

CSJ Article
September 2017

My Brothers and Sisters:

To say that it has been busy would have been an understatement. Our CSJ Executive Board as well as all our districts have been kept extremely busy these few months. I want to personally thank all our members of the CSJ for their hard work and dedication to fighting to defend and support our heritage.

Columbus Day

Since our last Golden Lion Newspaper a lot has changed with regard to Columbus Day. This fight to preserve it and defend Columbus has become more difficult. The latest blow happened on August 30th after our CSJ along with National CSJ wage a battle to prevent Los Angelis from abolishing Columbus Day. In spite of the hard work of us and many other groups, the Los Angelis City Council voted 14 to 1 to replace Columbus Day with Indigenous Peoples Day. We cannot allow this defeat to prevent us from moving forward with to our own City to prevent attacks on Columbus.

On August 22nd the Speaker of the New York City Council announce plans to remove statues that she felt were unworthy to be in New York City. Of course, one on her list was the Columbus Statue at Columbus Circle in Manhattan. This announcement caused a ground swell of Italian Americans to join forces to fight this plan. I joined, along with the Columbus Citizens Foundation and many other groups, in waging a battle with the speaker on this issue. I began a facebook group "Columbus Under Attack" and in two days we had over 13,000 people on it. In speaking with Carly Jerome from National we thought it was better to create a new group, this one being a closed group that can be found in the search engines. The new group was "Save Columbus Day". I want to thank all my brothers and sisters that joined both groups because it showed a large group of people with a strong voice opposing the statues removal. If you have not yet joined this group please do so immediately.

The Commission for Social Justice signed on to a letter with the other groups to all candidates for office in this year's election. In that letter we asked their position on the Columbus Statue and Columbus Day. We gave them until the 28th of September to respond and put in the letter that a lack of response would be considered a lack of support for our Italian American Community. After the 28th we will hold a press conference informing the voters the results of our campaign. Even before this letter went out I am happy to report that the following elected officials have announced their support for our cause: Governor Andrew, Senator Chuck Schumer, Public Advocate Tish James, Cuomo, Councilman Ritchie Torres, Councilman James Vacca, Councilman Joe Borelli, Councilman Vincent Gentile and Assemblyman Ronald Castorina. I am asking each of you to contact all your local elected officials to ask them to support Columbus Day. Please get back to me at osiajohnf@gmail.com with the results. There can only be one of two answers, yes or no. If they are not yet ready to commit to a yes, they are a no.

This issue has become a snowball rolling down a hill. I have been in contact with the folks in Akron Ohio who informed me that their City Council is proposing to replace Columbus Day with Indigenous Peoples Day. We heard that Bangor Maine is proposing the same thing. As I sit here typing this column I received an email that Ithaca has voted to remove Columbus Day. So as you can see this is like an out of control train rolling down a hill.

My brothers and sisters there is no issue more important than the one we face now. We all have to stay unified and do whatever it takes to put the brakes on this train and end this attack on our heritage. This year, I ask all our brothers and sister to join us at the Columbus Day parade down 5th Avenue. Let's show up in record numbers to defend Columbus. Also, there are additional Columbus Days parades throughout the State. Please try to make every attempt to be at those parades also.

I am urging every lodge in our state to please sign our petition and get your family, friends and community residents to do the same. The petition can be located on the web at <https://www.change.org/p/order-sons-of-italy-in-america-s-commission-for-social-justice-save-columbus-day>. We also have hard copies available for those that are not online.

Saturday Night Live

This is still a very active fight that we are engaging in with NBC. A letter was sent to all the sponsors of the show. We received two responses, one from Quest and the other from Exxon. The responses were ridiculous and we followed up with an additional letter. We are still awaiting their response. I also sent a letter to NBC voicing my outrage of the skit performed by Saturday Night Live and we received no response. In addition, I sent a letter to every elected official in the state, with the link of this episode inviting them to the press conference. We received thee responses, Assemblyman Castorina, Assemblyman Montesano and Congresswoman Nydia Velazquez.

On August 21st we had everyone calling NBC's Corporate Office at Rockefeller Center voicing their anger regarding the Saturday Night Live Skit. I am happy to say we had over 250 people calling at 11AM on that day.

On August 22, 2017 our CSJ held a press conference at Columbus Circle to denounce NBC and the sponsors of Saturday Night Live for that disgusting skit attacking Italian Americans. We were very happy that many members of the press showed up to cover this issue. However, that is the same day that Councilwoman Viverito came our publically to remove the Columbus statue. Sad to say the whole story changed to Columbus.

We will continue this fight until we get a proper response from both NBC and Saturday Night Live.

Positive Image

Just a reminder on September 17th we will be at the Hofstra's Italian American Experience. NYSOSIA will have twenty minutes speaking time on the stage at 11:00 AM. We will also be manning tables for membership, CSJ and some of our other charities. Please come out and support this event.

I am happy to report that our newly improved bookmarks are available. As I told you in the last issue, this year we added a bookmark for Judge Frank Gulotta. We have in stock many materials to help our lodges spread the positive story of our great culture and heritage. Keep in mind it is up to all of us to tell our story. If we leave it to others our story changes and not for the better. So, let us all get out there spreading the good news of all our accomplishments throughout the years.

Fraternally yours,

John