

July 11, 2016
Jaclyn Bernstein

Re: Establishing Indigenous Peoples Day

Dear City of Los Angeles,

I am writing to express my strong support for abolishing Columbus Day in the city of Los Angeles, and establishing Indigenous Peoples Day on the second Monday of October. Indigenous people have been in what is now the City of Los Angeles since time immemorial, yet still are not adequately recognized as its first peoples.

Indigenous Peoples' Day has been adopted in other cities (e.g. Seattle, Minneapolis, etc.) across the country as part of a larger movement that has rejected the celebration of Christopher Columbus. Columbus is a pivotal figure in the large-scale genocide and colonization of indigenous peoples in the America, with a legacy of slavery, exploitation, rape and torture that should no longer be celebrated and **codified** by the city of Los Angeles.

The notion that Columbus discovered the Americas stems from the idea that indigenous peoples were less than human, and for that reason, the Americas were a "vacant" land. These ideas have **no place in today's contemporary society**, and must be, once and for all, rejected.

Columbus' actions have negative consequences that have continued through the generations for Native peoples. Today, Native Americans and indigenous peoples suffer the worst outcomes on almost every socio-economic indicator of well being; including rates of poverty, high school completion, life expectancy, youth suicides and representation in the child welfare and criminal justice systems. Native peoples are also the only group to still be treated as mascots and called derogatory names by major public figures.

The City of Los Angeles, home to the largest urban indigenous communities in the United States, has not only the opportunity, but also the responsibility to stand on the right side of history. To adopt Indigenous People's Day is a step towards healing and reconciliation in Los Angeles that is so critically needed in today's larger movement for racial equity and healing in this country.

I appeal to you to adopt Indigenous People's Day on the second Monday of October and abolish the designation of that day as "Columbus Day." By doing so, you will be granting Native Americans the rights that all Americans deserve – the right to feel safe, respected and included as part of this country's cultural and historical legacy.

Sincerely,

Jaclyn Bernstein
Actress & Community Organizer