Cape Verdean Oral History Project: Interview with Anthony Lopes by Alberto Torres Pereira

Anthony Lopes
Cape Veredean Oral History

Tape # 19F

Friday, September 13, 1974

Anthony "Tony" Lopes

Providence Corporation
Westminster, St. Providence, R.I.

Interviewee, Alberto Torres Pereira

000- Opening remarks between Lopes and Pereira re books, poor Poor People’s Park and education for Cape Verdeans.

050- Identify Lopes: birthdate, place of birth, etc. Education: wants to study law or education.

077- Outside on Benefit Street: To South Main Street, directly across 195 East West.

106- Lopes talks about Africa, immigration to U.S. (parents.)

108- Parents from St. Antao, Cape Verde Islands. Lopes plans to visit the islands in 1975 - "going back to roots." Wants to see "where I began."

135- "Enerstina" and "Nadelona" schooners from C.V. Islands dock at Point Street and South Water harbors...mother donates clothing for Cape Verdeans. Doesn’t know whether mother came to America aboard either schooner. Lopes remembers visiting these schooners with his mother. Remembers vividly the smell of food and eating aboard the ships.

170- Hatred of American "system" flashbacks of what once was: Triangle Park

Salvation Army

Book store that he loved.

185- "is small distance from South Main Street to Brown University physically - great distance psychologically."

At Rhode Island College, interested in mathematics; finds "figures" too finite, too objective. Decided on sociology as major; wanted to know and understand why societies operate as they do; felt he had to go to college.

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236 - Interviewer and Lopes walk along South Main and Wickenden Streets; he describes park, trees, benches once part of "triangle Park" which was located directly under 195 west over pass. "calls as childxxxhassling "old-timers", beer-drinking, potato-chips; names old friends. "this is where we were from, Period!"

272 - Narragansett electric Company- construction of chimney
Barker Whadsey Seed Grain Store
Black Island Line

302 - Small and stench of Providence "river. South Main population; congestion, but not overpopulated. Lopes feeling that South Main was original ghetto, but "ghetto to him. Considers overpopulation concept to be fallacious, admits to xxxxxx overconcentrated areas in the world.

348 - Walking North on Benefit Street; comments on no. of Cape Verdeans in Fox Point sect on east side.

Down Transit Street west, discuss houses now standing. Cape Verdeans gone now, but once dominated area, or at the least, were prominent in numbers.

380 - Memories of Personalities: A Mr. Santos, in particular, author of a diary, or log, on whaling in the early 1900's. Santos was "in-house" barber for black Cape Verdeans since most white barbers would not cut their hair. Lopes discusses superstitions regarding hair-cutting and shaving, during, before and after meals.

415 - Holy Rosary church and church in general discussed. In church, "whites would not sit next to me." Church spiritual extension of Portuguese colonization.

507 - Recollections of large tenements and families in them; The Turk's Butcher Store (shop); Candy's Poolroom; Senior Citizens Club, where Cards, checkers and the African game, "ourri" was played daily.

530 - Lopes points out areas where once stood Salvation Army, Volunteers of America, A local Cape Verdean food store. Points out a famous Antique shop, Dore House once located on the corner of South Main and James Street.
Anthony "Tony" Lopes
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Alberto Torres Pereira, Interviewer

001 - Lopes describes Cape Verdeans as exploited immigrant group. Cites lack of realistic adaptation to America which left Cape Verdeans open to exploitation.

021 - Lopes cites Cape Verdeans their resignation to one station in life; refuses this concept for himself. Cites immigrant "psychology."

042 - Interview continues at India Point Park, India Street in Providence. Lopes casually acquainted with southern tip of South Main street area. He is more familiar with Fox Point school, Tockwotton Park, Old Ice "Ill. Comments on learning to swim in Boy's club on South Main Street, whereas interviewer explains that his generation learned to swim in Providence River.

070 - Location: India Point Park; Providence River; String Peas across the river on the East Providence side. Discussion centers around swimming and Mr. Mendes, an aging Cape Verdean who planted a garden, insisted it was a farm and which is located between a chemical distributor and the Providence River.

110 - Lopes not sure that "collective social consciousness exists within Cape Verden community. Comments on Black Panthers, Huey Newton and Amilcar Cabral.

126 - Considers himself aware, but powerless; cites his frustration and inability to foster change.

135 - As to Cape Verdeness, quotes median, Red Foxx; "I ain't from Africa, I'm from St. Louis."

159 - South Main, Transit and John streets and surrounding area, (Fox Point) once strong Cape Verdean cultural stronghold. Lopes describes ritual of mashing corn. Description of house he lived in. Talks about harvesting corn, hollowed log and mallet used to mash the corn.

210 - Foods: cus-cus(meal) goofong (banana cake) both made from corn.
Anthony "Tony" Lopes
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Westminster Street, Providence, Rhode Island

Alberto Torres Pereira, Interviewer

227- Lopes describes how cus-cus is made.

238- Discusses women's wear, including bandana worn by many Cape Verdean women for reasons of both tradition and sanitation.

333- Illiteracy of Cape Verdeans who migrated to U.S.

346- Describes his mother as an intellectual, graduated from high school in St. Antao at age 14. Was well off economically.

368- Lopes's mother adapted to America easily. She was aware of "inequities" that existed; on looking for an apartment to rent, was turned down because she was black.

386- Lopes discusses church.

430- His father was a seaman, but Lopes does not recall name of ship father sailed aboard. Recalls that his father discussed African countries such as Mozambique, Angola and Guinea-Bissau. Game called "Ourri" originated in West Africa played at home.

470- Discussion of Cape Verde and Guinea-Bissau independence; what effect on Cape Verdean Americans?

501- Lopes questions sincerity of American ethnics to identify with groups they have left behind.

530- Cape Verdean Convention '73 good start. Good intentions, but sees no commitment on part of American Cape Verdeans to help islanders with money.

590- Discusses chances of Cape Verdean-American cultural unity. Breakup of colonialism, African independence, etc. END.