



## A Note from Guest Editor

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## **A Note from Guest Editor**

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Our time is now. It is the time to redefine our identities in our own voices, reflecting our stories, creating legacies that we are all proud of leaving behind for future generations.

The valuable contributions made by Cabo Verdean women to their communities across the globe have been vast and diverse. However, if one does a search of the words or subject “Cabo Verdean women” or “Kriola”, the yielded results are of hypersexual, tightly dressed, and sensual beings. Similarly in music videos, social media and film, the Kriola is more often than not featured for her physical attributes and not for the content of her character and humanity.

As an African feminist, I celebrate empowered Kriolas who are comfortable enough with their bodies and sexualities to dress and carry themselves as they see fit. However, the challenge is when this becomes the only image of the Kriola available in the popular imagination thus leading to the objectification of this group of women. It is imperative that the voice of the Kriola or Cabo Verdean woman is centered beyond the single story that is currently available. Nigerian author, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie powerfully states that, “the single story creates stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue but that they are incomplete.” They become the only story we know about a group of people, thus leading to reducing that group of people to a singular narrative. This has certainly been the case for Cabo Verdean women, until now.

Although much has been written about Cabo Verde in general and Kriolas, in particular, most of it has been written by non-Cabo Verdean women and in Portuguese, thus reaching limited audiences and not necessarily reflecting the full humanity of the people. Similarly, the existing limited body of literature in the English language is predominantly written by non-Cabo Verdeans. For Africans in general, telling our own stories is extremely significant because most of the

continent's history has been told in the context of imperialism and colonial occupation. Cabo Verde and its people are no different.

What is often missing is the voice of the everyday woman who has agency, for instance the voice of women like my grandmother Maria Silva fondly known as “Ia” (ee-uh) to her peers and “Mae” (Mother) to younger generations, who shares stories of her daily life as she walked to the *mercado* or market to buy vegetables and fresh fish while stopping along the way to chat with *vizinhas* or neighbors about local news. These are *our* stories. They reflect our *Cabo Verdeanidade* or Cabo Verdianity, the humanity that recognizes us as people and not as colonial subjects. In a time when much attention is given to the empowerment of women, Kriolas must continue to assert our place and space in society. Noted women's rights activist and combatant in the armed struggle for Cabo Verde's independence, Zezinha Chantre reminds us that, “Cabo Verdean women must create and make our own space in the globalized world.” Although, this struggle belongs primarily to us as women, we must also hold governments, institutions, and all individuals accountable in recognizing the value of creating societies where Kriolas feel fully respected and denounce actions, laws, and policies that deny us our basic human right to fully live our best lives.

This edition of the Journal of Cape Verdean Studies centers Cabo Verdean women's voices, knowledge, scholarship, activism and experiences. The objective is to alter the single story and redirect the present discourse in order to rebrand the image of Cabo Verdean women, from objectified victims of their circumstances to empowered beings who also have agency of their decisions. This movement is already in motion via community efforts of organizations like *womenise.it* (Cabo Verde), *Criolas Unidas*, *Criolas Contra Cancer* and *Deputadas Milionarias*, (United States), in academia via the works of Cabo Verde-based scholars like Roselma Evora and Euridice Monteiro as well as US-based scholars such as Aminah Fernandes Pilgrim and Dawna Thomas. In addition, *Poderoza: An International Conference on Cabo Verdean Women* held biannually in the United States is the first conference of its kind that values both community and academic spaces in understanding the unique set of challenges we face therefore centering Cabo Verdean women's voices, experiences and knowledge.

This issue includes the multidisciplinary work of Kriola scholars in academia as well as community advocates. Callie Watkins Liu, Aleida Cristina Mendes Borges, Anna Lima, Eunice Ferreira and Janine de Novais represent a diverse group of women whose vast experience and level of expertise transcends geographical boundaries, disciplines and community work. The featured scholars offer critical interventions in the areas of performance arts and African liberation, questions of ethnic and racial identity, self-identification, youth, political participation and democracy, genealogy, immigration and beyond. Their work comes together beautifully in this issue with the hope of inspiring the reader to truly “see” Cabo Verdean women as active agents of change with powerful stories that must be shared with others, in our own voices.