



City of Middletown

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

September 30, 2021

For Immediate Release

Contact: Mayor Benjamin D. Florsheim, (860) 638-4801

THE FAMOUS TALL SHIP *AMISTAD* IS COMING TO HARBOR PARK ON SATURDAY, OCTOBER 2, 2021

Events will include Middle Passage and Port Marker Ceremony and dockside tours of *Amistad*

Middletown, CT – The famous tall ship *Amistad*, the flagship of Connecticut, is coming to Middletown on Saturday, October 2, 2021. Events at Harbor Park will begin at 11:00 a.m. and continue until 4:30 p.m. These include the Third Annual Middletown Middle Passage and Port Marker Ceremony, educational events, music, entertainment, and on-board tours of the ship. All are invited to come learn the history of the *Amistad* and its ongoing relevance today.

Discovering *Amistad*, the group responsible for bringing the ship to Middletown, pays honor to and acknowledges the resiliency and determination of the 53 people from Sierra Leone who were kidnapped and illegally sold into slavery aboard the *Amistad*. They fought for their lives and their release from bondage, overtaking the ship and steering it toward freedom. Their 1839 trial at Connecticut's Old State House found those involved in the *Amistad* Uprising not guilty, an early victory for Black and white abolitionists that led to the eventual return of the captives to their native land.

“The uprising aboard the *Amistad* in 1839 and subsequent court proceedings mark an important event in Connecticut and United States history. The *Amistad* highlights some of the worst atrocities perpetrated by human beings, while also serving as testament to the enduring desire of all people to be free. This continuing struggle for freedom from oppression and bondage in myriad forms is just as relevant today,” Mayor Florsheim commented. “I am honored to host the *Amistad* in Middletown. The *Amistad*'s visit and the Third Annual Middletown Middle Passage and Port Marker Ceremony are a chance for the community to come together to recognize a difficult and important aspect of our shared history, and will also serve as a catalyst for continued exploration as to what we can collectively do to improve the lives of everyone in our community.”

“Middletown is excited to welcome the *Amistad* to our city, and we are looking forward to Saturday's program,” said Kisha Michael, Arts & Culture Coordinator for the City of Middletown. “It is a great honor to coordinate this event with so many organizations, stakeholders, businesses, historians, public officials,

Municipal Building; 245 deKoven Drive, Middletown, Connecticut 06457
Phone: 860-638-4801 Fax: 860-638-1901 E-mail: Mayor@MiddletownCT.gov



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committees, community organizers, and residents of Middletown in order to bring this event together. As a native of Middletown, I now in my adult life have been called to action to help bring us together to collaborate and bring events that serve the citizens and children of this community. As the event is approaching, I am watching all of us as one come together to learn, celebrate, and honor our history.”

Mayor Florsheim went on to state, “we are fortunate to be working with groups like the Middletown Racial Justice Coalition and the Mayor’s Permanent Task Force on Anti-Racism, as well as many engaged citizens who continue to clearly evaluate the progress we are making, and draw focus to areas that need to be addressed. *Amistad’s* visit reminds us that the actions we take today not only impact our own lives, but will be felt for generations to come. May we honor those who have courageously struggled for freedom by working proactively to promote justice and equality.”

Dr. Jesse Nasta, Executive Director of the Middlesex County Historical Society and an Assistant Professor of the Practice in Wesleyan University's African American Studies Department, noted that "it is an honor to combine our annual Middletown Middle Passage and Port Marker Ceremony with the *Amistad's* visit. The ceremony, organized annually by the Middlesex County Historical Society since 2019, commemorates the thousands of people of African and Native American descent who were enslaved in Middletown in the late 1600s and 1700s. And the *Amistad* represents an incredible act of enslaved people's resistance and self-liberation. This important day in Middletown will commemorate two sides of the same story, both the horrors of the trans-Atlantic slave trade of which Middletown was a part, and the resistance and survival of enslaved people themselves."

For more information and upcoming schedule for the October 2nd event, please visit <https://www.middletownct.gov/1036/City-Events> or contact City of Middletown Arts & Culture Office: arts@middletownct.gov or (860) 638-4511, or the Middlesex County Historical Society: mchs@wesleyan.edu or (860) 346-0746. For more information about Discovering Amistad visit www.discoveringamistad.org or contact Paula Mann-Agnew, Executive Director - pmann-agnew@discoveringamistad.org.

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