



## **John Barros**

John Barros was born in the Roxbury neighborhood of Boston in 1973, to his parents, who emigrated to Boston from the Cape Verde islands in West Africa. John was educated in the Boston Public Schools, St. Patrick's Catholic Elementary School, and Boston College High School.

During his teenage years, John got involved in community improvement efforts. In 1991, at age 17, he was the first youth elected to the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative (DSNI) Board of Directors. In this role he worked to amplify youth voices across the organization and neighborhood.

John became one of the first members of his family to attend college when he enrolled at Dartmouth College. He focused on economics, and successfully advocated for Dartmouth to create the African and African-American Studies major in which he earned his degree. John held several leadership roles including President of the Palaeopitus African American Society and member of the Casque and Gauntlet Senior Society. He served as director of the Black Underground Theatre Association and editor of Black Praxis, a publication at Dartmouth focused on the experiences of Black students.

While studying at Dartmouth, John was accepted into a corporate internship with INROADS and placed at Chubb Group of Insurance Companies. After graduation, John was offered a full time position at Chubb helping to underwrite initial public offerings for dot-com startups.

In his twenties, John decided to return home to Roxbury, and dedicate his career to local efforts to lift up his community. Later, John was elected Vice President of the Board of DSNI and Dudley Neighbors, Inc., a respected non-profit organization that promotes community ownership as a strategy for building permanently affordable housing.

In 1999, John became Executive Director of DSNI, a role he held for 13 years. He led the effort to revive a neglected neighborhood into a vibrant urban village. He established the largest urban community land trust in the country by acquiring over half of the 1,300 vacant lots in the neighborhood and converting 36 acres into 225 homes, gardens, parks, playgrounds, schools, a community center, and a greenhouse. He led a highly collaborative grant application process with 36 community partners and ultimately won a \$5 million Promise Neighborhood grant from the US Department of Education.

John married Tchintcia, whom he met and began a friendship with when both were teenage activists with DSNI in Roxbury. John and Tchintcia bought a home in Dorchester close to Nubian Square, where they would go on to raise their four children and continue to be deeply engaged with community efforts.

In 2002, John joined three other social entrepreneurs to design and open Restaurante Cesaria, the first full-service Cape Verdean restaurant in the Boston area. John and his partners opened Cesaria in the Bowdoin-Geneva neighborhood of Dorchester in an attempt to bring new jobs and

business activity to the area. Restaurante Cesaria is often referred to as an arts and cultural center. It hosts a variety of performances including students from the Boston Public Schools, international artists and visual art expos. It plays an important role in enabling social networking and civic engagement.

In 2010, John was appointed to the Boston School Committee. There, he facilitated a series of data-sharing agreements across public agencies in order to better coordinate services for children. These included services for students experiencing homelessness and housing instability, and after school enrichment programs.

In 2013, John launched a campaign for Mayor of Boston, joining 11 other candidates in the hotly contested race. He was endorsed by the *Boston Globe* as one of two candidates “*best positioned to provide the wide-ranging leadership necessary to bring the vision to fruition.*” John finished in the top half of the election and endorsed Marty Walsh.

In 2014, Mayor Walsh appointed John to establish and lead the first-ever Economic Development Cabinet. John would go on to serve as Chief of Economic Development for seven years, during which time Boston added 140,000 new jobs and invested record amounts of funding in job training programs for local residents. John changed the way the City leverages economic growth by emphasizing community planning and creative problem solving to create a more equitable and inclusive economy. This was accomplished in five major undertakings:

- Alignment of all departments with economic development activities under a clearly stated mission of creating a more equitable and inclusive city;
- Creation of a new unit of Economic Inclusion and Equity to oversee new policies and programs while dismantling antiquated rules and policies;
- Co-chairing the process of creating “Imagine Boston 2030,” Boston’s first comprehensive city-wide plan in 50 years, with an emphasis on equitable growth;
- Creation of the new Office of Financial Empowerment which equips residents with the services they need to increase their income and build wealth.

John served as a central member of Mayor Walsh’s leadership team throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. John encouraged the Mayor to quickly establish the Health Inequities Task Force, to work collaboratively with organizations and leaders in order to address the reasons for the disparate impact the pandemic was having on communities of color. John worked to make testing, vaccinations, and fresh food more readily available and provided in a culturally competent way for communities of color.

John also played a key role in the City of Boston’s commitment to addressing systemic racism after the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis. He recommended that the Mayor create a new Equity Cabinet that would bring an equity lens to all the functions of city government while also launching a series of anti-racist trainings at all levels of the organization. He also worked closely with the Boston Police Reform Task Force, which developed recommendations for strengthening the BPD’s training and use-of-force policies, which the Mayor adopted in 2020.

In March 2021, John announced that he is running for Mayor of Boston. He launched a campaign focusing on a strong and equitable recovery from COVID-19; creating more affordable housing; investing in public education; and addressing racial and ethnic disparities in Boston's communities and economy.