

New York State Commission for Social Justice
2024 Winter Plenary Session
Report

Brothers and Sisters, I hope that the Christmas Holiday was enjoyable for each of you and your families. I wish you all the best for the New Year. I am pleased to report to you on the activities of the Commission for Social Justice. CSJ has been working very hard to defend our heritage and continue with the positive programs during this period.

2023 CSJ Luncheon

This year's CSJ Luncheon will take place on March 17th and will be held at Verdi's. The honorees are Past President Anthony Naccarato and Italian American Museum founder and CEO Joseph Scelsa. There will be a special tribute to Past President Michele Ment. We will also have a souvenir journal. Please support this function which will allow CSJ to continue their mission in defending our heritage and promoting our positive image to all.

Attacks on Columbus and our Holiday

Queens Senator Ramos and Brooklyn Assemblymember Marcela Mitaynes Continue their attack on Columbus

We still have no definitive news on where this legislation is currently. However, we are staying on top of this to be ready to respond when necessary. I am still urging all of you, brothers and sisters, to have a conversation with your state legislators.

Please take this threat and act immediately to fight this bigoted resolution. Call your State Representatives and let them hear your concerns. If any of your representatives are at a town hall meeting or attending a function in your district approach them and urge them to vote this legislation down. Although Governor Hochul committed to veto this legislation should it pass, our fear is the two chambers in Albany may have to votes to override the veto.

We will keep you up to date with any news that we receive regarding this legislation.

New York University

We were informed that New York University has removed the Columbus Holiday from their 2024 school calendar and replaced it with Indigenous Peoples Day. All too often we see this happening in institutions of learning, and this woke ideology in play. Schools are supposed to be places where students learn to investigate the facts and reach a conclusion with the information. Unfortunately, that is no longer the case. Indoctrination has replaced education for the students. Upon hearing about this move I immediately drafted a letter to Linda Mills, President of NYU. I am urging all alumni of NYU to voice your strong objection to this change.

Syracuse

No update on the fight to save the Columbus Statue in Syracuse. The Mayor's Office appealed the decision of the lower court which ruled in favor of the Columbus Monument Association. We will continue to support our brothers and sisters in Syracuse in this fight.

Mount Vernon School Board

I was informed by Ralph Tedesco that the Mount Vernon School District was holding a public meeting to vote on removing the Columbus Day Holiday from their 2024 school calendar. Although it was too late to get people at the meeting, I did draft a letter to Mayor Shawyn Patterson-Howard objecting to this proposal. As of this date no decision has been made, and we remain hopeful that no action will be taken on this proposal or that it will be defeated.

Southampton

The new school calendar should be worked on early in the new year. I will stay on top of this and as soon as we hear that are having discussions for the 2023-24 school calendar, I will get our team together to have our voices heard.

Albany

I was informed by our President Biagio that the City of Albany had legislation to remove Columbus Day and replace it with, you guessed, Indigenous Peoples Day. I immediately sent an email to the Council urging them to keep the Columbus holiday and, in the email, I listed the facts that we know about Columbus. President Biagio attended the meeting and spoke defending our holiday. The legislation was tabled. President Biagio will stay on top of this legislation should it come back for a vote. We need to be sure that whenever this comes up for a vote there must be a strong contingent at these hearings to voice their concerns.

Philadelphia's Battle to Save the Columbus Holiday

This issue remains in the courts. No new information currently.

Sopranos

There is now an off-Broadway musical coming to Brooklyn called the Sopranos. Members have called and asked us to fight this show. We believe that fighting this and all these shows only gives it press. So, our decision is to ignore these shows.

I do want to say that the biggest audience of these shows are our own community allowing the stigma of organized crime on Italian Americans continue. I also received complaints that one of our lodges had a Facebook page with some of these actors in this show. They were not only pictured with them our OSDIA logo and sign was present in the post. This is unacceptable.

Making vandalism of statues a hate crime in New York

We are continuing to have legislation presented to make vandalism of statues and edifices a hate crime. Whether the act was against any ethnic, racial, or religious group. All groups need to have their symbols protected against those that continue to vandalize them.

A book of the month Review.

Christopher Columbus: THE HERO

Defending Columbus from Modern-Day Revisionism by Rafael

In years past, society overwhelmingly viewed Christopher Columbus as a discoverer, pioneer, hero, and in modern terms, “cutting edge”. Unfortunately, that is not the case today due to modern-day revisionists who portray Columbus as a villain and have consequently, misinformed generations. As the author states in the introduction of the book, he looks to set the record straight about Columbus, and indeed he does! Rafael, a Taino descendent, accomplishes this by writing the book so that you feel he is having a zealous conversation with you and is able to refute the inaccurate accounts by “so-called” modern day scholars by using primary sources in each chapter from people who actually knew Columbus and by quoting Columbus’ own diary. Chapter by chapter Rafael dispels each myth, presenting information from multiple sources and historical documents with insights about the time period. After reading this book, it is clear that Columbus is indeed a hero and his legacy, and the federal holiday should be preserved for future generations. For those who look to preserve Columbus’ legacy, this book is a “must read” so they can educate themselves about the truth about Columbus and then re-educate those who have been misinformed.

Book Review written by Lisa Serafini

All book reviews by Lisa and Amanda will now appear on our CSJ website.

Lisa and Alison are working on their next review for next month. I want to thank both Lisa and Amanda for taking this on.

Support for CSJ

I want to thank Robert Graham who set up a tool for people to donate to CSJ with just one click. We are using a protocol “Givebutter” and have a QR code to take on and make the donation. This is a great opportunity for CSJ to raise money from members and those that are not members. Our QR Code will be posted in all our articles and correspondences. Please consider clicking on the QR Code and donating to CSJ.



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 about our community, please notify me immediately.

Fraternally,
John