



Italian Historical Society of America Newsletter

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Tutto Italiano **Benvenuto a *Tutto Italiano***

When did the history of Italy begin? Of the resources viewed online, most cite the mid-eight century - 753 BC with the legend of [Romulus and Remus](#) – as the “foundation of Rome.” Information on one website provides a timeline starting with “[c.48,000 BC Neanderthal Man arrives in the Italian peninsula](#).” The [Etruscans](#) are noted as the civilization that preceded the rise of the Roman Empire; before them, the [Villanovans](#).

After the fall of the Roman Empire, numerous tribes and countries occupied and took control of various regions Italy, leading to the Risorgimento – the unification of Italy – that started in 1861 and was official in 1871 when Rome became the capital of a unified Italy.

So, did Italy exist before it was an independent nation? Not according to a spokeswoman for Take Down Columbus NYC, described as “a group of community members with backgrounds in education, social work, and mental health ... [that] through weekly teach-ins and interactions with the community work to reeducate the community and public on the complete identity of Columbus ...” She also mentioned “our ongoing commitment to dismantling the colonial legacy.” Apparently, this means removing the statues of Columbus (and doing away with Columbus Day) [because he represents white supremacy and oppression](#).

At a [virtual joint meeting of the Parks & Recreation and Youth, Education & Cultural Affairs committees](#) held December 7, 2020, in Brooklyn, New York, this woman with a self-described background in one or more fields of “education, social work, and mental health” proclaimed “Columbus couldn’t have been Italian because Italy wasn’t formed as a nation during his lifetime.” Does that apply only to Columbus and the claims of Italian Americans who emphasize his ties to Italian American culture? Or are Native Americans not Native Americans because America “wasn’t formed as a nation” during their lifetimes?

Her presentation was made to request a letter of support from both committees that will be used to further her groups cause of taking down all statues of Columbus in New York City, and possibly in locations throughout the state and beyond.

If you have ever wondered what goes on in these meetings to remove Columbus statues or rename Columbus Day, you need to watch the video mentioned above. Not only does it appear that these groups against Columbus are pandering to Native Americans by mentioning land grabs and tribes’ cultural significances (more about that below), but they are also twisting facts with fiction as they present their stream of misinformation to committee members.

One of the fabrications mentioned at the meeting was [a sentence from a letter written by Columbus](#) and used completely out of context. Most of the other statements made to discredit Columbus were attributed to the writings of Bartolomé de las Casas, described “as a friar and a monk who traveled with Columbus on his voyages ...” According to various sources, de las Casas became a priest sometime between 1510 and 1514 (Columbus died in 1506.). De las Casas arrived in Hispaniola – under the

encomienda system (a Spanish policy of receiving land and slaves) – in 1502, the same year Columbus returned for his fourth and final voyage (1502-1504). They did not meet and never sailed together. (De las Casas's father and possibly an uncle sailed with Columbus.)

Another false claim referred to the “writings of Bartolomé de Las Casas” as the cause for Columbus's return in chains to Spain in 1500. De las Casas did not start writing about Columbus until 1527, working on *History of the Indies*.

Along with numerous remarks meant to degrade Columbus's credibility, the presenter spun a tale of misinformation to committee members who have little or no knowledge of the historiography of Columbus. These groups against Columbus are focusing on re-thinking and re-imaging the past. Might it be a better option to use their energy to focus on how they can assist their communities in the present?

[Archaic Italy: Introduction](#)

[The Secret of Civilization: The Etruscans](#)

[History of the Italian Regions](#)

[A History of Italy in Brief](#)

[Understanding Italy: History of Italy](#)

[Issues Relevant to U.S. Foreign Diplomacy: Unification of Italian States](#)

[Christopher Columbus statue debate rises as controversial statues fall across the country](#) (abcnews.com; June 10, 2020)

[Breaking: “Racist Statue of Liberty” to be Dismantled, Returned to France](#)

From the Italian American Press

The Italian American Press offers a great selection of books – culture, history, memoirs, art, family, food, the supernatural, the natural beauty of Italy, and more – for every interest. Help preserve Italian American heritage and history. Support authors of Italian heritage who write about Italian American and Italian culture and let them know you found their books on the Italian American Press.

New on the Italian American Press - Two love stories

[The Woman in Red by Diana Giovinazzo](#)

A sweeping, illuminating tale of Anita Garibaldi, the feminist icon who became one of the most revered historical figures of South America and Italy.

[She Seduced Me: A Love Affair with Rome by Mark Tedesco](#)

A collection of stories taking the reader on a – past and present – journey across Rome, through its art, culture, and history.

For Valentine's Day

[Saint Valentine's Story](#)

[Pane e Tulipani \(Bread and Tulips\)](#) [YouTube Video]

“Silvio Soldino directs this gentle comedy about a housewife (Licia Maglietta) who temporarily flees from the grinding tedium of her household duties and drifts into a world of amicable weirdos. Subtitled.” (*Thanks, Joe.*)

Italian American Heritage Project

More About Columbus

How significant is your Italian heritage? It's not about pride – as in being self-important; it's about pride in understanding and preserving the traditions of our

ancestors. Many Italian Americans are not aware of the history of the Italian immigrants – the prejudices and discrimination, the ridicule and abuse, the shame in being Italian – as they transitioned to Italian Americans. Many Italian Americans do not see the relevance of Columbus in the evolution of Italian neighborhoods to Italian American communities. They are ignorant of the cultural significance of Italian Americans in America.

In listening to or reading about the current political environment of the United States, calls for unity and being held accountable are becoming common terms. Shortly after his inauguration, President Biden said, "[Unity and healing must begin with understanding and truth, not ignorance and lies.](#)" Yet, ignorance and lies are destroying Italian American culture.

In cities and states across America, tributes to Columbus are disappearing. Community leaders are accepting the cries of the groups opposed to Columbus and acquiescing to their demands. Where are the Italian Americans in these towns and why aren't they providing the historical facts to dispel the lies? At the committee meeting in Brooklyn, someone asked a similar question. Italian Americans need to organize, to be aware of these meetings, and to counterclaim the misinformation.

One of the best sources to keep up with news about Columbus is [We The Italians](#), that has a separate section on its website with news about Columbus. Another source, [Courage and Conviction: The True Story of Christopher Columbus](#) is a 30-minute video produced by The Knights of Columbus and the National Columbus Education Foundation. The video provides an excellent overview of Columbus and Italian Americans. Especially relevant is mention of the statue of Columbus in Syracuse NY.

The statue (as many others) has long been [targeted for removal](#). A petition "[Remove Racist Monument in Syracuse](#)" claims the statue "represents racist acts of violence through the forceful removal of people from their ancestral lands." It continues, "We are a city built on the invaded and occupied territory of the sovereign Onondaga Nation, and a city Indigenous people have always called home which they continue to live in today."

Last June, the [Protesters call\[ed\] for removal of Syracuse's Columbus statue in 2 days](#). The mayor attended the rally and said "I'd be afraid that responding to the demands of one group would not be respectful to the many people I've engaged in the process to date." At some point, the Syracuse Inter-Faith Commission invited members of the Onondaga Nation to participate in discussions to remove the statue, and the Onondaga Nation issued a [Statement on Columbus Statue in Downtown Syracuse](#) dated August 12, 2020 on its website.

Also on its website: "[The Onondaga Nation is not a part of the United States](#)" and "As a nation, the Onondagas have declined to participate in the census for the past 40 years because [they do not consider themselves U.S. citizens](#) ..."

Additionally in 2005, the Onondaga Nation brought a [land rights lawsuit](#) against New York State that the U.S. Federal Court dismissed, stating it would be "too disruptive" to the people of New York." The Onondaga Nation submitted their case in 2014 to the World Court in the United Nations; where it is still pending.

With the petition and calls not to reelect the mayor, this past October, he made the decision to remove the statue. It appears that Mayor Walsh and the Syracuse Inter-Faith Commission prefer to take into consideration the interests of a group that claims no United States citizens and seeks to disrupt the lives of close to one-half million people in New York State, rather than address the concerns of the Italian American citizens of the United States.

Currently, the [Columbus Monument Association](#) is [seeking legal action](#) to prevent the removal of the statue and has a [petition](#) to sign, in addition to a form to [contact Mayor Walsh](#).

[5 reasons to defend Christopher Columbus](#) (The Hispanic Council)

The groups opposing Columbus Day have an organized agenda to eliminate it from America; Italian Americans do not have an organized proactive plan. The statements of truth and facts posted on so many Italian American websites are not working. Italian Americans need a nationwide program to battle the campaign to abolish Columbus Day or it will be lost; even though Indigenous People already have a designated day, and Native Americans have a day and a month to celebrate their culture.

Indigenous Peoples Day – August 9

Native American Month – November

Native American Heritage Day – Friday after Thanksgiving

Visit the [IAHP website](#) to read my articles, learn about the lesson plans, see the resources I've used, and support my work. Donate for a cause – preserving Italian heritage and Italian American history and culture through education. [All donations are tax-deductible.](#)

Italian American News

National Pizza Day (February 9th)

[She's 90 and Italian. I'm in my 30s and half Indian. Here's why we're the closest of friends.](#) Washington Post; January 27, 2021)

[Lady Gaga Explains the Symbolism of Her Schiaparelli Inauguration Dress and Giant Dove Brooch](#) (Elle; January 20, 2021)

[Charting a new course for Christopher Columbus](#) (Fra Noi, January 19, 2021)

[Christopher Columbus statue to stay put; City Council fails to override veto](#) (New Britain Herald [CT]; January 14, 2021)

David Chase Redux (Bill Dal Cerro, Italic Institute of America; Jan 6, 2021)

[Italian Heritage Museum Now Open in League City](#) [Texas] (December 6, 2020
[Source: [We the Italians](#)])

News about Italy

[Mario Draghi: the right man for Italy ... for now](#) (The Guardian; February 4, 2021)

Food & beverage: Italian exports resist despite the crisis (italianfood.net; February 4, 2021)

[Stolen 500-year-old painting found in Naples cupboard](#) (BBC, January 17, 2021)

Buon anno, buon tutto, buona vita,
Janice

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Founder, [Italian American Heritage Project](#)

Founder, [Thirty-One Days of Italians](#)

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