

## CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE 11/4/16

My Dear Brothers and Sisters

This past quarter can be characterized as both contentious and sublime as far as CSJ issues were concerned.

In late August an unexpected issue arose that forced us to take immediate action. The National Education Association (NEA), the national professional organization for teachers, issued a public announcement that it would initiate a nationwide campaign to encourage school districts to change Columbus Day to either Indigenous Peoples Day or El Dia de la Raza (The Day of the Race, referring to Latin America), and it would spend \$57,500 to do it! National CSJ responded finally by initiating a nationwide online and ground petition entitled "Save Columbus Day." NYS CSJ immediately answered the call and sent out the petitions, encouraging all lodge presidents, CSJ lodge liaisons, and CSJ Executive Board members to give this matter top priority by circulating them at all and any public events or meetings, and to encourage others, including those not members of the Order, to join the cause! We need 100,000 signatures nationwide online and on the ground by April 30, 2017. These petitions will be directed to the President of the United States to take action through federal administrative activities that observe Columbus Day. These petitions will only be honored by the President until they reach 100,000 signatures, much like when we engaged in the petition campaign to get Yogi Berra the Medal of Freedom, if you remember. So, everyone please do your part to make the threshold a reality!

We have compounded and publicized our effort through the sale of "Save Columbus Day" t-shirts. If interested please contact our NYS CSJ Treasurer Joe Vallone at [vjoseph982@optonline.net](mailto:vjoseph982@optonline.net). As the CSJ Chairman I have made it a point to attend five Columbus Day events and one cultural event ("A Taste of Italy in Suffolk County") to wear a Columbus costume to outwardly highlight and remind everyone during our Italian Culture and Heritage Month of the seriousness of our commitment to defend Columbus' legacy and demonstrate pride for one of our Italian icons. As expected, his legacy was challenged in October when an article appeared in the Southampton Press, a local weekly on Long Island.

Thomas Clavin, a writer from Sag Harbor, wrote a piece in the Press' Viewpoint section as a guest contributor. In his essay he called Columbus' first landing in 1492 an "invasion" that resulted in "genocide." I immediately wrote a letter to the editor, which was printed, where I took Clavin to task regarding the use of such terminology. I argued that "invasion" means forceful entry with hostile intent. Such was not the case with Columbus. His journal shows that initially relations between the natives and him were cordial. "Genocide" means a planned annihilation of a race or ethnic group. Nothing could be further from the truth! Columbus did not embark on his journey on August 3, 1492 from Palos, Spain with some pre-ordained plan to annihilate anybody! When one pays careful attention to the semantics, one can discover that the analysis is flawed and distorted. I attest that NYS CSJ will remain ever so vigilant to combat any unworthy challenges to our beloved Columbus and Columbus Day!

We're also continuing a fight on another plane. A month or so ago we had a setback regarding our efforts to landmark Our Lady of Loreto Church. One of the community members of our Brownsville Cultural Coalition was able to meet with Mr. John Tynan from Catholic Charities POP, the development corporation handling requests for proposals for the OLL parcel. At the meeting Tynan was downright adamant that the church was now unsafe and it would not be landmarked or sold. Consequently, the Diocese has filed once again for a demo permit. Another community member was able to gain entry to the church when a company worker was on site

for the purpose of doing an estimate for the demolition. He observed that the basement was literally torn apart as piping and electric lines were savagely ripped out. The first floor was pretty much intact and repairable, but the roof needed much restoration. Armed with such information, a flurry of conference calls ensued amongst us. We planned a strategy that focused squarely on contacting once again the local city councilman Rafael Espinal, Jr. We felt that if we could just gain his commitment to landmark the church, then the City Council and consequently the NYC Landmarks Commission would then landmark the Church. The Diocese then could not demo the building, and we would be entitled to restoration money from the state for the exterior. The coalition is doing all it can to meet with Espinal, of course!

Despite these unexpected horrors and nagging setbacks that do occur with CSJ issues, there's always some satisfying uplifts. One was the acknowledgment finally by the National Park Service of Luigi Del Bianco as the Chief Carver of Mount Rushmore! I was told by Luigi's grandson Lou Del Bianco that sometime in April 2017 there will be an unveiling of a plaque at the Mount recognizing Luigi as such. It was such an exhilarating feeling that after a 25-year campaign with CSJ and Doug Gladstone, the author who wrote of Luigi's exploits, a documentary and a book written by Lou, that we were all able to rejoice in the culmination of such a mission! The Long Island daily Newsday provided an article by the Associated Press commemorating the 75th anniversary of Mount Rushmore this year, but much to my chagrin I couldn't believe that the article did not mention Luigi at all!

Having been piqued, I immediately forwarded a letter to the editor describing the slight against Luigi and educating the editor of the indispensable role of Luigi Del Bianco. Newsday printed the letter.

Having toiled through another ordeal, Lou and I met for lunch on Long Island and basked in our euphoria of Luigi's recognition. At the luncheon I gave Lou the Newsday article and my subsequent letter which both now appear on Lou's website about Luigi. Members of the Order should be so proud that NYS CSJ was able to lend a hand in achieving this mission!

Another blossoming development is our "Hlstory in a Box" program which is now at the CSJ forefront in promoting and showcasing our culture and educating the public as a counterpoint to stereotyping and defamation. I have done forty-one presentations to date over the last two years or so. Thanks to President Carolyn I was invited to the State Student Summit in Albany in September where I presented the program. In October I did six classes at W. Tresper Clarke High School in Westbury, Long Island and the America Lodge in Franklin Square, Long Island. I have offers from Yonkers High School, the HH Rogers/Cabrini Lodge in Tuxedo, and District 5. Anyone in the state who may be interested please contact me. I'd love to do the program for you.

As a spinoff from the program above there has also been further activity by CSJ in the realm of positive image programming. We've just spent thousands of dollars replenishing our storage facility with new orders for posters, bookmarks, and pamphlets that have been depleted as a result of the enormous interest by so many schools, lodges, districts, and convention delegates. Particularly, I want to graciously thank GL Editor Sal Moschella and Executive Board member Rosemarie DiChiara from the Caboto Lodge for all the work they have done in making this

development a reality! Sal has worked so assiduously in producing brand-new, updated Medal of Honor and Baseball Hall of Fame posters, and he is presently working on updating our MOH booklets that accompany our MOH display kits. Rosemarie has been so diligent in coordinating our orders with Minuteman Press in Merrick and Superior Printing in Brooklyn. Together she and I collaborated on revamping the Columbus bookmark in updating his portrait, and laminating and colorizing the bookmark. Thank you Sal and Ro!

Furthermore, I was able to convert sixteen videocassettes in the CSJ library to DVDs. These cover subjects I think would edify lodge members in appreciating Italian culture and history. Eventually I will introduce them in the Golden Lion newspaper with annotations attached so lodge members will have a synopsis of the subjects at hand. Lodges could then request to borrow them without charge and return them to me, whereupon I would release them to other lodges and so on. It would amount to a revolving library and at the same time educate our members. Stay tuned for the release.

Fortunately, I also made contact with two gentlemen this quarter who allowed me to spread the operations of CSJ to the viewing public. In late September thanks to CSJ Treasurer Joe Vallone I met filmmaker Gerry Ferretti from Lindenhurst, Long Island, and together we did an engaging half hour show on CSJ shown on You Tube. One can see the program at <https://youtu.be/TPohOOAV7zo> if you have the time, and I hope you do. Dave Setteducati, a member of the Sellaro Lodge has a program on public access programming on the Hauppauge Cablevision system, Channel 20, entitled "Italian America on Long Island." His program on CSJ with me will air in January. Hopefully, the public will understand that there is an organization ready to address bias and bigotry against Italians and promote our rich legacy.

Lastly, I am elated that finally after so much prodding that WCBS Radio did the piece on Antonio Meucci at the Garibaldi-Meucci Museum following its March program on the Osgood File about Alexander Graham Bell. Grazie mille to Past National and State OSIA President and Museum President Joe Sciamè and GMM Educator Marianna Randazzo for providing an informative, fact-based program that set the record straight on Meucci as the true inventor of the telephone! They were superlative!

Stay tuned for next quarter's report on your CSJ, and do whatever you can as an integral part of the CSJ base. Thank you!

Fraternally,

Lou