

New York State Commission for Social Justice

Brothers and Sister,

I want to begin by thanking all my brothers and sisters who have been supportive in our fight to save Columbus Day and the statues. Whether you signed a petition, attended a rally or made a donation I want to know that it is totally appreciated. We are continuing to deal with many issues. In spite of all of this our executive board has some new initiatives to promote a positive image for Italian Americans.

CSJ Luncheon at Russo's on the Bay

Our Annual CSJ luncheon is fast approaching on February 25, 2018. This year we are honoring four individuals who have promoted a positive image of Italian Americans. Each of them has used their unique qualities to highlight the greatness of our Italian heritage and culture.

Louis Gallo has been a member of the CSJ Executive Board for many years. He led our Executive Board and took on the many fights to preserve, protect and defend our heritage. He began many positive image programs and traveled the state promoting a positive image of our community.

Carolyn Reres our Immediate Past President of the New York Grand Lodge has been a strong advocate of CSJ. She began positive image programs during her tenure and has always been a proud Italian American woman. Three of the programs she instituted are the Traditional Dress of the Regions of Italy, the Lecture Series and the Student Seminar. All three programs are huge successes.

Assemblyman Ron Castorina is a proud Italian American Elected Official from Staten Island. Assemblyman Castorina has defended our Italian American Heritage with a strong voice. He was the first Elected Official to support our efforts in a fight with Saturday Night Live. Recently, he objected to an ethnic attack on Governor Cuomo by the leader of his own party.

Columbus Citizens Foundation led by Angelo Vivolo has been in the forefront of our fight to save Columbus Day and our statues. He has given of

his time and energy to lead this fight. The Columbus Citizens have allocated thousands of dollars and staff to put an end to these attacks on our heritage.

Attack on Columbus Day and his statues

First, let me be perfectly clear, **we did not win the fight to save the Columbus Statue in Columbus Circle.** True, the statue is going to remain in Manhattan. We knew this all along. The Mayor's Commission has recommended that a plaque or marker or whatever else they want to call it, be placed on or near the statue telling the other side of the story. We remain adamantly opposed to this and are going to fight this using every possible avenue to do that.

Due to the fact that many of our groups, including our own, are 501c3's we had to be clear that we were legally allowed lobbying and allocating funds in this fight. Because of that we began as a for-profit group called the Christopher Columbus Preservation Group. Once our legal team was in place a research of the law was done and determined that we could be registered as a 501c4 organization, which does allow this type of activity. Our new name is the Christopher Columbus Preservation Coalition. We also have a website 'www.columbuseritagecoalition.com. When visiting this website you are able to sign petitions to city and state lawmakers. If you have family or friends that would like to receive updates from the campaign, send their email addresses to info@columbuseritagecoalition.com.

On a sad note the City of San Francisco has voted last Tuesday to do away with Columbus Day in favor of Indigenous Peoples day. This was done with little or no notification. OSIA was told two days before the vote was taken. The measure that was passed reads *"San Francisco has a responsibility to oppose the systematic racism towards indigenous peoples in the United States, which perpetuates high rates of poverty and income inequality, exacerbating health, education and social crises among Native Americans"*.

Adding to this list is the City of San Jose is discussing four options for the future and/or replacement of their Christopher Columbus statue. The four options will be:

Option 1: Remove the statue and store it

Option 2: Relocated the statue to San Jose Airport, Terminal A, gate 9

Option 3: Relocate the statue to History Park San Jose, Bank of America Building

Option 4: Keep the statue at its current location.

Being option 4 is not likely to be approved the Italian American groups are opting for Option 2.

As you can see the Columbus fight is happening all over our Country. We have to take steps to fight this even more vigorously that we have in the past. It is time we go on the offensive and call it exactly what it is, discrimination against our community. It is also time we tell the negative story, the truth, about the Indigenous people and their brutality.

Lastly, we have Save Columbus Day tee shirts and magnets for sale. All proceeds will go into the fight to Save Columbus Day. **Please consider purchasing one to help us fund this fight.**

Republican Party Chair Ed Cox

On this past Wednesday, Republican Party Chairman Ed Cox had a press conference attacking Governor Cuomo and the corruption in Albany. During the press conference he had a prop of boxes of Ziti which he changed the name to Cuomo's Bribezoni and a statement that we have to put an end to "Cuomo's Culture of Corruption". I was made aware of this by an outraged Republican Assemblyman Ron Castorina who immediately issued a press statement attacking his chairman. President Robert and I issued a press statement demanding a public apology from Cox. We are still awaiting his response.

Positive Image

“An Immigrant Essay Contest”

Let me begin by thanking Charlie Lucie who I appointed to chair this program. He and his committee jumped on it immediately and came up with the following program.

This contest is open to all members in good standing of local lodges that have a child or grandchild in the 7th or 8th grade, or a high school senior. A winner will be picked from each district throughout the state from both categories. Each winner will receive a \$200 award for his or her essay.

It is the responsibility of the local lodge president for validating their member's standing with the lodge prior to the essay being submitted by initially the cover page.

The essay will be highlighting a family member who migrated to the United States from Italy. All entries are due no later than April 1, 2018.

Legislative Breakfast

We are holding a Legislative Breakfast on April 14, 2018 from 9:00 AM to 12:00 Noon. It will be held at the Seaford American Legion Hall. We are inviting all our Federal and State legislators to attend. The purpose of this breakfast is to discuss and advocate for the issues that are important to the Italian American community. This gives us an opportunity to the elected officials to get to know us and our issues and for us to begin a working relationship with them. A hot breakfast will be served before our program. We urge all Lodge Presidents, CSJ Executive Board Members and Liaisons to attend.

I want to thank Keith Wilson for chairing this event.

La Bella Lingua Award

This year, CSJ will be implementing the La Bella Lingua Award. MaryAnn Rispoli is the chair and Jean Gagliardo is the Co-chair. In February we will be mailing letters and applications to all high schools that offer the Italian Language. The high schools will be asked to select one of their most

qualified graduating seniors with at least three years of Italian Language courses. The school must submit two copies of their official transcript, letter of recommendation and completed application. A selection committee of 4 to 6 liaisons from different areas in your district will be impaneled. One \$500.00 award per district will be given to those selected and \$50.00 to the district for expenses. For more information call Mary Ann Rispoli at (516) 623-5208.

I want to close by saying how grateful I am to have such a fantastic team on the CSJ. They all work extremely hard and are dedicated to preserving our heritage.

Again, my Brothers and Sisters, I want to thank you all for the support and encouragement for moving CSJ forward.

Fraternally,

John A. Fratta