

as if



DOMINICAN  
SISTERS  
San Rafael

## Gather @Grand 2020 Speaker Series

### Film Study Guide

#### **Movie #1 - *Amistad***

In "Amistad," 53 African people find themselves in a highly politicized tug of war among slave traders, the New Haven, Connecticut court, 11-year-old Queen Isabella II of Spain, and President Martin Van Buren.

Captured by Spanish traders in 1839, the Africans staged a takeover so that they could reroute the Amistad to go home to Africa. The ship ends up going in the wrong direction and is caught by Americans off the eastern seaboard. The Africans are taken into custody in New Haven, Connecticut where they are put on trial as murderers and rebels.

The movie is available on Amazon Prime and YouTube. It was directed by Steven Spielberg in 1997.

#### **Amistad Study Guide**

1. What are your initial thoughts about the dehumanizing effects of enslavement on African people after viewing Amistad?
2. What policies or practices do you think contributed to the racial inequities seen in Amistad? Consider actions by Isabella, the two sailors, and President Van Buren.
3. How was slavery justified during the movie Amistad?
4. Describe Cinque and his cultural background. How did he evolve during the journey on the Amistad?

5. How is the conflict constructed in the movie and to what extent are the conflicts resolved?
6. Describe the attitudes of the people of New Haven when they saw the African men, women, and children in shackles, being led down the streets of their community.
7. In the movie Amistad, John Quincy Adams said, "We need to get over our fears and prejudices." What strategies or actions do you think could be used to eradicate racism in America?
8. How did enslavement of the Africans aboard the Amistad affect the Africans, the sailors, the New Haven community and the United States?
9. Describe the various levels of systemic injustices (involving law enforcement) which are seen in this movie? Were you surprised by any of the actions?
10. In schools across America students recite "The Pledge of Allegiance" every morning. "The Pledge of Allegiance" was originally written in 1892. Though the language has been revised a number of times, the last six words have remained the same: "with liberty and justice for all." What do you think needs to happen to have "liberty and justice for all" Americans?