

THE *SÃO JOSÉ PAQUETE de AFRICA* AND THE *CLOTILDA*: RECONSTRUCTING MEMORY AND AFRICAN CULTURAL HERITAGE BEYOND THE SILENCE AND THE SHAME



A Presentation by Kamau B. A. Sadiki

On December 3, 1794, the *São José Paquete de Africa*, a Portuguese ship transporting over 500 captured Africans, mostly Makua people from Mozambique, departed the northern coast of Mozambique for what was to be a 7,000 mile voyage to Maranhao, Brazil and the sugar plantations that awaited its human cargo. Tragedy struck after twenty-four days into the voyage. On December 27th, the *São José Paquete de Africa* crashed into the rocks off Clifton Beach in Cape Town, South Africa. After attempts to salvage the “cargo” from the wreckage, 212 African lost their lives. In June 2015, after more than five years of research and underwater archaeology work, the Slave Wrecks Project, a partnership between the Smithsonian’s National Museum of African American Culture (NMAAHC), IZIKO Museums of South Africa, George Washington University, and Diving With a Purpose (DWP), announced the discovery of the *São José Paquete de Africa* shipwreck. It represented the first slave shipwreck ever discovered that sunk with captured Africans on board. On July 9, 1860, the *Clotilda* sailed into the Mobile Bay as the last slave ship to bring captured Africans into the USA. There were 109 Africans from present day Benin aboard. In June 2018, the wreckage of the *Clotilda* was located in the Mobile River. Kamau Sadiki participated in the underwater archaeological work on the *São José Paquete de Africa* and the *Clotilda* as a strategic partner with the Slave Wrecks Project and NMAAHC. Kamau is a PADI certified Divemaster, a DWP Lead Instructor and immediate past President of the National Association of Black Scuba Divers. He will be discussing his work on the projects, scuba diving on slave shipwreck sites, the ultimate exhibition of artifacts from the *São José Paquete de Africa* in NMAAHC, what’s ahead for the *Clotilda* descendant community of Africatown, AL and the critical meaning of memory and cultural heritage in the context of the African Slave Trade.

