

Some contributions to understanding violence in (and of) the Cape Verdean community in Portugal

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In any way, shape or form, violence is an anthropological phenomenon that is always determined from a human perspective. As such, both the causes and effects of violence can be psychological, mental, physical, social, cultural, economic, political, and philosophical - among several possible others. Thus, prior to considering the significant dynamics underlying violence in any of its forms, we must be careful not to isolate 'violence' from its anthropological approach, *sensu lato*.

In this paper we will specifically focus on Cape Verdean immigrants in Portugal. Our intention is to examine some of the relevant historical and existential elements, as well cultural and identity factors, pertaining to this group. Together, these elements may explain - or at least raise the question - about the violent behaviors and attitudes of Cape Verdeans in Portugal.

It is important to note that any migration process involves multiple issues and experiences, the most evident being stress. In some cases, these issues can impede adaptation and contribute to emotional distress.

Any immigrated community suffers a form of violence that is inherent to the state of being (literally and supposedly) out of the scene. In host countries, immigrants find themselves separated or out of place, and, in most cases, not harmoniously integrated. Both Cape Verdean immigrants and their descendants (of second and third generation, who were born in Portugal) are no exception to this rule. They are directly situated within the marginalized and ostracized parts of Portuguese society.

The Cape Verdean migrant, we believe, is confronted with two essential experiences related to loss and gain (a permanent and interactive gain) of cultural references and identity. There are many permanent changes, including those that are physical (i.e. new environment and home), biological (i.e. food), social and familial, cultural, political and psychological (and identity) that often contribute to psychosocial and cultural maladjustment. Being othered and stigmatized factor here too.

Thus, it is no surprise that in this immigrated community there has been a very high crime rate. It may also explain why Cape Verdeans represent a significant percentage among the prison population in Portugal. In the third trimester of 2015, the General Board of Reinsertion and Prison Services released its prison statistics. They found that among a total of 14,237 inmates, 17.3% were foreigners. Of this group, the most prevalent nationalities were Cape Verdean (31.1%) and Brazilian (13.7%).

We will highlight what several studies have confirmed: most convictions were for crimes related to drug dealing, armed robbery, gang violence, and domestic violence. There were also some convictions related to undocumented/ illegal immigrants, confrontation with the police, and defiance of authority.

The statistics on Cape Verdean prisoners and the types of crimes attributed to them appear to suggest social circumstances that have been well-characterized. Further, both the frequency of and types of crimes this group is found to engage in points to a particular state of being- of dysfunctional and deviating ambivalence. Where these crimes tend to occur, geographically, is significant, and must be taken into account. Most such crimes occur in the greater Lisbon area, specifically in *Amadora, Buraca, Damaia, Alto de Santa Catarina, Pedreira dos Húngaros* and *Concelho de Oeiras*. These also occur in an area named the South Bank or *Margem Sul*, especially in the urban and economically depressed *Setubal* neighborhood.

Most Cape Verdeans who live in such impoverished conditions- rife with crime and violence, are both impacted by and react to these social conditions. Many suffer from poverty, a lack of safety and discrimination. Many suffer due to separation from both their own cultural values as well those of the host culture- values that have been denied them in their marginalization. Despite the work of community organizations, cultural activists, actions of the High Commissioner for Migrations, and the social and autarchic politics of multicultural integration, immigrants who are violent have typically experienced themselves as unrooted, marginalized, and economically depressed.

We believe there is a labyrinth of other underlying issues contributing to the tendency toward violence and deviant behaviors. These include the very society from which Cape Verdean immigrants originate, including its anthropological, historical, environmental, cultural, and economic dynamics. It is also crucial to focus on the dynamics of identity that produce the Cape Verdeans' collective psyche and its individualized ramifications.

Now, where does the Cape Verdean immigrant in Portugal come from? Currently he/she comes from several places that do not include the actual Cape Verdean Archipelago. Cape Verdeans come from the archipelago as well from its diaspora (as Cape Verdeans are spread throughout the world). We believe most immigrants have come to Portugal from Cape Verde since the 16th century. The flow of migrants has ebbed and flowed at certain times.

It is important for us to learn more about Cape Verde. It is a small insular state located on the western coast of Africa- in the middle Atlantic Ocean. It belongs to Macronesia, like the archipelagos of the Azores, Madeira, and the Canary Islands. Cape Verdean history dates back to the 15th century. It was discovered by the Portuguese, and subsequently populated by Europeans, African slaves and servants. Such population resulted in one of the most successful (though not violence-free) examples of miscegenation known to date. Cape Verde is also the oldest Creole society in the Atlantic Ocean. The *creolism*, as we may infer, arose from miscegenation (interbreeding of races) that was often imposed by the dominant colonizer- a typically powerful white male owner.

Many view Cape Verde as an amalgam of various migrations. The Cape Verdean is seen as an interracial, intercultural, and international person and identity, established through miscegenation. It then developed into its own culture, with its own specific mental, psychological, and emotional framework- from which violence emerges.

As most Cape Verdeans live outside their homeland, Cape Verde has one of the highest rates of emigration in the world. There are an estimated one-million Cape Verdeans in diaspora- among them, tens of thousands are in Portugal. Joana Gorjão Rodrigues published an article about Cape Verde (2015) in *Jornal Público* (Public Newspaper), in which she wrote, "*Asking a Cape Verdean if they have anyone in their family who lives abroad becomes caricature, they say: of course, everybody has*".

The idea of diaspora seems both intrinsic and extrinsic to Cape Verde. We have always questioned the Cape Verdean essentiality. What makes Cape Verdeans search for improvement and reshape their way of being? Cape Verde has an insular/archipelagic dispersion and a migrant/diasporic dimension that turns it into a nation whose geometry transcends far beyond the state.

Insularity and “diasporicity” result in the Cape Verdean way of being in the world. Starting from their lives in the archipelago, Cape Verdeans are affected by a migratory feature; that is, the dynamics of geographic mobility. Cape Verdeans often have to deal with several elements of psychological conditioning. They are marked by loss (of family, friendship, social status, contact with their community).

It is particularly evident in the way Cape Verdeans, who are insular and diasporic humans, place themselves into new host societies. It suggests mutual understanding and mutual interpretation, sometimes impossible to be developed in conditions of inequality.

We will highlight cultural factors, specifically in regards to language - the complexity of bilingualism in Cape Verde. This culturally determined characteristic shows elements of the Cape Verdean universe. Bilingualism is a corollary of an inbred, insular, and diasporic nation, and emerges from the need for dealing with their double-linguistic identity in a host society (Portugal).

It is important for us to study the almost diglossic situation Cape Verdeans have to overcome because of their condition as double migrants (i.e. moving between islands and throughout the world). We need to examine their process of psychic development while they face cultural challenges. Migratory ostracism has an extremely disruptive impact on this process. It also affects the process of social/economic improvement of most Cape Verdeans in Portugal.

Interchanging situations of permanence, mobility, and wandering lead Cape Verdeans to experience feelings of isolation, seclusion, detachment and absence. They also feel rooted and uprooted, because of the smallness of the islands and, on the other hand, their ghetto communities spread throughout the world. All these dynamics reveal a nodal point of several forms of resistance (cultural, economic, social, and psychological) which constitute, in the end, phenomena of Cape Verdean re-existence.

There are, however, neither closed doors nor closed minds. Cape Verdeans tend to place themselves not as an “attachment” but as an effective part of the Portuguese society. Still, they do not lose their identity and their “Cape-Verdeanity”. Despite the conflicting relationship, the way Cape Verdeans connect and interconnect to each other leaves room for Cape Verdean worldview and re-existence. It allows them to be in a dialogue with other segments of Portuguese society.

Despite many tensions, Cape Verdeans have been able to develop- albeit in a slow and impaired way, some strategies of resilience and adaptation. It enables them to minimize the negative effects of insularity/diasporicity. Additionally, it allows them to take advantage of some opportunities for sublimating their violence. Their anthropological roots are revealed and strongly confirmed by this violence, which is always defined from the human (and humanist) perspective.