

## **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 .

### CSJ Luncheon at Russo's on the Bay

The CSJ luncheon was a great success. I want to thank all who attended, all who took ads out in our journal and all who donated gifts for our raffle. I also want to thank our well-deserved honorees. The accolades that you received were a true testament for the work each of you have done for our Italian American community.

### Attack on Columbus Day and his statues

I want to bring you all up to date on this fight to Save Columbus Day and our statues. With regard to the Columbus statue at Columbus Circle we are waiting to hear what plans the mayor and the city have for a promised plaque. As of today we have not heard about any committee being put in place to come up with verbiage for a plaque. The Columbus Heritage Coalition is continuing to meet and increase the number of Italian American organizations. We are working with our public relations firm and our legal team to be ready in a split second to fight any attempts to place a plaque of marker on the statue.

CSJ has been fighting attempts to do away with Columbus Day as soon as we get the information that it is being proposed. Unfortunately, what is now happening is these cities and school boards are doing this with little or no notification to the community. It is imperative that as soon as you hear any rumbling that a plan is being discussed to remove Columbus Day I urge you to notify me immediately.

Southampton School District in the dark of the night with no notification voted to replace Columbus Day with Indigenous Peoples Day. They tried this last year but CSJ and the residents of Southampton made their voices

heard and it was defeated. On April 10, 2018 CSJ members along with OSDIA members and residents of Southampton attended their school board meeting. We spoke at their open session and urged them to reverse this biased action. There was no response to our request. I want to thank all our members that attended this meeting On April 27, 2018 the school superintendent and some school board members met with the Southampton residents. Lou Gallo attended that meeting also as a CSJ Executive Board member. Again, the request was made to reverse this action. The answer given was no. We have a very strong group of Southampton residents that are determined to get Columbus Day placed back on the calendar. I want to thank Rocco Corriero who is leading this fight. This is a fight that we will fight until this decision is reversed. CSJ is looking to take out a full page ad in the Southampton Press informing the residents of the actions of the school board. The Southampton residents are also taking a full page ad listing over 100 residents supporting Columbus Day.

I am also happy to report that once again, the State of Colorado soundly rejected a proposal to remove Columbus Day. This is the third time this proposal was made and the third time it was defeated. Congratulations to our Brothers and Sisters in Colorado!

### Blue Bloods

In February the CBS episode of Blue Bloods identified Italian Americans as guidos. There was no possible reason for this terminology to be used in this show. CSJ send a letter to CBS officials informing them of our objection to using that word. Unfortunately, this is happening so many times that people believe it is acceptable. I made them aware that using this term for Italian Americans is no different than using the n-word for African Americans. We are awaiting their response.

### Staten Island Hustle

Here we go again; a new show called the Staten Island Hustle has come out on CNBC. The show portrays Italian Americans as buffoons and has them using their connections to achieve success. We just received information on this show and will be discussing it at our next meeting.

## Positive Image

### “John Dabbene Immigrant Essay Contest”

We are very pleased to implement a new Immigrant essay contest in memory of Past NYS CSJ Chair John Dabbene. Each district was given the opportunity to apply for a 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grader and a high school senior award. Both awards were \$200.00 each. The applications were due back on April 1<sup>st</sup> and the following member's children were selected for the awards.

District 1 Kimberly Serrao from the Perry Como Lodge #2846

District 2 Eleina Plelan from the Marco Polo Lodge #2214

District 3 Michael Lopes from the Per Sempre Lodge #2344

District 3 Pietro Ilardi from the Petrosino Lodge #285

District 4 Olivia Velardo from the Christopher Columbus Lodge #692

District 5 Zachary Berde from the Vincent Liguanti Lodge #2212

District 6 Morgan Konow from the Columbia Sons and Daughters Lodge #659

District 7 Rocco Spinelli from the Duca Degli Abruzzi Lodge #443

I want to congratulate all who applied for this award. The checks will be distributed at the members lodge. I want to thank Charlie Lucie and his committee for doing a great job.

## Legislative Breakfast

The Legislative Breakfast was postponed due to a lack of representation from the invited elected officials. I still believe that it is important to have an open dialogue with our elected officials. We will meet this month to determine if we should try this in the future. One suggestion was that we should go to Albany on lobby day to meet individually with elected officials. More information will be coming out regarding this project.

I want to thank Keith Wilson for chairing and planning this event.

## La Bella Lingua Award

The applications are out to the districts. 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. The awards will be presented in June.

I want to take this time to thank, Mary Ann Rispoli and Jean Gagliardo and the committee for implementing this program.

CSJ Purchases 120 copies of La Storia

The CSJ purchased 120 copies of the book La Storia, Five Centuries of the Italian American Experience written by Jerre Mangione and Ben Morreale. These will be distributed to the scholarship recipients this year and were distributed to the students at this year's student summit. This book tells the struggle and achievements of Italians and Italian Americans. I want to thank Carl Ciaccio who through his contacts got us these books for 50% off the purchase price.

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*