

# Faces Of New Bedford – #43: Stacey Mendonca

Meet Stacey Mendonca, 42-year-old certified occupational therapist assistant for the New Bedford Public Schools.



Stacey had lived a normal life that most in her position would, as an employee, wife, mother, and grandmother until an event that took place during the Summer of 2015 turned her life upside down. On August 2nd, she received the news that no mother ever wants to hear, her 24 year old son, Jeffery Sylvia, Jr. was found murdered in the city's South End.

In the wake of this tragic event, her family was at a total loss. Although she knows that her son may have not always made the best decisions, nobody should ever be able to choose whether someone lives or dies.

She owes her ability to be able to make it through each day with support from family and friends, grief crisis counseling, which was established by the Victim Advocacy Program days after her son's death and support from the POMC (Parents of Murdered Children) groups she attends with her daughter.

Having come along way since her son's death, she wants to impact the community and raise awareness to the Youth about the cause and effects of senseless acts of violence. She has

started the J.E.F.F. (Just Envision Future First) campaign in memory of her son to do just that. She is currently raising funds to start a scholarship for a NBHS graduate and to donate a new baseball scoreboard to the GNBYSBL, where he played as a child and is hosting the Spare the Pain Bowl-A-Thon to do so. With J.E.F.F. she hopes to be able to stop another family from facing the pain and challenges that she and her family has had to endure in the aftermath of her son's traumatic passing.

"We have been taught to not put our hand in fire because we know we will be burned. However because the consequence is delayed we don't think of the severity of our actions. It's time to get our youth to envision a future self before making a choice that could crush their hopes and dreams for a better future."

---

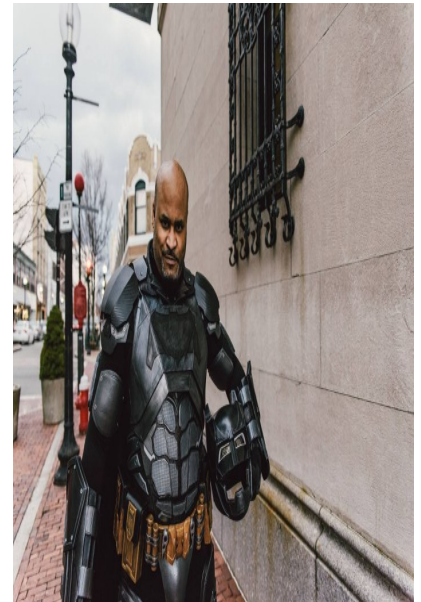
*Faces of New Bedford is a project by Colton Simmons. If you are interested in booking a shoot or getting prints from the series email all inquiries to [colton@coltonsimmons.com](mailto:colton@coltonsimmons.com)*

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

---

## **Faces Of New Bedford – #42: Raymond Ramos**

Meet Raymond Ramos, 41-year-old production worker for Harvey Building Products and Cosplayer.



Raymond has been an artist his entire life and started creating costumes at the age of 10. Every year he would be constantly trying to outdo his costume from the years prior. Along with his creation of costumes he started illustrating his own comic book characters, which he says was spurred on by his friend Manny DeBritto.

Although he spent a lot of his youth creating costumes, it wasn't until 2007 when he created his first full costume for a work Halloween party, the Marvel Comic character Blade. From there he continued to find ways to improve this look, trying to create the real life Blade look. After being connected with his martial arts instructor's former student, he entered his first show, South Coast Toy and Comic show.

A few years later Raymond's friend started the Rhode Island Comic Con, which has grown into an event so large that it sold out the Dunkin Donut center last year. Raymond has been featured every year as a cosplay guest and has won awards for the Best in Master's class for his Batman costume.

Being linked with the Rhode Island Comic Con has also opened opportunities to volunteer and give back. He has dressed for occasions at the Hasbro Children's Dental Clinic, bringing smiles to the kids and even the adults who work in the office.

---

*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](mailto:colton@coltonsimmons.com)*

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

---

## Faces Of New Bedford – #41: Craig Dee

Meet Craig DeMelo, 33-year-old teacher and musician.



Craig grew up his entire life and graduated from New Bedford High in 2000. During his time in high school he started singing in a band called Affliction. Having been involved in chorus all throughout his childhood, he had always sang but wanted to learn how to play the guitar, so he taught himself in 6 months.

In college, he had someone introduce him to Dave Matthews Band and it was during that time where his journey as a song writer

really took off. Finishing up the last year of college, he started subbing in the New Bedford school system to make extra cash while finishing his degree and fell in love with teaching. It was during this time where he was also part of the band Lemon Stone, which he toured across New England with.

He graduated college and started working full time as a teacher in at Roosevelt. Lemon Stone had broken up and Craig really started developing his solo work, writing and recording an album, "The Wiskey Poet," which he released in 2007. This album opened up a slew of gigs for him, playing in several large venues between New Bedford and New York.

As he has gotten older, growing his family and raising his children, he has enjoyed to be able to play locally and still teach at the High School, where he has taught English and Journalism since 2008. It's been awesome for him to see students who come through the school and rise beyond the trials that they face and become successful.

His hope is for New Bedford High's image to become more accurately represented and that the exception which is publicized wouldn't be considered the normal behavior of the school. He remembers when there was a valor about going to NBHS and he is working and hoping to see that restored.

---

*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](mailto:colton@coltonsimmons.com)*

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

---

# Faces Of New Bedford – #40: Danielle Lopez

Meet Danielle Lopez, 21-year-old Honors student at Bridgewater State University.



She is currently studying in Biology with the intention of obtaining her Doctorate in Dental Medicine. Although her current is very promising, things haven't always been so great.

When Danielle was just 8 years old, her mother was working to two jobs just take care of her and her 3 siblings. Due to unfortunate circumstances, she lost both of her jobs and was unable to find another position that would be able to support the entire family. Due to the jobs her mom held, she always found herself just above the poverty line, so they weren't eligible for assistance during this period.

Shortly after, they lost their apartment and were forced to live in a tent at a local campground. For the next 3 months they bathed in coin operated showers and commuted back to New Bedford from Rochester for school and work. While her mother continued to work at her new job and strive to restore their living situation, they were eventually blessed with an RV to stay in.

Fast forward 13 years later, Danielle looks back at her mother's sacrifice and perseverance, thankful that she learned what she had at such a young age. She also reflects on the time she spent at Dennison Memorial in the wake of these events, which really sculpted and molded her desire to learn. This has manifested itself in her current position, striving to create a better life for herself and her future family.

"The position you are in now isn't where you are going to be forever, but if you don't change the things you do then you are going to just perpetuate the cycle."

---

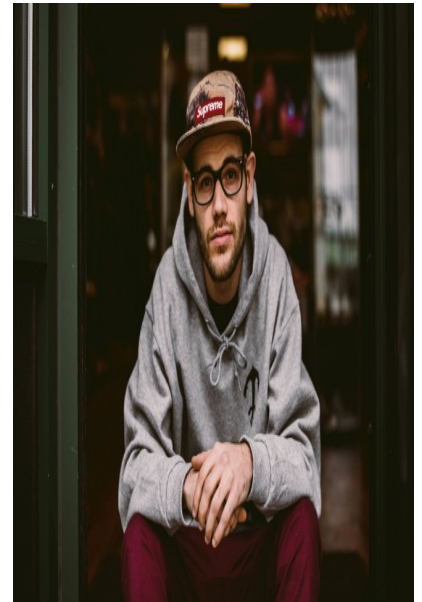
*Faces of New Bedford is a project by Colton Simmons. If you are interested in booking a shoot or getting prints from the series email all inquiries to [colton@coltonsimmons.com](mailto:colton@coltonsimmons.com)*

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

---

## **Faces Of New Bedford – #39: Paulo Duarte**

Meet Paulo Duarte, 23-year-old store manager of U7 and co-brand owner at Longevity Co.



Paulo has had a deep love for sneakers since he graduated high school, where he really started to get into the streetwear culture. From there he began collecting sneakers, learning the value in reselling exclusive sneaker releases, at the time Retro Air Jordans. The urban culture and sneaker heads in New Bedford really inspired Paulo to get involved, frequenting stores such as Carters and Expressions to check out the latest gear.

Delving into this passion he started buying and selling sneakers on Facebook groups and Kixify, which is an online resource that allows users to sell sneakers, unlocking the ability to sell more sneakers at a time depending on how well your business is. In a once in a lifetime opportunity, he sold a pair to the owner of the website, who was so pleased in the way Paulo handled the transaction, gave him the ability to sell unlimited sneakers on their platform.

It was around that time that Shop U7 had opened in the south end of New Bedford, where his friends had told the owners about Paulo and his knowledge of sneakers. He stopped in during the opening week and the owners tested his knowledge of pricing and they were impressed but the young mans prowess. He quit his job of delivering pizza, where he was extremely unhappy, and was hired on and started as an assistant in the



shop.

As time went on and the owner's trust in him grew, they promoted him to store manager. During his time working there, he as also come alongside his close friends to start LongevityCo, a local streetwear clothing company, which has grown immensely in popularity over the past few years. He's grown to learn that he needs to love what he does and he is finally in the position to do that.

Paulo is highly encouraged by the young and ambitious people around him. He sees so many people who are working on their craft and they encourage him to get better. For him to see a business open in New Bedford, he thinks about the fact that they had an idea and made it a reality, in an environment where you are guaranteed to succeed.

*"If you put time and effort into something you are passionate about everyday, it will pay off. Trust your ideas & don't let anybody tell you, you can't do what you want."*

---

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](mailto:colton@coltonsimmons.com)

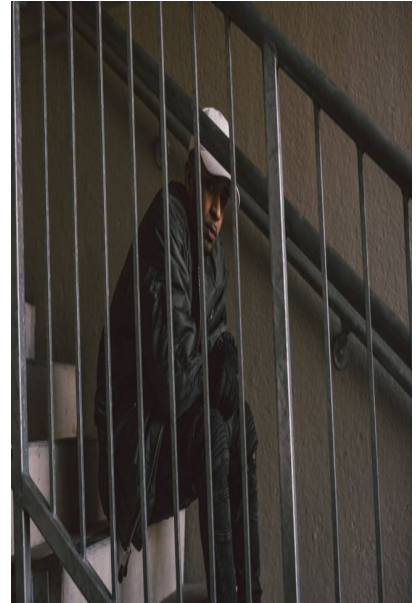
Follow Colton on Instagram:  
<https://instagram.com/simmonscolton>

---

## **Faces Of New Bedford – #38:**

# Carlos Araujo

Meet Carlos Araujo, 19-year-old photographer who spent his entire life in New Bedford.



His passion for photography came about one day when his cousin Kathy asked him to do a photoshoot for her and her boyfriend. She placed a camera in his hand and, with no prior experience, started shooting away. Although they weren't the best photos she saw that he had a very great eye for composition and told him he should look into getting his own camera.

After saving for a few months, collecting all that he could from his checks from McDonalds, at the age of 16 he bought a camera and started taking pictures of his friends around the city. Soon after, he started making a business out of his photography, traveling to Boston and networking with photographers across the region. During the week he would balance school, soccer and his job and spend his weekends growing and perfecting his craft.

By 18, he had graduated high school and even started attending the New England School of Photography. One night, with no money or ticket in his pocket, he attempted to get into RCA Recording artist Los' show, to hopefully photograph and talk with the rapper. He was able to get in and send the photos to Los, who loved his style and asked him to photograph the rest

of his tour. The two became really close and Los offered him the chance of a lifetime, to come out to LA and become his personal photographer.

In the time between then and now, he has had the chance to work with artists such as Jeremiah, Lucas Coly, Justin Combs, P. Diddy, and Justin Bieber. He feels like the support he has back at home, from his friends and family during this journey have pushed him to be able to get to the places that he has at such a young age. He is constantly encouraged by the local artists and photographers, providing constant fuel for him to put New Bedford on the map as an emerging creative force.

*"Knowledge is King!"*

---

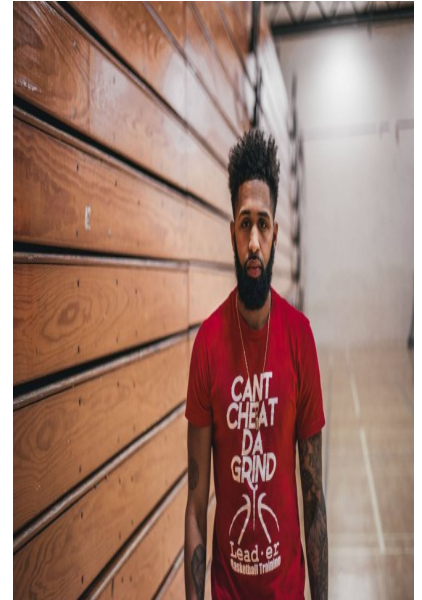
Faces of New Bedford is a project by Colton Simmons. If you are interested in booking a shoot or getting prints from the series email all inquiries to [colton@coltonsimmons.com](mailto:colton@coltonsimmons.com)

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

---

# **Faces Of New Bedford – #37: Brian Rudolph**

Meet Brian Rudolph, 27-year-old teacher's assistant, basketball player, and coach.



Spending his whole life in New Bedford, Brian has always found an attraction to basketball, one that even landed him a position to play for Loyola University Maryland. After graduating with his Bachelors degree in Advertising and Public Relation, he came back to New Bedford, where he started working for the public school system and coaching Junior Varsity Basketball for NBHS.

During the day he works with children who have disabilities, assisting them in staying focused during class and coaching them through the triggers they may face throughout their day. At night he helps lead the JV basketball team to face against the same teams he did during his time at New Bedford High. When he was younger he felt that his calling was to just play basketball, but as he has grown older and matured he knows that he is meant to coach. He loves being able to teach his players life lessons through coaching and show them that there are opportunities for them beyond what is being offered to them in the city.

He also spends his summers playing for the Cape Verdean National Basketball team, where he has played against professional basketball players from across the world for the past four season. Their hard work has even led them to the AfroBasket, which is Africa's qualifying tournament for the

Olympics. Although he led the team in scoring throughout the season, an injury kept Brian and the team from taking home the top spot, and a seed in the Summer 2016 Olympics. Despite the loss, he is relieved that he was able to come back and be here for his family and his students.

His hope is to help spearhead a summer basketball league at Monte's Park, which will allow the neighborhood kids an outlet in the summer, rather than turning to the streets. Growing up he's seen struggle and success in his immediate family and wants to see not only success in his life but the lives of the students he impacts everyday.

"You can't cheat the grind. It's not just about basketball either, whatever kind of work you put into something, is what you will see in the end. You reap what you sow."

---

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](mailto:colton@coltonsimmons.com)

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

---

## **Faces Of New Bedford – #36: Victor Fernandes**

Meet Victor Fernandes, 44-year-old mason contractor at Fernandes Masonry and co-founder of the Noah Foundation. Victor moved to New Bedford 28-years ago from Linhares DaBeira, Portugal.



It wasn't until their son, Noah, turned five that he was diagnosed with M.E.L.A.S.

– a progressive and degenerative mitochondrial disease. Raising a child with this type of disorder puts a large strain on the family between all of the medical visits and the equipment needed in order to make a house suitable for them to live in.

Seeing this daunting task, Victor and his wife Christine founded the non-profit organization Team Noah Foundation. The goal of the organization is to help raise funds in order to be able to fill in the gaps where insurances and government funds fail. They firmly believe that no child should be without the proper equipment to cope with the disease.

So far they have been able to provide the reconstruction of a few patients homes, installing ramps and lifts throughout the house to make their daily routines more feasible. Their main goal at the moment is to raise a million dollars to build a park in New Bedford that an entire family who has a disabled child can go. Most of the time, when a family has a child with a disorder like M.E.L.A.S., that child has to stay behind when their siblings go to the park with the other parent. Their vision is to allow everyone to be able to enjoy their time out with their loved ones without leaving anyone out.

*“There are so many around us who have come to support, show us love, and create opportunities for Team Noah Foundation to help peoples lives. We know that there are so many who need help, but we want to help change that.”*

---

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](mailto:colton@coltonsimmons.com)

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

---

## **Faces Of New Bedford – #35: John Brendon**

Meet John Brendon “JB” Macaroco, 22-year old aspiring business owner/fashion designer.



JB works for his family’s business M&R ScreenPrinting, which was started in the basement of his grandfather’s house in 1982. The business continued to grow and expand up until 1996, when his grandfather decided to retire and sell the company to

an outside party.

In 1990 JB's father, John, lost his job as a Phys Ed teacher due to city cut backs. He then started working for his father-in-law's company to provide for his family. After several years of managing the shop, he then with a partner purchased the company. Fast forward 20 years and JB now works with his entire family to keep the business running smoothly.

After spending a few years going for an engineering degree, JB felt that he didn't want to take that route in life and switched into the business program at #UMassDartmouth. Upon entering the program talks between his sister, Sorrell, began about starting a clothing company. In 2014, in an attempt to put his business knowledge to use, he and his sister released Wicked Clothing's first line and met mixed results.

Not satisfied, JB took the initiative to research and learn the market to better implement his vision. In 2015, with much gained experience and knowledge he, working together with local photographer Jonna Mojica, launched a summer and winter line, which became pivotal for JB and the future of Wicked.

Now fulfilling orders across the country and having some prominent faces in the fashion world co-signing and wearing his apparel, he can only be thankful. #NewBedford and the culture here has helped inspire and motivate the creativity he has poured out into his work. His hope for this year is to get his line into stores, while continuing to push the company's online presence.

*"I just encourage everyone to chase their dreams. New Bedford is a place with so much talent and underrated skill, we just have to come together and make it happen."*

---

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



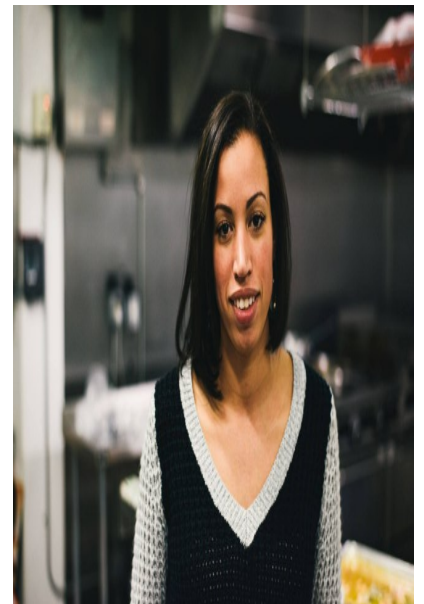
series email all inquiries to [colton@coltonsimmons.com](mailto:colton@coltonsimmons.com)

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

---

## Faces Of New Bedford – #34: Crystal Lister

Meet Crystal Lister, a 31 year-old Medical Lab Technician, body coach, and cook. Crystal works for the Greater New Bedford Health Center. When she isn't in the lab, her and her husband are the owners of Heathy Bites Meal Preps, which means she is constantly researching healthy meals and creatively helping others live cleaner, healthier lives.



Now she hadn't always been such a health enthusiast. Attending Greater New Bedford Voc-Tech she was in the Culinary Arts program and always enjoyed cooking growing up. Crystal never really managed how she ate and once she had her two kids, she had even less time to devote to developing a healthy way of living. It got to the point where she felt miserable and blamed everyone around her for her unhealthy lifestyle.

It was at this point she realized that for the sake of her health and the future of her children, she needed to make a change in her life. After working with a trainer who was passionate about fitness and inspiring others, she fell in

love with the idea of living a healthy life. After learning how to prep her meals and working out consistently, Crystal dropped down over 45 pounds and found herself at a weight that she really felt comfortable with.

This gave her the desire to develop and assist in the same growth in others. Explaining that diet was one of the most important parts of leading a healthier lifestyle and that her clients needed to prep their meals, she found that more than not they would just ask her to prep for them. This got her thinking and not to long afterwards she opened up her own business, prepping meals for those who want to eat healthy but don't have the time to portion and prep for themselves.

Her desire to help others goes beyond the notion of attaining the "perfect body." Working in the medical field, she realizes how unhealthy people are. As more people are being diagnosed with diabetes, high cholesterol, and high blood pressure, she wants to raise the awareness that these aren't death sentences. With the correct diet people can actively fight these diseases and live longer, happier lives.

*"It is so much more than losing weight, it's more about finding yourself and loving the person that you are."*

---

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](mailto:colton@coltonsimmons.com)

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