

New York State Commission for Social Justice
2021 Spring Plenary Session
Report

Brothers and Sister thank you for all your support to our CSJ. We all look forward to the time when we can all meet in person and enjoy each other's conversation, laughter, and smiles. Despite this difficulty period the work of your CSJ continues daily.

2021 CSJ Annual Fundraiser

I want to thank all our brothers and sisters for their support of our annual CSJ fundraiser. Although, we could not be together at a venue and enjoy each other's company we are pleased it was a success. I must make something clear, all though our fundraiser was a success, as funds come in, they go out to support our heritage. Much more is needed to fight the fights before us.

Attacks on Columbus

Columbus Statue in Downtown Brooklyn

Since the Community Board meeting in Brooklyn regarding removing the Columbus statue there is no movement yet for that to happen. As of now, the proposal is at the Park's Department where a final decision will be made. I am staying on top of this and will continue to make our voices heard.

Senator Jessica Ramos is at it again

The information we have is this bill will not come out of committee for a vote. However, we will stay on top of this to make sure that is the case. I am urging all our members to contact their elected officials to oppose this legislation.

Bill to Remove the Federal Columbus Day Holiday

We were informed that there is a proposal, once again, in the House of Representatives to remove Columbus Day HR_1189 sponsored by Rep. Norma Torres from California. As reported last month, we are continuing to monitor this legislation. As of now there is no movement of this.

Columbus Statue in Syracuse

The leadership of the fight to keep the Columbus statue in Syracuse were on our zoom call this month. They are fighting the attempt of the mayor to remove the statue and

have filed a notice of intent with the City and will fight this all the way. We will continue to support them in any way we can and hope to reach a positive conclusion. I want to thank Carmine Federico, Bob Gardino, Nick Piro and all who are engaged in this battle. Thank you and know CSJ is with you in this fight.

Sag Harbor Removal of Columbus Day

We have great news!!! The Sag Harbor School Board voted to keep Columbus Day on the calendar and to designate the day before Thanksgiving, Indigenous Peoples Day. Thank you, Sag Harbor!

Southampton School Board

There is nothing new with Southampton. As you know, after many fights to change Columbus Day to Indigenous Peoples Day, Southampton School District decided to mark the school calendar "school closed". This was not a victory for us but not a loss either. The other possibility would have been to rename the date, Indigenous Peoples Day.

We are pleased with the victory of Sag Harbor. Our concern has been if Sag Harbor, where there is no Indian reservation, voted to remove Columbus Day, this would cause a ripple effect in Southampton, which has a reservation. I want to thank Lou Gallo for all his work on these issues.

Columbus Circle Statue in Manhattan

The New York City Police Department and the mayor decided to remove the fence around the statue and remove to police stationed there. In less than a week the Columbus statue was vandalized. This cannot be tolerated! I am very please to report that Governor Andrew Cuomo announced that he is having the State Police to investigate this as a "hate crime". I want to thank the Governor for taking this position which we have been asking for a long time.

Council of Presidents Major Italian American Organizations

The Council of Presidents of Major Italian American Organizations set-up a sub-Committee to Save Columbus Day. Robert Ferrito and Basil Russo are the chairs of this committee. It was broken up into a number of additional subcommittees, Fight to Save Columbus Day and our Statues, Retrieving and re-erecting our confiscated Columbus Statues, Fight to Save Columbus as a National Holiday, Fundraising for Columbus, Distributing the Columbus documentary, Coordinating the efforts of Italian American defamation groups and Coordinating Legal challenges. I am chairing along with Angelo

Vivolo the committee to Save Columbus Day and our statues and retrieving and re-erecting confiscated Columbus statues. This is a nation-wide organization. On my committee I have representatives from across America. Our committee had two meetings so far and was well attended and the members are very enthusiastic. We will continue to work as a team.

Columbus attacks Outside of New York

- Wilmington Delaware's attempt to remove the Columbus statue was defeated by the City Council. The vote was six in favor and six abstaining. Only one Councilmember flat out said NO.
- Oregon State to Cancel Columbus Day. The Oregon House passed HB 2526 to designate the second Monday of October as Indigenous Peoples Day. The House committee on rules is now evaluating this bill.
- Belmont Massachusetts petitioning to eliminate Columbus Day.
- Maynard Massachusetts removes Columbus Day. This was approved at the April 6th meeting of the Select Board.
- Bedford Massachusetts is set to vote on May 15th to rename Columbus Day Indigenous Peoples Day.
- Minnesota bill to restore the Columbus statue torn down.
- Petition to save Columbus Day in Norwich Ct. Public Schools.

This list goes on and on. We are in a war to preserve our heritage and culture. National President Robert Ferrito has been in the forefront on all these issues.

2021 NYS OSDIA CSJ "La Bella Lingua Award" program

La Bella Lingua Report from Chairperson Mary Ann Rispoli.

I am pleased to inform you that we received seventeen "La Bella Lingua Award" candidates from District II (Nassau County) High Schools as follows:

Bethpage
Calhoun
East Rockaway
Farmingdale
Jericho
JFK Bellmore
Lynbrook

McArthur
Mepham
Mineola
New Hyde Park
North Shore
Plainedge
Plainview Old Bethpage, JFK
Sacred Heart Academy
Valley Stream North
West Hempstead

The OSDIA NYS CSJ District II "La Bella Lingua Award" selection Committee of four: Ann Acquaviva, Phyllis Cerullo, Lee Cerullo (Award founder) and me, Award Chairperson, will review all material received and make our selection before April 20th:

Due to the current pandemic, we may not be able to hold our usual presentation ceremony; therefore, I may have to again mail the Award recipient a letter of congratulations with the "La Bella Lingua Award" certificate and check. I will send the recipient's Principal a letter informing them that their student is a recipient of this year's District II "La Bella Lingua Award" so they may include this information in their HS's Awards Program.

After District II's Award recipient is selected, I will send necessary Award recipient information to NYS CSJ Chairperson John Fratta requesting that the NY State Grand Lodge Foundation issue a \$500 Award check made payable to District II's "La Bella Lingua Award" recipient.

I will mail letters to the sixteen non-Award recipients along with individual "Certificates of Recognition." Their Principals will receive a letter thanking them for their student's participation, etc. after Award recipient selection is made.

Mary Ann Rispoli
"La Bella Lingua Award" Program Chairperson
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I want to take the time to thank MaryAnn Rispoli for chairing this award and doing a fantastic job.

John Dabbene Essay Contest

Chairperson Geraldine Iannella Graham reported that the responses to this contest was very disappointing. We have only received one entry. This contest is open to all children and grandchildren of members. We will award one child \$200 from each district that sends in the winning essay. Due to the lack of response to this contest we are extending the deadline to June 1st.

My Italian Secret

Vince Marmorale reported that he is working on having an outdoor showing of MyItalian Secret at Casa Belvedere in Staten Island. This movie gives the truth about the Jews that were saved by the Italians during World War Two. To get this story out CSJ will be producing a brochure on the Holocaust and the Italians that risked their lives in saving the Jews living in Italy. For any lodge that has not had a presentation by Vince it is something you should consider. It can also be used for membership. I want to thank Vince for all his work on this subject.

In closing, I want to express my deepest appreciation to President Anthony Naccarato for reappointing me chair of this great committee and for his total support for the CSJ over the last two years. I also want to thank 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 to our community, please notify me immediately.