

Upcoming panel discussion celebrating life of Capt. Paul Cuffe of Westport, New Bedford

Spinner Publications introduces the second in a four-part series of panel discussions celebrating the life of Captain Paul Cuffe (1759-1817) of Westport. Titled "Captain Paul Cuffe: Entrepreneur," the event will take place on Saturday, June 11th from 5:00–7:00 p.m. at the Wamsutta Club, 427 County Street in New Bedford.

Paul Cuffe's career as an entrepreneur begins when as a teenager he sailed through British blockades and marauding pirates to trade needed goods on Nantucket during the American Revolutionary War. After the war, he fished for cod on the Grand Banks, becoming one of Westport's earliest pioneers in the commercial fishing trade, even as he commanded whaling expeditions to Belle Isle off the Labrador coast.

Later, trader Cuffe teamed up with his brother-in-law, Michael Wainer, to become a leading shipbuilder in Westport, turning out schooners, brigs and barks suitable for trans-Atlantic voyages. He established a packet trade from New England to New York, later expanding from Canada to the Southern states, and built a lucrative domestic market for gypsum mined in Canada.

The intrepid captain dangerously entered Southern slave ports with his Black and Native American crew. He increased trading to South America, West Africa and Europe, importing exotic and essential goods to be sold at the family store he established in the center of New Bedford. Captain Cuffe traded during the War of 1812 and the Napoleonic Wars in northern Europe. He weathered violent storms, unlawful detainments, ship seizures,

lost crew, and political shenanigans to become one of the most successful merchant mariners of his time. Paul Cuffe's final voyage was in pursuit of the establishment of a growing, independent nation in Sierra Leone, West Africa.

The panel of scholars will discuss Captain Cuffe's impact on the economy and his lifelong passion to improve the human condition of his brethren—free and enslaved people of color. Panelists will explore how Cuffe's legacy helps inform modern entrepreneurs.

Panel members headlining the discussion are:



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- **David C. Cole**, economist and author of over twelve books, including *Paul Cuffe: His Purpose, Partners and Property*. David received a PhD in Economics from the University of Michigan in 1959. He taught at Vanderbilt University (1958-62) and was affiliated with the Harvard Institute for International Development (HIID) and the Economics Department at Harvard (1966–1994).



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- **Marion Kilson**, social anthropologist, received her PhD in 1967 and retired as Graduate School Dean at Salem State University in 2001. She published 8 books and many articles on African and African American topics. She curated the 2009 exhibition, “Black Entrepreneurs of the 18th and 19th

Centuries” at the Museum of African American History and Federal Reserve Bank of Boston.



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- **Samia Walker**, Executive Director of EforAll, received her B.S. in Criminal Justice from Bridgewater State College, and worked as a Domestic Violence Advocate with the New Bedford Police Department. With EforAll, Samia offers future entrepreneurs the support and guidance to help their businesses flourish, especially through adversity.



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- **Lamont D. Thomas** is a retired professor and leading authority on Cuffe. He earned his bachelor's and master's degrees in history from Trinity College in Connecticut. Lamont's book, *Rise to Be a People: A Biography of Paul Cuffe*, (Illinois University Press, 1986), was nominated for six awards by the University of Illinois Press, including a Pulitzer Prize in History.



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- **Joseph Thomas**, publisher. Co-founder of Spinner Publications, Joe is the event moderator. In 1997, he received the Commonwealth Award—the state’s highest cultural achievement award—in the humanities category “for dedication to excellence in illuminating and celebrating the heritage of Southeastern Massachusetts through a series of high-quality books and publications.”

The event, Captain Paul Cuffe: Entrepreneur, is happening in conjunction with 20mi2, a city-wide weekend celebration in New Bedford, featuring live music, art, recreation, unique experiences and other programs spotlighting points of interest in the city. The 20mi2 is designed to reveal the cultural wealth abounding throughout the city’s 20-square miles.

The discussion is free to the public. There will be light fare and refreshments. Attendees are encouraged to participate in a Q &A and to socialize following the discussion. For people unable to attend, a video of the event will be available on Spinner Publications’ Facebook and YouTube pages.

Grant support comes from the Massachusetts Humanities and

the New Bedford Arts Council. The final two discussions will be held this summer in Westport and in Aquinnah, Martha's Vineyard in early fall.

For more information contact Corey Nuffer at 605-376-2692 or Spinner Publications 508-994-4564. Registration link: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/347926606847>