

Faces Of New Bedford #153: Abrah Zion

Meet Abrah Zion, 42-year-old Photographer, and owner of Miss Z Photography.



Abrah has always been into photography, stealing her parent's polaroid and film cameras as a kid, taking photos of anything she could. With both of her parents as teachers, she knew she wouldn't be able to go to college for photography and majored in Near Eastern and Judaic studies at Brandeis University, but kept on photographing with her friends.

After graduation, her career path took a detour and she got into computing, working for several companies before settling at Coastline Elderly in New Bedford, servicing their computers and phone systems. After the birth of her first daughter, during her maternity leave, she turned her passion toward her brand new child and became obsessed with photographing her.

This obsession turned into her photographing friend's kids and before she knew it, she didn't return to her position at Coastline and had started her own photography business. Since opening, she has been able to make a name for herself in the SouthCoast and beyond by being published in the international magazine, "Taopan – The Art of Pregnancy and Newborn", as well

as the national magazine “Beauty and Lifestyle Mommy Magazine”. She has also won awards such as #1 Photographer in Best of the SouthCoast 2017 awards, 3 years in a row as Parent’s Choice Award from the Motherhood Society and has been listed as one of the top 10 maternity photographers in Massachusetts by PhotographyMagazine.com in 2016.

She is also working to become an accredited safety expert by the APNPI, The Accredited Professional Newborn Photographer. Abrah also volunteers for the organization Now I Lay Me Down To Sleep as well as donating sessions to families who couldn’t otherwise afford the sessions.

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Faces Of New Bedford #152: Nataníel Barbosa

Meet Nataniel Barbosa, 35-year-old master barber and co-owner of United Barbershop. Nataniel grew up in Cape Verde and moved to New Bedford at the age of 16. Coming to the country at that age made it very difficult for him to learn the language like a younger child would, but regardless persevered and graduated from New Bedford High School.



With his friend's father owning Tropicals Hair Salon and Barbershop, he spent a lot of time around the profession and even helped out at the shop sweeping and stocking stations. This pushed him to learn how to cut hair himself, eventually enrolling in Rob Roy Academy, where he received his barber's license.

Nataniel worked at Tropicals until 2009, which is when he had his first child and knew he needed to make a move in his career to provide for his family. Along with fellow barber Jailson Sequeira, he opened United Barbershop just after getting his master barbers license. He is proud to know that he was able to come to this country and establish a business in the community, helping various local organizations and basketball teams, while also participating in aid efforts to his home country of Cape Verde.

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Faces Of New Bedford #151: Matthew Jezierski

Meet Matthew Jezierski, 33-year-old Executive Chef, and co-owner of New Bedford Noodle Bowl.



Matt grew up in a family that was always cooking, so it was no surprise to him that when he graduated high school, that he went to school to pursue a career in culinary. He wanted to get out and see other places, so he applied to the furthest culinary schools he could and was accepted into New England Culinary Institute in Burlington, Vermont.

What drew Matt to this school the most was their internship program and the fact that their learning experiences took place in the kitchen of the Inn at Essex, getting hands-on experience in the field. During his time there, he worked through every station in the kitchen, from the front of the house to the back of the house. During his two six month internships he worked at a restaurant in Prout-Neck, Maine and another in Big Sur, California.

He decided to stay in California and this began his journey back and forth between the East in West coast, gaining more experience and knowledge in several different kitchen environments. One major concern for him was making his dishes with all fresh product, especially seafood and not finding that anywhere else, he moved back to New Bedford, where he could get fresh vegetables, meats, and seafood.

After moving back and working at several restaurants, his parents approached him with the idea of opening a ramen/noodle restaurant like one they had visited while in Iceland. Together with his parents and co-owners Jim and Maddi, they entered the E For All Program, where they fine-tuned their menu and gained the knowledge to open up their Purchase street location. Noodle Bowl New Bedford specializes in making noodle bowls with flavors from around the world, featuring Portuguese, Polish, and even a spin on the classic Asian Braised Beef bowl. Matt hopes to be able to make a staple in downtown with their venture, bringing a new spin on an old classic.

"I want to get better, every single day."

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Faces Of New Bedford #150: Jack Leao

Meet Jack Leao, 30-year-old DJ.



Jack's parents moved to the US from Cape Verde prior to his birth in the mid 80's, which is where dad began DJing local events and parties. When he and his brother were old enough, their father began taking them to events to help him and learn how to DJ.

After high school, Jack and his brother continued DJing local hall events and some small events at UMass Dartmouth. This allowed Jack to gain enough experience to begin DJing at clubs, starting at Tantric in Providence. Under the umbrella of the dj group, Passport DJs, he began working at several clubs each week, even working for the internet radio station based in Fall River called Hurricane Radio.

Over the last few years, he has been able to take his talents as an International DJ, specializing in music from all over the world, all over New England, New York, and New Jersey, performing at some of the largest nightclubs in those areas. Jack has also been involved in charity events, providing music for at the events free-of-charge to help raise money for

causes, such as the Volcano that ravaged Cape Verdean island of Fogo in 2015. His hope is to take his shows international and perform across the world.

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Faces Of New Bedford #149: Daisy Ormseth

Meet Daisy Ormseth, 40-year-old Nurse Practitioner.



At the age of 14, Daisy found out that she was pregnant and decided to move in with her now husband, to be able to raise their daughter together. Living with her boyfriend and their

daughter, they struggled to get by and she even dropped out of high school. By the age 18, she had seen a posting for an EMT job and knew she needed to go back to school for her family and their future. After receiving her GED and passing EMT school, she began her career as an EMT and worked in Boston for 10 years.

In and out of hospitals, she had tons of contact with the emergency staff and seeing how much they were able to do for the patients they brought in, she decided to go back to school to become a registered nurse. Upon graduating Massasoit with her associate's degree in Nursing, she began working as an emergency nurse at Saint Anne's Hospital in Fall River. While also working part-time in St. Lukes emergency room, she continued to go back to school, getting her bachelors from UMass Boston and then her master's degree from Simmons College, to become a Nurse Practitioner and to be able to provide more care for her patients.

Since becoming a Nurse Practitioner, she has been able to work in family practice at Prima Care of Fall River. She has also been able to volunteer in several capacities, such as traveling to Miami and the Keys to help with Hurricane Irma Relief. She also is planning to volunteer at the Boston Marathon this upcoming holiday weekend. With advocacy, not only for her patients but other nurses, so important to her, Daisy is also planning on returning to school for her doctorate in nursing, with the hope to work in policy, creating safer environments for nurses to work in, allowing for better care of their patients.

"Some people say you shouldn't look back because that's not where you're going, but I think it's important to see where you came from."

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Faces Of New Bedford #148: Warley Williams

Meet Warley Williams, 33-year-old Assistant Principal of Greater New Bedford Voc-Tech. After high school, Warley attended UMass Dartmouth hoping to graduate with a degree in Computer Science, but shortly into his first semester, he found out that his now wife was pregnant with their first child. Out of his father's house and with bills adding up, he knew that he had to do what was right for them at the moment and left school to work at a lumberyard.



During that brutally cold winter, he quickly realized that he needed to find a way to make a better life for his family. With the mounting gang violence in the city during that time, he was inspired to get into education, in a hope to guide the future generations in a better direction. Starting at BCC, he began studying history, eventually returning to finish his degree at UMass.

While attending school, he started substitute teaching for the

New Bedford Public School system. He was called to substitute a few times at Whaling City, the alternative high school, as they felt he had a great way of relating to the students there.

He accepted a full-time history teacher position at Whaling City and after a short period there he was asked to become the principal of the school. He was excited to be a role model to the students there and help kids graduate and further their education or get a job, which prior to their attendance at Whaling City, didn't have the hope for either.

When the principal position became vacant at Greater New Bedford Voc-Tech, he applied for the position, hoping to impact an even larger population of the city's youth. Although they had someone else for that position, they offered him the assistant principal position, which he interviewed for and received. Along with his roles as assistant principal, he also is chair of the graduation committee, co-facilitator of the mentor program, co-advisor of the National Honor Society, and Director of Security at the school.

Outside of his career, Warley strives to give back to his community. He is a board of director for the United Way of greater New Bedford; directs summer programs for 8th graders going into high school to close the summer learning gap, and he and his family has hosted a teenager from the Bronx for the Fresh Air Fund for the last five years. Warley is very passionate about helping his community and bettering the future of all kids in the Greater New Bedford area.

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Faces Of New Bedford #147: Kayla Mederios

Meet Kayla Mederios, 27-year-old Occupational Therapy Assistant, Applications Specialist, and Buti Yoga Instructor.



Growing up Kayla always struggled to maintain weight, fluctuating up and down into her mid-20s. After graduating from BCC and she began her career as an occupational therapy assistant, which was inspired by working on an Alzheimer's unit as a CNA and wanting to help people even more. She quickly became good friends with her co-workers, who inspired her to begin her fitness journey.

Along that road, she lost 75 pounds by incorporating weight training and eventually Buti Yoga. She was introduced to Buti Yoga at a class and then began regularly attending classes at Motion Dance and then at Ritual Yoga Studio. It was her instructor, Tara, who inspired her to take it to the next level and after a year of attending classes, she took her certification test in June of 2017.

Since receiving her certification she has begun teaching classes at Supreme Perfection Dance studio in Fairhaven and Gotta Dance Studio in New Bedford. She is glad that she has been able to take the inspiration from her friends to not only transform her own life but utilize it to transform the lives of her students. She is also planning on getting her Buti Sculpt certification this June, which is a HIIT (High-Intensity Interval Training) version of Buti, using poses in between exercises.

"No matter how long the journey takes you're always one step closer to your dreams."

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Faces Of New Bedford #146: Wilson Alix

Meet Wilson Alix, 23-year-old professional boxer.



Wilson moved to the US when he was 12 years old from Portugal. The transition for him was a bit difficult and during that time he got himself in a bit of trouble. At the age of 16 though, he saw two paths for himself and wanted to make sure that he went down the right one. Rather than use his fighting for bad, he decided to hone those abilities and began training with Jeffery Perez, who saw the potential Wilson had to become a professional boxer.

Continuing his training, he graduated high school and began college, all while working several jobs, like construction and personal training. As an amateur boxer, Wilson traveled all across New England, training in new gyms, sparring with other boxers and holding a record of 5-4, he diligently prepared himself to achieve his dreams of becoming a professional boxer. It was December of 2017 when he got the call that would change his life, he had been offered his first professional boxing match in February at Twin Rivers Casino.

Wilson had to make a tough decision of taking a chance and quitting his full-time job and deferring his enrollment at Bridgewater State, just to be able to take the chance of a lifetime. Although Wilson went on to lose his first fight, he walked away feeling more victorious than he had ever felt after his previous wins as an amateur. He had finally gotten

to the point that he had always dreamed of while also understanding it was the start of the biggest journey of his life. With an amazing team behind him, Wilson is continuing to train for his next fight and growing in the sport of boxing.

“I just want to be able to show kids who don’t have hope or a vision of their dreams coming true, that with hard work and focus you can achieve those dreams.”

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Faces Of New Bedford #145: Victoria Wood

Meet Victoria Wood, 26-year-old Math Teacher at Our Sisters' School.



Growing up she felt like she went through school blind to the idea of privilege. When she got to UMass Dartmouth though, through studying and observing society in her sociology courses, she quickly became aware of the social injustice in the world. Witnessing that there needed to be a change in education, she became passionate in pursuing a career the education field.

She got involved with Our Sisters School during her sophomore year of school, while she was an Endeavor Scholar and volunteered over 600 hours at the school tutoring and working in the school's office. In her last year of school, she applied to become an Americorps Teacher with the school, volunteering her time to invest into the students at the school. After two years of volunteering, she was hired as a more permanent, salaried math teacher.

Since working at the school she has become even more impassioned in her love for teaching and guiding her students, that she will be attending UMass Law, with a concentration in Public Interest Law this upcoming fall. She hopes to be able to run for school committee one day and continue to help improve the way our education system is being directed. Not only does she teach at the school, but she is starting her first year coaching with the Voc-Tech Girls Lacrosse Team.

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Faces Of New Bedford #144: Roger Chouinard

Meet Roger Chouinard, musician and owner of Purchase Street Records. Growing up his uncle played for a band called Billy Squire and tour with acts like Ted Nugent, Alice Cooper, and Gary Moore, just to name a few.



This uncle's influence drove Roger to start playing music and he fell in love with playing the drums. Over time he has played in a few different bands, such as Drained and Closer than Kin. While playing for Closer than Kin, their following really took off and they toured throughout the US, Canada, and Europe. When he wasn't making music and touring with the band he had started buying and selling collectors items at flee

markets and fairs.

He got interested in records when he bought a collection of records and saw how well they sold and seeing people's reactions to finally getting the album they always wanted. This pushed him to open a record store in 2016, with the advice of No Problemo owner Craig Paiva, opening right on Purchase Street, dubbing it Purchase Street Records. Since opening he has had the great experience of helping collectors find everything they've need, carrying such vast amount of music in the store.

Since opening Roger has released an album through the store, a two sided vinyl, featuring local bands The Pourmen and the Black Kennedy's. He also provides the music daily to 94 HJY, to play on their Final Vinyl Hour.

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