



SPECIAL NOTICE

Columbus Day and the Italian American Experience

**Italian Americans Need Columbus Day -
A Holiday Rooted In Our History**



Columbus Day was first declared a national Holiday in 1892 following the mass lynching of Italians in New Orleans, Louisiana in 1891. The New Orleans massacre was one of the largest single lynchings in American history when a mob lynched 11 innocent Italian Americans who were falsely accused and found innocent after a trial.

During this dark episode, mobs across the city attacked the Italian community and ransacked homes and shops. Italy broke off diplomatic relations with the United States over the incident and the widespread mistreatment of Italian immigrants in the United States. There was talk of war.

The following year, President Benjamin Harrison declared Columbus Day as a National Day of Unity to unite a divided nation. It was also the 400th anniversary of Columbus' landing in 1492. Columbus Day was seen as a symbol of bringing together a nation of diverse peoples and the millions of immigrants who found inspiration in Columbus.

This tragic incident in New Orleans was the reason Columbus day came to be. In 2019, the mayor of New Orleans issued an apology.

The following decades saw dozens of lynchings of Italian Americans across the country. Italians were the second largest group of Americans to be lynched. Five

Italian American grocers were lynched by a mob in Tallulah, Louisiana in 1899 for serving black people as equals in their stores. A State Historical marker was dedicated at their burial site

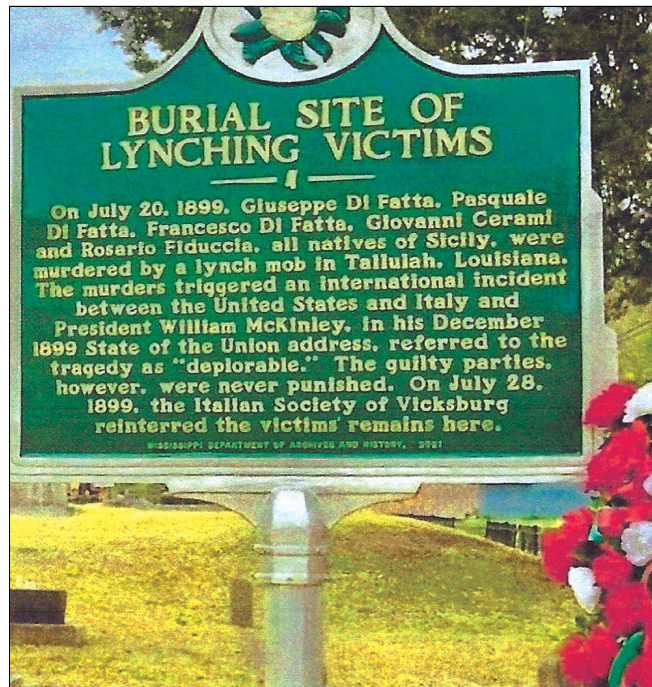


PHOTO ABOVE: *Historical Marker for lynching of five Italians in 1899*

The Pledge of Allegiance was written in honor of the Holiday.

Italian Americans began celebrating Columbus Day in earnest to restore a sense of dignity and self-worth to themselves considering the rampant anti- Italian sentiment of the time.

One million people gathered in New York to honor the new Columbus national holiday and cheer on the 40,000 strong parade the day after its recognition in October 1892.

Columbus Day helped the Italians to forge a needed sense of national identity and pride in the face of the hostility toward them.

They viewed Columbus as one of them, the explorer from Genoa, Italy, whose voyages led to the creation of America and their own voyages to these shores on their own journey of discovery.

Columbus Day Matters.

Critics of Columbus overlook the historical and emotional stake the Italian American community has in Columbus and Columbus Day as a cherished holiday.

These same critics want to scapegoat and blame him for their own experiences. This is a false narrative and historically inaccurate. He is not responsible for the things they accuse him of, including slavery and genocide. Neither is true.



PHOTO ABOVE: *The Statue of Columbus at Coit Tower overlooking San Francisco Bay. (Removed in 2020)*

PHOTO BELOW: *The Monument to Columbus in Genoa, Italy*



For Italian Americans, celebrating Columbus Day has been a symbol of their national identity, unity and pride. If any group has a vested interest in Columbus Day, it is the Italian Americans. They have erected statues and monuments in honor of Columbus, they celebrate Columbus Day together across the nation with parades, and public Columbus Day celebrations.

Italian Americans chose Christopher Columbus to celebrate their American lives. Columbus Day was celebrated by Italian Americans long before it became a national Holiday. The first Columbus Day Parade in San Francisco was held in 1869. In 1994

that city would no longer permit it to be called a Columbus Day Parade. That was the city's response to the 500th anniversary of Columbus arrival in 1492.

For generations of Italian Americans, Columbus Day has been a defining feature of Italian American culture and history. It is the day they celebrate their contributions, history and cultural heritage. Italian Americans were instrumental in the recognition of Columbus Day in the States and nation.

Angelo Noce, an Italian immigrant to the California foothills of the Gold Rush in 1858, is credited as the "Father of Columbus Day." In the United States for obtaining recognition of Columbus Day as a State Holiday in the States. Upon his death, thirty-five states had recognized Columbus Day.

★ SAVE COLUMBUS DAY ★

PROTECT & PRESERVE OUR PAST

There is no replacement for Columbus Day in Italian America. Historians consider Columbus as perhaps the most important historical figure of the last millennia for his amazing voyage of discovery and its impact on the world. With ratings like that it would not be possible to replace him.

To answer the critics, when Columbus Discovered America, it stayed discovered. It was a discovery as much as a prospector discovers gold in the ground. As Italian Americans seek to preserve their cultural heritage and protect Columbus Day, they face those who would tear down this legacy and replace it with their own, using claims about Columbus that are greatly exaggerated and even false to malign him and his holiday.

The Italian American attachment to their Columbus legacy has and continues to endure despite attempts to rewrite 500 years of the history of America.

As one Italian American student stated, "As a child growing up in Sacramento, there was one time of year where I felt proud of my heritage, one day a year where I felt proud to be an Italian American. That day was Columbus Day. The one time of year when I could raise my hand in class and have my voice heard, the one time I could ask if anyone knew who America was named after. Only once, in my K-12 education did someone in the classroom know America was named after an Italian, but forgot the name was Amerigo Vespucci: that was my 10th grade history Teacher. Great!"

Today's students are being taught a false and anti – Columbus view of history by their teachers. The National Education Association has officially called for the abolition of Columbus Day or any truth telling about the real Columbus.

In the words of one Italian American mother, "My children need to celebrate, and they need to know their heritage. To the voices who say Italian Americans don't need a holiday, I say we do. A day that allows them to have their ethnic roots and to feel there is room enough in this great country for them to celebrate the arrival of their first countryman and the many millions of Italian Americans who crossed the ocean with dreams and made them our legacy."

Columbus Day deserves to be a holiday as much as any other Holiday. And Italian Americans deserve a holiday as much as any other group of Americans.

Discovering Columbus Day

Columbus Day Is A Symbol Of America

Columbus Day Matters to Italian Americans and to all Americans. It is the one holiday America celebrates its immigrant and patriotic roots. It is also a day rooted in Italian American history.

Our Nation's Capital, The District of Columbia is named after Columbus as are 6,000 places in the United States.

Columbus Day stands as a reminder to all immigrants that their unique history and culture will be recognized and to affirm the United States as a nation of immigrants, no matter when and how they arrived. Whether earlier migrants from Asia, later migrants from Europe 700 years ago or from Africa.

Columbus Day is still the only National Holiday at the federal level recognized in the month of October each year - for now. In fact, October is also recognized at the national level as Italian American Heritage Month. Indigenous Peoples Day is not until Congress says so.

But the gains of our ancestors are being taken away. They came to pursue the American Dream and better their lives for themselves and their children. In their memory we are obligated to protect their legacy and memory of what they passed on to us through their struggles and successes.

Next time you place your hand over your heart for the Pledge of Allegiance, remember that the Pledge comes from Columbus Day.



PHOTO ABOVE: *Italian flag on Sacramento home on Columbus Day 2022.*

Don't forget to show your Italian pride on Columbus Day!

[CLICK TO VIEW Saving Columbus Day Articles](#)

[CLICK TO READ Why We Need A Holiday](#)

[CLICK TO READ Why Italian Americans Should Be In History Books](#)

The Italian American Experience
Muddies the Waters of Racial Discrimination

**NOTA BENE: There Have Been Other Painful
Episodes In The Italian American Experience.**

AMONG THEM:

**The World War II Internment, Relocation and
Restriction of Italian Americans**



PHOTOS ABOVE: *Photo of Guard and Italian Americans arriving at internment camp in Missoula, Montana*

During World War II, over 600,000 Italian Americans were restricted, and thousands subjected to forced relocation from the West Coast while community leaders were interned and imprisoned without trial or due process.

These restrictions included fingerprinting and carrying a government issued identity card, curfews, bans on travel more than 5 miles from home, seizure of personal property and businesses. The Italian language was banned in public as the enemy's language. Their only crime was being of Italian ancestry. At the time, Italian Americans were the largest immigrant group in the United States and in California. These events silenced Italian American culture for a generation and the effects are still being felt.

For decades after World War II, American teachers taught a false history about the wartime experience of Italian Americans, denying that Italian Americans had been interned, relocated or restricted as had the Japanese. Italian American students who raised the issue in class were told it did not happen or their papers on the topic were poorly graded. Parents who told their kids about their experiences were met with the same denial and told it was "Not in the history books." Our story is still not included.

A review of 22 U.S. college and high school history textbooks conducted in 2004 (The Italian American Textbook Project), revealed that none mentioned

the WW II experience of Italian Americans other than to mention “they were spared internment, unlike Japanese Americans,” “they were not presumed disloyal by virtue of their national origin,” and “they were never relocated.” All statements in the textbooks used in our schools and all false history. If mentioned at all, it was their association with crime. Chicago mobster Al Capone, the poster boy for organized crime, is featured in virtually every textbook.

How can we expect Italian American youth to be proud of their heritage, which is stigmatized and marginalized in the education they receive. How can we expect them to celebrate their heritage when the symbols of their identity like Columbus Day are trashed and portrayed as bad when they are not. But we do get to learn about other people’s history and culture in school, just not our own.

For some 60 years the federal government had denied that Italian Americans had been suppressed during the war years, but Italian American historians documented the truth and as truth be told, in 1990 the federal government admitted these events happened with the passage of the Wartime Violations Italian American Civil Liberties Act of 1990.

LINKS – on website – Rosie the Riveter and the website section on WWII

[CLICK TO VIEW WWII Italian American Articles](#)

[CLICK TO READ Rosie The Riveter](#)

The Anti-Columbus Hysteria of 2020 - The Journey Ahead!



PHOTOS ABOVE: *The Statue of Columbus and Isabella stood in the California State Capitol Rotunda since 1883, and the removal of the statue in 2020.*



PHOTOS ABOVE: *The Statue of Columbus in California Capitol Rotunda in Sacramento*

The hysteria and mob riots of 2020 accelerated the mass destruction of all things Columbus. Parades were banned, statues and monuments erected by our ancestors removed and violated, Columbus Day holidays replaced by tribal holidays.

Even the statue of Abraham Lincoln was removed in Boston - and he freed the slaves. Go figure. How many more historical figures will be ideologically lynched and when and how will it be stopped.

In California, The Statue of Columbus and Isabella was removed in 2021 from The Rotunda of the State Capitol where it had stood since 1880. The California State Columbus Day Holiday was replaced by Indigenous Peoples Day in 2021.

The Columbus international Highway Sign in southern California was removed by the State to be replaced by a native American one. In Los Angeles, the county government banned references to Columbus in public spaces.

These anti- Columbus political actions were taken in California by a political party and Governor with an anti-Columbus bias and ideology. The combination of racially motivated interest groups in league with the political and administrative power of the government has left Italian Americans unprotected and unrepresented in California, at all levels of government.

Sacramento County - As recently as April 18, 2023, of this year, the Sacramento County Board of Supervisors replaced Columbus Day with Indigenous people's day. Courtesy of the (DEI) Diversity, Equity and Inclusion staff in collusion with native American advocates. The County even issued a misleading Press Release saying Columbus Day is not a National Holiday. Nothing could be further from the truth. However, Indigenous People's Day is not a national holiday until Congress says it is.

The Italian community of Sacramento area numbers more than 60,000 people. On their behalf, the Society is challenging the county to reaffirm the Columbus Day holiday. We believe the county's action was racially motivated. We believe the County made a mistake by taking sides and discriminated against Italian Americans when they replaced Columbus Day. We are informed they knew the holiday was associated with Italian Americans.

The county action took place just two months before the Supreme Court of the United States declared that race-based discrimination and diversity policies and goals are a violation of the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment. Diversity is no longer acceptable as justification for discrimination. When will the County change its ways.

We believe the county used diversity considerations as a justification for

replacing Columbus Day. There was no good reason for the county to replace Columbus Day with Indigenous Peoples Day, and to do so behind closed doors. No notice to the public or the Italian American community.

The real issue is whether Italian Americans, in their long and heroic struggle for acceptance are once again being marginalized as second-class citizens.

This cultural conflict is happening nationwide. Italian Americans have been on the frontlines challenging these attacks on our American lives and culture by pushing back with advocacy and lawsuits. Italian Americans have a number of ongoing court cases, and one is against the Mayor of Philadelphia for unilaterally replacing Columbus Day with Indigenous People's Day, which is before the U.S. Supreme Court.

Ask us how we really feel!

The Mouth of Truth



PHOTO ABOVE: Audrey Hepburn at the Mouth Of Truth in the film 'Roman Holiday.'

Long before the modern lie detector, the untruthful faced a much more severe fate between the jaws of *La Bocca della Verita*, or *Mouth of Truth*, an ancient carving which was said to bite the hands-off liars.

The massive Roman marble disc weighs over a ton and depicts the face of a man thought to be the river god Oceanus. While historians are not certain of its purpose. In the 13th century the disc was removed from the nearby Temple of Hercules and is now in the portico of the Church of Santa maria in Cosmedin in Rome.

The carving is now famous for the legend associated with it, that the mouth of the face would close if anyone placed a hand in it and told a lie. Those who were accused of perjury or adultery were brought to Mouth of Truth where they had to swear under oath and place their hand into the mouth. It was rumored that an

executioner would be positioned behind the Mouth.

The legend became a popular part of culture and even today parents threaten fibbing children with a visit to the Mouth of Truth. It entered American culture when Audrey Hepburn put her hand in it in the 1953 movie "Roman Holiday." Today it attracts tourists who stick their hand in its mouth. This writer has done that but very nervously and unsure of what would happen to my hand.

Try it next time you are in Rome, or not.



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