



0. THE STORY LIVES ON - Story Preface
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Since the film's release, interest in the *Amistad* Incident has grown. A ship's replica has sailed from port to port, and artwork imagines what it must have been like for the captives to travel aboard the ship as they crossed the Atlantic on the "Middle Passage." Image online, courtesy Haytom. PD

One hundred sixty years after it happened, the *Amistad* case returned to America's national dialogue. A 1997 film by Steven Spielberg movingly depicts the story.

- Anthony Hopkins, as John Quincy Adams, makes the Supreme Court victory seem like a foregone conclusion. (It wasn't, in real life.)
- Djimon Hounsou (who speaks Mendi) is a convincing Sengbe ("Joseph Cinque").
- Matthew McConaughey, portraying Roger Sherman Baldwin, demonstrates the positive side of lawyering.
- Morgan Freeman, fictitious abolitionist Theodore Joadson, has some of the best scenes in the movie.

Although Joadson was not part of the actual *Amistad* story, the role exemplifies the important part African-Americans played as the slavery debate pushed the United States toward civil war.

There is an interesting fact about the actor who portrays an elderly *Amistad* captive. He is Samuel Pieh, the great-great-grandson of Sengbe Pieh.

A lawsuit against *Amistad* initially threatened its release date. Barbara Chase-Riboud, who wrote *Echo of Lions*, alleged her book was the basis of the film. Spielberg's lawyers argued the *Amistad* story is part of American history, and no author owns the rights to history. The case was settled February 9, 1998.

As a response to intense public interest in the *Amistad* case, a replica of the ship was built at Mystic Seaport in Connecticut. Her keel laying took place on March 8, 1998 - to commemorate the March 9, 1841 date of the Supreme Court decision. The ship, launched in 2000, will be used for educational purposes.

As we conclude our summary of the *Amistad* case, Sengbe's most famous words still haunt us:

Brothers, I am resolved that it is better to die than be a white man's slave...

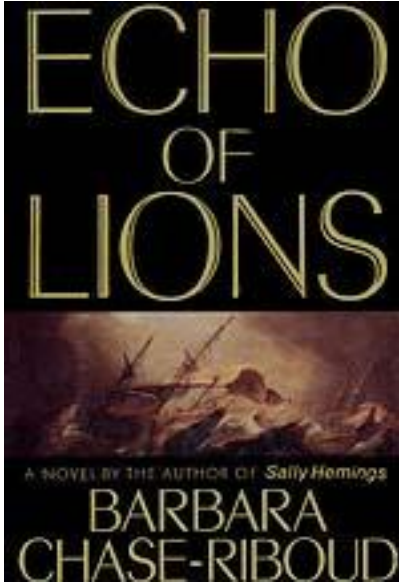
Sengbe was one of the fortunate few in this dark period of American history. He never was a slave; he did not die a slave.

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

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

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Echo of Lions - by Barbara Chase-Riboud

Image of book cover, online courtesy Amazon. PD

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Echo-of-Lions-by-Barbara-Chase-Riboud>



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Amistad - The Replica Ship

Video clip online, courtesy Mystic Seaport Museum. PD

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