.

Reflecting on the difficulties and discrimination she faced as a Portuguese-American woman in the police force, Colonel Assumpico said that she wants to emphasize inclusion, acceptance and diversity among the State Police ranks.

“We have to reflect our community. What better way than to see all different men and women, all different sizes and shapes from all different areas? What’s not to like about that? It’s going to work. We have to get better and we will.”

Her heritage, she says, is the reason she is able to connect with others and lead the police force with an open mind. “I can relate better to people just by the way I was raised,” she says, “because I accept where I come from and I’m proud to have such a solid background.”

Colonel Assumpico’s pride for her culture is obvious. She is tenacious in her determination to lead successfully. As the first Portuguese-American to take on the position, and as the first woman, she is breaking down barriers and becoming a true role model for others in the community.

“A woman can lead this agency,” she said, “and I won’t disappoint anyone. I’m ready for this challenge and I won’t let this opportunity go.”

This interview was conducted as part of the “Luso-American Elected and Appointed Officials of Rhode Island” project at the Institute for Portuguese and Lusophone World Studies at Rhode Island College.