

Fw: Please keep our historic statue

preservation <preservation@Phila.gov>

Fri 6/26/2020 8:03 AM

To: Jon Farnham <Jon.Farnham@phila.gov> 1 attachments (14 KB)

Christopher columbus statue.docx;

From: Linda DellaPia <[REDACTED]>**Sent:** Thursday, June 25, 2020 10:48 AM**To:** preservation <preservation@Phila.gov>**Subject:** Please keep our historic statue

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Please keep our historic statue that represents the community that thrives and lives there.

By 1870 census 82% of Italians born in Italy were living in South Philadelphia. In the end of the 19th Century Italians immigrating to Philadelphia mainly came from peasant villages in the south of Italy and were from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. During that era most Italians came to the United States in order to financially helping their families by achieving the American dream.

The vocational skills they had learned in Italy were not in high demand in the U.S, however. Immigrants in the later period originated from the southern half of Italy and Sicily. The public had a more negative perception of the poorer Italians. However, with hard work and building a family, the economy flourished with iconic areas such as the Italian Market, the Italian newspapers, and a great deal of Italian restaurants. Besides the thousands of Italian immigrants that became notable in society, they pride themselves as being hard working, family and faith driven.

Christopher Columbus is a part of the Italian community in many ways, the founder of America that brought the world to share its beauty and thriving potential. The statue at Marconi Plaza reminds this vigorous community of the fight that they endured to come to America and build their American dream.

The statue is seen as a treasure among most local Italian Americans, who occupy a large percentage of South Philadelphia. Sculpted in 1876, it was originally located in Fairmount Park until it was moved to Marconi Plaza in 1982. The marble statue was originally purchased for \$18,000 with money raised by Italian Americans and the Columbus Monument Association,

donated to the city to support the cultural history of the immigrant Italian community and respond to discrimination against Italians.

“The Mayor and Police leadership are more concerned with appeasing the anarchist mobs descending upon our city and less concerned about our citizens, our neighbors and the overall public safety of our great city.” Said Mark Zimmario of The South Philly Review.

Christopher Columbus Statues

De Lorenzo, Mario [REDACTED]

Fri 7/17/2020 7:49 AM

To: preservation <preservation@Phila.gov>

External Email Notice. This email comes from outside of City government. Do not click on links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender.

Dear Philadelphia Historical Commission,

I am the president and founder of the Italian Pride Student Organization at Drexel University. I am writing to you on behalf of the Italian community at Drexel and I would like to share my opinions about the statues of Christopher Columbus.

When I look at the Columbus statue, I see my journey to the US. I see when in high school I used to speak no English and all my Italian American friends and more used to help me out. Also, I see all the contribution of Italians in the US, such as when Filippo Mazzei said "All men are created equal", when the Piccirilli brothers came in NYC and built many of the most famous American statues such as the Abraham Lincoln statue in Washington, or when Dario Antonucci projected all the safety protocols of the capsule that sent the first man on the moon. For me, the statue of Christopher Columbus in Marconi Plaza means not only the integration of the Italians in the US but also the importance we had and we will have in the community. Instead, by seeing all these acts of vandalism and these statues throw down in pieces, vandalized, burnt, and beheaded, I just don't feel like I am welcomed anymore in the US and this is a common opinion.

The statues of Christopher Columbus were never meant to honor the man. They were built as a token of the end of Italian segregation and integration of Italians in the US. Most of these statues were built after 11 Italians were lynched without a reason and that was the greatest lynching in American history. Even the Italian community suffered from segregation, discrimination, and redlining in the US but nobody teaches you that so the statues are there to teach us about that history. With time, these statues represented all the adversities we faced. During WW2, the Italian Americans were put in concentration camps, the so-called "Reinternation of Italians", and they were not allowed to leave even after the war. Nowadays, the statue inspires new generations of immigrants to come in the US looking for new opportunities and the Italian Americans see their trip to the US when they look at the statue. For future generations, the statue can still represent the integration of Italians in the US, inspire new generations of immigrants, and teach us many centuries of history.

The statue was financed with Italian immigrants' money (people who came with no money running away from famine) as a token of the end of Italian segregation, the integrations of Italians and the contribution of Italians in the US. The statue is where it belongs: with the Italian American community. We should respect the choices the previous communities made to protect the community and to inspire future communities. Undoubtedly, there are better figures than Christopher Columbus to represent the Italian Americans but if we erect new statues to represent the Italian Americans based on their contribution, these statues will lose the value of inclusion and we will lose part of our Italian heritage. Furthermore, this kind of decision should be made by Italian American organizations since they lived, studied, and worked with the Italian American heritage.

Columbus was protecting the Tainos from the Caribs, a tribe that was practicing cannibalism. The Tainos were so grateful to Columbus and when Taino Chieftain died due to a tribe war, Columbus adopted his son. New public art could be the moment when Columbus adopts this native American kid. Many of the facts about Columbus are false or taken out of context. The work of revisionists used papers from Bobadilla and La Casas. Bobadilla is known for his false accusations to take down Columbus and get his place so to commit the atrocities that are now attributed to Columbus, while La Casas is known to have exaggerated and for his falsehoods. La Casas' work was banned by his church and country. People are also attributing the atrocities that happened during the conquistadores but they happened when Columbus was out of the office and he was against these practices.

Columbus used to harshly punish whoever would mistreat the natives because the queen told him so. This public art would help everybody to understand better how history went. The division is mostly done by the ignorance of one side (that gets the information by testimonials of actors on social media, Wikipedia pages, and comics on YouTube) and the other side that knows history. By taking down the statue, you will just promote a culture of fake news and mass media influences. The solution is to teach everybody history and to promote public arts that unite ethnic groups. We, of the Italian Pride Student Organization at Drexel University, are already working with many Italian American organizations to promote the real facts and to open a dialogue about it on Drexel campus.

Thank you so much for hearing me.

Best regards,

Mario De Lorenzo,

Candidate for B.S. of Computer Engineering

And M.S. of Biomedical Engineering

Drexel University '22

Italian Pride || President and Founder

Duolingo || Global Ambassador



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