

Sheree Kansas

Subject: FW: Christopher Columbus Statue

From: Grace Sardina [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, July 31, 2020 8:45 AM
To: CityClerk <CityClerk@chulavistaca.gov>
Subject: Christopher Columbus Statue

**Warning:
External
Email**

Hello,

I would kindly ask that you open up negotiations for the bequeath of the Christopher Columbus statue. It is very shameful for a piece of American history and Italian American History to be sitting in storage because of one group's "feelings". History and facts can not be swayed by feelings. My Italian community is hurting as well. We too have suffered and wish for no further turmoil on any Americans. Our community matters as much as any other group. Please consider a more peaceful and prosperous place for the statue. The Italian community is more than happy to find a place where it can be respected.

Columbus Day originated as a celebration of Italian American heritage. The day does not represent hate, or evil or racism. Infact, it was created as a day to make peace with an immigrant group that was suffering greatly.

In 1892, following a lynching in New Orleans where a mob had murdered 11 Italian immigrants, President Benjamin Harrison declared Columbus Day as a national celebration. The proclamation was part of a wider effort after the lynching incident to placate Italian Americans and ease diplomatic tensions with Italy.

At that time, Italian Americans were struggling against religious and ethnic discrimination in the United States. Declaring Columbus Day helped the Italians assimilate into the American dream as this day was meant to be celebrating the life and accomplishments of Christopher Columbus and the achievements of Italian Americans. Historian Christopher J. Kauffman once wrote, "Italian Americans grounded legitimacy in a pluralistic society by focusing on the Genoese explorer as a central figure in their sense of peoplehood."

In 1937, Columbus Day became a holiday across the United States. Since 1971, it has been celebrated on the second Monday in October. The rise of Columbus Day celebrations gave the Italian immigrants a way to finally fit and celebrate their contributions to this country. Throughout all the years of countless backlash, discussions and changes, Columbus Day remained a celebration of Italian American pride. That is until recently.

Many have chosen to blame Columbus as the symbol of their ire. Many indigenous groups saw no reason to celebrate. With good reason. The indigenous people suffered greatly. Their land was taken. Their people were exposed to diseases that decimated populations. Their way of life destroyed.

All of that is true. However, we are applying 20th Century morals to a 15th Century man. Columbus was an adventurer and businessman looking for gold and riches. The slave trade was common. While we look back today in horror, we cannot lose fact it was a different world.

The atrocities committed after the colonization of the Americas after Columbus were committed by the European nations. England, Spain, Portugal and France sent explorers and claimed their own pieces of this paradise of riches. The indigenous suffered for it all with the approval of the Pope and the Catholic church. As

our country was formed and independence won from England, the US perpetuated their own genocide and destruction of the indigenous people.

Yet, people want to blame Christopher Columbus.

Italian Americans are resilient as any ethnic group and our contributions to this country are significant. We are not all cooks or in the mafia. Our place is everywhere. We have established our place in society and have proven we belong. Our accomplishments and contributions over the last 128 years have helped build this country. We deserve and have earned a day to celebrate our culture.

Do we need Columbus to do that? No. Italians embraced Columbus as a crutch in a desperate effort to fit in when we were struggling immigrants. The crutch for us is no longer needed. We can stand tall and proud of our culture's advancements into American society.

We will continue to fight for the rights of all Americans to live without fear and with dignity and respect. In addition, we will move our fight for recognition of our contributions to the culture of the United States. The celebration of our Italian American culture deserves its place in the United States of America with or without Christopher Columbus.