



PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CONTACT INFO:

Meredith Bonds-Harmon
East Providence 250 Committee, Chair
eastprovidenceri250@gmail.com
(401) 415-8138

Freedom in the Fight: The 1st RI Regiment Panel Discussion

The East Providence 250 Commission, in partnership with the East Providence Historical Society, Museum of Black Artifacts, and Newman Congregational Church, will present a panel discussion exploring the history and legacy of the 1st Rhode Island Regiment during the Revolutionary War.

Panelists will include author Robert Geake; Narragansett teacher and writer Lorén Spears; Jason Roomes, whose ancestor Caesar Rome chose the path from “slave to soldier” in order to earn his freedom through military service; and Rhode Island Historian Laureate Keith Stokes will serve as the panel moderator.

The program is based on Robert Geake’s book *From Slaves to Soldiers*, which tells the story of the 1st Rhode Island Regiment, the first state regiment to enlist enslaved Black men as soldiers. Panelists will discuss the experiences of Black soldiers, the promises of freedom made in exchange for military service, and what happened to those who survived the war. The discussion will also examine the service of Native American soldiers and their experiences after the war.

Attendees are encouraged to arrive early to explore the newly refurbished gravestones of Revolutionary War soldiers buried at Newman Cemetery. Guides and QR codes will be available to help visitors learn more about those buried there.

There will be displays by sponsor groups in the church hall. Following the program, there will be light refreshments and a chance to talk with the panelists.

The program will be held on Monday, September 21, 2026, from 7PM to 8:30 PM at the Newman Congregational Church located at 100 Newman Avenue, Rumford, RI.

The program is free and open to all.