

**New York State Commission for Social Justice**  
**2020 Winter Plenary Session**  
**Report**

Brothers and Sisters;

I want to thank all our Brothers and Sisters for their support for our CSJ.

**CSJ Luncheon**

Our Annual CSJ Luncheon, will be held next month on February 23, 2020. It will take place at Russo's on the Bay. Our honorees will be our Immediate Past President Robert Ferrito and our National President Nancy DiFiore Quinn, Peter and Jeri Dejana Foundation. There will also be a special recognition to Jean Gagliardi and Josephine Morici Cohen. We will also be giving a positive image award to Peter Prudenti, an individual who unselfishly donated a kidney to an unknown person. In addition to our luncheon there will be a souvenir journal.

**Update on our efforts to preserve and protect Columbus Day**

The fight continues to defend and preserve our Columbus holiday. I am very happy to report that this month our NYS CSJ made good on our commitment of donating \$15,000.00 to the National Columbus Education Foundation. In addition to these funds was a \$10,000.00 commitment from the NYS OSIA Foundation and \$25,000.00 from the Sons of Italy Foundation bringing our total to \$50,000.00. We are one of five major Italian American groups that make up the national Columbus Education Foundation. We will all be working together to promote the positive narrative about Columbus and work to dispel the negative narrative being taught.

This Foundation is a 501c3 not for profit and will not be able to do any lobbying.

The Columbus Heritage Coalition, which we are also a major organization member, is a 501c4 which is a not for profit but one that can lobby elected and school officials regarding Columbus Day. I am very happy to report that I am the treasurer of this coalition. This coalition will be the entity that will take the lead in fighting those cities and school boards that decide to remove Columbus Day from their calendars.

However, our fight continues, and it is becoming more serious each day. Just last week we were notified that Arizona and Nebraska has a proposal to replace Columbus Day with Indigenous Peoples Day. I want to remind everyone that August 9<sup>th</sup> is already a day to celebrate Indigenous People and the month of November is Native American Indian Heritage Month. This attack on the second Monday of October is just that, an attack, an attack on our heritage and culture. It is discriminatory to remove a day set aside for one ethnic or racial group and replace it with another. What makes it worse is Indigenous People already have a date set aside for them to promote their heritage. We will fight with all we have against this bigoted attack on our community.

### Columbus, as Taught in the Schools

The sub-committee that I set-up has been working extremely hard in investigating what the various history textbooks are saying about Columbus. This month, Lou Gallo sent out a blast asking all members of the order to volunteer to work in teams to contact schools in the districts to determine what is being taught in those schools about Columbus. Once all this information is gathered it will be presented for evaluation to this committee for the purpose of devising a strategy to change the perception of the history of

Columbus being taught in the schools. We are urging all our brothers and sisters to volunteer to help us.

### Desecration of Columbus Statues

President Naccarato and I have sent a letter to NYS Attorney General Letitia James requesting that desecration of a Columbus statue be classified a hate crime. We are demanding that when a statue in New York is vandalized that the police investigate it as a hate crime and individuals be prosecuted as a hate crime. Vandalizing a Columbus statue is as serious as vandalizing a statue of Martin Luther King and should be treated with the same seriousness. **For those brothers and sisters that have not yet signed our change.org petition to United States Attorney General Barr to make these crimes fall under the hate crime statute please sign it immediately.**

### New York Times Apology

We have renewed our fight to get the New York Times to apologize for their disgusting coverage of the New Orleans Lynching. It is not acceptable for the kind of attack that was made on Italian, especially Sicilian Immigrants. No group would ever stand quiet if this trash reporting was done to them and neither should we. The New York Times thumb their nose at us last May, when I went to their headquarters to deliver 38 copies of a 78-page document asking for an apology. They did not have the respect or the decency to respond to our documents. We cannot allow a newspaper that claims they are “All the News that’s fit to print”, to treat us this way. We are sending another letter to them demanding an answer to our original request.

## Mother Cabrini Statue

I am very pleased to announce that Governor Cuomo has allocated \$750,000.00 to erect a statue of Mother Cabrini. This statue will be placed in Battery Park with Ellis Island and the Statue of Liberty in the background. What makes this spot so acceptable is it is where many Italian Immigrants first step foot in America.

CSJ has been spending a very large sum of money in defending Columbus Day and the New Orleans apology. Our funds are extremely low, and we need to raise money to continue to defend and protect our heritage. A mailing was sent to all our members with an appeal for donations to each member of the order. Please help us raise the much-needed funds to continue our mission.

It is with sad duty that I announce the passing of Jean Gagliardo. Jean has been on our CSJ Executive Board since 2013 and has been a CSJ lodge liaison from the Cellini Lodge for many years. May she rest in Peace.

In closing, I am urging all to stay united and involved in our fight to defend our heritage. If you hear of any issues negatively affecting our heritage, please get it to us ASAP.

Our CSJ is only as great as the brothers and sisters on our executive board and our lodge liaisons. Each of them is totally committed to defending and promoting a positive image of our heritage. I thank each of them.

Brothers and Sisters, I want to thank you for your support to CSJ.

Fraternally,  
*John A. Fratta*