

Letter from Kale to John Quincy Adams, January 4, 1841. Written from Westville (New Haven), CT.

The original letter is in the Adams Family Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society. The transcription was published in Simon Baldwin. "The Captives of the Amistad." Reprinted in *Papers of the New Haven-Colony Historical Society*. Vol. IV. 1888. 354-55.

Westville Jan 4th 1841

My Dear Friend Mr Adams

I want to write a letter to you because you love Mendi people, and you talk to the grand court. We want to tell you one thing. Jose Ruiz say we born in Havana, he tell lie. We stay in Havana 10 days and 10 nights. We stay no more. We all born in Mendi — we no understand the Spanish language. Mendi people been in America 17 moons. We talk American language a little, not very good. We write every day; we write plenty letters. We read most all time. We read all Matthew, and Mark, and Luke, and John, and plenty of little books. We love books very much. We want you to ask the Court what we have done wrong. What for Americans keep us in prison. Some people say Mendi people crazy, Mendi people dolt, because we no talk American language. American people no talk Mendi language. American people crazy dolts? They tell bad things about Mendi people and we no understand. Some men say Mendi people very happy because they laugh and have plenty to eat. Mr. Pendelton [the jailer] come and Mendi people all look sorry because they think about Mendiland and friends we no see now. Mr. Pendelton say we feel anger and white men afraid of us. Then we no look sorry again. That's why we laugh. But Mendi people feel bad. O, we can't tell how bad. Some people say, Mendi people no have souls. Why we feel bad, we no have no souls? We want to be free very much. Dear friend Mr. Adams, you have children, you have friends, you love them, you feel very sorry if Mendi people come and take all to Africa. We feel bad for our friends, and our friends all feel bad for us. Americans not take us in ship. We were on shore

and Americans tell us slave ship catch us. They say we make you free. If they make us free they tell truth, if they not make us free they tell lie. If America give us free we glad, if they no give us free we sorry—we sorry for Mendi people little, we sorry for America people great deal because God punish liars. We want you to tell court that Mendi people no want to go back to Havana, we no want to be killed. Dear friend, we want you to know how we feel. Mendi people think think, think. Nobody know. Teacher, he know, we tell him some. Mendi people have got souls. We think we know God punish us if we tell lie. We never tell lie; we speak the truth, What for Mendi people afraid? Because they have got souls. Cook say he kill, he eat Mendi people—we afraid—we kill cook. Then captain kill one man with knife, and cut Mendi people plenty. We never kill captain if he no kill us. If Court ask who bring Mendi people to America, we bring ourselves. Ceci hold the rudder. All we want is make us free, not send us to Havana. Send us home. Give us Missionary. We tell Mendi people Americans spoke truth. We give them good tidings. We tell them there is one god. You must worship him. Make us free and we will bless you and all Mendi people will bless you, Dear friend Mr. Adams.

Your friend

Kale