

Faces Of New Bedford #64 – Rayana Grace

Meet Rayana Grace, 24-year-old Youth Development Director at the YMCA.



Rayana, who has lived in the city her entire life, couldn't imagine living and working anywhere else. After graduating from Boston College with a degree in Sociology and African/African-Diaspora studies, she had friends who took their skills and talents elsewhere, as she followed after her intuition to return home and seek employment.

Realizing the importance of giving back to the city that helped raise her she started working as a case manager at the Harbour House. The Harbour House caters to homeless families that are trying to get back on their feet, providing them with a place to live and a case manager, who can help plug them into the services offered in the city. She enjoyed this job, as it opened her eyes to the difficulties that others face in the city and gave her compassion to be able to do her best to help them.

After her time with Harbor House, she started working for the YMCA as the Youth Development Director, which was a position that hadn't been held for 8 years prior to her employment

there. With the Y, Rayana is able to create and maintain programs for the children who attend the downtown location. She has helped establish a drama club, dancing classes, and a plethora of other services during her time there.

Her hopes are to be able to empower the children to recognize that anything that they are looking for outside of themselves is already within them. So if they are looking for love or strength or faith, those are already gifts within them.

Faces of New Bedford is a project by Colton Simmons. If you are interested in booking a shoot or getting prints from the series email all inquiries to colton@coltonsimmons.com

Follow Colton on Instagram:
<https://instagram.com/simmonscolton>

Faces Of New Bedford #63 – Robert Mendes

Meet Robert Mendes, Executive Director of the Boys and Girls Club of Greater New Bedford.



Robert grew up in the cities south end, before moving into the house his parents bought just a few blocks from the program. Almost immediately his mother had him and his siblings signed up and they began attending everyday afterschool.

Soon after his time at the Club, he enjoyed helping the Gym Director, Chet Travers, gather equipment and form intramural leagues. Robert did this throughout his teenage years and started working as an aid in the Gym before he graduated High School. It was during his years there where saw kids from all walks of life coming together, some with no guidance besides the club, grow and see success they wouldn't normally have.

He stayed on at the Boys and Girls Club and it morphed into a career for him. He's worked as a basketball coach for the past 40 years. He took over the position as the Physical Director, transitioned to the Program Director, and eventually became the Executive Director, which he has been doing for the last 18 years.

He's enjoyed being able to impart to them all of the things that his mentors had to him in his youth. When Robert became the Executive Director he knew he didn't want to stay pent up in his office all day, but become apart of these children's life and push them to be respectful and take advantage of every opportunity that is awarded to them.

"The kids are the most important aspect of this job and organization. You can never put yourself in a level where you aren't in touch with the kids."

Faces of New Bedford is a project by Colton Simmons. If you are interested in booking a shoot or getting prints from the series email all inquiries to colton@coltonsimmons.com

Follow Colton on Instagram:
<https://instagram.com/simmonscolton>

Faces Of New Bedford #62 – Debra Perry

Meet Debra Perry, 52-year-old Singer and Vocal Coach.



Debra has always loved singing and teaching, even organizing the children in her neighborhood and practicing Christmas Carols in October, only at the age of 9. As she got older she continued to perfect her voice, training with Katie Linder-Tetzel at the Music Center.

Debra attended the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth and studied Music and Psychology, because she wanted to eventually work as music therapist. Upon graduating, she sang for various bands, choirs, and events, including weddings, baptisms, and corporate functions. Her most memorable moment was singing with a choir in a church in Leningrad, Russia which hadn't had any music for 100 years.

Debra taught at as a Vocal coach at the Music Center for 11 years. She also taught under the direction of Jeannie at her voice studio in Boston. During this time, she learned the technique that she has been using for the past 20 years. In

2004, Debra then opened her own studio in New Bedford, The Vocal Development Studio. She opened the studio in New Bedford, because there weren't studios in the city that taught vocalists to gain control of their voice, while also building a strong stage presence and confidence in their vocal abilities.

In her time as a Vocal Coach, Debra has had the opportunity to train vocalists who have gone on to lead lasting careers, such as Devin Lima (LF0), Sean Gallagher (Beyond the Embrace), Aoife Clancy, and many more. She has also worked in studio with big names like Denny Dias (Steely Dan) and Dinky Dawson (Tour Manager and Sound Engineer of Fleetwood Mac).

"You have to think of yourself like an athlete. Singing takes a lot of discipline. It isn't what you see on TV. It takes more than natural talent. You need to train."

Faces of New Bedford is a project by Colton Simmons. If you are interested in booking a shoot or getting prints from the series email all inquiries to colton@coltonsimmons.com

Follow Colton on Instagram:
<https://instagram.com/simmonscolton>

Faces Of New Bedford #61- Yesenia Miranda-Santiago

Meet Yesenia Miranda-Santiago, 26-year-old New Bedford Police Officer and Army Combat Veteran. Yesenia was born in Puerto Rico and moved to the United States when she was 4 years old. Growing up she wanted to serve in the military, as she took great pride in her new home and wanted to see what life in the service was all about.



After graduating from Greater New Bedford Voc-Tech, Yesenia spent a semester in BCC before realizing that she wasn't ready for school. In 2009 Yesenia enlisted in the Army and not soon after returning from basic training, found out that she would be deployed to Iraq. Only 19 and scared, she left in February of 2010 and was trained as a military police officer.

During her time in Iraq, Yesenia worked with the Iraqi Police and helped to train at the academies in Baghdad. It was a tough adjustment being halfway across the world from her family and only having spotty internet to Skype them on holidays, however, she endured the long 11 months there.

Upon returning to the United States, with some motivation from other officers she met during her time abroad, Yesenia enrolled in the police academy. After graduating she became a New Bedford Patrol Officer on February 14, 2013 and has been serving the city ever since. In lieu of recent negative light on police officers, she has seen an amazing amount of support from the community, which has given her ease while on the job.

"Don't let anything hold you back, you always have a choice in how your future unfolds."

Faces of New Bedford is a project by Colton Simmons. If you are interested in booking a shoot or getting prints from the series email all inquiries to colton@coltonsimmons.com

Follow Colton on Instagram:
<https://instagram.com/simmonscolton>

Faces Of New Bedford #60 – Trevor Carter

Meet Trevor Carter, 30-year-old business manager of Carter's Clothing and Footwear.



Trevor has always been involved in his family's business as long as he could remember, starting to work at the business at the age of 11. Carter's Clothing was opened by his grandfather, William "Bill" Carter in 1947, which began as an army surplus store that became a sporting good store and is today the supplier of sneakers and clothing to consumers in Downtown New Bedford.

After high school, Trevor attended BCC and graduated with an associates degree in Business Management, all while taking over the responsibilities as store manager of his father's

business. It is important for him to be apart of the hard work that his family has invested in their company, as they have become a name that people could trust.

He enjoys that he is in the heart of the city, as he gets to be apart of the rich and cultural experience, all while meeting people from different socio-economic backgrounds. Trevor actually hopes to see more retail stores open in the downtown area, as it would create healthier competition in the market and drive more people down there to shop.

“With the transformation I have seen in the past 19 years..I can’t imagine what I’m gonna see in the next 19 years.”

Faces of New Bedford is a project by Colton Simmons. If you are interested in booking a shoot or getting prints from the series email all inquiries to colton@coltonsimmons.com

Follow Colton on Instagram:
<https://instagram.com/simmonscolton>

Faces Of New Bedford – #59 Sarah Kocur

Meet Sarah Kocur, 28-year-old academic advisor/adjunct instructor and small business owner. As far back as she could remember, her mom, grandmother and nana had sewn. Being of European decent, it wasn't uncommon for the women to make their own clothes, so she picked up on it and found excitement in creating her own pieces.



As she got older and had graduated high school, she started attending Bristol Community College. She had always found it difficult to continue her education and wanted to give up many times, but through the support of her family, she pushed on. During her time at BCC, she started as a work study and as she moved on to UMass Dartmouth and eventually Eastern Nazarene, where she obtained her Masters in Science – Management, she continued advancing her career at BCC.

In 2011, she became a full-time employee and also teaches courses on college success. Through her position as an advisor and instructor, she finds it effective to share with her students that there were so many times that she wanted to quit, but kept pushing hard and it was worth it in the end.

Alongside her endeavors with BCC, she owns LOVEmoda (which translated from Polish means “Love Fashion”), a purse and clothing company based out of New Bedford. As she became older she turned her passion for sewing into something that she, after the push from friends and family, could make into a career. Starting off with just clutches, she has opened doors for herself, selling her products on Etsy, at SoWa in Boston, with the Etsy Mill Gypsies throughout New England, and several of the Craft-O-Rama exhibits held in New Bedford. Her hope is to grow LOVEmoda, creating accessories for men's fashion as

well.

Faces of New Bedford is a project by Colton Simmons. If you are interested in booking a shoot or getting prints from the series email all inquiries to colton@coltonsimmons.com

Follow Colton on Instagram:
<https://instagram.com/simmonscolton>

Faces Of New Bedford – #58 – Frank Stephens

Meet Frank Stephens, 62-year-old security officer at St. Luke's Hospital.



Frank was born in Kansas City, but grew up in Newport and Providence, Rhode Island. Upon graduating high school, he spent some time at Tennessee State University before transferring to American International College (AIC) in Springfield, where he received his degree in Business and Economics.

After getting married he relocated to New Bedford, where he fell in love with the city immediately. He worked for 14 years as a production manager of sonar at Raytheon. When the company sold the technology to the US government, Frank was laid off. Getting involved with the correction department, he started working at the Ash Street Prison.

During his 20 years with the Sheriff's Department, he worked his way up to a Captain at the Dartmouth House of Corrections, a position he retired from earlier this year. He always treated his inmates the way he would want to be treated, so it was encouraging to run into them years later and see the impact he had in helping change their lives.

He also spent a good portion of time owning his own security business, which serviced notable clients such as Mo Vaughn, MC Hammer, as well as various New England Patriot's and Boston Celtic's players. This experience led him to taking a per diem position as a security officer for Southcoast Health, where he feels blessed to work. The hospital is like a small city and he loves to be able to help out in anyway that he can while there, even if that means getting water for a patient on a busy floor during rounds or walking staff to their cars at night.

"Follow the way of the Lord's passages, do unto others you want to be done unto you. That goes a long way and it's what allowed me to be fair in my time of security and corrections."

Faces of New Bedford is a project by Colton Simmons. If you are interested in booking a shoot or getting prints from the series email all inquiries to colton@coltonsimmons.com

Follow Colton on Instagram:
<https://instagram.com/simmonscolton>

Faces Of New Bedford – #56

Jess Bregoli

Meet Jess Bregoli, 32-year-old gardener and sculptor.



Jess moved to the area when she was a child from Oregon so that her mother could finish her Masters degree at UMass Dartmouth. Growing up she would work with her mentor, Emily Johns, taking care of the waterfront gardens at the Seaport in Downtown New Bedford. At the age of 16 she left school and backpacked through New England and ended up in Vermont. When she was 17 she realized that she needed to finish high school and came back home.

During her early 20s she attempted to complete a degree in Art History at several local colleges but left the area to pursue a relationship and business ventures in Atlanta, Georgia. While in Georgia she owned a coffee shop/art gallery and ran a high end clothing store. She then had her son, Sage, and it was around that time that she realized that she wanted to do large scale sculptures about environmental issues. Upon her split with Sage's father, she moved back to New England.

Back home, she decided to go back to school and finish her degree, but got involved with the sculpture program at UMass, seeing she hadn't had any formal training and wanted to start creating. Upon graduation from UMass, Jess has worked with several local committees, including being co-chair of New Bedford Beautiful, freelancing as the Art Administrator for the City of New Bedford, and working with the New Bedford Cultural Council. Working with these departments, she has worked for the last two years on the Seaport Art Walk, where local artists gather to bring to life our Seaport area with murals and sculptures of all shapes and sizes.

Faces of New Bedford is a project by Colton Simmons. If you are interested in booking a shoot or getting prints from the series email all inquiries to colton@coltonsimmons.com

Follow Colton on Instagram:
<https://instagram.com/simmonscolton>

Faces Of New Bedford – #55: Joe Lopes

Meet Joe Lopes, 42-year-old loan officer and City Councilor for the City of New Bedford.



Spending his entire life living in New Bedford, he always had a huge love for the city. After graduating from the University of Massachusetts with a degree in Political Science and with some inspiration from one of his professors, Dr. Hackey, he went on to pursue his Masters Degree in International Business. His time at Johnson and Wales, where he received his Masters, was important because he was able to learn so much about the world, and himself, from the diverse group of students and teachers there.

Having a family who had always been involved in political campaigns and working towards social justice, he always wanted to do something to give back to the community he loved so much. Joe had run 3 times for the position of City Councilor and lost all three times. After his last run, he was offered a job to work under former-Mayor Lang in the New Bedford Economic Council, where he gained a vast knowledge about city infrastructure and politics.

In 2009, Joe ran for city council for his 4th time and won, making him the Councilman over Ward 6. This was huge for him because growing up in the south end was crucial to him becoming the man he has become, so he is honored to serve that area. In his time as councilman, he has worked on projects to renovate the playgrounds of Hazlewood and Ashley parks, making

those locations once again a place for families to visit. He is also working with the city to build much needed new elementary schools to the ward.

“The world is bigger than your window, look at it, explore it, and seek it.”

Faces of New Bedford is a project by Colton Simmons. If you are interested in booking a shoot or getting prints from the series email all inquiries to colton@coltonsimmons.com

Follow Colton on Instagram:
<https://instagram.com/simmonscolton>

Faces Of New Bedford – #54: Edson Goncalves

Meet Edson Goncalves, 27-year-old systems engineer.



Edson's mother saved money during his early life, to move him from Praia, Cape Verde to New Bedford to work towards a better

life. Growing up in housing projects throughout the city most of his life, he had been exposed to so many things that troubled him. From friends who had been imprisoned for murder to friends who overdosed and passed away.

Knowing he wanted to become more than that and from a little inspiration from Star Wars, he chased the dreams of becoming an engineer. He saw all of this amazing technology in the movies and asked someone why we didn't have any of it and they told him because engineers hadn't created them yet. Doing his best to stay out of trouble, he graduated from New Bedford High School and attended UMass Dartmouth, where he received a degree in Electrical Engineering.

He had heard great things about working with Department of Defense so pursued a job with General Dynamics, who held multiple contracts with the U.S. Government. During his time there he worked with the networks and systems that have assisted our troops overseas in communicating with one another as they are out in the battlefield.

Wanting more out of his career he moved on from General Dynamics to Riverbed Technology, where he is currently helping improve network performance for Fortune 100 Companies. He understands the importance of communications and hasn't let his dreams of Star Wars technology slip away, as he hopes to continue helping create and innovate better ways for the human race to stay in contact.

"Don't follow the trend. You don't have to do everything everyone else is doing because it most likely won't lead to anywhere good. Don't let your dreams die and continue until you achieve them."

Faces of New Bedford is a project by Colton Simmons. If you are interested in booking a shoot or getting prints from the

series email all inquiries to colton@coltonsimmons.com

Follow Colton on Instagram:

<https://instagram.com/simmonscolton>