



AMISTAD COMMISSION MEETING

September 26, 2025

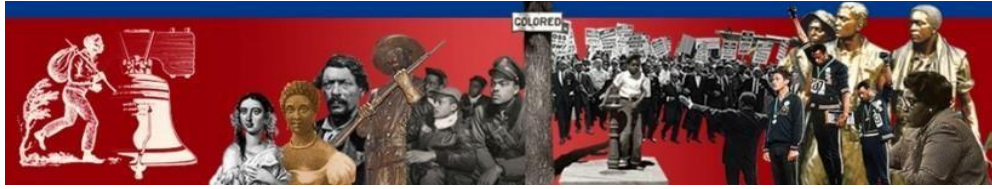
1:00PM - 3:00PM

Teams Meeting

Chair, Dr. Lillie Johnson Edwards

- I. Public Session: Call to Order – 1:00PM (2 Minutes)**
- II. Pledge of Allegiance (1 Minute)**
- III. Special Guest: Atlantic County Commissioner Andrew Parker (New Collaboration with Tulane University and Amistad Commission) (10 Minutes)**
- IV. Voting/Action Items (20 Minutes)**
 - A.** Minutes from June 27 Commission Meeting –Voting Item **Attachment IVA**
 - B.** Future Board Retreat in Collaboration with All Summer Institutes – Voting Item
 - C.** Future Meeting Structure for 2026 and 2027 – Voting Item **Attachment IVC**
- V. Board Discussion on Fundraising (10 Minutes)**
- VI. Creating an Organizing Committee for 2027 Gala for the 25th Anniversary of the Commission (10 Minutes)**
- VII. Executive Director's Report (10 Minutes)**
 - A.** Summer Institute 2025 Outcomes
 - B.** Next Steps with Strategic Plan
 - C.** Launch of Diversity School House: November 1, 2025
 - D.** Relaunch of New Website via Broadcast:
 - E.** Overview of the 2025-2026 PD Series
 - F.** Outreach and Communication Plan with NJ Counties
 - G.** Fall 2025 Events and Conferences
- VIII. Open Public Comments and Remarks: General Public (10 minutes)**
- IX. Adjournment**

Attachment IVA



Amistad Commission Quarterly Meeting Minutes June 27, 2025

Commissioners

Lavonne Bebler-Johnson, Rosie Grant, Danielle Jones; Antwan McClellan; Jason Redd; Joyce Ship-Freeman (Vice Chair); Lillie Johnson Edwards (Chair); Fatima Heyward; Senator Singleton; (Kemani Scott); Tom Puryear; ASW Reynold Jackson (Ed Gittens)

Amistad Staff

Patrick Lamy, Trevor K. Melton, Iman AQuddus, Andrea Bair, Britt Jordan

DOE/AG Staff

Amna Toor, Kerlyn Espinal

Public

Members of the general Public (4 Guest)

Meeting Called to Order

Chair Lillie Edwards officially began the meeting at 1: 10 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 statement pertaining to the public session of the Commission meeting to ensure compliance with the New Jersey Open Public Meetings Act.

Pledge of Allegiance

Chair Edwards began the meeting with the reading of the Pledge of Allegiance and asked all participants to participate.

Voting/Action Items

- Minutes from January Meeting and March Meeting Notes: There was a motion to approve the meeting minutes with the distinction to refer to the March meeting as meeting notes. There was a discussion on clarity with this point. The motion was moved by Commissioner Bebler-Johnson, Seconded by Commissioner Puryear. The roll call resulted in 11 in favor of approval.
- Bylaws Adoption: There was an overview of the various versions of the Bylaws over the past year and related background information. There was acknowledgement of all the people who contributed to the work on the Bylaws, all past discussion from DAG Toor's office, among others. There was a motion to adopt the Bylaws, moved by Kemani Scott, seconded by Lavonne Bebler-Johnson. There was a roll call resulting in 10 Commissioners in favor and one abstention.
- Proposed Budget FY 26: There was a brief overview as to why it was necessary to formally adopt the proposed budget for FY 2026 which was submitted to the Governor's Office in February of this year. There was a motion to move into executive session for the budget discussion recommended by DAG Toor. There was a motion to move to executive session and the public was notified to remain in the meeting if desired until the Commission returned from executive session.

Board of Commissioners Retreat Update – Lavonne Bebler-Johnson

There was an overview of the retreat and the importance of the Commission engaging in meaningful conversations about the future of the Commission. The session will be data driven focused on the past five years and the future of the Commission. There was a discussion and request for remote access for those commissioners who are unable to attend for varying reason. It was noted that the option to attend remotely would be investigated as well creating robust debrief for those who cannot attend.

Strategic Planning Update

Dr. Lamy provided an overview of what has been accomplished to date with the Office having developed 103 related objectives to the six strategic priorities. The goal is to prioritize these items in order of importance over the next five years. This task is intended for the Board Retreat on August 6th-7th.

Report from the Executive Director

Goals for 2025-2026

The Amistad Office team is energized and focused as we begin planning for the 2025–2026 academic year. This fall marks the Executive Director's third full academic year with the Commission. The following top priorities have been established for the upcoming year, listed in order of importance:

1. **Launch the implementation of the new Strategic Plan**, encompassing all six priority areas.
2. **Develop two new curriculum resources** tailored for New Jersey educators.
3. **Expand partnerships and collaborations** with national organizations.
4. **Finalize the Commission Office staffing plan** to support long-term goals.
5. **Increase fundraising opportunities** to support the Commission's mission.

Exemplary Award Process

Dr. Lamy reported that the Commission is currently reviewing three submissions for the 2025 Amistad Commission Exemplary Award. Final confirmation is pending from the Governor's Office regarding the continuation of the 2024 Selection Committee.

The Amistad staff has screened all applicants to ensure compliance with legislative requirements. There were three submissions: two from K–8 educators and one from a 9–12 educator. 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.

Award recipients will be announced during the **closing ceremony of the 2025 Summer Institute on August 7, 2025**.

Summer Institute: 2025, 2026, and 2027

As of the date of the meeting, **197 educators** are registered for the 2025 Summer Institute, both in-person and virtually. The program design is currently in draft form and will be finalized within the next two weeks. We are carefully monitoring the final payment process for in-person participants.

- The **2026 Summer Institute** is confirmed to be held at **Kean University**.
- For **2027**, we are exploring two potential venues: the **Chauncy Center in Princeton** (primary option) and **The College of New Jersey (TCNJ)** (alternative). Soft reservations have been made at both locations.

Curriculum Support Website

The Amistad staff are finalizing updates to our **Curriculum Support Website**. A request will be submitted in two weeks to feature the relaunch in the **Commissioner's Weekly Broadcast**. Our team conducts weekly reviews and updates to ensure content remains current and relevant.

Strategic Plan Implementation

The first phase of our Strategic Plan implementation is complete. We have drafted **103 objectives** aligned with the six strategic goals. These objectives will be reviewed in detail during the **Board of Commissioners Retreat in Atlantic City on August 6–7**.

New Curriculum Resources for Teachers

We are in the final stages of securing a **three-year contract with Diversity School House**, which will provide New Jersey educators with access to **1,500 new lesson plans and educational videos** focused on African American history. <https://diversityschoolhouse.com>

Collaboration with TRUE FICTION

The Amistad Office is initiating a partnership with **TRUE FICTION**, a comic book publisher specializing in American history. Together, we plan to develop a **comic book about the Amistad Commission**, designed for use by elementary school educators. The Commission has already outlined the five chapters of the book.

Upcoming Events and Collaborations

- **Annual African Diaspora Festival September 13, 2025**: A celebration of African culture, music, dance, fashion, and art in collaboration with the Underground Railroad Museum of Burlington County.
- **The 35th Anniversary Celebration of the Lawnside Historical Society/ Peter Mott House September 21, 2025**.
- **National History Day Stipend Grades 6-12**: Applications due **Sep. 30, 2025**: Stipend to support teachers' participation in New Jersey National History Day Contest
- **Afro Latino History Day Competition Oct. 18, 2025**: History contest for students to promote research and presentation skills

- The Amistad Commission will attend the 2025 New Jersey Council for the Social Studies Annual Conference at the **Busch Student Center** at Rutgers on **October 20, 2025**.
- The Amistad Commission will attend and present at the **2025 NJEA Conference from November 6-7, 2025** in Atlantic City.
- **African American History Day Grades 4 and 5 Feb. 2026:** History contest for students to promote research and presentation skills

Open Public Comments and Remarks: General Public (10 minutes)

- There was expression of interest by one member of the public to be provided with the opportunity to participate in the summer institute.
- There was a very direct question about the implications of DEI pushback and the national landscape and potential resistance from districts to meet the mission and intent of the Amistad Legislation. Dr. Lamy responded with optimism based on his experience since his arrival at the Commission. His perception is that NJ educators are generally more receptive and less resistant.

Adjournment : 2:48pm