

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

Brothers and Sister thank you for all your support to our CSJ. I also want to wish you all a happy New Year. I hope that 2021 will be a much better year than last year. I also hope that we will soon be seeing the end of this COVID-19 nightmare that we are experiencing.

2021 CSJ Annual Fundraiser

As you know this year it will be impossible to have our annual luncheon at Russo's on the Bay due to Covid. So, thinking out of the box we decided that this year we will be having a \$100 box but not using number boxes. This year, we will be selling shamrocks for \$100 each and the purchases name will be place on the shamrocks and drawn on March 17th using zoom. There will be five prizes, 1st prize \$2500, 2nd prize \$1000, 3rd prize \$750, 4th prize \$500 and 5th prize \$250. I want to thank Eleanor Jobbagy for chairing this fundraiser and for Anthony Rotoli for Co-chairing it. Anyone interested should send your checks to Anthony Rotoli, 93 Lincoln Avenue, Port Jefferson Station, New York 11776.

Attacks on Columbus

Unfortunately, the attacks have intensified over this last month. We win in one City and we receive more threats from other cities across America. We were pleased to hear about New Britain, Connecticut's Mayor Erin Stewart who vetoed a bill to remove the statue of Columbus. The City Council failed to have enough votes to over-ride the veto. Thank you, Mayor Stewart!

Columbus Statue in Downtown Brooklyn

We were notified this week that there is a push to remove the Christopher Columbus statue in Downtown Brooklyn, located in Columbus Park. There is also a move to rename the park. The Park's Committee of Community Board 2 took comments from the public regarding this issue on December 7, 2019. We only found out about this after the hearing. There was no representation at this meeting from our Italian American Community. The group pushing the removal is called "Take Down Columbus NYC and the organizing member is Victoria Vasquez. This group has members with backgrounds

in education, mental health, and social work. Their aim is to reeducate the community and the public on their complete identity of Columbus. Eventually, their plan is to have the Columbus Circle statue removed.

Senator Jessica Ramos is at it again

Senator Jessica Ramos is continuing her attack on the Columbus Holiday in New York State. Last year, she attempted to pass legislation to remove the Columbus Holiday and replace it with Indigenous Peoples Day in New York. Well, we received word that she is at it again. She has sponsored Senate bill #S2759 and it is co-sponsored in the Assembly #A2492 by Assemblyman Charles Barron. We have already reached out to some of our Assembly members and Senators asking them to oppose this legislation. They told us not to worry the bill will not go anywhere. However, we will stay on top of this to make sure this is the case. I am urging all our members to contact their elected officials to oppose this legislation.

Bill to Remove the Federal Columbus Day Holiday

We were informed that there is a proposal, once again, in the House of Representatives a bill to remove Columbus Day HR_1189 sponsored by Rep. Norma Torres from California. "The resolution honors and recognizes the unique contributions that Indigenous Peoples have made to the United States". So, what this resolution does is to highlight the contributions of Indigenous People and take away the contributions of our Italian American community. State President Tony already spoke to Congressman Suozzi and was told that he does not think this bill will pass. We must stay on top of this and we all have to contact our members of Congress and our United States Senators demanding their opposition to this bill.

Columbus Statue in Syracuse

I have been in constant communication with Carmine Federico and Robert Giordano regarding this issue. They represent the Columbus Monument Corporation, the very group that had this statue erected in 1934. As I mentioned at our last plenary Mayor Walsh announced the Friday before Columbus Day that this statue will be removed. Members of the Italian community have raised funds to fight this in the courts. Our CSJ has donated \$15,000 to help them defend our heritage. They have four attorneys working with them in this fight. A few weeks ago, they have filed legal papers

announcing their intention to sue to block the city's plan. The group believes, as we do, the mayor does not have the authority to remove the statue. Instead, the city should get the approval from the local and state historic boards. We will continue to support Syracuse in anyway we can.

Sag Harbor Removal of Columbus Day

Lou Gallo reported that he was told by the Superintendent that the calendar committee will be meeting on January 28 and that in February the school board will vote on the calendar's committees' recommendation. I sent a letter to the superintendent voicing our objections to removing the Columbus holiday off their calendar. This issue is very important to us because it could have a snowball affect with neighboring Southampton. Keeping in mind that Sag Harbor does not have a reservation in their community, but Southampton has a reservation. This could give more ammunition to those in Shinnecock's in Southampton to fight harder to remove Columbus Day.

Southampton School Board

As we have been fighting for many year's now to prevent Southampton from replacing Columbus Day with Indigenous Peoples Day it has become a yearly battle. As of now Columbus has been removed from the school calendar and replaced just with schools closed. Every year the fight begins to make Columbus Day, Indigenous Peoples Day. This usually begins in February and we are ready to once again, fight this move at the school board. I want to thank Lou Gallo and all the members of district one for being on the forefront in this fight.

2021 NYS OSDIA CSJ "La Bella Lingua Award" program

In January 2021 "La Bella Lingua Award" selection process will begin with each of the eight NYS District chairs mailing letters and applications to all High Schools that offer Italian Language courses in their_District. Three individual mailing will be addressed to: 1. Principal 2. Guidance Department 3. Teachers of Italian Language. The mailing's cover letter will request that the HS Italian Language Teachers select one of their most qualified graduating seniors (completing at least three years of Italian Language courses). The school must then submit two copies of their applicant's official transcript, letter of recommendation, completed application and student's essay to the District Chair before determined designated submission deadline date.

Mary Ann Rispoli, NYS OSDIA CSJ “La Bella Lingua Award” Program Chairperson
516-623-5208 Home
516-316-4094 Cell
marispoli@verizon.net

I want to take the time to thank MaryAnn Rispoli for chairing this award and doing a fantastic job.

I want to thank 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.