



## OF FREEDOM AND THE SILVER SCREEN

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The 1997 American historical drama opus “Amistad” is best remembered, I believe, for the main character Cinque’s impassioned plea “Give us, us free.” Spoken in apparently broken English, this request was addressed to a packed courtroom that was hearing the case of Cinque and his compatriots who had been subjected to a trial. The trial was performed in order to have them answer for mounting a mutiny aboard a ship bound for the US from Africa. Cinque and his countrymen, all natives of an African tribe, were supposed to be sold as slaves but they overpowered their captors, continued to sail, and had been hoping that they would be set free once they reached the fair land of the US. Instead, they were brought to trial, with an abolitionist lawyer defending them against blatantly prejudicial and bigoted people.

That story is just another of many such works that talk about slavery, the struggle for freedom and independence, and the travails that people in search of freedom and independence undergo. The 1977 mini-series “Roots” also comes to mind because it described very capably how the book author’s ancestor Kunta Kinte struggled from enslavement to eventual freedom. It was another striking historical drama that touched my very young heart then. I believe I was only in Grade three when that was shown on TV, and it was only my father and I who bothered to watch the late-night mini series out of all the members of our then small household. I also remember it starkly because one of my male classmates then who had dusker skin than the rest of us was called Kunta Kinte in jest by many in class (excluding me, honestly).

Like I said, there are many more similar stories.

Undoubtedly, since the dawn of civilization, freedom has been a vital factor that has either been too elusive or too loosely defined by people. By elusive we mean that many have played the role of slaves, subordinates, subjects or underlings to masters, commanders, rulers or superiors. The sad thing is, many of these masters, commanders, rulers or superiors have often been “conquerors” whose one and only objective was to subjugate and do so harshly, cruelly and unjustly. Who wouldn’t want to rise in revolt or mutiny under the conditions imposed by such masters?

Freedom is a basic right that is to be enjoyed by all. It is not a privilege to be enjoyed only by a select few. Suppression and its more extreme cousin, oppression, should never have a place in this world. A Supreme Being gave us the freedom to rule the earth. It is something that can never be taken away from us, that should be safeguarded to the best of our abilities, sometimes even at the risk of losing our very lives.

We were born free to live free.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Talk about your country’s history. Was there ever a tumultuous period in your nation’s past that involved the fight for freedom?
2. Why are people willing to risk their lives for the sake of freedom?
3. How is freedom suppressed today?
4. What are common freedoms that we all enjoy today?
5. Do you value your freedom? What are you willing to do to maintain it or get it back when it is imperiled?