

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

Brothers and Sisters, I want to wish all a very happy, healthy, and prosperous 2022. We hope 2022 to be better than last year. Please continue to be safe during this Omicron outbreak. For all our brothers and sisters who are experiencing Covid symptoms, get well soon.

In Memory of Louis J. Gallo

As I am sure you all know by now the loss of Lou Gallo. They say that you can judge your worth after you are gone by the impact you leave behind. Well, Lou's untimely passing has affected Italian Americans from across America. Lou gave his all to fight for our Italian American heritage and culture. The passion that he had when defending the legacy of Columbus was second to no one. To say that he will be missed in an understatement of this great individual. As we speak, Lou is up in heaven getting a "great job" to our other giant of CSJ, John Dabbene. We will continue in Lou's memory in our fight to preserve and defend our heritage. Rest in Peace, Lou. Sempre Avanti.

On another note, the CSJ is doing a Valentines Day Share the Wealth in Lou's memory, "Lou Will always Be In Our Heart". The money raised from will go towards a State Scholarship in Lou's memory. The balance of the cost of the scholarship will be paid by CSJ. I am urging all to participate in this Share the Wealth. The hearts will cost \$100 a piece and will be drawn on February 27, 2022, at 10:00am using zoom. The prizes will be:

1st Prize \$2500

2nd Prize \$1000

3rd prize \$750

4th Prize \$500

5th Prize \$250

Checks should be made out to NYS Commission for Social Justice and mailed to:

Anthony Rotoli

93 Lincoln Avenue

Port Jefferson Station, New York 11776

Please include your phone number.

The Never-ending attacks on Columbus

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

Governor Kathy Hochul

We have still not received an answer to our two letters to the Governor regarding Columbus Day and the elimination of the Italian American Liaison position in her office. Although, when the press carried the story, based on our letter, the Governor was quoted as saying she will appoint someone to replace Delores Alfieri. I want to make it clear; this issue is not about Delores it is only about the Italian American Affairs Unit in the Governor's Office. So far, no replacement has been made. We are sending another letter to the Governor requesting a meeting with her to discuss Italian American issues, Columbus, and the position of the Italian American Liaison.

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. The bill is stuck in committee and no action was taken on it. We might have a better chance of this bill passing in next year's Congress.

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. This bill was introduced to House Oversight Committee. No action on this bill as of now. We must keep the pressure up on our members of Congress to stand firm in opposition to this bigoted piece of 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. I am requesting a meeting with Cold Springs Harbor Superintendent Jill Gieraschto discuss this issue.

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. This bigot must be stopped. The fight continues.

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 or not 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.

Columbus Statue in Syracuse

Our brothers and sisters in Syracuse are fighting those that want to remove the Columbus statue in their city. This statue was paid for by members of the community, whose relative still live in the community. The Columbus Monument, in Columbus Circle was designed by the Syracuse-born architect, Dwight James Baum in 1934. When this issue first started Mayor Ben Walsh sent signals, he supported our Italian American community and the Columbus statue. Then he formed a commission to decide if the statue should be removed. The Italian Americans on the commission were outnumbered. Finally, right before Columbus Day those leading the fight were told that the mayor was announcing his decision. They urged him to hold off on making any announcement until after Columbus Day. The mayor ignored that request and on the day before Columbus Day he announced the statue was being removed. The Columbus Monument Committee filed a notice of intent with the Courts to prevent the mayor's action.

The case was heard and both the Italian American Community and the lawyers for the city argued the case. The Italian American Community had over one hundred residents in attendance. The Italian American Community has six prominent attorneys. Of the six the lead attorney is Tony Pietrafesi. The judge heard both sides and said he will render a decision without giving a time frame. The judge hearing the case is Supreme Court Justice Gerard Neri.

I want to thank Carmine Federico, Bob Gardino, Nick Piro and all who are engaged in this battle. CSJ will continue supporting our Syracuse brothers and sisters until they receive a positive outcome in this fight.

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.

In Memory of Louis J. Gallo

