

Faces of New Bedford #243: Celia Brito and Tanya Alves

Celia Brito is known by many as a personable woman who loves fashion and owns Celia's Boutique in downtown New Bedford. What many don't realize is how accomplished of an entrepreneur she really is. Did you know her store is the longest-operating small business in downtown New Bedford? That doesn't happen by accident.

She was born in Cape Verde and moved to New Bedford at the age of six. Growing up in New Bedford she always loved fashion, yet she moved to Boston and used her intelligence to climb the corporate ladder working high up in the rankings of Polaroid. Corporate America can be rough, and when Polaroid hit rough times, she was laid off from her position.

Sick of the corporate Boston rat race, Celia decided to move back to the city she loves and pursue her true passion as a fashion entrepreneur. She immediately noticed a hole in the market of New Bedford. There was a boom of successful working women in the city, yet no place locally for them to shop for high-end business attire.

She acted on her instincts and in 2003, Celia's Boutique was born.

20 years later, her business has expanded and she is now a staple in downtown, New Bedford. I asked her what advice she would give to a teenager in New Bedford who has dreams of one day starting a successful business. To be honest, I was expecting a fluff answer along the lines of "follow your dreams" or "do what you love".

But without hesitation, Celia began to step by step layout a strategic business plan that could get a young aspiring entrepreneur in the game and ready to open a business. She

began discussing the importance of finding mentors, avoiding loans and debt, understanding culture, building a brand. It was at that moment I realized why Celia is successful.

It's no surprise that Celia raised a daughter who is also very intelligent and plays a major role in the culture of downtown, New Bedford. Meet Tanya Alves, co-owner of Celia's Boutique and the daughter of Celia Brito.

Tanya is a mother of two kids herself, so when she isn't working at the boutique you can probably find her out spending time with her family. She is a graduate of New Bedford High School and has been assisting her mother in running the business since 2018.

Speaking with Tanya it was clear she believes community is the heartbeat of running a successful business. I've spoke with her twice this past month and both times I left that conversation with information on multiple new local events that I had no idea were happening, and multiple names of local artists and entrepreneurs that I should be in contact with.

If something positive is happening in New Bedford, chances are Tanya is involved or is at the very least close friends with the person in charge. Celia and Tanya are without a doubt two influential members of our community and their story will inspire a new generation of entrepreneurs in New Bedford.

Check out our other Faces of New Bedford **[here](#)**.