

# Amistad (film)



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Order 437863 Topic: Amistad (film)

Amistad is the name of a ship on course from Cuba to USA and it is carrying the cargo of Africans. They have been sold into slavery in Cuba. The film's protagonist, Sengbe Pieh, popularly known as Cinque, a tribal leader in Africa, takes command of the ship after a mutiny, in which most of the ship's crew is killed along with several Africans. The ship sails on and ultimately reaches USA, where the slaves hope they will get help. They think that they are sailing back to Africa, but they are tricked. In USA, they are treated as runaway slaves and imprisoned. Unable to communicate in English, they await certain death for the offence of killing their captors. But the legal point of the case is highly interesting. The Abolitionist lawyer argues that they are not slaves at all, but the free citizens of another country. The case reaches out to Supreme Court where John Quincy Adams makes a brilliant argument for their release.

Earlier, they are arrested by the American Navy. They are thrown into a dungeon and live in inhuman conditions, pending trial. The arrest of the slaves and seizure of the ship creates a big political storm, the issue reaches up to the President of the United States, Martin Van Buren (Nigel Hawthorne). The legality of the issue, having international ramifications, is highly complicated. The Africans are charged with insurrection on the high seas. Abolitionists work overtime trying to solve the case that takes complicated twists and turns. Besides the legalities of the issue, communication is a great problem, as no one is able to understand a word from the side of the African slaves. The problem of superstitious beliefs also intervenes. Here is Yamba, Cinque's rival for power amongst the Africans, a convert to Christianity, and he has taken a novel stand on the impending death of slaves—that execution

<https://assignbuster.com/amistad-film/>

will lead them to a pleasant afterlife! In the meantime, the death of a young African provokes a strong protest that threatens to blow into a prison riot and rebellion.

The high legal drama in the court begins with the help of the linguistic abilities of Covey, who is specially recruited for the task. Cinque is able to make a heart-rending presentation about his capture and the conditions of the slaves in general and especially the cruelties they suffered in the ship. This has been done through a series of flashbacks in the movie. Throughout the Middle Passage in the ship, rapes, tortures, random executions are carried out by the crew. He recalls how 50 people are deliberately pushed into the sea, in order to save food. In the emotional drama that precedes and follows the legalities of the case, the Judge finally rules that Africans are captured illegally, orders the arrest of Amistad's remaining crew. They are charged with slave trading and the Amistad Africans are to be sent back to Africa at the expense of the government of United States.

But the vested interests of the white race do not accept the judgment of the Supreme Court gracefully. An issue is made out of the economic importance of the slaves in the South. Sort of a Civil War situation develops in the political circles, and pleas are made to hand over the case to the Supreme Court, by picking the slave-owning judges to hear the case. John Quincy Adams, makes a brilliant case, and argues how the ideals of Constitution would be worthless, if the present case goes against the African people falsely implicated as slaves. Finally, the case is decided in favor of the Africans, and in the final scene, Cinque and the freed Africans return to Africa, dressed in white, symbolizing victory.

The gist of the movie is-- freedom is the birth right of human beings blacks or

<https://assignbuster.com/amistad-film/>

whites. The movie is well directed by Steven Spielberg, and the script is written by David Franzoni. It was released on December 10, 1997. There are many violent scenes in the movie and at times, their intensity is so much, that they hurt the sensibilities of the viewers.

\*\*\*\*\*

Works Cited:

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0118607/>