



AMISTAD COMMISSION MEETING

September 25, 2026

1:00PM - 3:00PM

Teams Meeting

Chair, Dr. Lillie Johnson Edwards

- I. Public Session: Call to Order – 1:00PM (2 Minutes)**
- II. Pledge of Allegiance (1 Minute)**
- III. Voting/Action Items (3 Minutes)**
 - A. Minutes from June Commission Meeting –Voting Item **Attachment IIIA****
- IV. Other Board Discussion Items (15 Minutes)**
 - A. Updates from the Executive Committee – Dr. Edwards - **Attachment IVA****
 - 1. Personnel Committee: Staffing and Reorganization Plan - **Attachment IVA-1****
 - 2. Budget and Finance Committee: Commissioner Grant – **Attachment IV A-2****
 - 3. Bylaws and Governance Committee**
 - B. 2027 Gala for the 25th Anniversary of the Commission**
 - C. Strategic Plan Year End Report and Year – 2 Implementation **Attachment IV C****
- V. Executive Director’s Report (10 Minutes)**
 - A. Summer Institute 2026 Outcomes**
 - B. Summer Institute 2027 Update (video from the Summer Institute)**
 - C. Amistad Comic Book Launch**
 - D. New PD Series for 2026-2027 - **Attachment VD****
 - E. Fall 2026 Events and Conferences**
- VI. Open Public Comments and Remarks: General Public (10 minutes)**
- VII. Adjournment**

Attachment IIIA



Amistad Commission Quarterly Meeting Minutes **June 26, 2026**

Commissioner's Present

Lillie Edwards – Chair, Joyce Ship-Freeman (Vice Chair), Lavonne Bebler-Johnson, Rosie Grant, Fatima Heyward, Khyati Y. Joshi, Tom Puryear, Anthony Carter (McClellan), Ane Roseborough, Danielle Jones, Patricia Atkins.

Amistad Staff Present

Patrick Lamy, Trevor K. Melton, Glender Terrell, A'ndrea Bair, Dr. John T. Mills

DOE/AG Staff

Kerlyn Espinal, Amna Toor

Public Present

Joyce Mollineaux
James Harris

Meeting Called to Order

Chair Lillie Edwards officially began the meeting at 1:06 pm with confirmation of a quorum and roll call. Chair Edwards thanked all participants for joining the meeting of the Amistad Commission and referenced the public session statement to ensure compliance with the New Jersey Open Public Meetings Act.

Pledge of Allegiance

Chair Edwards began the meeting with a collective reading of the Pledge of Allegiance and asked all participants to join in.

Voting/Action Items: Approval of Draft Minutes from the March 27, 2026 Commission Meeting

The minutes were reviewed and there was a vote to approve the minutes from the March meeting of the Commission. There was a motion to approve the minutes, it was seconded, and all were in favor of approving the minutes. (Motion- Commissioner Grant/2nd Commissioner Joshi, opposed 0-abstentions).

Report from the Executive Committee – Chair Edwards

The Executive Committee met on June 12, 2026, to review committee updates, prepare for the upcoming June 26 Commission meeting, and receive updates from the Executive Director.

- **Finance Committee:** The FY27 budget is expected to remain at **level funding with no increases** and is on track for completion by **June 30, 2026**.
- **Bylaws and Governance Committee:** Planning for the **Board Retreat** is ongoing, with efforts focused on securing a **Day Two guest speaker**.
- **Teaching Resources and Educator Support Committee:** No significant updates were reported.
- **Personnel Committee:** Work continues on the **Executive Director evaluation process** and staffing structure. Follow-up discussions are planned with AC Espinal and AC Duckett. There is a need for greater clarity and alignment regarding the Executive Director evaluation and the Commission's structural relationship with the Department of Education ("in but not of").
- **Preparation for June 26 Commission Meeting:** The Executive Committee reviewed and discussed agenda items for today's Commission meeting and updates from the Executive Director on multiple initiatives. All

Commissioners are invited to share agenda items for discussion with the Executive Committee for inclusion in the Quarterly Meeting agenda.

Board Retreat Update – Lavonne Bebler Johnson

Commissioner Bebler Johnson referenced the Retreat Program that was distributed and provided a general overview of the content of the retreat. She asked that all Commissioners make an effort to attend. There was a discussion on ethics training which is an annual exercise for all commissioners. There was also a discussion on the fact that residing on campus is optional.

25th Anniversary Gala (2027) – Rosie Grant

Commissioner Grant reported on the status of the planning for the 2027 25th Anniversary Gala and the concerns raised by the Ethics Board. The are general concerns about staff attendance and the sponsorship process. Dr. Lamy has responded to all the issues raised by the Ethics Board. We are not meeting as a planning committee until final approval from the Ethics Board.

Report from the Executive Director

Commission Goals for Academic Year 2026-2027

The Executive Committee and the Executive Director have identified the following goals for the 2026-2027 academic year. Commissioners were invited to share additional input with the Executive Director and the Chair and Vice Chair of the Board.

- 1. Launch Implementation of Year Two of Strategic Plan with all Six Priorities*
- 2. Introduce Amistad Comic Book Story in K-5 Classrooms*
- 3. Continue Expansion of Partnerships and Collaboration with National Organizations*
- 4. Finalize Commission Staffing Plan*
- 5. Introduce 25th Anniversary Events*

Mission Moment: The National History Day Finals at William Paterson University (Video): There was an unsuccessful attempt to view the video from the event. The file was sent separately to all Commissioners.

Strategic Plan Update: The first year of implementation of the Strategic Plan will conclude on August 1, 2026. A comprehensive report will be shared at the September meeting of the Board along with new priorities identified during the Board Retreat on July 29-30th.

Summer Institute: 2026, and 2027: As of today, over 400 **educators** are registered for the 2026 Summer Institute, both in-person and virtually. The program design is currently in draft form and will be finalized within the next two weeks. For **2027**, we are exploring potential venues in central Jersey that could accommodate the new attendance numbers for the Institute. We had to alter our plans to use the Chauncy Center in Princeton. The center cannot accommodate the size of our group. The College of New Jersey (TCNJ) may be an option as well for 2027.

Exemplary Award Process: We are currently reviewing the submissions for the 2026 Amistad Commission Exemplary Award. Final confirmation is pending from the Governor's Office regarding the formation of the 2026 Selection Committee.

Our staff will screen all applicants to ensure compliance with legislative requirements. Per legislation, the Selection Committee must choose one awardee from each grade band. Each recipient will receive **\$2,500** in recognition of their outstanding contributions. Additionally, their respective school districts will receive **\$2,500** to support implementation of the Amistad Law. Districts will be required to submit a report on how the award is utilized within the winning districts.

Award recipients will be announced during the **closing ceremony of the 2026 Summer Institute on July 30, 2026**, at Kean University.

Amistad Comic Book: We are in the final stages of introducing the Amistad Comic Book as the newest resource for New Jersey Educators. The Comic Book will be a primary resource for K-12 educators in NJ. A presentation regarding the Comic Book is anticipated for Summer Institute and NJEA in November. It was recommended that the Teaching Resources Committee meet to discuss the lessons and content of the new comic book.

Upcoming Events and Collaborations

A separate email was shared with all the Commissioners outlining the details of events and programs intended for academic year 2025-2026. Below are some anticipated events for the Commission to attend in the coming months.

- The Amistad Commission will attend the 2026 New Jersey Council for the Social Studies Annual Conference at the **Busch Student Center** at Rutgers on **October 19, 2026**.
- The Amistad Commission will attend and present at the 2026 NJEA Conference from November 5-6, 2026 in Atlantic City.
- **African American History Day Grades 4 and 5 Feb. 2026:** History contest for students to promote research and presentation skills.
- We are collaborating with New Jersey Technical Schools and school districts with visual arts programs to create Virtual Field Trips for students. African American Historical sites throughout the state of New Jersey will be featured in video documentaries created by students as a virtual resource for Educators.
- The Office will launch new African American History Contest for Kindergarten through third grades, centered on character education, Bulletin Board, Door Decoration, and poster board.

Open Public Comments and Remarks: General Public

Joyce Mollinaux: Commented on how impressed she was with the new Amista Comic Book. She inquired about the Exemplary Award and potential submissions from Atlantic City Public Schools. It was determined that they have not submitted any materials for the Exemplary Award.

James Harris: Congratulated the work of the Commission and inquired on potential openings to join the Board. Chair Edwards responded regarding the appointment process. He inquired about teacher benefits to attend the Summer Institute and noted that educators do receive PD credit. Mr. Harris also inquired on the Commission's involvement in NJ 250 Anniversary events and assurance of inclusion of African American contributions. Dr. in on the state-wide planning committee and the NJ African History Commission is leading that charge.

Adjournment

There was a motion to adjourn the meeting at 2:14pm