

From: **Berra, Joseph** <berra@law.ucla.edu>
Date: Wed, Nov 2, 2016 at 1:17 PM
Subject: Indigenous Peoples Day
To: "councilmember.buscaino@lacity.org" <councilmember.buscaino@lacity.org>

Dear Councilmember Buscaino,

My name is Joe Berra and I write in support of the proposal put forward by Councilmember Mitch O'Farrell to establish Indigenous Peoples Day in the City of Los Angeles.

I am a second-generation Italian-American. My four grandparents immigrated to this country between 1903 and 1918. I am also an Italian citizen by descent. Like many immigrants, my grandparents suffered discrimination. I grew up in the Italian neighborhood of St. Louis proudly referred to as "the Hill." When I was young, however, I still heard it referred to by others as "Dago Hill".

The Columbus Day holiday was originated by Italian-Americans in Colorado in an effort to overcome discrimination and assert Italian-Americans place in this country with pride. They sought it for the right reasons, but they chose the wrong symbol with which to identify.

My grandparents had nothing in common with Columbus' colonizing project in the service of the Spanish crown. They were landless peasants fleeing feudal conditions of oppression, in search of a new life. The America they came to, and the one in which we live, continues to be a dream, a project we all strive to build daily. One fact of this project is indisputable though: this land was home to the First Peoples before it became home to many of us, and rather than erase that fact we must acknowledge and honor it. Substituting the current Columbus Day holiday with Indigenous Peoples Day is the right way to start to do that.

When I moved to Los Angeles I was happy to see a large, thriving, Italian-American community of which I am now part, and to which you belong as part of a proud family history. I believe it is time for our community to find a new way to celebrate the rich heritage and contributions of Italian-Americans. I realize it will be difficult for many in our community to tear themselves away from this symbol, but it is the right thing to do, for the right reasons.

Please support Councilmember O'Farrell's proposal and please move to establish the second Monday of October as Indigenous Peoples Day.

Respectfully Yours,

Joseph P. Berra

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