Your Input, Our Outcome. My View. My New Bedford

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By Nicole Nelson

There's this thing that happens when you talk to people from the SouthCoast or New England who are not from New Bedford, Massachusetts. Usually it's a smile and a quick compliment about the city like "Oh, I love the Whaling Museum", or "I drove by there on my way to the Ferry". Sometimes the comment is a little more specific: "The downtown area is really nice, I love the restaurants there."

While the Downtown area is nice, and the restaurants there are great, and it is close to the Ferry, and the Whaling Museum is a civic treasure, there is more to New Bedford than the juxtaposition of burgeoning potential and the elephant in the room: Crime. I know this because I live here. I've lived here for a long time. Before I realized the whole crime thing I thought New Bedford was the best! Partly because I was very, very young, but also because it was home.

As an adult who has returned to New Bedford, I'm often conflicted. I'm still in love with the cobblestones and the food and the water and the history (don't even get me started on the history!!). But then there's the cynical adult part, right? The part that notices the shifty glances and the raised eyebrows when you proudly blurt out "Oh, I live in New Bedford!"

Because, let's be honest, it's getting better all the time but it's not there yet. It's sprouting, and the sprouts are starting to get stronger and a bloom is on the way but there are so many other factors that threaten this fragile growth. There's the crime, yes. But there's also the taxes! Oh my God,

the taxes! The insurance hikes, the property values, the parking!

So what can you do?

What can you do when you're not in public service and you don't want to be mayor? What do you do when you don't have the capital to start a new business to contribute to the revitalization of downtown? What do you do when you get emotional about how beautiful those Victorian homes are and you just want so badly for things to get better, but you're just a guy? You're just some person who is trying to make it work on an individual level and you're fixing up your house but other than better landscaping there isn't much else you can do to make a change others can actually see?

There's this thing in marketing that claims "perception is reality." It means that if something looks better most people will believe it's better even if it's not. It's obviously not real, but super effective nonetheless. We see this all the time with the latest iPhone and the new packaging for organic, natural, locally-grown celery. It's the same but it's dressed up, it's nicer. And we want it.

So what? We take two negatives and turn them into a positive. Because positive is always better. It's practically science. And to just really take this article to the next level with cliches: We fake it till we make it.

What I'm proposing is that we understand what the reality is but we choose to make it better. We focus on the good bits in order to crowd out the bad ones. We become a city of glowing positivity until we aren't pretending anymore, we are just that. Because frankly, I'm tired of having those eyebrows pop up at the mention of my home in disapproval. I want those eyebrows popping up in envy, because I live in the up-and-coming city that has it all: The food, the history, the growth, the art, the views, and the citizens who refused to

let it be less than it should be.

Make it up the way you want it to be. Design your future city. Highlight what makes it spectacular and pretty soon all of it will be. Join me in changing the perception of the city by doing what you already do all the time. Take photos of your cat, but your cat in your great apartment that is in New Bedford. Your martini from your favorite bar in New Bedford. The sunset over the water at the Fort in New Bedford. Tag it, be proud of it and share it. Get your followers that you've never met in real life and that live in New York or LA to google "New Bedford' because damn, that city looks amazing.

Your input, our outcome. My View, #MyNewBedford.

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#MyNewBedford is a personal project started by Niki Nelson who is a graphic designer living in (you guessed it!) New Bedford, Massachusetts. To help Niki generate content for a new outlet that focuses on the beauty of the city following @mynewbedford on Instagram and share your photos with the hashtag #MyNewBedford and let's see where this thing goes.

You can see more about Niki's project here.