

## **Angolamania: Affective Bonds with Angola in the Music of the Cabo Verdean Diaspora**

---

**ABSTRACT:** The relationship between the Cabo Verdean diaspora and Angola has undergone transformations in the past half-century. Angola was long a destination for Cabo Verdean emigrants, particularly when both countries were Portuguese colonial possessions. Despite historic tensions between these migrants and the indigenous population in Angola itself, the Cabo Verdean community in New England today manifests a strong affection toward Angola and Angolan music. This paper will investigate the way that this affective relationship presents itself in the world of popular music, with a particular focus on the music of the Mendes Brothers, based in Brockton, MA, and the Angolan singer Bonga's connections to the Cabo Verdean diaspora in Rhode Island. This analysis will be contextualized by research on the Cabo Verdean diaspora in the social sciences as well as by personal interviews conducted by the author with Cabo Verdean community activists and music industry representatives. This article will highlight the role of personal affective connections in discussions of Cabo Verdean diasporic identity and pan-Lusophone African solidarity.

**KEYWORDS:** migration, diaspora, New England, Cabo Verde, Angola, popular music, pan-Africanism, ethnic identity, Mendes Brothers, Bonga.

**RESUMO:** A relação entre a diáspora cabo-verdiana e Angola tem transformado bastante nas últimas cinco décadas. Angola sempre foi destino para emigrantes cabo-verdianos, sobretudo quando os dois países ainda eram sob domínio português. Apesar das tensões históricas entre estes migrantes e a população indígena de Angola, hoje em dia, a comunidade cabo-verdiana de Nova Inglaterra manifesta uma forte relação afetiva com Angola e a música angolana. Este artigo investigará a maneira em que esta relação afetiva se revela pelo meio da música popular, com enfoque especial na música dos Mendes Brothers de Brockton, MA, e nas ligações do cantor angolano Bonga com a comunidade cabo-verdiana de Rhode Island. Para estabelecer os contextos desta análise, se emprega pesquisas sobre a diáspora cabo-verdiana oriundas das ciências sociais, além de entrevistas conduzidas pelo próprio autor com organizadores da comunidade cabo-verdiana

em Nova Inglaterra e representantes da indústria musical de tal região. Essa pesquisa enfatizará a importância das ligações afetivas pessoais nas discussões da identidade diáspórica cabo-verdiana, e da solidariedade luso-africana.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: migração, diáspora, Nova Inglaterra, Cabo Verde, Angola, música popular, movimento pan-africano, identidade étnica, Mendes Brothers, Bonga.

---

## 1. Introduction

Among my earlier memories of the visible presence of the Lusophone diaspora in southeastern New England is an Angolan flag displayed proudly across the DJ's table at a hip hop show in Providence, RI, when I was a teenager. The group that was performing, Busted Fro, included notable players on the New Bedford hip hop scene in the early 2000s, several of whom were of Cabo Verdean descent. I mentioned the display of the Angolan flag to an acquaintance of mine who grew up in the Cabo Verdean community of southeastern Massachusetts, and I was surprised by her response. She complained that one of the group's members with whom she was acquainted had appropriated an Angolan identity, despite his Cabo Verdean roots. "I was born in Angola too, but you don't see me waving an Angolan flag," she remarked. This interested me for a number of reasons. First, I had never known that this friend, whom I had always associated with Cabo Verde, was born in Angola, a country that was figuring more and more in my own studies of the Lusophone world. Second, I didn't understand why she would want to separate herself from her connections with the land where she was born. It was among my first encounters with the intricacies of identity politics in the Cabo Verdean diaspora.

I have since grown fully aware of the deep bonds between Cabo Verde and Angola. A Cabo Verdean student that I tutored talked about trips to Angola to visit relatives when he was younger. I continued to meet more and more Cabo Verdeans who had been born in Angola and emigrated to the United States or Portugal as children. Above all, I noticed the presence of Angola in Cabo Verdean music. Listening to Cabo Verdean music produced both within Cabo Verde and in the diaspora one heard constant references to Angola. Similarly, I began to realize that much of what I thought was Cabo Verdean zouk that was played on the radio or in clubs was actually performed by Angolan musicians. It was becoming clear that a strong connection between Cabo Verde and Angola existed that

went beyond the bureaucratic and diplomatic sphere of the *Comunidade dos Países de Língua Portuguesa* (Community of Portuguese-Language Countries or CPLP)

A full analysis of the multifaceted links between Angola and Cabo Verde would be an undertaking beyond the limits of this article. Nevertheless, an examination of even some minimal elements of these linkages helps forefront lessons we can learn from the Cabo Verdean experience, both in the archipelago and around the world. Cabo Verdean culture and identity, predicated on a mixture of African and Portuguese influences, and strongly molded by a history of migration, is a rich illustration of Paul Gilroy's interpretation of double consciousness in his seminal work *The Black Atlantic* (1993), which begins with a sentence referring to DuBoisian thoughts on consciousness: "Striving to be both European and black requires some specific forms of double consciousness" (1). The Cabo Verdean experience—born in the violence of the encounter between Portuguese slaver and enslaved African, shaped by Cabo Verdeans' continual journeys from their islands to places like the United States, northern Europe, and Portugal's other African colonies, and informed by a multitude of relationships with other African and African diasporic cultures, as well as the cultures of not just one, but several imperial metropolises—has created a prismatic array of consciousness throughout Gilroy's theoretical Black Atlantic.

Beyond its explicit illustration and potential for expansion of definitions of a Black Atlantic, the Cabo Verdean experience of multiple consciousnesses and migration can also inform our own ways of interpreting migration's role in the forging of identity. Luís Batalha and Jørgen Carling support this view: "The ubiquity of migration in Cape Verdean society, cultural heritage, and family life facilitates the study of processes that are also present in other parts of the world, but often in a more subtle way. Moreover, Cape Verde represents an astounding diversity of migration experiences..." (Batalha and Carling 29). The sheer magnitude as well as the disperse nature of the Cabo Verdean emigrant community, which can be found not only in Portugal, the former metropolis, but also in the Netherlands, in the United States, and in African countries like Senegal, Angola and Guinea-Bissau, builds a diversity of dialogues with pan-African political thought, with continental and insular Portuguese cultures, with Afro-American and Afro-European identities, and with more specifically Lusophone African trends in literature, music and popular culture.

In this article, I will at times refer to the Cabo Verdean community as a diaspora, a usage that partially contradicts Deirdre Meintel's claim, "Labour migration

from the Cape Verde over the last century-and-a half corresponds more closely to the transnationalism model; however, as our historical review in the following section will show, the concept of diaspora is also pertinent in some ways” (26) Nevertheless, in a recent article on the power of narrative in the Cabo Verdean community, Gina Sánchez-Gibau writes, “To understand the African diaspora as a site of historical memory to which Cape Verdeans are connected is to acknowledge original conceptualizations of diaspora (i.e., dispersal from and connection to the homeland), while recognizing the continual re-creation of diasporic communities in the present” (“Telling our Story” 112). She further argues, “Indeed, in some ways, the notion of “telling our story” is one rooted in the very nature of the term *diaspora*—a term that signals the ties of responsibility engendered between a nation and its emigrants abroad” (112). James Clifford’s influential definition of diaspora itself, as Meintel maintains, does support the term’s utility in describing the Cabo Verdean communities scattered across the world: “Decentered, lateral connections may be as important as those formed around a teleology of origin/return. And a shared, ongoing history of displacement, suffering, adaptation, or resistance may be as important as the projection of a specific origin” (306). Gilroy himself comments on the way that the wide distribution of the African Diaspora through a Black Atlantic world produces broad repercussions:

The fractal patterns of cultural and political exchange and transformation that we try and specify through manifestly inadequate theoretical terms like creolization and syncretism indicate how both ethnicities and political cultures have been made anew in ways that are significant not simply for the peoples of the Caribbean but for Europe, for Africa, especially Liberia and Sierra Leone, and of course, for black America. (15)

In this article, I intend to illustrate, through the examination of popular musicians, that affective relationships and cultural activity amongst Cabo Verdean and Angolan musicians in Atlantic locations as diverse as southeastern New England, the Netherlands, Angola and Portugal have had impacts beyond the world of clubs, concert halls and recording studios.

My background is in literary and cultural studies, and in this article I owe a debt to the work of anthropologists like those cited above and ethnomusicologists, who have strongly informed my thinking. What follows is a brief overview of the Cabo Verdean presence in Angola, which is necessary to better understand these ties. After this overview, I examine the presence of Angola in Cabo

Verdean popular music produced in New England, and to a lesser extent Cabo Verde's reciprocal impact on Angolan popular music. This examination will be undertaken through close readings of song lyrics, as well as the reporting of interviews with Cabo Verdean community members in New England. Although the incorporation of such interviews is less conventional in literary and cultural studies work, Sánchez-Gibau reminds us of the importance of storytelling in the Cabo Verdean community: "An examination of Cape Verdean diasporic identity formation is irrevocably tied to stories, both individual and collective" ("Telling our Story" 112). Despite my departure from familiar methodological territory, it is my intention to bring a cultural studies perspective to the study of a community that is pivotal to broader understandings of Black Atlantic consciousness, the role of migration in the shaping of identity, and the power of diaspora.

## **2. Cabo Verdeans in Angola/Cabo Verdeans in the United States: The Intricacies of Identity**

As mentioned above, Angola has long been among the most prominent destinations for the Cabo Verdean diaspora, and its attraction grew as more Cabo Verdeans moved there in the period after the Second World War (Batalha and Carling 21). In Batalha and Carling's work they present the Cabo Verdean song "Terezinha" as evidence of Angola's prominence as a destination for Cabo Verdeans in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s, for the colony already appeared in musical portrayals of migration (21). Cabo Verdeans occupied a unique position in colonial Angola, one that was at times fraught with connections to the colonial regime. In his study of Angola under the Portuguese, Gerald J. Bender discusses those who migrated to Angola during the last decades of Portuguese rule: "It was hoped that these individuals, whom the Portuguese considered perfect racial and cultural intermediaries between Africans and Europeans, would help stabilize the multiracial *colonatos*" (110). Despite this enhanced colonial status, Cabo Verdeans did not always occupy an elite position, and could be found inhabiting Luanda's shantytowns, or *musseques*, like Sambizanga (Moorman 90). Cabo Verdeans in Angola, rather than identifying with the autochthonous African populations, maintained their own identity, an identity that many perceived to be aligned with that of the Portuguese colonial masters. Marissa Moorman mentions this in her 2008 work on Angolan popular music, when she cites Ilídio do Amaral's descriptions of the Cabo Verdean presence in Luanda's late colonial *musseques* quarters, particularly in informal commerce (67).

In Bender's book, he mentions riots that occurred in the slums of Luanda in 1974, after which both white Portuguese and Cabo Verdean slum dwellers eventually decided to flee (201). Moorman also references this violence when she describes the participation of some Angolan musicians in these riots: "Musicians like Chico Coio got involved in the spontaneously formed self-defense militias in the musseques. Such militias defended against attacks from Portuguese merchants, Cape Verdean volunteer forces working for the Portuguese police, and FNLA militants" (195). In footnotes to his book, Bender further claims, "Almost all of the approximately 40,000 Cape Verdeans who were in Angola before the April 1974 coup resembled Cape Verdeans in the U.S. in that they identified with the Portuguese in the colony, not with the Africans" (203). Bender's commentary here on Cabo Verdean identification with the Portuguese as reflecting patterns in the United States stands out, and this topic will be addressed later in this article. Rather than painting a picture of a Cabo Verdean community harmoniously integrated into indigenous Angolan society, both Bender and Moorman portray a community in an ambiguous position. How, then, have Cabo Verdeans developed the affective connections with Angola that are discernible in the New England diaspora, when such connections may have been more tenuous in Angola itself? Bender's statement also points to a response to this question. He connects the Cabo Verdeans of Angola with Cabo Verdeans in the United States, and makes the debatable claim that both groups identified at the time more with the Portuguese than with Africans or Afro-descendants. As a native of southeastern New England who was raised in proximity to a large Cabo Verdean community that clearly identified as a community of color, separate from the white Portuguese, statements like Bender's come as a surprise. Nevertheless, scholars like Deirdre Meintel have also documented this identification: "Cape Verdeans were described as fluent speakers of Portuguese, mostly literate, free of racism, and as bearers of a culture whose Portuguese roots were the only ones recognized, one that set them apart from African-Americans (Meintel 1981:1984a)" (35). A 2009 article by Marilyn Halter documents this phenomenon in greater detail.

Halter's article explores the changing dynamics of racial and ethnic identification in Cabo Verdean communities of New England. She writes, "In the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, although Cape Verdean settlers sought recognition as Portuguese-Americans, white society, including the other Portuguese immigrants in the region, excluded them from their social and religious associations. At the same time, the Cape Verdeans chose not to identify with the native-born

black population” (Halter 531). Halter continues, claiming, “And despite over thirty years as an independent nation of Africa, the great majority of both Cape Verdean immigrants and the American-born still resist the label of African” (535). This attempt to avoid connection with the black community in a country where racial binaries are a determinative aspect within culture and society perhaps has contributed to a liminal status for Cabo Verdeans in the United States. In an article on race and ethnicity in the Cabo Verdean community of Boston, Gina Sánchez Gibau quotes a woman named Wanda: “There are Black people and there are White people and you were trying to be Grey, somewhere in the middle, and there was no Grey. So, I identified with who, you know, I wanted to be like” (“Contested...” 484). Although some Cabo Verdeans in the U.S. may have wished to maintain a separate identity from Afro-Americans, they were also rejected by white society, thus prompting the creation a distinctly outside and somewhat hidden status, one memorialized in the title of Claire Andrade-Watkins’s 2006 documentary on the Cabo Verdeans of Providence, *Some Kind of Funny Porto Rican*. Marilyn Halter claims that a focus on multiculturalism beginning in the 1970s presented an option for a separate and hybrid identity that was not available in the United States that Bender had in mind when he compared Cabo Verdeans in Angola to Cabo Verdeans in the United States (Halter 542). Furthermore, since 1975, Cabo Verde has been an independent nation that has affirmed a distinct identity from that of Portugal. The Cabo Verdeans that were in Angola during the colonial period were part of a political and cultural system that did not allow for the creation of explicit affective relationships with the host colony. It is only in the post-independence world of diaspora that these relationships can be fully articulated and celebrated.

In Halter’s article she discusses the relationships between Angolans and Cabo Verdeans in contemporary Massachusetts. She describes the trajectory Cabo Verdean descendants who were born in Angola and have now found themselves in the United States. These diasporic denizens have lived a particularly transnational experience, with some having migrated from Angola back to Cabo Verde and then to the United States and others joining the wave of *retornados* to Portugal and then migrating to Massachusetts. Some non-Cabo Verdean Angolans have also obtained political asylum from the United States and emigrated as well. All of these communities have tended to emerge in places like Brockton, Massachusetts, where an existent Cabo Verdean community meant that, “they have been able to take advantage of a Portuguese-language infrastructure, social

services, medical professionals, and co-ethnic employment and housing networks originally set up for the Cape Verdean newcomers” (546–547). Halter also discovered that good relations exist between Cabo Verdeans and recently arrived Angolan immigrants in Brockton. While there may be some tension between the two communities in Portugal, in Brockton they coexist well, and many of the Angolans in fact learn Cabo Verdean *kriolu* to better assimilate into the existing Cabo Verdean community (547). The fact that Angolans and Cabo Verdeans need to coexist in a broader Lusophone African diasporic community may have prompted the affective relationship evidenced in music. In the United States, the two communities find common ground with their dependence on the Portuguese-language community infrastructure, while in Portugal they find common ground as postcolonial migrants of color. By being grouped together, Angolans and Cabo Verdeans have created more positive connections than they may have had during the colonial years, when the Cabo Verdean community was connected to the apparatus of colonial power. These connections can even be seen in Angola itself. On a recent visit to Angola, a functionary for the *Partido Africano para a Independência de Cabo Verde* (African Party for the Independence of Cabo Verde or PAICV) noted that, “the Cape Verdean community looks very well integrated into Angolan society” (“Comunidade cabo-verdiana”). For a variety of reasons, Angolans and Cabo Verdeans appear to have created a stronger affective cultural bond, at least in southeastern New England, than that which existed when the Luanda riots of 1974 took place. An exploration of the musical manifestations of this bond will provide a deeper insight into the topic.

### 3. “Angolamania”

Cabo Verdean music is often studied as a creative expression of the migratory experience. Many Cabo Verdean songs narrate displacement, and scholars have studied Cabo Verdean songs as an insight into a national identity predicated on diasporic dispersion. In an article about the role of images of emigration in Cabo Verdean music Juliana Braz Dias writes:

Cape Verdean music has had a strong role in the process of construction and reconstruction of social identities. It is an essential tool in the formation of the idea (and feeling) of what it means to be Cape Verdean, and aids the adaptation of Cape Verdeans to foreign lands, as well as in their re-adaptation when they return to the homeland. (174)



Given music's prominent role in the creation of a Cabo Verdean identity, it becomes essential to listen to that music to find answers to our questions about that identity, such as affective links to Angola. This section will examine both scholarly works about Cabo Verdean and Angolan music and songs produced by diasporic musicians to illustrate Angola's position in Cabo Verdean discourses of identity. It is important not only to focus on the representation of Angola that is created in songs, but also to understand the impact that Angolan popular music itself has had on Cabo Verdeans in the diaspora. Furthermore, a discussion of the transnational nature of Cabo Verdean popular music and its varied influences will help reinforce the significance of inter-diasporic relations, such as those referenced by Halter, in the creation of Cabo Verdean identity.

Cabo Verde has become known globally for its rich musical culture. Artists like Cesária Évora and Maria de Barros have gained followings around the world since the 1990s. What many foreign fans of Cabo Verdean music may not realize is that much of the music that they consume originates in a diasporic musical network. Rui Cidra writes, "Migrants who settled in different migrant communities built musical production networks that enabled migrant and non-migrant musicians to record their music. Until recently, all recordings of Cape Verdean music were made entirely outside of the country" (190). Given the material poverty of Cabo Verde and the fact that there was already a well-established diasporic network in more economically developed countries, it not surprising that the production and recording of Cabo Verdean music would become a global enterprise. Musicians needed the more advanced production technology available in countries like Portugal, the United States and the Netherlands, and were able to take advantage of these through pre-existent migrant communities.

A side effect of this process of transnational musical creation was the opportunity to work with musicians from other countries who would have an influence on Cabo Verdean music. Cidra discusses the importance of Rotterdam as a recording center for Cabo Verdean musicians in the 1960s. This Dutch city had a large Cabo Verdean migrant population and was home to the influential record label *Edições Casa Silva* (later known as *Morabeza Records*). Though the majority of artists on this label in those early years were Cabo Verdean, this record label presented another point of dialogue between Cabo Verdeans and Angolans outside of the confines of the moribund Portuguese Empire. In his article, Cidra writes of the pro-*Partido Africano da Independência da Guiné e Cabo Verde* (African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cabo Verde, or PAIGC) political leanings of

the founders of Casa Silva, and uses this to explain these nascent links between the Cabo Verdean and Angolan popular music scenes in that decade of anti-colonial struggle in both countries. Cidra explains:

Casa Silva was also connected to the ‘anti-colonial struggle’ and PAIGC propaganda activities. With these political leanings, it published recorded poems of Cape Verdean writers and intellectuals and political speeches by party leaders, as well as the *Angola '72* LP by the Angolan singer Bonga, who was then exiled in the Netherlands, and who was backed by Humbertona and the Angolan Mário Rui Silva. Records with political content were put into sleeves belonging to other records and transported covertly to African countries by Cape Verdean and Angolan sailors. (194)

While in Angola itself there may have been tensions in the early 1970s between Cabo Verdean migrants and Angolans who were ready for independence, within a broader Lusophone African diaspora, musicians with similar political leanings were working together to better spread their message.

Though his message was unmistakably linked to the Angolan independence movement (and particularly with the UNITA party (Moorman 241)), the above-mentioned singer Bonga has gained considerable popularity among Cabo Verdeans. A Bonga concert that I attended in East Providence, RI, in 2010 was attended mostly by first and second generation Cabo Verdean-Americans. Among Bonga’s most popular and enduring songs is “Mona Ki Ngi Xiça,” a song from *Angola '72* sung in Kimbundu, that discusses the sorrow of leaving a child behind when one needs to migrate. This song lives on as an iconic symbol of Angola’s struggle for independence. While most Cabo Verdeans do not speak Kimbundu, Bonga’s performance of this song at the concert was accompanied by silence and even tears from some members of the audience. There was no way of knowing how many of the people in the audience were born in Angola or had connections there, but it was striking to see the way that an iconically Angolan cultural product affected a crowd of Cabo Verdean listeners. Despite the creation of separate national identities, it was clear that Bonga’s supremely Angolan creation also spoke to Cabo Verdeans’ experience of migration and identity formation.

One explanation for the Cabo Verdean interest in the music of Bonga and other Angolan musicians of his generation can be found in Moorman’s work. She describes the way that an appreciation of the popular music produced in Luanda’s *musseques* transcended racial and class divisions in the colony’s final years:

Music in late colonial Angola took private grief and by performing it publicly made it collective. The sound, and perhaps even the process, was attractive to whites as well, and in an ironic twist on the lusotropical narrative, by the early 1970s, whites made their way to the musseques in sizeable numbers to hear Ngola Ritmos and other popular bands play. In the end, it was Angolan music and Africans who succeeded in producing a culture, both cosmopolitan and African, that attracted European audiences. (137)

Whereas the Cabo Verdeans may not have identified with local African populations, they were part of this colonial cosmopolitanism described by Moorman, and would have been involved in the music scene as actively as Luanda's whites were. Furthermore, as a colonial people also facing an independence struggle against the Portuguese, the collective airing of grief that Moorman posits would have perhaps had particular resonance.

A 2010 interview I conducted with Yvonne Smart, a worker at the Cape Verdean Museum Exhibit in East Providence, RI, focused on the connections between Bonga and the Cabo Verdean community of southeastern New England. Smart hosted Bonga when he first came to perform in the United States in 1974. In her interview, she stated that she believes his tour of the United States at the time was the first exposure that many Cabo Verdean-Americans had to Angolan culture. Bonga had come to perform at the United Nations for a memorial service in commemoration of the recently assassinated PAIGC leader Amílcar Cabral. According to Smart, this tour was sponsored by the PAIGC support committee in the United States. Bonga and his band played in a variety of the venues in the United States during this tour, including Brown University in Providence, Southeastern Massachusetts University (now University of Massachusetts Dartmouth), and the Cape Verdean Progressive Club in East Providence. Since little money was available to sponsor this group of musicians, members of the Cabo Verdean community like Smart hosted them and provided them with food. Smart remembers that the group of musicians was diverse, and included musicians from Angola, Mozambique, Cabo Verde, Brazil, and even Martinique. Songs were sung in Kriolu, Portuguese, and a variety of African languages: "It was world music before they called it world music," as she put it. She remembers the emotional impact of Bonga's concerts at the Cape Verdean Progressive Club on the audience: "My mother, when he came, was in her 80s, at the time, and she went to that concert and I remember it really

moving her.” Smart has since befriended Bonga, attending all of the shows that he has performed in the region.

She says that Bonga feels an affinity for Cabo Verdeans, claiming that the Cabo Verdean community of Lisbon embraced him when he first moved to Portugal from Angola. He had gone to Portugal as an athlete and, according to Smart, eventually defected, living illegally with help from Cabo Verdeans in Lisbon. Smart recalls that at the same time when Bonga was staying with her and performing in the United States, there were tensions between Cabo Verdeans and Angolans in Angola. “There was trouble because the Cape Verdeans came over to Angola to be middle men. The Angolans thought that Cape Verdeans were on the side of the Portuguese government, even if they weren’t” (Smart). Despite this, according to Smart, Cabo Verdeans in both Lisbon and New England embraced the singer. Bonga’s performance in the United States to commemorate Cabo Verdean and Bissau-Guinean independence hero Amílcar Cabral sent a strong message of solidarity between the various independence struggles of Portuguese-colonized Africa, and laid the groundwork for future expressions of solidarity between Cabo Verdeans and Angolans.

The Mendes Brothers are a musical group rooted in the Cabo Verdean community of Southeastern New England that continues this performance of solidarity in a more contemporary context. The Mendes Brothers are João and Ramiro Mendes, two brothers from the Cabo Verdean island of Fogo who settled in Brockton, MA, the community mentioned by Marilyn Halter as a point of encounter between Cabo Verdeans and Angolans in the United States. Starting in the early 1990s, the brothers began a prolific musical career. Their music was popular both with the local Cabo Verdean community and with non-Cabo Verdean listeners who were interested in the burgeoning world music scene of the era. They are mentioned in the 1994 *Rough Guide to World Music* as, “the hot new names in the U.S.-based Cape Verdean scene” (Peterson 280). During the 1990s and much of the 2000s, the brothers also ran a record label out of Brockton called MB Records that was influential in the North American Cabo Verdean music scene, releasing albums by local Cabo Verdean artists and even breaking some Angolan artists, like the Kafala Brothers and Waldemar Bastos, into the U.S. market. The Mendes Brothers themselves have released several songs that deal with Angola as a primary topic. In a 2010 interview with Callie Crossley on the Boston radio station WGBH, the Mendes Brothers discussed their connections with Angola, stating that they have recorded over twelve songs that deal with the theme of peace and unity in Angola (*Callie Crossley Show*).

This interview invites the listener into these musicians' transnational experience. They discuss their experiences touring in Angola in the 1990s and singing songs with themes of peace and reconciliation. In the interview, one of the musicians describes Angola as, "a sister country that speaks the same language and was a former colony of Portugal as well" (*Callie Crossley Show*). This statement will be analyzed more closely after a discussion of the songs of the Mendes Brothers. Their experience with the use of music as a peace-building tool led the musicians to create a foundation in the 2000s called The Music and Life Foundation that supports efforts to build peace through music. Among the most salient features of the Mendes Brothers' music is that it functions as a commentary on global crisis, something exemplified in several of their earliest songs. Their first album from 1993, *Palonkon*, contains two songs that discuss Angola, "Angola na Paz" and "Angola Beleza Natural." The first of these songs deserves analysis, as it is an unequivocal statement of solidarity between Cabo Verdeans and Angola.

The song has a sound that shows influences from both Cabo Verdean and Angolan popular music genres. The rhythm of the song is much like mid-tempo Cabo Verdean *coladeira* music, while the instrumentation reflects an Angolan sound, as it features the high-tuned electric guitars that were popular in much of the late colonial Angolan music that has been researched by Moorman. Musically the song can appeal to both audiences. The lyrics are sung in Kriolu, and begin,

Angola, Angola/ Dja bu sufri tcheu nes mundo/ Sufriemento ta kaba/ Tudo na paz e harmonia/Angola, Angola/ Tudo bo dor tambem é nha dor/ Bu sufriemento é nha lamento/ Bu alegria é nha contentamento.

Angola, Angola/ You've suffered much in this world/ The suffering is ending/ All in peace and harmony/ Angola, Angola, all your pain is also my pain/ Your suffering is my lament/ Your joy is my contentment. (Mendes Brothers "Angola Na Paz")

Angola, which was experiencing a tenuous peace in 1993, had, at the time of the song's release, suffered through seventeen years of civil war. The Mendes Brothers express their sorrow at the suffering that Angolans had undergone during the years of war, and, by reaffirming the end of hostilities, make an appeal for peace in the strife-torn country. The chorus of the song is a plea for national unity, "Um só povo um só nação/ Um só povo um coração/ Um só povo um direção/ Angola na paz é midjor//Just one people just one nation/ Just one people one heart/ Just one people one direction/ Angola at peace is better"

(Mendes Brothers “Angola Na Paz”). Although they themselves are not Angolan, the Mendes Brothers plead directly with their fellow Lusophone Africans to unite. Later in the song, they appeal to various factions of the conflict including, President “Zedu” dos Santos, Jonas Savimbi, and “forças estrangeiras” (Mendes Brothers “Angola Na Paz”). While the song displays solidarity with Angolans, it is important to note that the lyrics contain *bo* (your) in reference to Angola and *nha* (my) in reference to the Cabo Verdean singers. The singers show their concern with Angola, but they do not claim the conflict and suffering as their own. It is an interesting song in that it clearly separates the Cabo Verdean singers from their Angolan subject matter, while at the same time encouraging Angolans and reinforcing empathy and support from Cabo Verdeans around the world.

The other song from this album with Angola as a theme is “Angola Beleza Natural,” a song that discusses the natural beauty of the country. This paean to Angola describes it as a land with “beleza natural/ natural beauty,” and “riqueza natural/ natural riches” (Mendes Brothers “Angola Beleza Natural”). The chorus of this song reveals the affective relationship that the Mendes Brothers have established with Angola as both nation and concept. The singer claims, “Angola intrega meu coração/Angola makes my heart whole,” and also that, “Angola fica na recordação/ Angola stays in one’s memory” (Mendes Brothers “Angola Beleza Natural”). These declarations confirm that Angola holds an essential role in the Mendes Brothers’ configuration of their self-identity. Though the brothers are not Angolan, the nation makes their hearts whole and stays in their memories. In a study of Portuguese *retornados* from Angola living in northern New Jersey, Kimberley DaCosta Holton notes similar emotional responses to Angola from these white former colonists and claims:

They have never ‘gotten over’ Angola, and contrary to commonly held perceptions, this longing for past lives has little to do with material wealth. Some came to the United States in search of a surrogate Africa. Others came to escape what they characterize as the social toxicity...All still dream of returning to Angola, either permanently or for a visit” (503).

The Mendes Brothers display a similar affective reaction to the country that perhaps stems from the influence of Cabo Verdean *retornados* who fled Angola and present similar feelings as the Portuguese *retornados* detailed by DaCosta Holton. Marilyn Halter already has documented the presence of Cabo Verdean *retornados* in Brockton, MA, the city where the Mendes Brothers are based. Just as

time spent in the diaspora helped to shape Bonga's reaction to Cabo Verdeans in Lisbon in the 1960s, so proximity to people who had spent time in Angola in the Brockton Cape Verdean community may have led to a deeper interest in that nation on the part of the Mendes Brothers. This is an interesting connection to ponder, and it would be important to interview the musicians about it.

The Mendes Brothers continued publicly to manifest their affection for Angola, discussing the nation in the above-mentioned interview on the Callie Crossley show and playing a sample from a song recorded in the late 1990s called "Angola Kuia". In 2006, they released a compilation CD of their songs specifically dedicated to the topic of Angola called *Para Angola com um Xi Coração*. The album contains both of the songs discussed earlier in this paper, in addition to several other songs exploring the theme of peace in Angola. The next year they recorded an album called *Cabo Verde* which, nevertheless, still includes two songs about Angola, one entitled "Luanda" and the other, "Angolamania." The latter song is particularly interesting as it displays a consciousness of the group's fixation on Angola, utilizing the titles of several other songs including "Angola na Paz" and "Angola Beleza Natural" in the lyrics. The song's final verse features the artists singing the names of various cities and towns in Angola and repeating the chorus, "Ai amor, Angolamania/Oh love, Angolamania" (Mendes Brothers "Angolamania"). Angola has now achieved the peace that the brothers had so actively hoped for in their earlier songs, but it has not lost its hold on them as a source of musical inspiration. Though they may have established a relationship of *bo* and *nha* with Angola, they still feel that it is important to refer to Angola, and to embrace their own "Angolamania."

While it would be an exaggeration to refer to Cabo Verdeans in New England as having "Angolamania," the popularity of Angolan music in the community cannot be denied. In a 2010 interview, Djuca Baptista, a concert organizer and club promoter in the Cabo Verdean community of Providence, RI, describes the magnitude of this popularity. Djuca works with Jambaby, a production company that had, at the time, organized at least three Angolan music events in Providence. These events included a *kuduro* dance night, a concert by Bonga, and another concert by the Angolan *kizomba* star Don Kikas. According to Baptista, these events drew large audiences. When asked if he thought that the audiences were mostly comprised of Angolans and/or Cabo Verdeans who had lived in Angola, he responded, "No, they had everybody from the community." Much like Yvonne Smart's mother's emotional reaction to Bonga in the 1970s, these

Cabo Verdeans from Rhode Island in the 2010s were attracted to Angolan music without any direct personal connection to Angola.

Don Kikas himself presents an interesting case of the multi-faceted identities that manifest themselves in the Lusophone African diaspora. A particularly illustrative point is his 1999 hit kizomba song “Angolanamente Sensual” (Angolanly Sensual). Kizomba is an Angolan genre of dance music that shares many auditory features with zouk, a genre of music that originated in the French Antilles but that has become a powerhouse musical genre among Cabo Verdeans from around the diaspora. JoAnne Hoffman has written about the popularity of zouk with Cabo Verdeans and discusses its initial boom in the Cabo Verdean community of Rotterdam, while also tracking its growing popularity in the diaspora as well as in Cabo Verde itself. Speaking about the genre, she claims that, “The roots of *cabo-zouk* lie in a combination of local and global factors that crossed paths at a particular time, in a particular place and answered a particular need—the popularity of Antillean zouk intersected with a community of musicians that related to its rhythm and the related dancing” (Hoffman 218). Don Kikas represents a further extension of the genre, now from the Cabo Verdean diaspora to Angola itself, where songs influenced by Antillean and Cabo Verdean zouk have become the basis for the success of the now internationally-renowned kizomba genre of music and dance.

Don Kikas was born in the city of Sumbe, Angola, but moved to Brazil with his family at a young age (Vaz). According to Djuca Baptista, he was based in Portugal in the 2000s. He is another product of migration, and while his song “Angolanamente Sensual” may feature an explicit reference to Angola, it also has references to a transnational Lusophone identity that overflows the confines of the former empire. The video for the song begins with the musician flying his private plane, the DON K 2000, on a course that goes from Boston to Lisbon to Luanda. The song ends with the singer praising the sensuality of a variety of primarily Lusophone countries: “Moçambicanamente/ Caboverdeanamente/ Guineensemente úí/ Sãotomensemente/ Portuguesamente/ Brasileiramente úí/ Mexi-mexi-mexi-canamente/ PALOP-PALOP-PALOPamente/ Universalmente// Mozambicanly/Cabo Verdeanly/ Guineanly/ São Tomeanly/ Portuguesely/ Brazilianly/ Mexicanly/ PALOP-ly/ Universally” (Don Kikas). The reference to the term PALOP, a Portuguese-language acronym for Officially Portuguese-Speaking African Countries (Países Africanos de Língua Oficial Portuguesa), is noteworthy, as it posits a cultural unity among the former Portuguese colonies of Africa.



This echoes comments by the Mendes Brothers about Angola being a sister country that shares a language with Cabo Verde. While Cabo Verdeans take pride in their own language, Kriolu, the comments by the Mendes Brothers and Don Kikas's mention of the PALOPs also affirm Cabo Verdean identity within a larger community of Portuguese-speaking African countries. Based on Djuca Baptista's description of the large crowd at the Don Kikas show in Providence, the Cabo Verdean community there certainly does not see a problem with identifying with other Portuguese-speaking African countries. Although "Angolamania" may be an exaggeration, the examples detailed in this section certainly illustrate an "Angolaphilia" in the Cabo Verdean community of southeastern New England.

#### **4. Conclusions**

In their interview with Callie Crossley, the Mendes Brothers discuss a song from their album entitled "Porton di Regresso" (Gate of Return). They claim that this song addresses people from all over the "Atlantic diaspora," and invites them to cultivate closer contact with Africa. They say that, "Africa is very lonely. They're looking for the connection. They're looking for their sons and daughters in particular to reconnect to the continent" (*The Callie Crossley Show*). Based on the examples that have been studied in this paper, there is indeed an attempt on the part of many Cabo Verdeans and Angolans to try to reinforce connections between Cabo Verde and the African continent, a reinforcement in which the southeastern New England Cabo Verdean community plays a role. As posited in the introduction to this paper, the Cabo Verdean migrant experience is one that illustrates and expands on Gilroy's influential discourse on the Black Atlantic. We can see the ways in which the college campuses, theaters, recording studios and dance clubs of southeastern New England have been spaces that have fostered the cultivation of a multiple consciousness among Cabo Verdean migrants and their descendants, which strengthen connections with Africa and the African Diaspora. In his book, Gilroy discusses the dual consciousness that many Afro-descendants develop, a consciousness that entails recognition of belonging within both a national community and a broader African diaspora. When I asked Djuca Baptista about the connection that Cabo Verdeans feel with Angola in relation to those with other African countries he answered, "The connection with Angola isn't different from the one with other countries in Africa" (Baptista). This response was interesting, because the examples of the presence of Angola in some elements of Cabo Verdean popular culture, not to mention

the special connection that Bonga felt with Cabo Verdeans, seem to indicate that there is indeed a special bond between the two nations. Nevertheless, Baptista implied that the connection that Cape Verdeans felt with Angola was part of a broader cultural approximation to Africa. As scholars like Marilyn Halter and Gina Sánchez-Gibau have shown, there has been a growing trend among Cabo Verdeans in the United States as well as the diaspora in the past half-century to identify more with Africa.

Social scientists of all political stripes, ranging from Brazil's reactionary Gilberto Freyre in his articulations of Lusotropicalism to Portugal's more radical Miguel Vale de Almeida and his "*mar da cor da terra*" (earth-colored sea), have posited the existence of a Lusophone "Brown Atlantic" that contrasts with Gilroy's Anglo-centric Black Atlantic. These discourses often focus on ideas of "exceptionalism" in the context of Portuguese imperialism. In this article I hope to have made the case that the particularly multi-faceted discourses of identity encountered in the Lusophone world do not merely stem from a Portuguese imperial exceptionalism, but rather from the genuinely multi-faceted migratory experiences of groups like the Cabo Verdeans. By following the directive so eloquently investigated by Gina Sánchez-Gibau and referenced in the introduction to this article, scholars must investigate people's specific stories of migration, diasporic affiliation, and transnational affect. I hope that my brief analysis of the work of specific musicians and community organizers is a small step in this direction.

In a migratory and mobile world, people develop diverse ties with a variety of other nations and cultures. Bonga left Angola to live in Portugal where he was embraced by the Cabo Verdean community of Lisbon, an event that led to an affection toward Cabo Verdeans. Yvonne Smart, a member of the New England Cabo Verdean community with connections to the political struggle in the archipelago itself, brought a voice from one Lusophone African struggle for independence into a community that had long been ambivalent about its connection to Africa. The Mendes Brothers lived in a city in the United States where a large community of Cabo Verdean *retornados* from Angola had also settled, possibly sparking an interest in Angola. Their dedication to the use of music as a peace-building tool heightened Angola's role as an inspiration to their music. Don Kikas has lived in Brazil and Portugal, making him more connected to the larger Lusophone world than other Angolans may be. Each of these artist's and activist's unique diasporic paths have contributed to their unique musical and cultural products. The transnational lives that are becoming increasingly

common will lead to a wide variety of affective feelings toward different countries and cultures for different individuals. The stories, whether told, or sung, of Cabo Verdeans in New England, with their noteworthy history of migration and displacement, have much to teach us about the ways in which these ties develop.

#### WORKS CITED

- Almeida, Miguel Vale de. *Um mar da cor da terra: "Raça", cultura a política da identidade*. Oeiras: CELTA, 2000.
- Batalha, Luís and Jørgen Carling. "Cape Verdean Migration and Diaspora." *Transnational Archipelago: Perspectives on Cape Verdean Migration and Diaspora*, edited by Luís Batalha and Jørgen Carling, Amsterdam UP, 2008, pp. 13–31.
- Baptista, Djuca. Personal Interview. 10 Dec 2010.
- Bender, Gerald J. *Angola under the Portuguese: The Myth and the Reality*. University of California Press, 1978.
- The Callie Crossley Show. Narr. Callie Crossley. Subj. João and Ramiro Mendes. WGBH, Boston. 17 Aug 2010. Radio.
- Cidra, Rui. "Cape Verdean Migration, Music Recordings and Performance." *Transnational Archipelago: Perspectives on Cape Verdean Migration and Diaspora*, edited by Luís Batalha and Jørgen Carling, Amsterdam UP, 2008, pp. 189–203.
- Clifford, James. "Diasporas." *Cultural Anthropology*. Vol 9, No. 3 (Aug, 1994), pp. 302–338. JSTOR.
- "Comunidade de imigrantes cabo-verdianos "muito bem integrada" na sociedade angolana" *Jornal de Angola Online*. *Jornal de Angola*. 18 Oct 2010. Web. 11 Dec 2010.
- DaCosta-Holton, Kimberly. "Angola Dreaming: Memories of Africa among Portuguese Retornados in Newark, NJ." *Community, Culture and the Makings of Identity: Portuguese-Americans along the Eastern Seaboard*, edited by Kimberly DaCosta-Holton and Andrea Klimt, Tagus Press, 2009, pp. 497–524.
- Dias, Juliana Braz. "Images of Emigration in Cape Verdean Music." *Transnational Archipelago: Perspectives on Cape Verdean Migration and Diaspora*, edited by Luís Batalha and Jørgen Carling, Amsterdam UP, 2008, pp. 173–187.
- Don Kikas. "Angolanamente Sensual" *Xeque Mate*. Zona Música, 1999. CD.
- Freyre, Gilberto. *O mundo que o português criou*. 1940. É Realizações, 2010.
- Gilroy, Paul. *The Black Atlantic*. 1993. 4th Pr. Harvard UP, 1996.
- Halter, Marilyn. "Diasporic Generations: Distinctions of Race, Nationality, and Identity in the Cape Verdean Community, Past and Present." *Community, Culture and the Makings of Identity: Portuguese-Americans along the Eastern Seaboard*, edited by Kimberly DaCosta-Holton and Andrea Klimt, Tagus Press, 2009, pp. 525–553.

- Hoffman, JoAnne. "Diasporic Networks, Political Change, and the Growth Cabo-Zouk Music." *Transnational Archipelago: Perspectives on Cape Verdean Migration and Diaspora*, edited by Luís Batalha and Jørgen Carling, Amsterdam UP, 2008, pp. 205–220.
- Meintel, Deidre. "Cape Verdean Transnationalism, Old and New." *Anthropologica*, vol. 44, no. 1, 2002, pp. 25–42. JSTOR.
- Mendes Brothers. "Angola Beleza Natural" Palonkon. MB Records, 1993. CD.
- . "Angola Na Paz" Palonkon. MB Records, 1993. CD.
- . "Angolamania" Cabo Verde. High Times Records, 2007. MP3.
- Moorman, Marissa. *Intonations: A Social History of Music and Nation in Luanda, Angola from 1945 to Recent Times*. Ohio UP, 2008.
- Peterson, David. "Sweet Sorrow: The Music of Cape Verde." *The Rough Guide to World Music*, edited by Simon Broughton, Mark Ellingham, David Muddyman and Richard Trillo, Rough Guides Ltd, 1994, pp. 274–281.
- Sánchez Gibau, Gina. "Contested Identities: Narratives of Race and Ethnicity in the Cape Verdean Diaspora." *Community, Culture and the Makings of Identity: Portuguese-Americans along the Eastern Seaboard*, edited by Kimberly DaCosta-Holton and Andrea Klimt, Tagus Press, 2009, pp. 461–495.
- . "Telling our Story, Because No One Else Will: Cape Verdean Transnational Identity Formation as Knowledge Production." *Mande Studies*, vol. 16/17, 2015, pp. 107–117. JSTOR.
- Smart, Yvonne. Telephone Interview. 10 Dec 2010.
- Vaz, Pedro. "Don Kikas." *Mwangole.net*. 22 June 2009. Web. 11 Dec 2010.

BENJAMIN LEGG is a Senior Lecturer and Language Coordinator of Portuguese at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, TN. As a native of southeastern New England, he was exposed to the diverse Portuguese-speaking populations of that region, an experience that led to his interest in the Lusophone World. He currently researches questions of Brazilian national identity and U.S.-Brazil relations, Brazilian culinary traditions and food culture, and queer activism and visibility throughout the Lusophone World.