



California Italian-American Task Force

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To: Rev John Jenkins C.S.C
President, Notre Dame University

To: John Brennan
Chair, Board of Trustees. Notre Dame University

From: Bill Cerruti
Chair, California Italian America Task Force

Re: Opposition to Covering The Columbus Murals at Notre Dame University

On behalf of the California Italian American Task force, a statewide organization, I would like to voice our opposition to the proposed action to cover the 12 Columbus Murals at the University.

Political Motivations by Native Americans - As you may be aware, the Italian American community is on a collision course nationwide with the native American community over the issue of Columbus the man and Columbus Day as a symbol of Italian American identity.

Recent attempts by native American activists and casino tribes to replace Columbus Day with Indigenous Peoples Day has caused a series of political battles across California and the nation.

Recently, native Americans sought to take away Columbus Day in several California cities and as a State Holiday in California against the resistance of the Italian American communities. The Italian Community blocked the action to take away Columbus Day as a State Holiday and obtained recognition of Italian American Day in the cities where Columbus Day was attacked.

Columbus Day is a Symbol of Italian America - Columbus is viewed by Italian Americans as the first Italian immigrant and Italian Americans in the United States have adopted Columbus Day as their Day of celebration. Columbus has been viewed as a hero in the Italian community. *Columbus Day and Columbus are associated with Italian Americans in the national imagination and are a symbol of their national unity and identity and their arrival on these shores.*

Columbus Day has been to the Italian American community a day where we could celebrate being Italian and be proud of the vast contributions our people have made to America. It is a time we remember the sacrifices made by our ancestors and the enormous bigotry and prejudice we have faced. It is part of our heritage. The attacks on Columbus and Columbus Day are an attack on the Italian American heritage.

Columbus Is The Subject of False Accusations - Columbus is an important historical figure and his voyages of discovery were one of the greatest events in world history and changed the course of history. But Columbus is also the subject of false and misleading accusations by those who seek to denigrate him and his accomplishments and the European roots of the United States. Basing actions on misleading claims made by native Americans is not the way to run a University.

Columbus Is Not Responsible For The Actions Of Those Who Came After Him. The action by the University of Notre Dame to cover his murals supports the view that Columbus is responsible for the actions of those who came after him. Those who deny the contributions of Columbus miss the point of his story and the story of the many immigrants who arrived after him. **That is the story the University should tell its students.**

Action Recommended - To avoid such biased actions by the University in the future against this symbol of Italian America, it would be a better approach if the University created an *Italian American Studies Program* so that its students and University leaders are better informed about the Italian American experience and the importance of Columbus as a symbol of Italian American identity and heritage.