

THE NEW JERSEY STATE CONFERENCE  
OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF COLORED PEOPLE

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*Resolution*

*The Retention of Jersey Amistad Commission Staff  
and  
Adequate Budget Resources*

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**WHEREAS**, after decades of attempts in the New Jersey Legislature, in 2002, Assemblymen William D. Payne and Craig A. Stanley successfully sponsored the Amistad Bill (A1301) which mandates New Jersey schools to incorporate African-American history into their social studies curriculums; this legislation also created the Amistad Commission, a 23-member body charged with ensuring that African-American history, contributions and experiences are adequately taught in the state's classrooms; and

**WHEREAS**, since 2003, the NAACP, by national resolution, began calling for legislation to establish commissions to integrate African American history into state curricula; the NAACP believes that all students are negatively affected by the discriminatory and purposeful omission of African Americans from ancient history and American history; the educational deficiencies displayed by Black youth are rooted in the limited training of their teachers, the overt and covert racism in research and textbooks that fail to identify the positive contributions of minorities, and the lack of awareness that African American history occurred concurrently with American history; all of the children and young people in our classrooms need to experience African American history recorded, aligned and integrated accurately into the curriculum; the New Jersey Amistad Commission has provided a national role-model for achieving these goals; and

**WHEREAS**, the NAACP, America's oldest and largest civil rights organization, has been able to strengthen the ties of its mission toward racial equality and justice with its most important legateses, the children and young people in our nation's classrooms, by working with The New Jersey Amistad Commission to reach its statutory goals, and to set examples of success for the Commissions that it has inspired in other states; and

**WHEREAS**, New Jersey's Amistad Commission was in the national vanguard for such progressive curriculum development, inspiring New York State and the State of Illinois to establish their own Amistad Commissions in 2005, and the State of Connecticut in 2006. New Jersey led Illinois, New York and Connecticut in the establishment of commissions to review how Black history and 250 years of slavery are taught in America's classrooms and all of the commissions are called "Amistad Commissions" after the Amistad, a Spanish slave ship that was the site of a famous slave revolt in 1839. The U.S. Supreme Court eventually granted those slaves their freedom, and this historic slave revolt was the basis for a popular movie by Steven Spielberg, "Amistad," in 1997; and

**WHEREAS**, the New Jersey Amistad Commission has been diligently striving to fulfill the directives of the Amistad legislation; the primary focus of the Amistad staff is the continued development of the Amistad curriculum, as well as the dissemination

of curriculum materials to every school in the state; the Commission has formulated a course of action that has revised Social Studies instruction throughout the state's 619 school districts, not designing a separate African-American Studies course for New Jersey's school districts, but accommodating the infusion of the African-American content into all levels of Social Studies and the Humanities; and

**WHEREAS**, the Amistad Commission has successfully undertaken the development of a comprehensive Amistad web-based curriculum in response to the public's appeal for lesson plan samples that fully illuminate its goals; the Amistad web site provides downloadable Amistad lesson plan templates, upcoming events and professional development activities throughout the state, web links for African-American resources, and a literacy list for elementary read-aloud programs; over the last several years, the Amistad Commission has offered continuous professional development opportunities and training for teachers in their respective districts as well as conferences, civic, community, and public events; the Commission identifies and catalogs EXEMPLARY PRACTICES found in schools across the state; the Amistad Summer Institutes provide curriculum development activities for educators and offer the opportunity to receive professional development and/or graduate credit hours to enhance their knowledge and ability in teaching African-American history; and

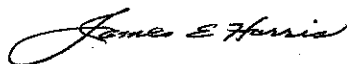
**WHEREAS**, the New Jersey State Conference of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (New Jersey State NAACP) has experienced great enrichment of its education agenda, as the New Jersey Amistad Commission has provided seminars, lectures and professional development workshops for which New Jersey teachers have been able to earn required professional development credits; and

**WHEREAS**, the wisdom of the leadership elected by the people of New Jersey has resulted in a celebration of the cultural richness and innovative spirit of the nation's most diverse state with the creation of the following Commissions in the Department of State: Amistad; Martin Luther King Commemorative; American Indian Affairs; Governor's Ethnic Advisory Council; Arab-American Heritage; Ellis Island Advisory; New Jersey Israel; Jewish Heritage Trail Study; New Jersey Black Cultural and Heritage Initiative Foundation; National and Community Service in the Department of Education, Commissions on Holocaust Education; Italian and Americans of Italian Heritage Cultural and Educational Programs.

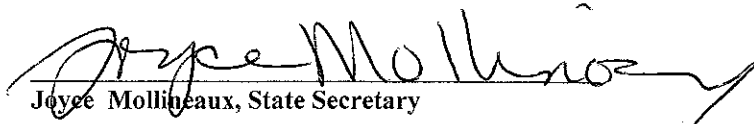
**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that the New Jersey NAACP appeals to Governor Christie to retain the current staff that is accomplishing exemplary work at the New Jersey Amistad Commission, the Executive Director, Stephanie James Wilson, and the Administrative Assistant, Tashanna Williams, who possess the knowledge base, and have demonstrated the required expertise to continue implementation of the Amistad Law without interruption; and

**BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED**, that the budget for the New Jersey Amistad Commission be retained at amounts that its Commissioners recommend to be adequate for the support of operations and implementation of the law and the Amistad mandate for K-12 Social Studies curricula throughout New Jersey.

Date: April 5, 2010



James E. Harris, President



Joyce Mollineaux, State Secretary