



Richard Williams <richard.williams@lacity.org>

RE: June 14th, 2017, Los Angeles City Council Rules Committee Meeting, Item No: 15-1343

Burntswamp <burnt.swamp@verizon.net>
To: richard.williams@lacity.org

Wed, Jun 14, 2017 at 1:43 PM

Hi Richard,

Please submit the following comments for tonight's Los Angeles City Council Rules Committee Meeting since I cannot personally attend.

Much appreciated and be well.

Larry Smith

June 14th, 2017

Los Angeles City Council Rules Committee
John Ferraro Council Chamber, City Hall, Room
200 North Spring Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

RE: Item 15-1343

Dear Los Angeles City Council Rules Committee (Herb J. Wesson, Jose Huizar, & Marqueece Harris-Dawson, Councilperson):

I am writing this letter of statement requesting the Los Angeles City Council Rules Committee immediately approve the replacement of the Columbus Day Holiday with Indigenous Peoples Day. Tonight's Los Angeles City Council Rules Committee, Item 15-1343, addresses this, outstanding issue.

Currently, Indigenous peoples represent about .04% of entire Los Angeles County population; in fact, Indigenous peoples today are the survivors of the United States Indigenous population (250,000) at turn of the 20th Century. Moreover, in over 100 years - at least, the City of Los Angeles has neither acknowledged Indigenous peoples as human beings, especially on an annual basis, or formally recognized us in the context of a city holiday. As city representatives and leaders, council members have a rare and unique opportunity to help lay the foundations for healing by eliminating the Columbus Day holiday and replacing it with Indigenous Peoples Day.

Celebrating Columbus Day is insulting to Indigenous peoples, detrimental to our health – on numerous levels, and reinforces inaccurate perspectives about how the rest of American society views us. As Indigenous peoples, we have this concept known as Seven Generations, which means we must reflect seven generations into the past when considering our actions today, and we must account for how our actions today impact seven generations into the future. The celebration of Columbus Day has caused intergenerational trauma for Indigenous peoples and the continuance of celebrating Columbus Day will further compound and aggravate the historical trauma of future generations unless there is immediate action rectifying the situation.

The legacy of teaching about Columbus has been highly romanticized, fictionalized, and glorified in terms of

his so-called accomplishments. The false narratives about Columbus are taught in America's public schools, are found in most children's literature books throughout the country, and the Columbus mythology is still a lie commonly and repeatedly told today. As elected officials, you have a responsibility to be effective agents of change for the betterment of society even though your responsibilities require executing difficult decisions at times. The elimination of the Columbus Day holiday is an opportune time to demonstrate your leadership skills, to demonstrate empathy with oppressed Indigenous peoples for the first time in this city's history, and execute an action that reflects eliminating one small historical injustice with significant and intergenerational consequences.

People in positions of privilege and power often make the argument to continue celebrating the Columbus Day holiday by focusing exclusively on certain, limited and positive contributions of Columbus while neglecting the atrocities he committed and what he symbolizes (racism, genocide, the principal creator of the Enslaved African Trade, etc.). The elimination of Columbus Day is not an attack on Italian Americans, but an acknowledgment that Columbus, in terms of his overall actions, is not a person to celebrate or revere. In fact, celebrating Columbus means choosing the lie over truth and demonstrates colonial, settler privilege over Indigenous peoples. Consider the analogy. What if German Americans wanted to create a holiday to celebrate German Americans? Would society tolerate German Americans choosing Hitler to symbolically represent them in a holiday and only focus on and celebrate Hitler's medical achievements while simultaneously ignoring his policies of genocide against Jews, Slavs, Romas and Somas (also known pejoratively as Gypsies), LGBT, socialists and communists? I believe, along with all you and American citizens, that this proposal would be construed as preposterous, offensive, and unreasonable. Therefore, in terms of the advocates of the Columbus Day holiday, we should reject any arguments articulating the support of Columbus' heroics (e.g. promoting migration, Americana, etc.) while simultaneously ignoring his atrocities as a justification for the celebration of the Columbus Day holiday. It is inhumane to ascribe to the central, doctrinal tenets of Holocaust deniers by arbitrarily including and excluding information that supports their position – in this case, the position is that of Columbus Day supporters.

The Los Angeles City Council has been given the task, trust, and responsibility of the people to right the wrongs of the past. Eliminating the official Columbus Day holiday and replacing it with Indigenous Peoples Day would help begin a new path of healing. Indeed, over 14 cities throughout the United States have already begun acknowledging Indigenous People Day in place of Columbus Day. Some of the cities include Seattle, WA; Minneapolis, MN; Berkeley, CA; Albuquerque, NM; Portland, OR to name just a few. Thus, the Los Angeles City Council's actions would not be geographically isolated, but instead reflect an emerging, first-step pattern of reconciliation and healing with Indigenous peoples and their respective First Nations.

Sincerely,

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