New Haven, Jan. 4, 1841

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. José 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 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 America language. Merica people no talk Mendi language; Merica people dolt? 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. Pendleton come, and Mendi people all look sorry because they think about Mendi land and friends we no see now. Mr. Pendleton say Mendi people angry; white men afraid of Mendi people. The Mendi people no look sorry again—that why we laugh. But Mendi people feel sorry; O, we can’t tell how sorry. Some people say, Mendi people no got souls. Why we feel bad, we got 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 carry them all to Africa. We feel bad for our friends, and our friends all feel bad for us. Americans no take us in ship. We on shore and Americans tell us slave ship catch us. They say we make you free. If they make us free they tell true, if they no make us free they tell lie. If America people 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 what he think; 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 truth. What for Mendi people afraid? Because they 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, he no kill us. If Court ask who brought Mendi people to America? We bring ourselves. Ceci hold the rudder. All we want is to make us free.

Your friend,

Ka-le

In *The Captives of the Amistad*, Simeon Eben Baldwin, Section 5, 1886.