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Columbus in Colorado.

As the centennial anniversary of the first Columbus Day holiday in the United States approaches, a wonderful opportunity looms to revisit the accomplishments of Christopher Columbus. Colorado was the first state in the union to set one day aside acknowledging the deeds of Columbus, and to celebrate colonization of the Americas. Colorado Governor, Henry Buchtel passed a bill April 1, 1907, officiating Columbus Day.¹ However, it is quite puzzling to realize land locked Colorado is the birth place of Columbus day, particularly when we recognize Columbus did not even step foot on Colorado soil, actually, he did not step foot on soil in the United States.

When considering the achievements of Christopher Columbus, is it the place of tax paying residents in Colorado to join with these celebrations? Colorado is approximately 2000 miles from where Christopher Columbus ever walked in the Western Hemisphere. Colorado was not established until 1851, more than 359 years after Columbus first set sail. Possibly, the extraction of gold, or annihilation of the Indigenous population from the land in Colorado, might be the only element Colorado has in common with the achievements of Columbus in the Caribbean. Colorado tax payers must

¹ Some sources claim 1905 as the first official Colorado state holiday. Actually, the Italian-American community in Pueblo, Colorado organized a Columbus Day Parade in 1905, and then the first State Columbus Day holiday was officiated in 1907.

revisit their common understanding of Columbus to determine why the second Monday in October is a public holiday ordained as Columbus Day.

A legal holiday, acknowledging Christopher Columbus, is actually quite offensive to millions of United States citizens. The American Indian Movement has made a stand and publicly protest Columbus Day. Glenn Morris, (Shawnee) a member of the leadership council with Colorado American Indian Movement, Denver/Boulder chapter, claims in an article published by the Rocky Mountain News, “Columbus Day is a lie that should be abolished because it is a racial justification of genocide” (Morris, April 18, 1990).²

Many Italian Americans also disagree with a holiday acknowledging Christopher Columbus. An email sent to the Colorado American Indian Movement and the Denver Post, signed by 24 Italian-Americans, announced:

We, as progressive Italians, support a holiday to celebrate our Italian-American culture and heritage, and to honor the vast contributions of people of Italian descent to both America and the world at large. However, we absolutely condemn the celebration of Columbus as an Italian cultural icon. Columbus' exploitation, enslavement, and mass murder in the Caribbean far outweigh any of his nautical achievements (Thornton, October 10, 2004).

People from African decent are deeply disturbed by Columbus Day, as it was Columbus who established the first European slave trade in the Western Hemisphere. John Henrik Clarke, author of Christopher Columbus and the Afrikan Holocaust responds to an article in the New York Times with the words,

² Glenn Morris is also an associate professor of political science at the University of Colorado-Denver.

African self-assertion, [sic] the demand for a proper curriculum in the schools-- a demand that we stop praising a liar and a faker like Christopher Columbus who discovered absolutely nothing (Clark, n.d.).³

Over 30,000 people have signed petitions to abolish Columbus Day. Justice calls for the abolition of Columbus Day, not only in Colorado, but also in the United States.

Let us consider what children learn in schools about Christopher Columbus. To begin with, young children hear the 1492 poem:

In fourteen hundred ninety-two, Columbus sailed the ocean blue.

He had three ships and left from Spain;

He sailed through sunshine, wind and rain.

He sailed by night; he sailed by day; He used the stars to find his way.

A compass also helped him know, how to find the way to go.

Ninety sailors were on board; some men worked while others snored.

Then the workers went to sleep; and others watched the ocean deep.

Day after day they looked for land; they dreamed of trees and rocks and sand.

October 12 their dream came true, you never saw a happier crew!

"Indians! Indians!" Columbus cried; His heart was filled with joyful pride.

But "India" the land was not; it was the Bahamas, and it was hot.

The Arakawa natives were very nice; they gave the sailors food and spice.

Columbus sailed on to find some gold, to bring back home, as he'd been told.

He made the trip again and again, Trading gold to bring to Spain.

The first American? No, not quite. But Columbus was brave, and he was bright.

³ John Henrick Clark (1915-1998) Professor Emeritus of African World History (Department of Africana & Puerto Rican Studies) at Hunter College, New York

From the content of this poem, people would consider Columbus heroic, however, Russell Means of the American Indian Movement claims Columbus was lost and did not understand the reality of where he had landed. “You can't be more off course than one half of a world” (Means, n.d.).⁴

Actually, another popular reason for celebrating Columbus Day is to acknowledge the discovery of America. Would it be possible to consider Columbus as the one to discover America when he did not step foot on mainland America, and the places he did anchor his ship, he found already inhabited? The dictionary defines the word “discover” as to find out information that was not previously known or to be the first person to find or learn something previously unknown. According to Jack Weatherford, an anthropologist at Macalister College in Minnesota, Columbus no more discovered America “than Pocahontas was the discoverer of Great Britain. Native Americans had built great civilizations with many millions of people long before Columbus wandered lost into the Caribbean.” Weatherford goes on to detail his perspective of history in the following extract of an article written for the Baltimore Evening Sun:

The first European explorer to thoroughly document his visit to North America was the Italian explorer Giovanni Caboto, who sailed for England's King Henry VII and became known by his anglicized name, John Cabot. Caboto arrived in 1497 and claimed North America for the English sovereign while Columbus was still searching for India in the Caribbean. After three voyages to America and more than a decade of study, Columbus still believed that Cuba was a part of the

⁴ Russell Means, (Oglala/Lakota) has a doctorate in American Indian Humanities, a Senior Law Partner in the Red Cloud Law Firm, American Indian activist, actor, writer and public speaker.

continent of Asia, South America was only an island, and the coast of Central America was close to the Ganges River (Weatherford, n.d.).

If San Salvador was inhabited where Columbus first step foot in the West, how can Christopher Columbus be credited for discovering the Americas?⁵

Unfortunately for new citizens to the United States, preparatory lessons in citizenship require knowledge of Columbus. The title page of the lesson, preceding a quiz, gives the background “He [Columbus] found America in 1492” then continues on, with every question in the quiz, pertaining to Columbus finding America (Kluska, 2001).

Another publicly accepted myth, regarding Columbus, is he was the first to prove the earth was round. Lawrence Lerner served on a panel that wrote the 1990 framework for science education in California's public schools, he is also director of The Textbook League who examine curriculum for middle and High school educators.⁶ Lerner claims, “The students are learning rubbish,” according to the following extract from a text book scrutinized by the League:

The writers of Prentice Hall Earth Science say, on page 213,

For thousands of years, most people thought that the earth was flat. But as early as 300 B.C., the ancient Greeks theorized that the earth was round. Yet they still drew maps of a flat earth. As people explored more of the world, they were able to map large areas of it. In 150 A.D., the famous Greek astronomer Ptolemy made maps that included Europe, Africa, and most of Asia. Even more important, these

⁵San Salvador may be an incorrect assumption of where Columbus initially set foot on the Western Hemisphere. Studies by Mr. Gibbs question the Geographical discription of San Salvador and claim Turk’s Island to be the initial landing place of Columbus, as declared in papers Gibbs presented to the New York Historical Society. It is interesting to note that no evidence has been salvaged from the sea floor in the location of the claimed shipwreck at San Salvador, to prove Columbus’s whereabouts,

⁶ Lawrence S. Lerner is a professor in the Department of Physics and Astronomy at California State University, Long Beach

maps showed the earth as round! For hundreds of years after Ptolemy's work, mapping was neglected. Much knowledge of the world, as well as the idea of a round earth, was forgotten. In the fourteenth century, interest in Ptolemy's work was renewed. Once again, people believed that the earth might be round.

Columbus's voyage to the New World was final proof that it was indeed round. Commenting on this issue is Gary Gambino, a Columbus Day Parade supporter, at the 2003 parade in Denver. Gambino states, "My education teaches specifically of a man named Christopher Columbus, who, at a time when most people believed the world to be flat, he believed the world to be round...He was an adventurer, a discoverer, and is worthy of admiration...such a journey taken in the 1400s is akin to space travel today. The adversities he had to overcome were staggering" (Seibert, 2003). Centuries before Columbus was born, Eratosthenes (276 B.C. – 194 B.C.) actually proved the world was round giving an accurate measurement of the circumference of the earth, the distance to the sun and the moon (O'Connor & Robertson, 1999).

Most educators neglect to teach more controversial issues surrounding Christopher Columbus, such as slave trading. Columbus had slavery on his mind when he first encountered the Tiano. Commenting in his personal journal, Friday 12 October, 1492, within hours after first contact with the Indigenous people, Columbus claims, "I could conquer the whole of them with fifty men, and govern them as I pleased...It appears to me, that the people are ingenious, and would be good servants" (Kreis, 2002).

Although the 1492 poem suggests Columbus sailed to find gold, the poem does not mention the means by which Columbus would use to acquire gold, which was by enslaving the Indians. Taking several native people on board his ship to act as guides and

translators, Columbus sailed around the Caribbean intending the Indigenous people to identify locations where gold could be found. (Abbott, 1904, p. 76) Columbus mentioned the desire to retrieve gold 18 times in his journal within the first eight days upon his arrival at the Caribbean.⁷ Roy and Glyn Davies detail in an extract from their book, Monetary History from Ancient Times to the Present Day (2005). Just years prior to Columbus landing in the Americas, gold bullion had been scarce, known as the “Great Bullion Famine,” and efforts were made to obtain quantities of gold. The Portuguese, desperate for gold, captured African slaves and used the slaves to open up gold mines in Africa (Davis, R. & G. p. 175,176,186). A steady flow of gold into Europe somewhat alleviated the gold famine however, the value of gold and silver was on the increase. Leonardo de Vinci then designed a water driven mill that could rapidly produce pressed gold and other metals into uniform shapes, developing what was known as “milled money” (Davis, R. & G. p. 178,179). Gold was an important part of the economy and a countries wealth depended on ownership of gold. Just three years before Columbus set sail, King Henry V11 purposefully reduced mint charges encouraging people to bring more gold and silver to be minted. This caused a dramatic increase in coins along with an increase in the value of gold and silver (Davis, R. & G. p. 191). The desire to return to Spain with gold for the sake of personal prosperity along with the prosperity for Spain, drove Columbus to seek out gold and to enslave natives to mine the precious metal. (Davis, R. & G, 2005)

As described in 500 Nations (1994), Josephy explains that more than two months after Columbus had sailed to the Caribbean, profit in the form of gold or precious metals,

⁷ The search program on Microsoft Word was used to produce the actual number of times the word “gold” was mentioned.

was still the first and foremost priority. December 24, 1492, while Columbus explored the coastal areas, the ship Santa Maria, struck coral close to a populated island, and begun to capsize. However, most of the supplies and the crew were saved with the help of the Arawak, who swum out to the ship to assist. Guacanagari, the chief of the Arawak, provided hospitality and shelter to Columbus and his crew. Columbus named the island Espanola, (known as Hispaniola). Columbus favored Guacanagari, who was a dignified character governing a heavily populated village. As detailed in the book, The Smithsonian Chronicle of the North American Indians (1990), Columbus noted in his journal, “They are affectionate people and without covetousness and apt for anything, which I certify, I believe there is not better people or land in the world. They love their neighbors as themselves and have the sweetest speech in the world and gentle [sic], and are always smiling” (Viola, p.41). Researching further into the attitude Columbus held toward the people of Espanola, Alvin Jospehy, in his book, 500 Nations (1994), describes a critical detail that became the pivoting piece in the future of the native people. Jospehy explains, as an expression of gratitude toward Guacanagari, Columbus offered Guacanagari the red cape he was wearing since it appeared to the Arawak as an item of magnificence.

Interpreting the gesture as the opening of trade between the leaders of equal importance, Guacangari gave Columbus a mask, plates, a belt and other objects of gold, revealing to him also that the source of the gold lay nearby. To Guacangari, the exchange of objects was a fair trade – a symbol of mutual respect and recognition. To Columbus, one of the gifts, a golden head ornament, was a crown.

It represented authority, and the giving of it meant submission. He believed that Guacanagari was delivering his land and people to Spain (Josephy, p.122).

Columbus intended to return to Spain laden with gold, as stated in his personal writings, Friday 19 October 1492: “But in truth, should I meet with gold or spices in great quantity, I shall remain till I collect as much as possible, and for this purpose I am proceeding solely in quest of them” (Kreis, 2002). Columbus became obsessed with prosperity and determined to overtake the Indigenous people, pillaging all the gold he could for himself and the crown. Josephy, author of 500 Nations continues detailing the actions of Columbus. Josephy stated Columbus wrote to the King and Queen of Spain, emphasizing the availability of gold, noting the passive nature of the natives, claiming they are suitable for slavery, while highlighting the profit advantage in both gold and slave (Josephy, p. 123).

Josephy describes how Columbus captured 24 indigenous people from the Caribbean to return with him to Spain as specimens exhibiting the suitability Indians would be as slaves. “For a while the court hesitated to approve the enslavement of Indians, but that did not stop Columbus, who, on his return to the islands, soon began shipping Indians in chains to the slave markets of Cadiz and Seville. In 1503, Queen Isabella finally granted permission to capture idolatrous and cannibalistic Indians, paying us the share that belongs to us, and to sell them and utilize their services” (Josephy, 123).

As detailed in the book, Warpaths (1994), written by Ian Steele, Juan Ponce de Leon traveled with Columbus on his second journey to the Caribbean where Columbus established the town of Isabella, on Hispaniola. Ponce de Leon captured natives from Hispaniola, as well as neighboring islands, and forced them to farm, and to

produce food enabling Ponce de Leon to become dominant in that region. Soon Ponce de Leon overtook the entire island from the few remaining natives and used his prominence to become governor. Most of the slaves died of either disease or overwork and the gold had become scarce. Wealthy and powerful, Ponce de Leon invaded other neighboring islands to pillage for more gold, repeating his appalling legacy (Steele, 1994, p.7).

African slaves became popular during the time Columbus sailed to the Caribbean, as Europe was eager to build a failing economy with gold, ivory and pepper. Due to stronger resistance against European diseases, such as smallpox, diphtheria, and tuberculosis (compared to the Indigenous population) African slaves were shipped to the Caribbean not only to mine gold but also to establish sugar plantations. As stated by the Applied History Research Group at the University of Calgary, “As a young man Christopher Columbus was trained in the Madeira sugar trade. He brought this experience to the New World on his second voyage of 1493, when he introduced sugar cane plantings to the Caribbean” (Applied History Research Group, 1997). African slaves profoundly impacted and boosted the economy of Europe. Why would African American people want to celebrate Columbus Day when Columbus is responsible for spawning the slave trade in the Caribbean? A growing Holocaust continued in the wake of Columbus’s voyages west.

According to the research of Alvin Josphehy, in his book, 500 Nations, it is stated: On one occasion, Columbus ordered the decapitation of a number of Indians who were innocent of any wrongdoing. One another, he ordered every Arawak Indian over the age of fourteen to pay a tribute to him of a hawk’s bell full of gold every three months. The order was impossible and intolerable...although those who

failed to comply faced the threat of having their hands cut off and being left to bleed to death (Josephy p. 125).

Blood hounds were often sent out amongst the Indians, tearing the flesh off the off the bodies of the Caribbean's. The first account of this occurrence was on the island of Jamaica as reported in the book, Makers of American History. "They [Columbus and his crew] let loose, upon the almost naked natives, a powerful blood-hound, who pursued them with the resistless strength and ferocity and mangled them with bloody fangs (Abbott, 1904, p. 231-232).

In 1502 a native woman, widowed, and known as Queen Anacaona, led a group of resisting Indians, who were trying to avoid enslavement, into the mountains. The new Spanish governor, who succeeded Columbus, Nicolas De Ovando requested a diplomatic meeting with Anacaona. Agreeing to the proposal, Anacaona and 80 regional sub chiefs came for the meeting. When everyone attending was inside the meeting hall, the Spanish governor gave a signal to set the thatched roof and walls on fire. With swords and bayonets, soldiers surrounded the building, enabling the killing of any escapees. The Spaniards spared Anacaona for the purpose of later publicly hanging the native Queen (Josephy, p. 127).

Genocide was upon the Indians. Within 40 years of Columbus presence in the Caribbean, 90 percent of the original population had died primarily from European diseases. As the African slaves arrived in 1510, they carried with them additional diseases contributing to further illness and death. Just remnants of the Indigenous people survived the new world pandemic of 1519.

Words in the 1492 poem do not express the pain and horrendous sufferings of the Indians at the hand, and legacy of Columbus. History books have misinformed the American population. Indian people of the Caribbean may have been completely annihilated without evidence of the atrocities imposed upon them if it were not for the a glimpse of hope that came from a young man named Bartolome De Las Casas. Born in Seville, Spain 1484, De Las Casas at the age of nine, witnessed a procession celebrating the first voyage of Columbus in the streets of Seville, Spain. Seven Tiano Indians were paraded, while Christopher Columbus generated excitement among the crowd. It was this event that inspired Bartolome's father and uncle to travel with Columbus on his second voyage to the Caribbean. Later De Las Casas himself traveled to the Caribbean, living out his days as an advocate for justice of the Indigenous people. In his writings, horrified at the legacy left by Columbus, Las Cusses records personally observed atrocities perpetrated toward the Taino people:

And the Christians, with their horses and swords and pikes began to carry out massacres and strange cruelties against them. They attacked the towns and spared neither the children nor the aged nor pregnant women nor women in childbed, not only stabbing them and dismembering them but cutting them to pieces as if dealing with sheep in the slaughter house...They made some low wide gallows on which the hanged victim's feet almost touched the ground, stringing up their victims in lots of thirteen, in memory of Our Redeemer and His twelve Apostles, then set burning wood at their feet and thus burned them alive...(Dorsey, 1999). It was only fifty years earlier, upon arrival in the Caribbean, Saturday, October, 13 1492, Columbus stated in his own words "They do not carry arms nor are they acquainted with

them, because I showed them swords and they took them by the edge and through ignorance cut themselves. They have no iron” (Kreis, 2002). One can not even imagine how horrendous the situation in the Caribbean became for the Native American Indians. How can we allow our country, the United States of America, to continue with the appalling glorification of Christopher Columbus by allowing the public holiday, Columbus Day, to continue?

Reminded of the 1492 poem, important issues of factual history are amiss, such as the Spanish themselves turning against Columbus. By the second voyage Columbus made to the Caribbean, with a hunger for gold, Columbus continued to brutally overpower the Indians. After sending more than 500 natives back to Spain as revenue for the crown, the Spanish were disgusted with Columbus and his arrest was ordered. According to Mr. Aaron Goodrich, who wrote the book, A History of the Character and Achievements of the so-called Christopher Columbus (1874) consisting of a detailed account on his personal observations of Christopher Columbus, Goodrich claims:

When the five hundred slaves arrived an order was issued for their sale. Isabella countermanded the order... The Spanish grandees delighted with the thought that Columbus, the upstart foreigner, ‘son of nobody,’ and who had ventured to exercise authority over the hidalgos of Spain was about to be crushed... It was said that Columbus had deceived the sovereigns, by extravagant descriptions of the wealth of islands which were steeped in poverty; that he had forced excessive labor on the Spanish colonists; and that he had heaped indignities on Spanish gentlemen of noble birth... The one great condemning crime of Columbus, in

plunging a million of people into unutterable woe, in his greed for gold, they were silent about (Abbott, 1904. p.268-269).⁸

After the second voyage, on March 14, 1496, Columbus was sent back to Spain, landing at Cadiz, Spain June 11, 1496, by order of Queen Isabella. In his own words, Aaron Goodrich claims, “Columbus was cruel, avaricious, dishonest; but in other respects, except where he failed, he was a good Christian” (Abbott, 1904. p.267).

Not only had Columbus lost favor with the Spanish in Spain, he had also created tremendous problems in the Caribbean. Columbus treated the Spanish who had traveled with him to the New Land poorly, and continued to impose horrendous acts upon the natives. By the third voyage, Goodrich details the disfavor the Spanish held for Columbus, and states the dishonor Columbus faced when he was arrested and placed in shackles.

The pro-slavery tendencies of Columbus were very annoying to the queen. When the ships with the Roldan insurgents returned to Spain, they bought six or seven hundred slaves. Many of these Columbus had granted to these men by capitulation... For all these wrongs, Isabella, not unjustly, deemed Columbus in a great degree responsible. He was viceroy of all these realms, and was virtually invested with absolute power. The queen’s sympathies were outraged (Abbott, 1904. p.292).

⁸ Although Aaron Goodrich is stated in this text as being the author, giving the account on Columbus, Goodrich actually is quoted by John C. Abbott in the book Makers of American History: Christopher Columbus (1904). Goodrich wrote A History of the Character and Achievements of the so-called Christopher Columbus (1874) Published in New York by D. Appleton & Co. Goodrich’s book was not able to be retrieved in a timely manner, since the nearest copy was located in Oklahoma, consequently, could not be used in the list of resources.

At this point, Queen Isabella ordered one of the highest military and religious officers in the royal household, Don Francisco de Bobadilla, to carry out an order to arrest Columbus and seize all of his property, including his writings. (Large portions of Columbus's journal and personal letters were lost; consequently, there are some discrepancies in the historical accounts of the life and times of Columbus.⁹)

He [Bobadilla] then sent officers to seize Columbus, put him in irons, and imprison him in one of the cells of the fortress of San Domingo...a vast amount of testimony against Columbus, was gathered from the rebels to be forwarded to the Spanish court...Early in October, Columbus manacled like the vilest culprit, was led through the streets to the ship. (Abbott, 1904, p.296).

Christopher Columbus did not believe he sailed to Central America, and did understand he had arrived in a new hemisphere. After four voyages west in 1492, 1493, 1498 and 1502, Columbus went to his grave believing that he had visited the outlying islands of mainland Asia. If Columbus did not even believe that he discovered America, and in fact, he thought that he had traveled to India, hence the name he called the people, Indians, why should anyone else carry this unenlightened attitude?

According to the text, the Smithsonian Chronicle of the North American Indians, it was actually 1507, when German cartographer, Martin Waldseemuller first named the speculated continents to the west, after he had published a map of the world (Viola, p 43). Waldseemuller chose to honor Amerigo Vespucci, (also known as Americus Vespucci) a well educated explorer who was the first European to sail to Brazil, Columbia, Uruguay,

⁹ According to the Library Archives in Canada (2001, February 5), "During his first three expeditions, Columbus had kept a precise day-by-day log, which is now lost. Fortunately, one part of it was copied out by Bartolomé de Las Casas for writing his *Historia de las Indias* between 1550 and 1563" Retrieved July 31, 2007, from <http://www.collectionscanada.ca/2/8/h8-213-e.html>

and Argentina. As described by James Canaday, at Millersville University in Pennsylvania, Vespucci was also the first European to note the world's largest rivers, the Amazon, the Pavia and the Plata. As a skilled navigator, Vespucci determined the existence of the equatorial current. Creating controversy, Vespucci suggested that the land Columbus had visited was not in fact Asia, but rather, a "New World." At first, the recommendation was to name only South America, "Amerigo," but soon, both continents were known as "Amerigo" (Canaday, n.d.).

Colorado was the first State in the United States to proclaim a public holiday in recognition of Christopher Columbus, and the colonizing of the Americas. Born in Genoa Italy, the Italians do not even bother to recognize the accomplishments of Christopher Columbus; however, a statue was erected in his honor in Spain; after all, Columbus presented Queen Isabella of Spain, with gold that boosted the economy, and birthed the age of the conquistadors with opportunities in the Americas. Why should American citizens selectively honor a man who prospered his country, acquired new lands through military might, while brutally dissolving an entire population? Hitler would never be uplifted as a symbol of unity and patriotism, acknowledging his means of economic prosperity, while ignoring the interictal horrors of Nazism.

It is not often recognized, that in the settling of the West, it bought unsettling to the original inhabitants. In Colorado, there is a place of high honour, where people can go and show their respect at the grave of Buffalo Bill at Lookout Mountain. Symbolically this grave looks out over the vast plains of Colorado. Buffalo Bill epitomizes the Wild West as a staged production of legendary heroes and ferocious savages. Buffalo Bill at one time held the world record for shooting the highest number of buffalo in a single day,

just for the sake of sport, which contributed to the starvation of thousands of Native Americans. The truth of the matter is that there are countless unmarked graves of murdered, innocent Indigenous Americans across Colorado.

During the time of the Indian wars, Colorado became an important battlefield where pacification of the Natives was essential for Colorado to press forward. Even though peaceful treaties were negotiated, ruthless frontiersmen such as Colonel Shivington and the Colorado militia perpetrated vicious crimes against the Native population. Sand Creek, Colorado has recently been recognized as a national historic monument, due in part to the efforts of Senator Ben Nighthorse Campbell. Facts pertaining to the massacre that took place at Sand Creek, although still disputed by some, cannot be denied. Elderly men, women, children, and infants, without defence, were mutilated by soldiers, while according to the treaty made, were under the protection of the United States. Unfortunately this historical event in Colorado, was but one link in the chain of events incorporating prejudice, imperialism, colonialism and violence that stems back to 1492 when Christopher Columbus crossed into the western hemisphere.

Despite the fact that Italy as a country does not recognize Christopher Columbus as a hero, here in Colorado, portions of the Italian community demand recognition of Columbus, with a day set aside for parades and celebration in acknowledgement of the accomplishments of Christopher Columbus. The Italian people, culture, and local communities of America, bring some wonderful elements that contribute to the mosaic of the United States. Italian communities in Colorado have contributed much to the economy, and the epicurean flavour. How fantastic it would be to celebrate the Italian culture in Colorado, similar to the Irish at St. Patrick's Day, the Chinese at Chinese New

Year and the Dragon Boat festival, the Mexican culture during Cinco de Mayo, the Germans at Oktoberfest, and black Heritage with Martin Luther King Jr. It is shame that Columbus Day commemorates a man who could not be compared to Martin Luther King Jr. By ignoring the full consequences on humanity resulting from Columbus and his treatment of the Native community, it is a disservice to all Americans, and the Indigenous people of the Caribbean.

According to United Native America, the District of Columbia, and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, no longer observe Columbus Day. Both countries have changed the name of Columbus Day to Native American Day as a paid legal public holiday. The State of Alabama have renamed Columbus Day to American Indian Heritage Day Columbus Day [sic]. South Dakota replaced Columbus Day with Native American Day. In addition, Oklahoma has also put forward a bill to rename Columbus Day as Native American Day. North Dakota celebrates First Nations Day rather than Columbus Day, and Native American month in November. May 1st has become Tamanend's Day in the state of Pennsylvania. American citizens would all agree how diverse the United States has become, and most people would express advantages in celebrating the many cultures of the United States. Sadly, however, there is no federally recognized holiday honouring the original stewards of the land here in the United States, but rather, a holiday dedicated to the likes of Christopher Columbus.

Cultural interaction bought many rewards of trade back and forward from the Eastern Hemisphere to the West and from the West to the East. Half of the worlds produce had originated in the western hemisphere. Technology exchange in the form of metal tools became an advantage to the West. North American Iroquoian democratic

political systems had an influence on the founding politics of the United States, which still stand today in our democratic system. There are many things to be thankful for as our society grows and develops, but this individual, Christopher Columbus perpetrated horrors and atrocities bringing values and principals to the West that present a terrible example of European culture.

Denver, Colorado is in the nations spotlight every October. The Transform Columbus Day Alliance (TCDA), based in Denver, has been protesting the Columbus Day parade since 1989. TCDA sponsors a Four Directions All Nations March just prior to Columbus Day. With a membership of over 80 organizations TCDA, support the abolition of the Columbus Day holiday on a local, state and national level (TCDA, 2006).

The American Indian Movement, along with TCDA, explicitly commends the idea of celebrating the Italian culture while at the same time, refusing to include Columbus as part of that culture. Italian history is full of wonderful heroic figures such as Leonardo de Vinci, and Galileo, along with famous Italian Americans like Dean Martin, and Frank Sinatra. However, in celebrating Italian culture and history, the mafia are not emphasised, nor should Columbus be emphasised.

Spearheading the Columbus Day Parade campaign in Denver are the Order Sons of Italy in America (OSIA). OSIA, established in 1905, the same year the first Columbus Day parade was held in Colorado. An article published in the Westword Newspaper, details an effort made by Denver Mayor, John Hickenlooper, to solve the controversy between OSIA and TCDA. Stating in a letter Hickenlooper sent to both opposing parties, Hickenlooper claims he is “sick and tired of this entire costly, frustrating and potentially dangerous situation that does nothing but generate ill will” (Gallo, 2005, October 6).

However, George Vendegnia, the OSIA New Generation Lodge President, responds with the comments published in the Westword, ““We will celebrate Columbus Day. This letter totally embarrasses me and my committee,’ ...George Vendegnia, the Italian-American car-wash owner ...revived the parade here [in Denver] five years ago after an eight-year hiatus. He sees Columbus as a visionary navigator of the late fifteenth century, and Columbus Day as an opportunity to honor his own family's heritage. It's a celebration, he says, ‘as important as my grandfather's name’” (Gallo, 2005, October 6).

Unfortunately, between the Order of Sons of Italy, and the Native American protestors, there has been a clash of intentions with much misunderstanding. According to the article written by Bill Gallo of the Westword,

Vendegnia and the parade committee argue that it's also about First Amendment rights, but AIM has always insisted that the parade constitutes ‘hate speech’ and thus is not protected under the U.S. Constitution. That's another argument not likely to subside, particularly in light of failed parade-day agreements over the years. ‘AIM has always been the force that goes to the city and says, Let's resolve this,’ said AIM member Leslie Andrews. ‘We've gone to the Italians and said, ‘Let's resolve this’” (Gallo, 2005, October 6).

The real issue is a simple one, the whole truth needs to be recognized: who Columbus was, and what he did, so we can move on and realize the undeniable fact that he was the instigator of much pain and suffering for the Indigenous community.

Therefore, the appropriate action is three fold. First, abolish Columbus Day. Second, establish a day in honour of Italian culture, community, and contributions to this

great land. Thirdly, rename Columbus Day as First Nations Day, acknowledging the original inhabitants in the United States, who at this time, are not recognized.

After five hundred and fifteen years, it is about time to look at the evidence and make a judgment. The material proof is overwhelming. The effect of false education and fictionalising of the facts with selective history must stop. In Japan, there is debate about whether to educate on the realities of Japanese involvement in the Second World War. Part of the argument is that this will hurt national pride to know reality. Most American veterans would insist that the Japanese must confess the realities of the atrocities committed upon other nations during the Second World War. The Germans today, acknowledge the atrocities committed by Hitler and the Nazi regime and have said “Never again!” Columbus was never an American citizen, had nothing to do with the United States and should not have any claim of honour in such a way as having a day set aside to celebrate him. So why continue this facade? Let it stop now and abolish Columbus Day.

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