

Why I Love New Bedford

Russell is one of the nicest and most genuine people I've met in my 22 years in New Bedford. He works long, strenuous hours with his hands from Monday through Friday on Martha's Vineyard. He gets up before the sun rises, and travels home to New Bedford long after dusk falls. He is a young man in his 20's, and his daily grind is as relentless as his love for his friends and family. And whether he realizes it or not, he is an inspiration to me and my loved ones. Because despite the difficulties life continues to throw at Russell, he gets up the next morning and instinctively understands what must be done for the sake of what matters most; work, family, and love.

I love New Bedford because it is home to so many people like Russell. New Bedford is home to so many people who have had to brush off the hardships they've faced in preparation for new challenges ahead. New Bedford is home to so many people whose daily triumphs go unnoticed. New Bedford is home to a vast body of people who amidst the most heartbreaking stories from around the city, state, and country, continue to commit the smallest acts of kindness towards their neighbor. New Bedford is home to so many people who continue to pursue better lives despite negativity's incessant attempts to swallow them whole.



While it may be easy to overlook a stranger's opening of a door or a driver's yielding to a family with groceries in a crosswalk, these small acts of kindness are as prevalent in New Bedford as anywhere else in America. These small acts of kindness are what makes life worth living in New Bedford, because ultimately they are what fuels others to continue to respond to hate with love. In a country where bad things happen regularly, it is more important now than ever for people to continue to inspire positive action amongst others. Even in the most mundane situations. Because while you may not be able to control what happens around you, you do have the power to choose how you respond to what happens around you. And you never know how your actions can affect somebody else's going forward.

I met Russell through a mutual friend of ours a few months ago. Our friend lives in a building that is mostly occupied by elderly folks, and we encountered an older man named Richie who was having a hard time loading his wheelchair into his van. Richie had been fixing a friend's car overseas years ago, when a stranger shot him in the back; putting Richie in a wheelchair for life.

Before I could even approach Richie, I saw Russell thrust himself towards the man's wheelchair to load it into the van. There was no introduction, no exchanging of pleasantries, and no reward; just one man acting out of kindness for another. And that man happened to be my friend Russell, who could not have looked happier on that day to be helping somebody in need. Russell didn't need a thank you, money, a name, or for Richie to remember his.



He just wanted to help.

If you're from New Bedford, you either know somebody who has

faced great pain in their lifetime, or you have fought that pain for yourself. If you're from New Bedford, there is a good chance that struggle runs in your family. There is a good chance that if you are from New Bedford, you've grown up in a family that has constantly been exposed to pain and suffering in some shape or form.

For people living in New Bedford, work is synonymous with life. We must work our tails off everyday because people we care about deeply directly depend on it. And if you're from New Bedford, you can understand just how much harder life could be if you and your loved ones didn't work your tails off. Because people in New Bedford can empathize with just how trying tough times can be for others in the city. All they have to do is look around.

I love New Bedford because it is my home. New Bedford has been where my most fondest memories have taken place. And while I am just 22 years old, I realize that meaningful life experiences can take place anywhere in the world. I have hiked the Flatirons in Colorado, walked the beaches of Washington state, and partied in downtown Las Vegas. And while these moments were life changing in the most positive of ways for me, they also made me realize that there really is no place like home. In time spent away from Massachusetts, I realized that there truly is no place like New Bedford. And so I came back home in a heartbeat.



I believe people in New Bedford are more connected to one another than they realize. I believe most of us want the same thing; work, family, and love. I believe most of us are good intentioned people caught up in a giant web of negativity that gets in the way of what we want most. Problems are inevitable, but problem solving can be difficult. And I believe most people in New Bedford live to solve problems; be it their own or those of another. I believe most people in New Bedford would rather see the next person's problem be solved as opposed to simply watching them fail. I believe Russell is not the only person in New Bedford who just wants to help.

I believe that the people I've seen hold doors open, pay for strangers' coffees, and smile from across the street, are not the only people in New Bedford paying small acts of kindness forward. Because given our similar upbringings and rough-edged east coast roots, we share a life-long bond. We share a bond by having grown up and lived in one of the most polarizing cities in American history. We share a bond by living in a place that at times can be stunningly beautiful and at other times can be shockingly terrifying. And this bond is what propels us to be better people to those around us.

I don't love New Bedford for its history. I don't love New Bedford for its beaches, parks and landmarks. I don't love New Bedford for its food, downtown, or airport. I don't love New Bedford for its sports, music, or art.

I was taught at a young age that the most powerful form of love is unconditional.

And so, I just love New Bedford.