The *Amistad* Case

"*. . . each of them are natives of Africa and were born free, and ever since have been and still of right are and ought to be free and not slaves . . .*"

- S. Staples, R. Baldwin, and T. Sedgewick, Proctors for the *Amistad* Africans, January 7, 1840

**Key terms:**

undermine, abolitionist, schooner, brig

**Focus Question:**

Did the *Amistad* case help to undermine slavery in the United States?

**Discussion Questions:**

1. Why do the abolitionists stress Cinque's noble appearance?
2. Who is the Webster referred to in [**Document #1**](http://www.yale.edu/glc/archive/1045.htm)? Why is Cinque's actions and manner compared to American heroes and the American Revolution itself in [**Document #2**](http://www.yale.edu/glc/archive/1047.htm)?
3. In [**Document #4**](http://www.yale.edu/glc/archive/1042.htm), what is the *New York Morning Herald's* view of the enslaved Africans? Who is their principal source?
4. In [**Document #5**](http://www.yale.edu/glc/archive/1043.htm), the writer says Africans possess certain natural rights and should not be enslaved. But what is his attitude toward abolitionists and toward the Africans themselves? How can we reconcile both views?
5. All of these newspaper articles are from New York. How might this debate have been different in Massachusetts or Georgia?

**Outline:**

Using the documents, what are some of the arguments marshaled by pro- and anti-abolitionists in the Amistad case?

Pro –Abolitionist Anti-Abolitionist

**Mini-Project:**

Write a news report for an 1841 newspaper describing the decision of the Supreme Court in the *Amistad* case taking the viewpoint of either a Northern or Southern newspaper.

How to write a News Report

Step 1: Start planning

In your rough notes, answer some or all of the following questions:

Who? What? Where? When? Why? How?

Then add:

Quotes (if available)

More information

Next:

Think of a catchy lead paragraph

Step 2: Create a story!

\_\_Create a headline (Catches your attention, sums up the story)

\_\_Write a byline (Writer’s name)

\_\_Create a placeline (Where the story begins, ex. TORONTO - In the movie classic…)

\_\_Create a catchy lead paragraph (The opening section, gives most important information, includes the 5W’s

\_\_Write in the 3rd person

\_\_Write the body (1-3 paragraphs)

\_\_Be ensure to include a quotation

Step 3: Review and edit

Written Document Analysis Worksheet

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1. |  | TYPE OF DOCUMENT (Check one):   |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | | \_\_\_ Newspaper  \_\_\_ Letter  \_\_\_ Patent  \_\_\_ Memorandum |  | \_\_\_ Map \_\_\_ Telegram  \_\_\_ Press release  \_\_\_ Report |  | \_\_\_ Advertisement  \_\_\_ Congressional record  \_\_\_ Census report  \_\_\_ Other | |
| 2. |  | UNIQUE PHYSICAL QUALITIES OF THE DOCUMENT (Check one or more):   |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | \_\_\_ Interesting letterhead \_\_\_ Handwritten \_\_\_ Typed \_\_\_ Seals |  | \_\_\_ Notations \_\_\_ "RECEIVED" stamp \_\_\_ Other | |
| 3. |  | DATE(S) OF DOCUMENT: |
| 4. |  | AUTHOR (OR CREATOR) OF THE DOCUMENT:    POSITION (TITLE): |
| 5. |  | FOR WHAT AUDIENCE WAS THE DOCUMENT WRITTEN? |
| 6. |  | DOCUMENT INFORMATION (There are many possible ways to answer A-E.)   A. List three things the author said that you think are important:   B. Why do you think this document was written?  C. What evidence in the document helps you know why it was written? Quote from the document.  D. List two things the document tells you about life in the United States at the time it was written:  E. Write a question to the author that is left unanswered by the document: |

The Amistad Case

Brief Narrative of the *Amistad*Incident

Steven Mintz, University of Houston

In June 1839, four months after they had been forcibly enslaved and illegally shipped to Cuba, 53 African captives revolted as they were being transported on the schooner Amistad from Havana to Guanaja, Cuba. By day, at the Africans' orders, two surviving whites sailed the slave ship east toward Africa. But at night, the whites, who had purchased the rebels, altered the ship's course to the northwest. Following this zigzag course for weeks, the Amistad eventually anchored off eastern Long Island, where it was seized by a U.S. naval brig. A hearing was held in New London, Connecticut. The Africans were arrested, charged with mutiny, murder, and piracy and sent to New Haven where they were jailed, to await trial.

Abolitionists quickly took up the cause of the Amistad rebels. Legal battles raged for two years. In 1841, former President John Quincy Adams argued the prisoners' case before the U.S. Supreme Court which, at last, set them free.

The Amistad affair took place at a critical moment in the history of the Atlantic slave system. In 1833, Britain emancipated 800,000 colonial blacks; at the same time, the British navy was also engaged in an expensive campaign to suppress the African slave trade. Yet in Cuba and the American South, slavery was continuing to expand. During the 1830s, while Spain was shaken by civil war, Cuba illegally imported approximately 181,600 slaves from Africa. Many American slaveholders coveted Cuba and feared that Britain might seize the Spanish colony on the pretext of violations of slave trade treaties.

To understand the Amistad affair's historical significance, it is essential to locate the case in its proper political context. President Martin Van Buren, who was politically weakened by the disastrous economic Panic of 1837, feared that the Amistad case would undermine his political support in the South and damage his bid for reelection. His administration attempted to subvert the judicial system and deprive the rebels of their right to due process.

By 1839, the abolitionists had failed in their efforts to end slavery through moral suasion. Northern mobs, often instigated by "gentlemen of property and standing," disrupted abolitionist meetings and printing presses. The House of Representatives had adopted the "gag rule," automatically tabling antislavery petitions. Desperately, abolitionists sought a way to dramatize the horrors of slavery. The Amistad case seemed to provide a providential opportunity to illustrate the federal government's complicity with slavery and the discrepancy between slavery American ideals of natural rights. The affair played a pivotal role in shifting the abolitionist movement away from the tactics of moral suasion to new methods of political and legal agitation, which would arouse substantial numbers of Northerners against the immoralities of slavery.

Prior to the Dred Scott decision, the Amistad case was, arguably, the single most important legal case involving slavery during the nineteenth century. The Amistad case raised critical issues of law and justice. The central issue raised by the case was whether enslaved people had the right to rise up against their captors in rebellion. Do people who are held illegally have a right to self-defense?

Another key set of issues involved international law regarding treaty obligations, property rights, and the legality of the international slave trade. Was the U.S. government obligated to return the rebels to Cuba under 1795 and 1819 treaties with Spain, which provided for the return of property rescued from pirates on the high seas? Was the United States obligated to respect Spanish claims that the rebels were legal slave property or did it have an independent obligation to ascertain the accuracy of those claims?

**Abolitionism Timeline** (continued on back page)

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| **1433** | Portuguese seafarers round Cape Bojador on the West Coast of Africa. The Portuguese explore the coast and discover a large native population. |
| **1441** | Portuguese sea captain Antam Goncalvez returns from exploring West Africa with two slaves, the first in Europe from this area. |
| **1443** | One of Goncalvez's men, Nuno Tristao, captures 235 slaves. This is the beginning of the Portuguese slave trade. |
| **1492** | Columbus arrives in the New World. Spanish settlements are established in the Americas during the following years. Due to the large number of native deaths (caused by disease), the Spanish begin to import slaves from Africa. |
| **1565** | The Spanish introduce slavery in North America. They take slaves to St. Augustine, the first permanent settlement in what would become Florida. |
| **1619** | A Dutch vessel arrives in Jamestown (Virginia), an English colony, with twenty slaves. These are the first slaves in an English colony in America. |
| **1641** | The colony of Massachusetts Bay forbids slavery except in the cases of war captives or people willingly selling themselves into slavery. |
| **1652** | The colony of Rhode Island is the first to forbid all forms of slavery. |
| **1701** | The War of the Spanish Succession greatly weakens Spain and Portugal. England now becomes the main supplier of slaves. |
| **1787** | The Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade is founded in England. A small colony is established in Sierra Leone, Africa, for former slaves. |
| **1807** | England outlaws the importation of slaves. |
| **1808** | The United States outlaws the importation of slaves. |
| **1814** | United States and England agree to try to end slave trade in Treaty of Ghent. |
| **1822** | Liberia is founded as an African colony for freed American slaves. |
| **1833** | England outlaws slavery in all British colonies and in England itself. The American Anti-Slavery Society is formed. Arthur Tappan launches the abolitionist newspaper, The *Emancipator*. Prudence Crandall accepts black students into her school. |
| **1836** | The gag rule, which prohibits the reading of anti-slavery petitions in the U.S. Congress, is passed. |
| **1837** | Abolitionist Elijah Lovejoy is murdered on November 7, 1837. |
| **1839** | Cinque is captured from Sierra Leone and taken to Cuba. He leads a revolt aboard *La Amistad* on July 1. He and the other mutineers are captured on August 26 near Long Island, New York, and brought to New Haven, Connecticut. An investigation hearing is held on August 29. The *Amistad* Africans are charged with murder and piracy. In September, Cinque and the other captives appear in circuit court in New Haven. |
| **1840** | In January, the *Amistad* Africans appear in district court. The Liberty Party, established by abolitionists, has a candidate in the presidential election. |
| **1841** | On February 20, the *Amistad* case reaches the U.S. Supreme Court. |
| **1850** | Compromise of 1850 |
| **1854** | Kansas-Nebraska Act |
| **1857** | "Bleeding Kansas" |
| **1859** | John Brown's raid at Harper's Ferry, Virginia |
| **1860** | Abraham Lincoln elected president |
| **1861** | Civil War begins with Confederate attack on Fort Sumter in Charleston harbor, South Carolina |
| **1863** | Emancipation Proclamation goes into effect |
| **1865** | 13th Amendment to the Constitution outlaws slavery |

On Cinques (Doc 1)

**Citation Information:**"On Cinques," *The Colored American.* October 19, 1839.

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| |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | | 1. We are inclined to call the noble African by this name, although he is called by as many different titles as our republicanism offers reasons for enslaving his people. We have seen a wood-cut representation of the royal fellow. It looks as we think it would. It answers well to his lion-like character.— The head has the towering front of Webster, and though some shades darker than our great country-man, we are struck at first sight, with his resemblance to him. He has Webster's lion aspect. — his majestic, quiet, uninterested cast of expression, looking, when at rest, as if there was nobody and nothing about him to care about or look at. His eye is deep, heavy - the cloudy iris extending up behind the brow almost inexpressive, and yet as if volcanoes of action might be asleep behind it. It looks like the black sea or the ocean in a calm — an unenlightened eye, as Webster's would have looked, had he been bred in the desert, among the lions, as Cinguea [sic] was, and if instead of pouring upon Homer and Shakespeare, and Coke and the Bible (for Webster read the Bible when he was young, and got his *regal* style there) it had rested, from savage boyhood, on the sands and sky of Africa. It looks like a wilderness, a grand, but uninhabited land, or, if peopled, the abode of aboriginal man. Webster's eye like a civilized and cultivated country — *country* rather than city — more on the whole like woods and wilderness than fields or villages. For after all, nature predominates greatly in the eye of our majestic countryman. 2. The nose and mouth of Cingues are African. We discover the expanded and powerful nostrils mentioned in the description, and can fancy readily its contractions and dilations, as he made those addresses to his countrymen and called upon them to rush, with a greater than Spartan spirit, upon the countless white people, who he apprehended would doom them to a life of slavery. He has none of the look of an Indian — nothing of the savage. It is a gentle, magnanimous, generous look, not so much of the warrior as the sage — a sparing and not a destructive look, like the lion's when unaroused by hunger or the spear of the huntsman. It must have flashed terribly upon that midnight deck, when he was dealing with the wretched Ramonflues. 3. We bid pro-slavery look upon Cingues and behold in him the race we are enslaving. He is a sample. Every Congolese or Mandingan is not, be sure, a Cingues. Nor was every Corsican a Napolian [sic], or every Yankee a Webster. 'Giants are rare,' said Ames, 'and it is forbidden that there should be races of them.' But call not the race *inferior*, which in now and then an age produces such men. 4. Our shameless people have made merchandise of the likeness of Cingues - as they have of the originals of his (and their own) countrymen. They had the effrontery to look him in the face long enough to delineate it, and at his eye long enough to copy its wonderful expression. 5. By the way, Webster ought to come home to defend Cingues. He ought to have no counsel short of his twin spirit. His defence were a nobler subject for Webster's giant intellect, than the Foote resolutions or Calhoun's nullification. There is indeed no defence to make. It would give Webster occasion to strike at the slave trade and at our people for imprisoning and trying a man admitted to have risen only against the worst of pirates, and for more than life - for liberty, for country and for home. 6. Webster should vindicate him if he must be tried. Old Marshall would be the man to try him. And after his most honorable acquittal and triumph, a ship should be sent to convey him to his country - not an American ship. They are all too near a kin to the *"low, long, black schooner*." A British ship - old Nelson's line of battle, if it is yet afloat, the one he had at Trafalgar; and Hardy, Nelson's captain, were a worthy sailor to command it to Africa. He would steer more honestly than the treacherous old Spaniard. He would steer them toward the *sunrise*, by night as well as by day. An old British sea captain would have scorned to betray the noble Cinques. He would have been as faithful as the compass. 7. We wait to see the fate of the African hero. We feel no anxiety for him. The country can't reach him. He is above their reach and above death. He has conquered death. But his wife and children - they who "Weep beside the cocoa tree —" 8. And we wait to see the bearings of this providential event upon American Slavery. —*Herald of Freedom*  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | Cinque and Heroes of the American Revolution (Doc 2)  **Citation Information:**"Cinque and Heroes of the American Revolution," *The Colored American.* March 27, 1841 | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | 1. CINQUE. — This noble hero, by his defence of liberty, has placed himself side by side with Patrick Henry, John Hancock, Thomas Jefferson, and Samuel and John Adams fathers of the Revolution. The justice of the nation has stood up in vindication of his deeds, in defence of his course, and decreed them right. How could they have done otherwise, with an example so illustrious as the American Revolution before them. Were he not an African, a black man, his fame would be emblazoned forever on the tide of time, and written in high eulogium by the historian's pen. Robert Purvis has done himself great honor, in causing to have so correct a likeness taken of him on steel, to be handed down to posterity. His character and his acts certainly deserve to be written in song. Either would form a subject for those who muse in poetry. Now that the victory is won, will it not inspire the poet of the Merrimac. May it not be a subject for C.L.R. or H.H.G., or D.A.P. or Philomath. These, our own brethren, sometimes appear in song. | | | |

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| |  | | --- | | Meetings of the Liberated Africans (Doc 3)  **Citation Information:**"Meetings of the Liberated Africans," *The Colored American.* May 22, 1841. | |

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| |  | | --- | | 1. We announced in our last, that the meeting of these brethren at the Tabernacle on Wednesday, the 12th inst., was equalled in interest by no meeting during the week, and was numerously attended. The proceedings were as follows : 2. The Hon. James G. Burney was called to the chair. The throne of grace was addressed by the Rev. Christopher Rush, after which Mr. Lewis Tappan proceeded to apologize to the audience for the absence of the Hon. John Quincy Adams, who was expected to be present, by announcing that he was detained at home, in writing out his argument in their defence. He next stated the object of the meeting to be, to show first, the improvement these brethren had made since they have been in this country— to raise money for their support and education during their further stay among us—to aid in sending them home, when they shall have got the necessary information preparatory to so doing, and to excite the sympathy of the public in relation to the establishment of a mission, which it is hoped will grow out of this case. 3. Mr. Booth, their teacher, next proceeded to make some statements, giving an account of the success which had attended his efforts to instruct them. He related many incidents respecting them, which had come under his own observation. He also related some things which he learned from them in regard to their native country—that the people live in small houses—have laws—are hospitable and honest—that the son, when old enough, does the work for his father, he himself retiring from any further labor, and that the children always live with their parents. 4. The Africans next read twice round from the New Testament, by which they showed the success with which they had mastered our language, as well as the proficiency they had made in learning to read. While some had done better than others, they had all succeeded beyond all human expectation. Only reflect, they had first to learn the language of the country, before they could understand, so as to receive instruction, and having been here but 19 months, and only having had a teacher constantly since October last, and now to read with ease in the New Testament, is amazing. Who could have outdone them ? They sung two hymns in English with great melody and harmony, and sung, also, two of their native songs.—Kinna, an amiable looking youth about 18 years old, and who has been hopefully converted, made an address in English, giving the history of their captivity, and making many remarks as to what he considered to be the American character. Cinque made an address in his native language, with great energy, and appealing occasionally to his associates for proof, and who always responded. When Cinque arose at any time, great bursts of applause resounded from all parts of the house. 5. The meeting on the Thursday following, in the same place, was well attended, and in some respects, we are informed, was more interesting than the former one.—We were unable to attend, but learn that the proceedings were about the same as on Wednesday, with some additional questions put to Kinna by persons in the audience, and which, on account of the readiness and correctness with which he answered them, quite astonished the assembly. 6. The following Friday, another meeting was held, by request, in the church, corner of Thompson and Houston streets, and which was crowded. The exercises were the same as at the previous meetings, so far as time would allow, and the audience was equally interested in the proceedings, as at the former meetings. 7. On Monday evening last, another meeting was held by request in Zion Church, corner of Church and Leonard streets. The audience was principally made up of colored people, and we do not recollect of ever having seen a larger assemblage of our people upon any occasion.—Messrs. Tappan and Booth were more brief in their statements than at the Tabernacle, but the Africans were more interesting, we thought, than at any of the previous meetings. Kinna in giving a brief history of his being taken from his own country, of his being carried to Cuba, and the scene on board the Amistad, &c., stated, "you are my brethren, the same color as myself," and seemed to feel himself at home, and his address was exceedingly concise, distinct and happy. James Covey, also, the interpreter, who came from the same country, though in another vessel, made an admirable address, which drew tears from nearly every eye, and the manner in which he quoted and illustrated Scripture was amazing, and would serve as quite a lesson to a learned divine. 8. These meetings all have excited great attention, and have been of an exceedingly interesting character. The one at the Tabernacle on Wednesday,we regarded as a *consuming fire to prejudice.*We do not believe that any went away with the same views, and the same feelings in relation to any one in whose veins courses African blood. The event of the landing of these brethren upon our shores is to be, not without its beneficial effect, as well to the colored population of this country, as it promises to be to *Ill-fated*Africa. | |

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| |  | | --- | | The Case of the Captured Negroes (Doc 4)  **Citation Information:**"The Case of the Captured Negroes," *New York Morning Herald.*September 9, 1839. | |

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| |  | | --- | | 1. The highly important nature of the case connected with the disposal of the negroes recently captured on board of the L'Amistad, has induced us to take more than the ordinary measures to get all the facts and main features of this interesting affair as fully and as accurately as possible. The extraordinary fabrications that have been put forth by the "Journal of Commerce," in relation to this important case, require to be promptly exposed and refuted. The whole affair is of too serious a nature to be treated with levity, or to be made the subject of the ridiculous invention, overdrawn and exaggerated statements, and catch-penny falsehoods, to which the Journal of Commerce, copying from some penny paper, has given credence, publicity, and sanction. It is a matter of the utmost moment; affecting the credit and character of the Spanish government, of the authorities of this country, and of the lives of 30 or 40 human beings. 2. In order, therefore, to arrive at the truth, and the full details of the affair, we have despatched two highly intelligent and competent correspondents, for that purpose, to Connecticut; one to New London, and one to New Haven, to obtain all the facts of the case, a letter from each of which we this day lay before our readers, promising that all our information is obtained from the most direct and unquestionable source. In addition to this, Senor Ruiz, the owner of a majority of the negroes on board of the L'Amistad, called on us personally, yesterday, and furnished us with full and accurate information in connection with this curious transaction from its commencement down to this time. He states the two thirds of the account in the "Journal of Commerce" is but a tissue of falsehoods, without the least foundation in fact; calculated to injure all parties, to mislead the public on every important point, and to make an entirely false issue in a case that is of itself, upon the strength of its simple facts, sufficiently complicated to create a great deal of ill feeling, and difficult in arriving at a correct decision on its merits. 3. Senor Ruiz states that the character and conduct of the negroes as totally different from the statements published and endorsed by the "Journal of Commerce;" so far from being a hero, Cinguiz is as miserably ignorant and brutalized a creature as the rest of them; that the speeches and declarations reputed to have been uttered by him, are all pure invention from beginning to end; that he made no speech whatever; and that if he had, there was no one who could translate what he said; the cabin boy knows nothing of the language, as asserted by the "Journal;"and had he been able to tell Mr. Hyde, according to the "Journal's" account, Mr. Hyde knows nothing of Spanish, and the boy cannot speak English. The accounts, therefore, in the "Journal of Commerce" must be looked upon, by all who are desirous of understanding the real merits of the case, and of getting at the facts, as worthy only of derision and contempt; and as an impudent attempt on the part of that paper to palm off upon an intelligent community, the most infamous fabrications in a matter that deeply concerns the character, the credit, and the best interests of all classes of our citizens. 4. Senor Ruiz informs us, that he first met these negroes in the fields close to Havana; he saw them and examined them for two or three days before he made his purchases; and even then he did not purchase the whole of those that he found there. He did not inquire whether they were Congo negroes, or Mandangoes, or where they came from; he saw they were stout bodied men and he bought them; he took them to Havana, entered them according to the laws of the place, got out his bill of lading, and shipped them under the sanction of the authorities of the place. These are the topics and points upon which the whole difficulty of the case will hinge. These are the pivots upon which the decisions turn. Senor Ruiz says that he had no idea of the Spanish minister claiming them from this government as property; but he believes the minister will claim them as murderers, to be delivered up and sent to Havana for trial, for murdering a Spanish ship master, on board a Spanish vessel, in Spanish waters.—And, as we see, by the papers, that Senor D'Argaiz, the new Spanish minister, has arrived at Washington, the presumption is that they will be demanded forthwith, and therefore that all these difficult, intricate, troublesome and long mooted points will come up at once, be met, and set at rest at once and forever. 5. In the meantime the abolitionists are making immense exertions to get the negroes set free; they are raising subscriptions, collecting money, clothing and feeding them; employing the most able counsel, riding over the country, by night and day, to get interpreters who can converse alike in their language and in English; rummaging over musty records, old statutes, treaties and laws, in order to "get a peg to hang a doubt upon" in relation to delivering them up. Some of them they will endeavor to have used as states evidence, (if tried here) in order to prove that there was no legal authority for shipping them on board the L'Amistad. The canting semi-abolition papers, like the "Journal of Commerce" and the "American" and "Post" are all endeavoring to mis-state, misrepresent, and throw difficulties upon the matter in order to get the black murderers set free. The Southern papers have articles proving the propriety of the surrender.—Meanwhile, the negroes are getting fat and lazy; perfectly indifferent to the disposal to be made of them. They only do two things on the coast of Africa; that is, eat and steal. On board the L'Amistad, after the murders, they did little else but eat and steal. They quarreled with themselves about the food, they drank up what little liquor there was on board; and then, although having entire possession of the vessel, they began to steal individually every thing they could lay their hands on and to cram the articles into bags. After this, they rummaged and searched parts of the vessel daily. One day they would find one thing, and another day another; at last they opened a locker and found six demijohns of wine; these they drank in two days, and then they began to steal from each other. And if released and sent back to Africa, they will have no other occupation than eating and stealing again.—Senor Ruiz says that they are all great cowards, and had the captain killed one on the night of the mutiny they would have been subdued instantly, and all have run below. His impression is that they will be sent out to Havana, the ringleaders executed, and the rest given up to him. We shall see. It is a most singular case; we shall follow it up closely; and, unlike the "Journal of Commerce," we shall do so accurately. | |

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| |  | | --- | | The Captured Africans (Doc 5)  **Citation Information:**"The Captured Africans," *New York Morning Herald.* September 18, 1839. p.2. | |

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| |  | | --- | | 1. Correspondence of the Herald.   EN ROUTE TO HARTFORD, SEPT. 15   1. Mr. Bennett: The Abolitionists are of course greatly annoyed by your exposure of their hypocrisy; and are endeavoring to attract the sympathy and extract the money of the humane by accusing those who have desired to divest the main question of the perplexing difficulties thrown around it by Tappan & Co. of subserviency to the views of the slave holders. But such charges are too preposterous to receive a moment's consideration, and the effect of the indiscreet and foolish movements of the Abolitionists has been highly prejudicial to the Africans. I heard one of our most distinguished citizens remark yesterday, that his sympathies had at first been warmly enlisted in favor of the blacks--that he had been induced to believe, by the representations of the pseudo-philanthropists, that they were a set of hapless beings who had been torn from the enjoyments of social and domestic life and sold to hopeless misery, to feed the insatiate avarice of a blackhearted planter; and he should have rejoiced at their escape, even if they had reached our shores dyed to the elbows in the blood of their oppressors. He thought of Cinguez as he had been represented by Leavitt and his coadjutors, the heroic liberator of his enslaved brethren, who nobly preferred death to the degrading bondage of the white man; and was almost ready to wink at an infraction of our treaty with Spain, if necessary, to protect him from the consequences of his daring gallantry. But a look at the *hero* and his *compatriots*had wrought an instantaneous change in his sentiments. Instead of a chivalrous leader with the dignified and graceful bearing of Othello, imparting energy and confidence to his intelligent and devoted followers, he saw a sullen, dumpish looking negro, with a flat nose, thick lips, and all the other characteristics of his debased countrymen, without a single redeeming or striking trait, except the mere brute qualities of strength and activity, who had inspired terror among his companions by the indiscriminate and unsparing use of the lash. And instead of intelligent and comparatively civilized *men*, languishing in captivity and suffering under the restraints of the prison, he found them the veriest animals in existence, perfectly contented in confinement, without a ray of intelligence, and sensible only to the wants of the brute. No man, he said, more thoroughly appreciated the hideous horrors of the slave trade, or had conceived a more decided aversion to slavery in all its phases; but he was certain that the natives of Africa would be improved and elevated by transferring them to the genial climate of Carolina, and the mild restraints of an intelligent and humane planter. Still although the abstract idea of liberty was utterly incomprehensible to an African, and ridiculous as applied to him; and his physical condition was made better by the change, he has natural rights which it is enormous wickedness to invade. The previous impressions, as well as present views of this gentleman, are precisely coincident to my own, and the effect of my examination of the condition and character of the captured blacks was identically the same. 2. The conclusion that I arrive at, therefore, is, that the monstrous perversions of the fact of which the Abolitionists have been guilty, and their hypocritical and insidious appeals to the sympathies of the public, have operated to the serious disadvantage of the blacks, and will have a greater influence in precluding a fair trial, than all other causes combined 3. Antonio, who is detained as a witness against the murderers of the captain, was the cabin boy of the *L'Amistad*. His life was saved by the interposition of Manuel, one of the blacks, who assisted in the murder of the captain. He is an active and rather sprightly boy, of fifteen, and had been with Captain Ferrer in the *L'Amistad*, upwards of three years. He says his master treated him kindly, and he occasionally expresses great indignation towards the blacks. He, however, tells different stories at different times, but this is perhaps owing to his confusion and want of memory. When told that the negroes would perhaps be sent to their own country, he laughed and said they would be caught and carried back to Havana again in less than six months. He is very comfortable and contented, but he says he likes Havana better, because the weather is warmer. 4. Tomorrow I will write you from Hartford, and give you all the proceedings as they occur. | |

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| |  | | --- | | 1. To the Editors of the Journal of Commerce:   New Haven, Oct. 8,1839.   1. Gentlemen.—The following short and plain narrative of one or two of the African captives, in whose history and prospects such anxious interest is felt, has been taken at the earliest opportunity possible, consistently with more important examinations. It may be stated in general terms, as the result of the investigations thus far made, that the Africans all testify that they left Africa about six months since; were landed under cover of the night at a small village or hamlet near Havana, and after 10 or 12 days were taken through Havana by night by the man who had bought them named *Pipi*, who has since been satisfactorily proved to be Ruiz; were cruelly treated on the passage, being beaten and flogged, and in some instances having vinegar and gunpowder rubbed into their wounds; and that they suffered intensely from hunger and thirst. The perfect coincidence in the testimony of the prisoners, examined as they have been separately, is felt by all who are acquainted with the minutiae of the examination, to carry with it overwhelming evidence of the truth of their story. Yours respect'ly,   GEORGE E. DAY.     1. Monday, Oct. 7. 2. This afternoon, almost the first time in which the two interpreters Covey and Pratt have not been engaged with special reference to the trial to take place in November, one of the captives named Grabaung was requested to give a narrative of himself since leaving Africa, for publication in the papers. The interpreters, who are considerably exhausted by the examinations which have already taken place, only gave the substance of what he said, without going into details, and it was not thought advisable to press the matter. Grabaung first gave an account of the passage from Africa to Havana. On board the vessel there was a large number of men, but the women and children were far the most numerous. They were fastened together in couples by the wrists and legs, and kept in that situation day and night. Here Grabaung and another of the Africans named Kimbo, lay down upon the floor to show the painful position in which they were obliged to sleep. By day it was no better. The space between decks was so small,—according to their account not exceeding four feet,—that they were obliged, if they attempted to stand, to keep a crouching posture. The decks, fore and aft, were crowded to overflowing. They suffered (Grabaung said) terribly. They had rice enough to eat, but had very little to drink. If they left any of the rice that was given to them uneaten, either from sickness or any other cause, they were whipped. It was a common thing for them to be forced to eat so much as to vomit. Many of the men, women, and children, died on the passage. 3. They were landed by night at a small village near Havana. Soon several white men came to buy them, and among them was the one claiming to be their master, whom they call *Pip,* said to be a Spanish nick name [sic] for *Jose*. Pip, or Ruiz, selected such as he liked, and made them stand in a row. He then felt each of them in every part of the body; made them open their mouths to see if their teeth were sound, and carried the examination to a degree of minuteness of which only a slave dealer would be guilty. 4. When they were separated from their companions who had come with them from Africa, there was weeping among the women and children, but Grabaung did not weep, "because he is a man." Kimbo, who sat by, said that he also shed no tears—but he thought of his home in Africa, and of friends left there whom he should never see again. 5. The men bought by Ruiz were taken on foot through Havana in the night, and put on board a vessel. During the night they were kept in irons, placed about the hands, feet, and neck. They were treated during the day in a somewhat milder manner, though all the irons were never taken off at once. Their allowance of food was very scant, and of water still more so. They were very hungry, and suffered much in the hot days and nights from thirst. In addition to this there was much whipping, and the cook told them that when they reached land they would all be eaten. This "made their hearts burn." To avoid being eaten, and to escape the bad treatment they experienced, they rose upon the crew with the design of returning to Africa. 6. Such is the substance of Grabaung's story, confirmed by Kimbo, who was present most of the time. He says he likes the people of this country, because, to use his own expression, "they are good people—they believe in God, and there is no slavery here." 7. The story of Grabaung was then read and and interpreted to Cinquez, while a number of the other Africans were standing about, and confirmed by all of them in every particular. When the part relating to the crowded state of the vessel from Africa to Havana was read, Cinquez added that there was scarcely room enough to sit or lie down. another showed the marks of the irons on his wrists, which must at the time have been terribly lacerated. On their separation at Havana, Cinquez remarked that almost all of them were in tears, and himself among the rest, "because they had come from the same country, and were now to be parted forever." To the question, how it was possible for the Africans, when chained in the manner he described, to rise upon the crew, he replied that the chain which connected the iron collars about their necks, was fastened at the end by a padlock, and that this was first broken and afterwards the other irons. Their object he said in the affray was to make themselves free. He then requested it to be added to the above, that "if he tells a lie, God sees him by day and by night." | |