



0. THE FIRST TRIAL - Story Preface

1. THE SLAVE TRADE

2. THE AMISTAD MUTINY

3. CAPTURED AGAIN

**4. THE FIRST TRIAL**

5. JOHN QUINCY ADAMS FOR THE DEFENSE

6. SET THEM FREE!

7. FREEDOM!

8. SENGBE GOES HOME

9. THE STORY LIVES ON

10. WHEN PEOPLE were CARGO

Image depicting the middle panel of a three-part mural by Hale Woodruff entitled "Rising Up." It pictorially tells the story of the Amistad captives. This scene, created in 1939, imagines how the trial may have appeared. Image online, via Wikimedia Commons. PD

During early judicial proceedings, Sengbe and Kimbo, another captive, told their stories through an interpreter who did not speak the Mende language. That first trial held no surprises. The Africans lost.

Martin Van Buren, then president of the United States, decided to intervene. Before the *Amistad* Africans had a chance to appeal their loss, Van Buren authorized a Navy ship to take the Africans back to Cuba! Blatantly violating due process of law, the President set the stage for a battle in the United States Supreme Court.

A group of abolitionists heard about the plight of the Africans and hired Roger Sherman Baldwin, an attorney from Connecticut, to defend them. Baldwin was known as a man who spoke for the downtrodden.

Before he could speak *for* his clients, however, he had to be able to speak *with* them. No one in Connecticut understood Mende.

Searching the docks in New York, the abolitionists found James Covey who had been born in Mende country (where his name was Kaw-we-li). Fortunately, Covey spoke Sengbe's language. (The link takes you to an incredible web site on the Mende language.)

Baldwin and the abolitionists were determined to free the Africans. With President Van Buren and his administration against them, however, the road would not be easy.

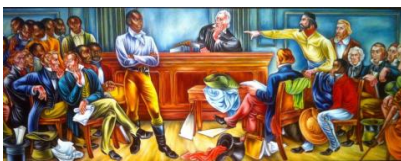
See [Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:](http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/THE-FIRST-TRIAL-Amistad-Incident)

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See [Learning Tasks for this story online at:](http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/THE-FIRST-TRIAL-Amistad-Incident)

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## Media Stream



### Amistad Captives on Trial

Image of the middle panel from Hale Woodruff's "Rising Up" mural which he painted for Talladega College. Image online, via Wikimedia Commons. PD

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Amistad-Captives-on-Trial>

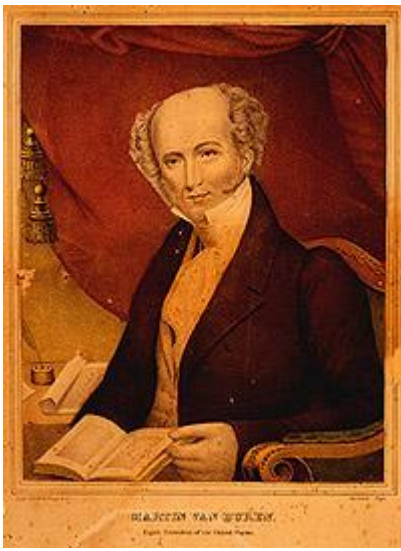


### Image of the First Trial

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons. PD

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### Martin Van Buren

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons. PD

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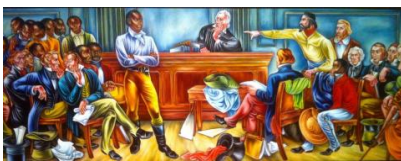
### Roger Sherman Baldwin

Image online, courtesy Library of Congress. PD

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*Image courtesy of the Collections of the Library of Congress*



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