Amistad Who's Who

The Africans

Sengbe (Cinque)
A 26-year old Mende rice farmer and leader of the Amistad revolt.

Galibaru (Grabo)
A Mende rice farmer and second in command of the Amistad captives. Speaks several African languages.

Shule
The oldest captive and fourth in command while on board La Amistad.

Fuliwa
Born in the Mende town of Mano. Taken prisoner when soldiers surrounded and raided his town. Fuliwa filed charges against Ruiz and Montez.

Shuma
A middle-aged Mende man taken as a prisoner of war and then sold into slavery. Spoke over the grave of Tua, a captive who died in jail: “Now Tua is dead. God takes Tua. We are left behind. No one can die but once.”

Kinna
Born in Mende country. Considered a “good scholar” while in New Haven.

Kale
An 8-year old Mende boy stolen from a street in his home town.

Teme
A young Mende girl who lived with her mother, brother, and sister until a group of men broke into their house, took them prisoner, and sold them to different slavers.

Kagne
A young Mende girl taken as payment for a debt her father owed.

Margru
A young Mende girl also given as payment for a debt owed by her father. Later studied at Oberlin College.

The Other Captives

Burna
Kimbo
Kononna (Nazhuaulu)
Burna
Bartu (Gbatu)
Gnakwoi
Kwong (Kagnwani)
Pie
Fuliwulu (Furie), Pie’s Son

Pungwuni
Sessi
Yabo
Fabanna
Tsukama
Berri
Foni
Ba
Moru

Ndamma
Bau
Kale
Bagua
Sa
Ngahoni
Fakinna
Faginna

The six captives who died while in New Haven:

Fa
Tua
Weluwa
Kaba
Kapeli
Yammoni

Captives’ descriptions based on A History of the Amistad Captives by John W. Barber, 1840.
Slave Traders and Owners

Pedro Blanco
A Spaniard and a rich slave trader, operating out of Lomboko, the notorious West African slave trading port.

Jose Ruiz
A Spaniard living in Cuba who purchased captives from the Teora for Cuban sugar plantations.

Pedro Montez
A Spaniard, also living in Cuba, who purchased four children from the Teora captives.

Crew of La Amistad

Captain Ferrer
Owner and captain of La Amistad. Killed by Sengbe and other captives during the revolt.

Celestino
Cook on board. Also killed during the revolt.

Antonio
Cabin boy and slave. Wounded during the revolt.

Two other sailors who escaped during the revolt.

The Abolitionists & Defense Team

Lewis Tappan
New York abolitionist and successful merchant who helped Simeon Jocelyn and Joshua Leavitt form the Amistad Committee.

Roger Sherman Baldwin
Abolitionist lawyer from New Haven who defended the Amistad captives throughout the trials.

Josiah Willard Gibbs
Yale University professor, linguist, and abolitionist who resolved the language barrier between the captives and Americans.

James Covey (Kaweli)
A 20-year-old Mende man, former slave, and sailor for British navy warship the Buzzard. Served as interpreter for the Amistad captives.

John Quincy Adams
Former president of the United States and ardent anti-slavery advocate. Argued the Amistad case before the Supreme Court.

Others

Captain T. R. Gedney
Captain of the U.S.S. Washington, the Navy brig that towed La Amistad into New Haven. Claimed salvage rights on the ship and the Africans on board.

Judge Andrew Judson
A pro-slavery judge who initially decided in favor of Ruiz and Montez. Later ruled that the Africans had been transported illegally.

Martin Van Buren
Eighth U.S. President. Served one term from 1836-1840. First president born in the U.S.

John Forsyth
Secretary of State under Van Buren, former minister to Spain and slaveholder from Georgia.

Justice Joseph Story
Supreme Court justice who wrote the Court's decision in the Amistad case.