10-11-1973

Cape Verdean Oral History Project: Interview with George Castro by Alberto Torres Pereira

George A. Castro

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Thursday, October 11, 1973
Thursday, November 15, 1973

Mr. George A. Castro

Alberto Torres Pereira, Interviewer

000- start tape

003- Father from Cape Verde, Island of Praia

008- Castro did not identify with Cape Verdeans

014- Father spoke English

Mr. Castro grew up in South Providence; mother had left family

022- Cape Verdean (Crioulo) language not spoken at home; stayed

with godmother, did not speak Crioulo. Had no interest in

Cape Verdean culture, identified with Black Americans, as

opposed to Cape Verdeans.

047- is familiar with Cape Verdean food - cous-cous, corn, fish

dishes; his friends, southerners who migrated to Providence,

introduced him to foods and cultural activities similar to

Cape Verdean

060- identified as black individual

063- began boxing at age 12; hero was Joe Louis

music - Count Basie, Duke Ellington, etc.

came from low income Jewish-Irish so-called ghetto -

Jewish-Irish small businessmen on Willard Avenue, Providence

077- presently involved in radio, TV, real estate, Director of

Neighborhood Youth Corps, Providence (Out-of-School Program)

084- wanted to find out what Cape Verde was about. Read a book

called Black and White Makes Brown (Lyall)

"white" Cape Verdeans, brown and black, mixture of ethnic

and national backgrounds

100- racism of

109- Castro speaks about independence for Cape Verde Islands;

wonders why Cape Verde not struggling for independence

122- Castro turned away from Cape Verdeans because of their

brainwashed concept of themselves as white
George A. Castro

140- jobs available to Cape Verdeans, not to "negroes"
Daddy Grace, evangelist

150- many Cape Verdeans went South
discusses state of semi-bondage Cape Verdeans held other
Cape Verdeans in

165- John Lopez, funeral undertaker, Fox Point

173- discusses conditioning by whites of Cape Verdeans to believe
they were white

182- Father cooked.

185- Father wrote letters for friends, translator
construction worker, plasterer's helper

195- Father gambler, ladies man, was two-fisted fighter
mother -

208- did not know mother until he became an adult

210- what are implications for Cape Verdean Americans in the
struggle for independence by the PAIGC (African Party for
Independence for Guinea-Cabo Verde)

230- mentions names prominent during racial upheaval in 1960's

247- most leaders in Civil Rights had Cape Verdean names

255- compares Cape Verdean American and Black American cultures
and their effect on both groups
American Cape Verdeans must identify with African movement,
not just the revolution in Guinea-Bissau
American problems of Blacks should take precedence

282- Cape Verdeans more African than Black Americans (comment
by Johnette Cole)

301- wants to see African independence, but American problems are
Castro's main concern; wants to deal with American problems
first

320-

326- believes integration valid in some places; segregation valid
in others
George A. Castro

(second tape) #13

337- recapitulation of first interview

355- attended neighborhood school, South Providence - Temple St.,
    Oxford St., Lincoln Ave, Roger Williams, Central High -
    plays, theatre.
    took post-grad at Central - 5 months
    worked various jobs
    applied at Roger Williams Junior College - did not attend
    Youth Corps Counselor, took courses at P.C. - 4 year-
    scholarship, could not finish because of pressure of job

402- presently enrolled in UWW - political science

410- difficulty for Cape Verdean in Black American community;
    Cape Verdians have identified too long with Portuguese.
    In South, easier for total integration.
    Puerto Ricans
    cultural background important
    Cape Verdians from Cape Cod more "Cape Verdean" than "Black"

442- important for Cape Verdean to know his historical identity
    conditioned by Portuguese
    Africans and Black Americans come from different cultures,
    some difficulty in identifying with each other
    Interracial marriage, miscegenation - causes some of the
    racial identity problems

475- controversy over original inhabitants of Cape Verde Islands

486- Castro anti-Cape Verdean to a degree
    Father taught him to go to school, take on responsibility,
    "be a man"
    first job - shoe-shine boy, then newspaper boy, carrying
    bags at the train station, weekends earned 25¢
    at 15 worked as dishwasher - 1949
    Johnson's Hummocks, Providence
    elevator operator, Gladdings, $1.25 hourly
    shipping clerk, Smith Corona, Dyer St., Providence

540- candy and milk only diet for some of his boyhood friends

564- Castro was "heavy with money", Father asked for nothing
    turned professional boxer in 1950 - 10 fights, retired
    undefeated; helped him to respect himself and others,
    self-discipline
    Discusses boxing as teaching process, was street-fighter
    taken to gym at Brown; gym at CYO over fire station on
    Point St.
    1948- pre-amateur at 11, at 19 turned pro after a couple
    of amateur fights
    Lev Hunt trainer, manager, father-figure
George A. Castro

564- (cont.)

Hunt encouraged Castro, not to fight pro, but to find himself as a person

profession; was known as Genge Costa

no racism - Irish, Italians, Blacks, all poor after success

652- 2 years, left boxing

wants to be lawyer

665- feels God has put him here for purpose, preaches self-realization, self-knowledge to youth and adults

679- to improve on self

deals with wide spectrum of race, language, cultures, and is comfortable in his role.

706- wanted once to visit Cape Verde Islands, has relatives there no longer interested, feels no ties with Cape Verde his attention and energy will be focused on Black movement toward full equality never belonged to organisations (Cape Verdean), but participated as an observer

755- his views on Cape Verdeans in America, what future holds young Cape Verdean is identifying with Black America and Cape Verde.

Cape Verdeans get caught up in American life-style and do not return to islands Cape Verdean from islands (now) identified with African nations - Mozambique, Angola, Guinea-Bissau newly arrived Cape Verdean immigrants more readily identify with Blacks in America

815- agrees Cape Verdean culture does exist, but identification with Africa strong

835- it was in Cape Verdean's interest to be other than black prior to "awareness"

862- discrimination

889- discrimination between Black Cape Verdeans and Black Americans

933- job opportunities better for Cape Verdeans

949- reverse racism

976- Cape Verdean culture of importance? Is it part of Black history?

993- up to individual or group to study culture