

New York State Commission for Social Justice
2022Spring Plenary Session
Report

Brothers and Sisters, I am please to report to you on the activities of the Commission for Social Justice. As, we all have been saying over the last two years, please continue to be safe during Covid.

CSJ Share the Wealth for Lou Gallo's Scholarship

We would like to thank those of you who participated in the Commission for Social JusticeValentine's Day Share the Wealth by purchasing a heart or donating. The drawing was held Sunday, February 27 via Zoom. Our congratulations to the following winners:

- 1st prize - \$2500 – Marie Suriano
- 2nd prize - \$1000 - Vincent Marmorale
- 3rd prize - \$750 – Maria and Anthony Vasaturo Family
- 4th prize - \$500 - John E. Graham
- 5th prize - \$250 – John Fratta

As you are aware, the proceeds from this event will go toward establishing a scholarship inthe name of Louis J. Gallo.

I also want to thank the following who made donations to this scholarship:

- Gift of Sight Mary Naccarato \$2500
- Vince Marmorale \$1000
- Rocco Carriero, \$1000
- Carlo and Madeline Marteucci \$500.00

A grand total collected for this scholarship is \$10,000. Some more donations are still coming in so this number may change. The CSJ executive Board will add to the balance \$5,000 more to reach the \$15,000 needed for the State Scholarship.

Thank you again to those who participated and donated. I especially want to thank Anthony Rotoli and Eleanor Jobbagy for chairing this share the wealth.

Governor Kathy Hochul

I am very pleased to report that Governor Hochul has appointed Thomas Scarangelo as the Italian American liaison to the governor. The Governor held a Saint Joseph's breakfast for major Italian American Groups on March 16th. In attendance for OSDIA was me, President Ment, CSJ National Chair Robert Ferrito and OSIA Foundation President Joseph Sciamè. At the event the Governor announced a \$1 million grant for the Italian American Museum. She also announced help for the Little Italies in the state that are struggling from COVID restrictions. The breakfast was a good step to smooth the hard feelings that existed between our community and her administration. However, I am still waiting a response from her regarding the sit down meeting we requested with her and the five major Italian American groups in the State.

Attacks on Columbus and our Holiday

Syracuse

Our brothers and sisters in Syracuse are fighting hard to prevent the statue of Christopher Columbus in Columbus Circle to be removed. The lawsuit brought by the Columbus Monument Association was heard by Justice Gerald Neri. We are pleased to report that Judge Meri announced his decision and order the mayor and the city not to remove that Columbus statue.

Mayor Walsh, has decided, although the City of Syracuse is in a major budget shortfall, to appeal the decision. Shame on him. This case has cost the taxpayers of Syracuse over \$2 million, and that number will rise exponentially. Walsh has hired several high-priced lawyers to represent the City in this appeal.

Minnesota Proposes to replace Columbus Day

Minnesota Rep. Heather Keeler proposed HF2856 to replace Columbus Day with Indigenous Peoples Day. "Columbus is not someone that I think we all agree is worth celebrating. I will bring attention that there are no other holidays that celebrate white settlement and we can continue to have those conversations in those holidays," said Keeler who is Native American. "Columbus directly has a negative impact...he was a rapist, he was a murderer, we know this from history. Many of the Non-natives I talk to

don't want to honor and celebrate a man like that." The House Education Policy Committee approved the bill 11 to 7 and sent it to the House State Government Finance and elections Committee.

I drafted a letter to the chair of the House State Government Finance and elections Committee Rep. Michael Nelson and Vice Chair Rep. Andrew Carlson urging them to oppose this bill.

Philadelphia wins but still loses – The Columbus Statue

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.

Now we hear that the City of Philadelphia has decided to appeal the decision of Judge Paula Patrick.

Philadelphia's Battle to Save the Columbus Holiday

The Italian American Community in Philadelphia has been fighting against the City's removal of the Columbus Day Holiday and changing it to Indigenous Peoples Day. The Italian American Community filed a lawsuit against Bigoted Mayor Jim Kenney and the City of Philadelphia claiming this move was discriminatory. George Bocchetto, the lead counsel in this fight has argued this case in Court. Judge Charles C. Damell Jones dismissed the case based on whether the Italian Community had standing, whether they suffered discrimination and whether changing a holiday was the right of free speech. Bocchetto vowed to appeal this case saying the fight is not over.

We have had some victories in our fight to save Columbus Day

In Morgantown West Virginia the Morgantown City Council decided against a proposal to eliminate the Columbus Day Holiday. Many residents and groups came out to the hearing to voice their objections to this proposal. **Thank you, West Virginia!**

Magnolia Independent School District adds Columbus Day

I also happy to report that the Magnolia Independent School District added Columbus Day to the school calendar. The Calendar proposed by a committee composed of teachers, parents, community members and district administrators was approved unanimously. **Thank you, Magnolia Independent School District!**

The Death of 17-year-old Claudio Mandia



Claudio Mandia was a senior in Boarding School EF Academy in Thornwood, New York. When he was 15 years old, Claudio enrolled at EF Academy to experience American culture and to learn amongst students from across the world. In February, he admitted to cheating on a math exam. On February 14th, Claudio was expelled from EF Academy. Claudio was pulled from his second period class, notified of his expulsion, and escorted

to his dormitory to collect his belongings. He was then taken to a separate wing of EF where he was placed in solitary confinement as he awaited departure from campus. He remained in solitary confinement for four days. The conditions in the isolation room were made unbearable. He was not allowed any human contact, the trash accumulated in his room and on the day before his departure, EF Academy failed to bring his breakfast or lunch. For four days he was forced to endure these conditions. On February 17th at approximately 10 a.m., having not heard from Claudio for days, Claudio's sister Martina and a friend pleading with an EF counselor to check on Claudio. The counselor found Claudio dead by hanging.

We are demanding a full and complete investigation of the death of Claudio, and we are demanding that all at EF Academy be fired and charged in his death.

Rocky Point High School Discontinues Italian Language Studies

We were informed by a Gina, a member of the Caboto Lodge, that Rocky Point High School is planning on discontinuing the Italian Language studies because of low enrollment. The school is claiming that French enrollment is higher. Our information disproves that statement. It just so happens the Board President is French. Below are the numbers:

	Italian	French
7 th Grade	21	18
8 th Grade	29	21
9 th Grade	27	21
10 th Grade	21	17
11 Grade	11	

Total enrollment

Italian 109 French 79

We will be reaching out to the Rocky Point High School and the Superintendent to demand the school reinstates the Italian Language studies program. Thank you to Gina from the Caboto Lodge. It is like I have said, if you hear something, let us know.

John Dabbene Contest

We have decided to extend the submission for the John Dabbene Contest to June 1st. I am urging all district to have a child participate in the contest. There will be a \$200 award for each district.

LaBella Lingue Award Program

Submissions were received and the committee is now reviewing each one and will select the winners of this program. I am sorry to report that the only districts that we had submissions from were Districts 1, 2, 3, 7 and 8. This award is \$500, and I know there are students that could use that money. So, please district liaisons, try to get the schools in your district that have an Italian language program to select a student.

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.