

New York State Commission for Social Justice
2021 Fall Plenary Session
Report

Brothers and Sisters, thank you for all your support to our CSJ. Although many lodges and our own Grand Lodge have begun meeting in person, we at CSJ decided to continue meeting using zoom. We feel that in this way we can continue to have input from our lodges upstate that cannot attend an in-person meeting. We are exploring the possibility of doing both an in-person meeting and zoom at the same time in the future. I believe it is vital to have all segments of our state to be involved in our CSJ.

Columbus Day Parades

I would like to thank all our brothers and sisters who attended this year's Columbus Day Parade on 5th Avenue. The weather was great and the crowds, although were not as large as year's past, but they were excited and supportive of Columbus and our heritage. I would like to thank Jenna Esposito, who donated her time and talent and sang on our float up 5th Avenue. I would also like to thank all our lodges that participated this year.

We were sorry that our own parade in Long Island had to be canceled due to the inclement weather. I want to thank the parade committee and all the lodges involved for all their hard work in planning this parade and we look forward to next year's parade.

The Yonkers, Bronx and Brooklyn Columbus Day Parades also took place. We need all parts of our state and nation to have parades honoring Columbus. In that way we continue to show how great Columbus was and what his exploration meant to the Americas.

Antonio Meucci Lodge #213 Unveils a Statue of Columbus

I was pleased to be the guest speaker at the Columbus Day celebration and the unveiling of their new Christopher Columbus statue at the Antonio Meucci Lodge. The day began with a wreath laying ceremony at Tibbetts Brook Park in Yonkers. I spoke about the attacks on our culture and Columbus. After the ceremony we went to the Meucci Lodge and unveiled a beautiful statue of Christopher Columbus. I want to thank the leadership

and the members of the Antonio Meucci Lodge for their continued support for Columbus and our heritage.

The Never-ending attacks on Columbus

We knew that as we came closer to Columbus Day that the attacks on him would increase. Never have we seen the number of attacks that we have dealt with and are continuing to this very day.

President Biden

On Columbus Day, President Biden issued two proclamations. One declaring the Day Columbus Day and the other declaring the day Indigenous Peoples Day. The problem of course is that he declared our day to be Indigenous Peoples Day. But the real issue is in the wording of both proclamations. In the Indigenous proclamation all was positive about their great culture and their accomplishments. In the Columbus proclamation he spoke about Italian Americans and our culture but then proceeded to talk about the attacks on the Indigenous People by all Europeans. President Michele and I immediately sent off a letter to the president demanding an apology.

Governor Kathy Hochul

At our Columbus Day Parade in Manhattan, Governor Hochul marched arm in arm with our Italian American leadership. Smiling and waving to the crowds with an Italian flag and of course doing photo ops. What she omitted to say was on the very same day she issued a proclamation declaring the day Indigenous Peoples Day. The response of our community was swift and furious and two day later a proclamation was released declaring the day, Columbus Day. Her office claims that the Columbus Proclamation was made on October 8th. Our question is, if that was true why it was not released on Columbus Day or even spoken about while she marched in our parade? A letter was sent to her demanding an apology.

Congresswoman Velazquez

On Columbus Day, Congresswoman Velazquez issue a tweet attacking Columbus and calling him a genocidal maniac. Here is her tweet:

“Today should be #Indigenous Peoples Day. And yet this day is still shared with a genocidal maniac. We need to take this time to reflect on the brutal history of violence against Indigenous peoples in America and to recognize that there is still a lot of work to repair this harm”.

I find it amazing how uneducated she is when it comes to Indigenous people and Columbus. The sad part of this is she represents Manhattan’s Little Italy. A letter was sent to her demanding an apology.

Senator Alessandra Biaggi

Never in my wildest dream would I be writing about a Biaggi in a negative term. I know Mario Biaggi, who was always a hero of our Italian American Community. He is probably rolling over in his grave regarding his Granddaughter’s actions. Right after Senator Biaggi was sworn in to office, myself and then President Naccarato met with her to congratulate her. At that meeting we asked her about her support for Columbus and she answered I’m Italian, of course I support Columbus. Well now we know that was a bold face lie. She signed on to legislation to do away with Columbus in New York. She should be ashamed of herself for this action. Just to note, she represents Italian sections of the Bronx.

West Orange Mayor Robert Parisi

We have said repeatedly that we are our own worst enemies. Well, you can see that here in this report. Mayor Robert Parisi joined a host of pandering politicians in declaring Columbus Day Indigenous Peoples Day. In his video message he talked about the great Native People and how the land in his district belongs to them and how it should be turned back over to them. Although, he did not relinquish any of the lands that he claims were theirs. He is just one more woke politician that should be removed from office immediately. We sent him a letter.

Congressmen Andrew Garbarino and Mark Amodei

On October 8th Congressmen Andrew Garbarino and Mark Amodei introduced H Resolution 708 Expressing support for the recognition of Christopher Columbus and his impact on the Italian American community and recognizing the second Monday in October as “Columbus Day”. We want to thank both these legislators for this resolution.

United States Congress House Bill 5473 to replace Columbus Day

This bill was sponsored by Rep. Norma Torres from California. It has 67 co-sponsors. I am urging all our brothers and sisters to write to their congressmembers to oppose this legislation. All can look up the bill and read it in its entirety. We must demand our congressmembers vote no on this bigoted legislation.

Homework Assignment for a 4th Grade Student

CSJ was notified that a 4th grade teacher in a Cold Springs Harbor gave a homework assignment to his/her students. All four of the questions were multiply choice. The first question was Who was Christopher Columbus? The next question was What caused Columbus to go on an expedition west? The last part and most troubling was Read the Following Sentence from a passage.” During the first visit, and his next three visits, Columbus and his men Brutally mistreated the Native people. They stole their land and claimed it for Spain through violent battles. They enslaved many of the Tainos and forced them to work in harsh conditions”

What can you conclude based on this information?

- A. Columbus decided to leave after meeting the Taino people.
- B. Columbus and his crew worked together with the native Taino people.
- C. Columbus and his crew used violence and cruelty to try to get land for themselves.
- D. Columbus and his crew sailed to Central America to find more spices and gold.

This assignment was taken from ReadWorks.Org. We are trying to find out the school and the teacher that gave this homework assignment. Once we do, we will meet with the teacher and the principal to discuss this. If we get no satisfaction we will go to the superintendent.

Philadelphia wins but still loses

The Italian American Community in Philadelphia won two lawsuits against the mayor. The first was to leave the Columbus statue and not remove it. The second one was to remove the box covering the statue that was placed by the city. The Judge who heard

the case was an African American Judge the Honorable Paula Patrick. Two great victories. However, Mayor Jim Kenny refused the order to remove the box. The petitioners asked the court if the community can remove the box and it was granted. Mayor Kenny then stationed three police officers at the statue with the order to arrest anyone trying to remove it. This bigot must be stopped. The fight continues.

As you can see, we have been very busy. There are so many other cases we're dealing with, but this report would be in volumes if I listed all of them.

Eleanor Jobbagy to be awarded the Ambassatore Award

I want to congratulate our CSJ co-chair Eleanor Jobbagy who is being awarded the 2021 Ambassatore Award from the Italian American Museum. The award ceremony will take place on November 18th at Crest Hollow Country Club in Woodbury, Long Island. No one is more deserving of this award. Eleanor wears her Italian American pride on her sleeve and in her heart. Again, congratulations Eleanor.

Columbus Day Share the Wealth

I would like to thank all who participated in our share the wealth fundraiser. We changed the date of the drawing to October 31st at 10:30 am.

In closing, I want to thank the CSJ Executive Board and our district liaisons and all my brothers and sisters for all their support for our CSJ. Please continue to keep your ears to the ground and should you hear something negative to our community, please notify me immediately.