

PRESENT FROM THE START:

PEOPLE OF COLOR IN CONNECTICUT'S REVOLUTIONARY ERA, 1763-1836

Eastern Connecticut State University, 83 Windham St, Willimantic, CT 06226

Connecticut Explored, Inc., The Center for Connecticut Studies, the Department of History at Eastern Connecticut State University, and the Association for the Study of Connecticut History will host the "Present from the Start: People of Color in Connecticut's Revolutionary Era, 1763-1836" conference on Saturday, September 20, 2025, from 8:30 am to 4:00 pm at Eastern Connecticut State University in the Student Center.

Draft Program

8:30 Registration and coffee, tea, and light fare



9:00 Welcome Remarks

Conference co-organizers Dr. Katherine Hermes (Connecticut Explored) and Dr. Thomas Balcerski (Eastern Connecticut State University, Center for Connecticut Studies)

9:15-10:15 Keynote Remarks: Catherine Johnson Adams, Associate Professor, History, SUNY Geneseo

Professor Adams is the co-author, with Elizabeth H. Pleck, of *Love of Freedom: Black Women in Colonial and Revolutionary New England* (Oxford University Press, 2010). Professor Adams is an expert in the history of African Americans in the early United States. Her research interests include early American history, African American history, women's history, and material culture.

10:15-10:30 Coffee Break

10:30-12:00 Morning Session Roundtables (Student Center 217)

1. Exploring the Relationships between White Female Enslavers and Enslaved Black Women through Museum Collections

Dr. Camesha Scruggs, Assistant Professor, Central Connecticut State University, Moderator

Christopher Shields, Greenwich Historical Society

Melissa Houston, Greenwich Historical Society

Kathy Craughwell-Varda, Greenwich Historical Society

2. African American Religious, Educational, and Revolutionary Experiences (Student Center 219)

Dr. Bilal Sekou, Professor, University of Hartford, Moderator

Felton Best, CSU Professor, Central Connecticut State University, "The Early African-American Religious Experience in Connecticut: Philosophical, Theistic, and Historical Implications."

Benjamin Foster, Central Connecticut State University, "Bin Ya: Events and Individuals in the African American Revolutionary Era Experience, 1763-1836;"

Walton Brown-Foster, Central Connecticut State University, "The First HBCU that could have been: New Haven 1831."

3. Uncovering the Collections (Student Center 221)

Dr. Barbara Tucker, Professor Emerita, Eastern Connecticut State University, Moderator

Adrienne Whaley and Alexandra Cade, Museum of the American Revolution, "Patriots of Color: From an Archive to an Online Storytelling Experience;"

Amy Hietala, et al, Connecticut Museum of History and Culture, "Tracing People of Color from the American Revolution."

12:00-1:30 Lunch and Exhibits (Posters and Digital Projects)

1:30-3:00 Afternoon Panels

1. Maritime Connections (Student Center 217)

Alex Dueben, "Anchors Away: Men of Color at Sea in the American Revolution"

Katharine Reinhart (Archaeological and Historical Services, Inc. and the Univ. of Connecticut) with Kelsey Tuller (Archaeological and Historical Services, Inc.), "Networks and Names: The Builders of the American Frigate, *Confederacy*"

Pauline Merrick, "Sam Huntington: Black Governor, Soldier, Sailor"

2. From Slavery to Abolition (Student Center 219)

Bridget Lewis, “Compelling Friendship: De Facto Slavery's Persistence in Massachusetts during the Revolutionary Era”

Lucien Lafreniere, “Steady Habits and Sudden Change: The Size and Impact of Abolition During the Revolutionary Era”

Bill Keegan and Kristen Noble Keegan, Bywater Historical Services, LLC, “Hebron’s Loyalists: What happened to the enslaved people who were part of their estates?”

3. Indigenous Communities in the Revolutionary Era (Student Center 221)

Laurie Weinstein, “The Revolutionary War and its Impact on Indigenous People in Western New England”

David Naumec, Historic New England 250 Revolutionary War Research Scholar, “Connecticut’s Indigenous Troops”

Vicki Welch, Seven Generations Family Research on People of Color (Mahican), “Captive Heroes: Three Soldiers of Color in the American Revolution”

3:00-4:00 Closing remarks by Dr. Stacey Close, Eastern Connecticut State University, “The Legacy of Dr. Lorenzo Greene” (Student Center Auditorium)

4:00 Tour of the Center for Connecticut Studies, J. Eugene Smith Library, 4th Floor

Bios:

Dr. Benjamin Foster currently serves as a Lecturer in African American Studies at Central Connecticut State University. He has over thirty years of service in education and public administration. In 2019, he was one of thirty-five individuals, who were awarded the “Distinguished Service Award” in Hampton, Virginia by the 400 Years of African American History Commission a federally appointed entity. Dr. Foster has served as Principal of Comprehensive and Technical High Schools, Assistant Chief, Staff Development, Department Social Services, Principal Planning Analyst for Human Services, State Office Policy and Management, District Coordinator, Social Studies and Adult Education. He held Fellowships at the Institute for Educational Leadership (IEL), Environment and Behavior Research Center, University Massachusetts/Amherst, and Center for the Study Public Policy, Cambridge, Massachusetts. In addition, he has been a member, New England Board of Higher Education, Chairman, Education Committee State Conference N.A.A.C.P., Trustee, Trinity College, and Founder Institute for Cross-Cultural Awareness and Transformative Education, Inc. Dr. Foster earned degrees from Trinity College, Wesleyan University and the University of Massachusetts in Amherst. An author and essayist, he acquired further studies at Cheyney, George Washington, Hampton Universities, and Baruch School of Public Administration, CUNY. He is the recipient of numerous awards and honors.

Dr. Walton Brown-Foster is a professor in the Department of Political Science at Central Connecticut State University, New Britain, CT. She is Editor-in-chief of the online *Journal: 1619: Journal of African American Studies*. She received her doctorate in political science from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. Her areas of research and teaching are Latin American Politics, African Politics, International Relations, Comparative Politics, Religion and Politics, and African American, Race and Ethnic politics. She has taught at the University of Georgia, Athens, and African American politics at Yale University, New Haven. Her most recent publications are "*African American Women in 2020 US Politics, the Stony Road Walked*," in Tauna S. Sisco et al. *Identity Politics in US National Elections*, Palgrave Publications, 2023, and "*Barbenheimer*": The nuclear age, civil rights, and African American women," forthcoming in Karen Ritzenhoff, et al., *Barbenheimer Syndrome*, Bloomsbury Publishing. Currently, she is working on a manuscript for publication about African American women and US Foreign policy.

[photo] Dr. Stacey Close received his Ph.D. and M.A. from The Ohio State University and B.A. from Albany State College, a HBCU in Georgia. While he currently serves as a Professor African American History at Eastern Connecticut State University in Willimantic,

CT, Dr. Close also has past service as a senior level administrator during his time in higher education. He has made paper presentations at conferences and universities as such as the Southern Conference on African American Studies, Association for the Study of Afro-American Life and History, Professional and Organizational Development Network, Brown University, Yale University, and St. John's University. He has published with journals and presses such as the Journal of Negro History, CT Explored, Humanities, The Griot: The Journal of African American Studies, Wesleyan University Press, Garland Publishing, and Guilford Press.

[photo] Alexandra Cade is the Assistant Curator at the Museum of the American Revolution and a PhD Candidate in the History of American Civilization at the University of Delaware. A historian and violist, she is a scholar of sound, travel, and identity, and her dissertation explores the material culture of sensory nationalism in 19th-century American tourism. Alexandra holds undergraduate degrees from the Eastman School of Music and the University of Rochester, and a master's degree from the Winterthur Program in American Material Culture.

[photo] Alex Dueben is a freelance writer and independent scholar based in New England who has written for *The Believer*, *Vulture*, *The Millions*, *The Los Angeles Review of Books*, *The Brooklyn Rail*, and many other publications. He is the writer and editor of the artist monograph *Hurricane Nancy*, and his debut novel is forthcoming.

[photo] Pauline Merrick is a genealogist and independent historian whose main interest is researching Black Revolutionary War Soldiers. She has published multiple articles and videos on this subject, and enjoys teaching others about such forgotten history.[photo]

[photo] Dr. David Naumec is a historian, archaeologist, and museum consultant from eastern Connecticut. He currently works as an Archaeology Field Director for Heritage Consultants and recently completed a fellowship as Historic New England's Revolution 250 Research Scholar, where he studies New England's Indigenous and African American Revolutionary War veterans. His historical and professional interests include Native American history, colonial North America, the history of Connecticut, and battlefield archaeology.

[photo] Adrienne G. Whaley is an educator and history-lover who currently serves as Director of Education and Community Engagement at the Museum of the American Revolution. A graduate of Harvard University and the University of Pennsylvania with degrees in African American Studies and Education, Adrienne has worked in both art and history museums, including the Museum of Modern Art (New York), the African American Museum in Philadelphia, and the Smithsonian's Anacostia Community Museum, and loves the potential for objects, artifacts, and primary source documents to enrich student learning experiences. She carries her love of history and for uncovering the stories of common people into her spare time as an avid genealogist, and, as both a museum

educator and a genealogist, she has presented on television and in workshops and conferences both locally and nationally.