October 21,2021

To the West Tisbury Board,

We are Directors of the Italian American Alliance and it was brought to our attention that you are considering changing Columbus Day to IDP Day. We also noticed that Mr Healy would like to research this issue further and we would like to offer our services to you by providing more in depth information regarding Columbus the man and his true place in History.

Columbus Day, and his namesake, does indeed represent our Acceptance into the larger American community.  The sad irony here is that not only do we emphasize with First Nations Peoples and their struggles with the United States government, but we would in fact ally with them in their cause if their cause wasn't also to destroy our culture and risk our hard fought standing.  I understand that they want to use Columbus as a scapegoat.  As an attorney I can appreciate the "but for" argument - but for Columbus' arrival none of this would have happened.  However, reasonable people would agree that this "but for '' is a sophomoric argument at best.

As much as they speak out against it, the First Nations Peoples were the first colonizers of the New World.  Upon their arrival they shaped and terra formed the land to suit their needs.  As we know, not all of them lived in harmony with the land around them - just look at the Olmec and Maya civilizations.  Great civilizations, but according to Collapse they deforested themselves into drought and starvation - hardly an example of environmental stewardship.  On the charges of genocide, slavery, murder, rape, etc. the Indigenous Peoples Day advocates (not First Nations Peoples as a whole) like to paint a picture of those crimes being brought by Columbus and those came after.  Of course, we all know that this position is not true.  None of those crimes were unique to the Old World prior to the arrivals of Europeans.  Native Tribes were constantly warring with one another.  Whether it was the Caribs or Caribs against the Tiano, or it was those conquered by the Aztec who later allied with Cortez to overthrow the Aztec emperor.  Unfortunately, death and destruction did ensue after Columbus' arrival.  However, most of it happened after he died in 1506, or was committed by the rival Hidalgo's.  In turning just to three modern works by women and minority authors such as Stamford Prof. Carol Delany, Doctor Mary Graybar and Raphael Ortiz, you will see that from their examination of primary sources, Columbus was a consistent friend and advocate of the natives.  According to Attorney Robert Petrone, Columbus should be considered the "first social justice warrior of the New World".  He adopted one Tiano Chief's own son as his own.  He rescued Tiano women and children from Carrib captivity and spared them from being eaten.  He also pleaded for full citizenship rights of the natives to the Pope and Spanish Crown so that the Natives could not be enslaved and would be afforded full citizenship rights.  Surely these actions are worthy of being celebrated by us today.  The question now becomes when we are Celebrating Indigenous Peoples Day, what is it exactly that we are celebrating?  One warring colonizer over that of another?

Lastly, on the issue of "stolen land", it is true that in some instances early English and Dutch settlers forced Natives off their ancestral areas by military means.  It is also no secret that the US government forcibly relocated Tribes, wholesale, to deserted areas of the county.  However, neither did Columbus partake in those re-locations and steal land, but Columbus was long since deceased when the US government and settlers did this.  Also, the concept of land ownership did not exist until Columbus brought western legal concepts with him.  So to say that they owned the land and it was stolen is insincere and a misrepresentation of the historical record.  It is also omitted, from Indigenous Peoples Day rhetoric, that in many instances European settlers bought land from the Natives by exchanging or bartering for it with goods that the Natives wanted (turns out they had little interest in gold and money).

**This letter is just a quick overview that we hoped will motivate you to ask more questions and get a better understanding about this topic. There is a good solution then the one of excluding one group's  holiday for the benefit of another. This  Please don't hesitate to reach out to us.**

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Very truly yours,

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