



Post Fellowship Reporting - Project Summary

Report Title: Musical and Cultural Investigation in Cape Verde **Name:** Kera M. Washington

Other Team Members:

Program: Boston Program

Trip Dates: 11/30/-0001 - 11/30/-0001 **Location Visited:** Cape Verde

Post Fellowship Reporting Template: PFR Template 02

Project Summary: In my fellowship, I visited three of the islands of Cape Verde, exploring music, language, and culture. I wanted to visit the place from which so many of my students have immigrated, and still have connections, both physical and emotional.

I first began working as an Integrated Arts teacher in a school that is composed primarily of students of Cape Verdean descent four years ago, and I have found the linguistic and cultural connections that I'm able to make with my students – particularly those who arrive late in our school year – invaluable in helping to ease their transitions and simply allowing us to communicate with each other. Often these students come with no English skills and, because I teach all of the classes in our school, I have found it necessary to learn Kriolu in order to be an effective teacher.

When I visited the island from which most of our students come (a very small and rural island, Fogo), I immediately understood some of the challenges that face our students and their families. Moving from a small place, where children are watched by a closely-knit community (much like the community in which I grew up) to a big city, which is culturally, linguistically and geographically different, is an incredibly hard transition for an adult, let alone our K-5th Grade students.

Career Impact: One of the most rewarding moments of my fellowship was when I encountered one of my students and her family – by happenstance – on the island of Fogo, and I was able to have a conversation with her father who stays in Cape Verde while sending his daughter (7 years old) off to school every year. She has been one of my most challenging students; while she is academically capable, she is quite oppositional in class – and seems to be acting out her (depression?) anger. I was so glad to hear her father's perspective on her struggles – he is so concerned that he has been considering not sending her back to school in the U.S. -- and I was able to video a message he has for our teachers about his hopes of what we can do to help students here and families back home. His main concern and need is communication. He has tried to email, with little success, and I was able to bridge a gap that for him is critical. I would never have been able to begin a conversation with him had I not gone to Cape Verde and not been able to further my study of Kriolu. Because I was immersed in Kriolu language during my fellowship, I was confident enough to hold a conversation with him and to help bridge a huge gap for him with the school with whom he is entrusting his daughter 9 months out of the year).

Musically, my fellowship also exceeded my expectations. Because I was in Cape Verde during a national music festival, Baia das Gatas, many of the top Cape Verdean musicians, both living at home and in the diaspora, were in one place, rehearsing and preparing for their performances. I was able to meet these musicians, to listen to and take part in their rehearsals, and learn invaluable lessons about and in Cape Verdean music. I learned some of the rhythms my students have been trying to describe to me for four years! Now I understand what they've been trying to replicate on our desks. I was able also as to take lessons on the cavaquin, an important and beautiful instrument in much of the traditional music of Cape Verde.

Classroom/Community Impact:Invaluable to our school has been the traditional instruments I brought back from Cape Verde. I brought back drums with which we've begun a before-school percussion ensemble, and that will be used at events throughout the school year. I brought CDs of traditional music that is difficult to find here and which has brought both smiles and tears to me students' faces. I also brought back artifacts, which have inspired students to bring items from home to share with their classmates (including pictures of their villages). With my increased linguistic knowledge, I have been able to have a more intelligent conversation with my colleagues about the need for an in-depth Kriolu glossary for us non-Kriolu speaking teachers, and have gotten their invaluable input. Other colleagues have been inspired begin to learn Kriolu themselves – whereas before they have been a little hesitant to try. I have also been excited to have parents approach me because they know about my trip and want to speak with me about it (in Kriolu of course) and to tell me how much they appreciate my going. I could not have anticipated these ripples that have all been made possible because of the Fund For Teachers fellowship.

Open Response: I am still realizing the positive effects of my fellowship in both my teaching and the connections within our school

community. I am still editing all the video footage I took in Cape Verde. I know that when I am able to share that footage with my students, it will ignite further conversations. Both my students and colleagues are impatient with my progress and can't wait to see the video. I am so appreciative of the opportunity to conduct a Fund For Teachers Fellowship.

Quote:

Photos:



Visting Po Lon, a tree that is older than Cape Verde, Santiago Island, Cape Verde



The volcano in Fogo, island from which many of my students come



One of my students, my home with her father, Fogo Island, Cape Verde



Drums! Some of the instruments I brought back for our school, Sao Vicente Island, Cape Verde



My student and myself, Fogo, Cape Verde



The game of Oril, Santiago, Cape Verde



Monte Kara, in the harbor of Sao Vicente, Cape Verde



School of Music, Sao Vicente, Cape Verde