

## CHAPTER 75

AN ACT establishing the Amistad Commission and supplementing chapter 16A of Title 52 of the New Jersey Statutes.

**BE IT ENACTED** by the Senate and General Assembly of the State of New Jersey:

C.52:16A-86 Findings, declarations relative to Amistad Commission.

1. The Legislature finds and declares that:

a. During the period beginning late in the 15th century through the 19th century, millions of persons of African origin were enslaved and brought to the Western Hemisphere, including the United States of America; anywhere from between 20 to 50 percent of enslaved Africans died during their journey to the Western Hemisphere; the enslavement of Africans and their descendants was part of a concerted effort of physical and psychological terrorism that deprived groups of people of African descent the opportunity to preserve many of their social, religious, political and other customs; the vestiges of slavery in this country continued with the legalization of second class citizenship status for African-Americans through Jim Crow laws, segregation and other similar practices; the legacy of slavery has pervaded the fabric of our society; and in spite of these events there are endless examples of the triumphs of African-Americans and their significant contributions to the development of this country;

b. All people should know of and remember the human carnage and dehumanizing atrocities committed during the period of the African slave trade and slavery in America and of the vestiges of slavery in this country; and it is in fact vital to educate our citizens on these events, the legacy of slavery, the sad history of racism in this country, and on the principles of human rights and dignity in a civilized society;

c. It is the policy of the State of New Jersey that the history of the African slave trade, slavery in America, the depth of their impact in our society, and the triumphs of African-Americans and their significant contributions to the development of this country is the proper concern of all people, particularly students enrolled in the schools of the State of New Jersey; and

d. It is therefore desirable to create a State-level commission, which as an organized body, on a continuous basis, will survey, design, encourage, and promote the implementation of education and awareness programs in New Jersey concerned with the African slave trade, slavery in America, the vestiges of slavery in this country, and the contributions of African-Americans in building our country; to develop workshops, institutes, seminars, and other teacher training activities designed to educate teachers on this subject matter; and which will be responsible for the coordination of events on a regular basis, throughout the State, that provide appropriate memorialization of the events concerning the enslavement of Africans and their descendants in America as well as their struggle for freedom and liberty.

C.52:16A-87 Amistad Commission established.

2. a. The Amistad Commission, so named in honor of the group of enslaved Africans led by Joseph Cinque who, while being transported in 1839 on a vessel named the Amistad, gained their freedom after overthrowing the crew and eventually having their case successfully argued before the United States Supreme Court, is created and established in the Executive Branch of the State Government. For the purposes of complying with the provisions of Article V, Section IV, paragraph 1 of the New Jersey Constitution, the commission is allocated within the Department of State.

The commission shall consist of 19 members, including the Secretary of State or a designee, the Commissioner of Education or a designee and the chair of the executive board of the Presidents' Council or a designee, serving ex officio, and 16 public members.

Public members shall be appointed as follows: four public members, no more than two of whom shall be of the same political party, shall be appointed by the President of the Senate; four public members, no more than two of whom shall be of the same political party, shall be appointed by the Speaker of the General Assembly; and eight public members, no more than four of whom shall be of the same political party, shall be appointed by the Governor. The public members shall be residents of this State, chosen with due regard to broad geographic representation and ethnic diversity, who have an interest in the history of the African slave trade and slavery in America and the contributions of African-Americans to our society.

b. Each public member of the commission shall serve for a term of three years, except that of the initial members so appointed: one member appointed by the President of the Senate, one member appointed by the Speaker of the General Assembly, and two members appointed by the Governor shall serve for terms of one year; one member appointed by the President of the Senate, one member appointed by the Speaker of the General Assembly, and three members appointed by the Governor shall serve for terms of two years; and two members appointed by the President of the Senate, two members appointed by the Speaker of the General Assembly, and three members appointed by the Governor shall serve for terms of three years. Public members shall be eligible for reappointment. They shall serve until their successors are appointed and qualified, and the term of the successor of any incumbent shall be calculated from the expiration of the term of that incumbent. A vacancy occurring other than by expiration of term shall be filled in the same manner as the original appointment but for the unexpired term only.

c. The members of the commission shall serve without compensation but shall be entitled to reimbursement for all necessary expenses incurred in the performance of their duties.

d. The Secretary of State, or a designee, shall serve as the chair and the Commissioner of Education, or a designee, shall serve as the vice-chair of the commission. The presence of a majority of the authorized membership of the commission shall be required for the conduct of official business.

e. The New Jersey Historical Commission shall serve as staff for the Amistad Commission. The New Jersey Historical Commission may, subject to the availability of appropriations, hire additional staff and consultants to carry out the duties and responsibilities of the Amistad Commission.

f. The Department of Education shall:

(1) assist the Amistad Commission in marketing and distributing to educators, administrators and school districts in the State educational information and other materials on the African slave trade, slavery in America, the vestiges of slavery in this country and the contributions of African-Americans to our society;

(2) conduct at least one teacher workshop annually on the African slave trade, slavery in America, the vestiges of slavery in this country and the contributions of African-Americans to our society;

(3) assist the Amistad Commission in monitoring the inclusion of such materials and curricula in the State's educational system; and

(4) consult with the Amistad Commission to determine ways it may survey, catalog, and extend slave trade and American slavery education presently being incorporated into the Core Curriculum Content Standards and taught in the State's educational system.

#### C.52:16A-88 Responsibilities, duties of Amistad Commission.

3. The Amistad Commission shall have the following responsibilities and duties:

a. to provide, based upon the collective interest of the members and the knowledge and experience of its staff and consultants, assistance and advice to public and nonpublic schools within the State with respect to the implementation of education, awareness programs, textbooks, and educational materials concerned with the African slave trade, slavery in America, the vestiges of slavery in this country and the contributions of African-Americans to our society;

b. to survey and catalog the extent and breadth of education concerning the African slave trade, slavery in America, the vestiges of slavery in this country and the contributions of African-Americans to our society presently being incorporated into the curricula and textbooks and taught in the school systems of the State; to inventory those African slave trade, American slavery, or relevant African-American history memorials, exhibits and resources which should be incorporated into courses of study at educational institutions and schools throughout the State; and to assist the Department of State, the Department of Education and other State and educational agencies in the development and implementation of African slave trade, American slavery and African-American history education programs;

c. to act as a liaison with textbook publishers, public and nonpublic schools, public and private nonprofit resource organizations, and members of the United States Senate and House of Representatives and the New Jersey Senate and General Assembly in order to facilitate the inclusion of the history of African slavery and of African-Americans in this country in the curricula of public and nonpublic schools;

d. to compile a roster of individual volunteers who are willing to share their knowledge and experience in classrooms, seminars and workshops with students and teachers on the subject of the African slave trade,

American slavery and the impact of slavery on our society today, and the contributions of African-Americans to our country;

e. to coordinate events memorializing the African slave trade, American slavery and the history of African-Americans in this country that reflect the contributions of African-Americans in overcoming the burdens of slavery and its vestiges, and to seek volunteers who are willing and able to participate in commemorative events that will enhance student awareness of the significance of the African slave trade, American slavery, its historical impact, and the struggle for freedom;

f. to prepare reports for the Governor and the Legislature regarding its findings and recommendations on facilitating the inclusion of the African slave trade, American slavery studies, African-American history and special programs in the educational system of the State;

g. to develop, in consultation with the Department of Education, curriculum guidelines for the teaching of information on the African slave trade, slavery in America, the vestiges of slavery in this country, and the contributions of African-Americans to our country. Every board of education shall incorporate the information in an appropriate place in the curriculum of elementary and secondary school students; and

h. to solicit, receive, and accept appropriations, gifts and donations.

C.52:16A-89 Assistance to Amistad Commission.

4. a. The commission is authorized to call upon any department, office, division or agency of the State, or of any county, municipality or school district of the State, to supply such data, program reports and other information, personnel and assistance as it deems necessary to discharge its responsibilities under this act.

b. These departments, offices, divisions and agencies shall, to the extent possible and not inconsistent with any other law of this State, cooperate with the commission and shall furnish it with such information, personnel and assistance as may be necessary or helpful to accomplish the purposes of this act.

5. This act shall take effect immediately.

Approved August 28, 2002.