

Harp and the city’s Cultural Affairs director Andy Wolf, worked with local photographer Lesley Roy to develop and finance the printing of a *Soaring In New Haven* a photo book [see page 25] of birds “captured” in Roy’s lens within the city. The book is given by the mayor to dignitaries and special guests.

Katherine Blake, Audubon Connecticut’s Bird-Friendly Communities Coordinator and a New Haven resident explained that New Haven is a great spot for birds, “New Haven has several hot spots, Lighthouse Point Park, East Rock, West Rock.” East Rock Park is a hot spot in the Springtime for migrating birds, they come back they’re hungry and weary and they need a place to rest and refuel”. Blake added “we want to help enhance New Haven’s contribution to protecting migratory birds and to communicate what is good for birds is good for people a festival is planned for East Rock next Spring to highlight its role for birds and wildlife.

See the following pages for information and resources on birds in the region.



Haven Parks & Recreation, Yale Peabody Museum and the Yale School of Forestry have joined together to “develop” and protect wildlife and bird habitats in and around the Elm City, what the group calls “urban oases, habitats and green-spaces.”

The importance of the cities and the New Have region to migratory birds, and community efforts to improve wildlife habitat yielded an additional recognition and a little bit of money to help things along as well. In late July the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service designated New Haven as an Urban Bird Treaty City.

Twenty-one cities across the country share the designation, the goal of the “treaty” is to help New Haven engage the community and build wildlife territories. School yards have been identified as potential bird-friendly places and New Haven’s Common Ground High School with the help of a grant is working on developing these urban oases at several New Haven schools. On October 14, Audubon Connecticut will host a Schoolyard Habitat Summit.

New Haven’s mayor Toni Harp shared her enthusiasm for the Urban Treaty City designation saying, “New Haven’s proximity to Long Island Sound, in the center lane of the Atlantic Flyway, make it a most likely and logical home for the comprehensive effort among municipal, education, and

environmental groups to provide urban oases for migratory birds.”

Harp lauded the community habitat developers, “to receive this special recognition

Yale’s Peabody Museum is the “bird daddy” of the region. It’s staff of scientists, curators and illustrators is unmatched anywhere. Here, volunteer bird model painter Collin Moret pauses to look at his work on a red phalarope with Michael Anderson, museum preparator.

Anderson and his crew are creating models of birds that are not available to be taxidermied in order to fill gaps in the museum’s *Birds of Connecticut Hall*, which features every bird in the state.

Photo: Derek Torellas



What's In The Greater New Haven Melting Pot?

DIVERSITY: WHO WE ARE
PART I OF A MULTI-PART SERIES ON NEW HAVEN COUNTY

BY RACHEL BERGMAN



Hindu Cultural Center: The goddess Durga is flanked by a host of other Hindu deities on an altar inside the temple of the Hindu Cultural Center in Stratford.

Photo: Derek Torellas

If you Google search "New Haven Diversity" you will probably get a few Bar Association links. Of course, the lawyers *would* be all over this.

It's a complicated region we're living in and diversity has become a touch-point for celebrations, festivals, education, networking—and even public policy. Diversity is important, it makes people think harder, work harder to understand and get along, promotes innovation and variety.

The census numbers show that the Greater New Haven region, home to storied institutions like Yale University and hospital and corporate conglomerates like UTC, is fairly educated with 88.3% of county residents possessing a high school diploma or higher. Thousands of small and medium-sized business owners comprise the economy along with larger corporate and academic players, many immigrant-owned.

While the myth of the sun-hat wearing Buffy in pearls from Connecticut has been largely dispelled, or at least relegated to New Canaan, the question remains, is Connecticut a diverse state? Who makes up New Haven County's 862,477?

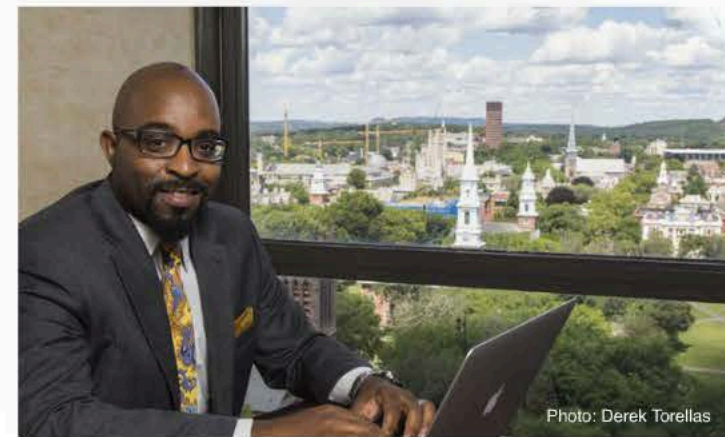
New Haven started out as a Revolutionary War battleground and later became known as the largest concentration of Italian Americans in the Northeastern region, with an Italian Consulate in New Haven at one point, and still boasts excellent Italian food aplenty and possibly the world's best pizza, depending on who is talking.

In examining the diversity of our own communities, New Haven Magazine reached out to those who are already doing outreach. Are we more than just the Little Italy of Wooster Square?

The only consulate in New Haven today is Ecuador, serving the sizeable population here and around the New England region.



Turkish Cultural Center: Omer Kizilcik, president of the Turkish Cultural Center, sits in the office of the organization's West Haven building.



Jason Watts: Jason Watts, founder of The Urban Professionals Network, inside John Davenport's At The Top Of The Park restaurant of the Omni Hotel. The UPN, created in 2005, is a business, social, and event marketing company.

Photo: Derek Torellas

The Milford/New Haven metro region is estimated to be home to almost 7,000 Ecuadorians.

Fausto Parra, Executive Secretary to the Commissioner at the State Department of Veteran's Affairs, came to the U.S. as an infant from Ecuador, strapped into a backpack his mother was carrying as she crossed the border with the help of a *coyotaje*—a smuggler. The first time his mother applied for their legal citizenship, Parra was 9 years old and they returned to Ecuador to petition at the U.S. embassy there. It was the early 90s and they traveled to Ecuador on the advice of an "Advisor," Parra explains, individuals in Spanish neighborhoods who provide advice

(for money) about the immigration process, although they are not lawyers or legal representatives. The advisor gave them bad advice and they lost everything. They were trapped in Ecuador.

Parra's mother paid yet another coyotaje, probably \$10,000, he estimates, although Parra says those fees are much higher now—and a taxi picked them up in Mexico and drove them back into the States. She was able to get her citizenship a few years later, after she married, although Parra wasn't yet eligible because his father was still a legal guardian in Ecuador.

His mother had worked 2, sometimes 3 jobs to support them. As a teen, his goal was to be as

American as possible, not speak with an accent, and to integrate. He was bullied at Greenwich high school for his "brown skin and accent."

Now, he says, he owes everything he achieved in life to his service in the military. He joined the military in his early 20s, looking for opportunity, discipline, and money for college. He spent six months in Afghanistan and seven months in Iraq during his 3-year service in the Army with the 82nd Airborne Division out of Fort Bragg in North Carolina. Before joining the Connecticut State Department of Veteran's affairs earlier this month, Parra worked for the VA Hospital in West Haven as a Program Specialist in Volunteer Services. Being bilingual helps, but he speaks Spanish with an American accent and his extended family teasingly calls him *Gringo*.

In Volunteer Services with the VA Hospital, Parra spent a lot of time engaging with community volunteers, which anecdotally he feels were majority female. He began an outreach program with female veterans, putting together a series of recognition events for outstanding citizenship and humanitarianism after service. He served with females in combat zones, says they were often doing community outreach alongside combat soldiers, making small gestures like passing out soccer balls to village children.

"A soldier is not just the strong-jawed man on the poster anymore. Hopefully, we're being more inclusive," Parra says. He believes it's important to re-educate the community about not only *who* a soldier is these days—male or female, or any of the soldiers he supports with his volunteer membership on the LGBT committee—but also, he says most people think vets all have PTSD. He admits people have asked him if he suffers from PTSD; want to know if he is "ok" after his combat service. "It's not the case. I work, I have a family."