

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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DEFENDING COLUMBUS & CELEBRATING ITALIAN AMERICANS

As a first generation Italian American I object to converting "Columbus Day" to "Indigenous People's Day." I reject our application of current standards of morality to people separated from us by centuries.

Our [continent was populated by immigrants](#). They came from Asia and perhaps the Oceanic region over thousands of years. They competed for good land and there was armed conflict. Whole tribes were probably destroyed by those that came later. Genocide?

Then new immigrants arrived from Europe. "Tribes" from England, France, and Spain. In conflict with themselves and with the tribes they found. Sides and alliances were chosen, promises made and broken, brutal conduct by ALL involved. What chance did the earlier tribes stand against the new comers?

It's been repeated thru human history. Much was unfortunate and hopefully we learn and do better ourselves. But please, be less quick to judge.

Most aren't aware of the treatment of Italian immigrants. My father came to the town of Lyons around 1914. For most of his life he swung a sledge hammer for the New York Central Railroad. Italians weren't welcome in Lyons! Different complexion, language, and habits.

Not allowed to use the sidewalks uptown, had to walk in the street. **Not allowed** to own homes in the main part of the village. Italians all lived on a few streets next to the tracks. The most unbelievable thing: there was a large hill located near the tracks and **the local Klan would burn crosses** there.

As kids in the 60s, we felt like outsiders. But the goal of our parents was to merge with American society, the old "Melting Pot." Most would try to speak english at home so children would learn it faster. There were no protests or demonstrations about racism. They worked hard, took care of their families, and helped their children. Eventually, things changed as Italians became a local police chief, teachers, and eventually Mayor.

Honoring Columbus was a source of great pride. Other groups have their own stories to tell, but you don't need to diminish others or our Country. My parent's had a great pride in American Citizenship and this country. We all have our faults and can do better. But to 'pull down' what others respected, and to use current moral standards to judge the moral worth of historic figures is mistaken.

"The interactions of physical matter have no intrinsic moral value." Maybe a more complicated way to say you can't judge a book by its cover! I recall catechism class and being asked, "Is Hitler in Heaven or Hell?" The Church answer, "Only God knows what was in his heart, what was his intent."



It's easy to judge moral worth based on something they say or do, but those are only indicators. Unfortunately, we aren't mind readers, and in a practical sense have to rely on actions to make judgments of criminal guilt or innocence. Times change standards. The spread of the United States across North America was not judged as evil and certainly not genocide.

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