

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

COLUMBUS DAY CELEBRATES GENOCIDE - INSTEAD GOVERNMENT SHOULD RECOGNIZE INDIGENOUS PEOPLES ON OCTOBER 12



By Marcos Aguilar (Azteca-Mexicano), Tlayecantzi - Executive Director
Semillas Sociedad Civil (Indigenous Peoples Community-based Organization)

Tlanexlihqueh totahuan, tonahuan, to nihuan ihuan to huehuetquemeh.
Good morning brothers and sisters, and ancestor guardians of these lands.

My name is Marcos Aguilar (Azteca Mexicano). I am the Executive Director Tlayecantzi of the ONLY indigenous community-based autonomous school in the county of Los Angeles, California, Anahuacalmecac International University Preparatory. Our school is located in *nican chanehqueh* Gabrielino Tongva territory, now known as Los Angeles - formerly Otsuungna.

The urban context survived by transnational communities of indigenous peoples is one also survived by youth and children under such duress that local educational authorities have declared the state of life of mostly all inner city youth as one akin to post-traumatic stress syndrome. Indigenous youth and children in particular bear the burden of these realities as they lack individual autonomy over their lives as minors and they collectively lack access to the resources necessary to overcome challenges they face.

In Los Angeles, over 224 languages are spoken today of which dozens are indigenous languages including Nahuatl-Mexicano, our language, which is represented by dozens of regional varieties spoken today throughout Aztlan, Mexico, El Salvador and Nicaragua. Over a million indigenous children attend Los Angeles public schools of which the vast majority are indigenous persons. Yet, as an example of the impact of overly restrictive policies of identification of indigenous children, in Los Angeles Unified School District, of over 650,000 students, *slightly over 900 (nine hundred) children are recognized as Native American*. This count fails to recognize tens of thousands of Indigenous children enrolled in Los Angeles public schools today such as Mayan, Zapoteca and Nahua students present today.

Additionally concerning, is the utter lack of outreach to indigenous parents, either to better identify indigenous children or to consult Indigenous parents in a process of free, prior and informed consent over the education and financing of the schooling of their children. Moreover, it is also alarming that no known public agency of the state concerns itself with conducting an accurate census of the number of children who speak an indigenous language or whose home language includes an indigenous language or whose heritage language may be an indigenous language. Consequently, possibly hundreds of thousands of children and families throughout the state of California, a state which is traditional territory for over two hundred sovereign indigenous nations, and home to hundreds of indigenous languages from throughout the Americas remain invisible, without regard to internationally affirmed rights to education, language and culture. Certainly, the impact of the Doctrine of Discovery upon indigenous children today and the languages they speak or are prevented from speaking by the policies, pedagogies, curricula and personnel of public schooling remains as the single most defining commonality among all indigenous children, their families and communities - A STATE OF NONEXISTENCE, DISAPPEARANCE & OLVIDO.

Date: 10-31-16
Submitted in APR Committee
Council File No: 15-1343
Item No.: 1

I note in this context that our community's concerns for indigenous rights and revitalization cannot be seriously considered without a sobering and honest assessment of the impact of acts of genocide by agents of state governments in Mexico and the rest of Latin America, particularly calling attention to the case of the massacre and disappearance in Iguala, Guerrero, Mexico of Indigenous student teachers of the Teachers College of Ayotzinapa, Guerrero, Mexico. These very student teachers were to become the teachers in remote villages, pueblos and even in inner city schools attended by indigenous children forced into migrating to cities outside their homelands and even outside their home countries. This is why legal measures recognizing the inalienability of the sovereign rights of Indigenous Peoples, and by extension Indigenous parents over the education and cultures of their children.

Importantly, the Legislature of the State of California adopted Assembly Joint Resolution No. 42—Relative to indigenous peoples. [Filed with Secretary of State August 11, 2014.] which called “for increased awareness, sensitivity, and respect for issues of sovereignty related to the heritage of Native Americans and indigenous peoples,” in its adoption of the principles of of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

AJR No. 42 additionally recognized that, “The “Doctrine of Discovery,” emanating from the European colonization after 1492 of the continents later to be known as the Americas, has had profound and lasting negative effects on the cultures and populations of the indigenous peoples and nations of the Americas;”

Recognition of Indigenous Peoples who represent important communities in the City of Los Angeles through the establishment of Indigenous Peoples Day on October 12th as an official city holiday would advance internationally reaffirmed calls for “promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion,” as well as, “Recognizing the value and diversity of the cultures and the forms of social organization of the world's indigenous people.”

As such, I urge this Committee to adopt the resolution in favor of establishing Indigenous Peoples' Day.

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To Councilman O'Garra,

I attended the Native American Heritage Month Celebration and heard your brief factual summation of the development of the United States since Columbus landed in Hispanola.

Los Angeles, with the largest population of urban Native peoples, should have their presence and history recognized by their day - Indigenous People's Day. Of the Italians who cling to Columbus as their "local boy makes good" do not understand this, please reach out with an educational campaign.

The events in Standing Rock, ND with the insane militarized force arrayed against the peaceful defenders of the land, water and treaty and sacred sites, show the continued attitude and tradition of violence against the Native peoples and their global supporters.

A resolution for Indigenous People's Day would be a

very significant contribution
the right the over 500 years
of songs - and education
not only for the Italians
but the nation as a whole.

I am very much in
favor of such a resolution -
it is critical for this
nation which has tried
to obliterate its own history -
and does so at its own
peril.

Sincerely, in
solidarity,
Lsa-Kae McKinn