

The Columbus Calumny

I have lived in the East Bronx neighborhood of Morris Park practically my entire life. Predominantly Italian until recently, Morris Park still retains a strong Italian flavor.

The Italian language of the neighborhood Nonas fills my ears; the first dishes I cooked without Mom's help were all Italian (the ingredients purchased at nearby fruit and vegetable stands, butchers, and delis brimming with goods imported from Italy); when my parents took the family on the Grand Tour of Europe, naturally Italy was on the itinerary.

I am not Italian by birth, but I am by *osmosis*. Therefore, I feel very acutely the anguish of the Italian community throughout the East Bronx, bewildered that their culture is being trashed, their history is being destroyed, and that they are being denounced as racist if they object to the [toppling or defacing](#) of statues of Christopher Columbus [throughout the United States](#).

Social Justice Warriors and their anarchist shock troops carrying out this wanton destruction are, as usual, utterly ignorant of history. When they're not busy pulling down statues of Columbus, they've been attacking statues and monuments honoring prominent abolitionists and black soldiers who fought with the Union Army to free blacks from slavery.

Clearly, nobody in the rage-stoked mob has the wit to Google the history of the public art that has become the Left's latest target – or has the reading comprehension skills to understand words on the plaque explaining the commendatory deeds of the person(s) honored.

If [police unions will be reformed](#) to allow for the timely removal of bad cops, we must also [turn our attention to the teachers unions](#) so we may more easily remove bad “[educators](#).” What we have seen over the past three weeks is a testament to

the systemic failures of public school education.

But that's another matter, for another day. The issue at hand is the mindless disrespect being shown to the Italian-American community, because social justice warriors believe Columbus was a genocidal white supremacist way back in 1492. Following this blinkered logic, of course, must mean Italians in the here and now are also genocidal white supremacists.

The inconvenient truth is that Italians and Sicilians were once victims of white supremacy in this country:

Until the 20th century, Italians and Sicilians were legally classified as "colored" under U.S. immigration law (as were Armenians and many other ethnic groups), were subject to quotas, and were not allowed to become naturalized citizens. This gave rise to "[race courts](#)" in which immigrants presented anthropological, cultural and historical evidence that their ethnic group was white, even though they were not Anglo-Saxon. Individual judges weighed this evidence and determined whether the plaintiff was white, and therefore could become a naturalized citizen. Different judges came to different conclusions, keeping the immigration status of many ethnic groups in limbo for decades. Very few people know about the race courts; it's not taught in school.

From 1885 until 1915, at least 50 [Italians were lynched](#) all over America (including in New York). In 1891, 11 Italians were lynched by a mob in New Orleans, even though they had already been acquitted of killing the city's police chief. To this day, it remains among the largest single mass lynchings in American history. Very few people know about the lynchings of Italians; it's not taught in school.

During World War II, FDR rounded up Americans of German, Italian, and Japanese descent and interned them [in relocation camps](#) for the duration of the conflict. This is during the living memory of Italian elders who live in Morris Park and

throughout the United States. Very few people know that the Japanese were not the only ethnic group put into American relocation camps; it's not taught in school.

Whatever injustices and crimes Columbus [putatively committed](#) 528 years ago, honoring him as a symbol of Italian pride for the fact that he – an Italian – was the one to discover this continent, is a small compensation for injustices and crimes against Italians that occurred in this country within the past 150 years.

Few if any elected officials in local, state, or federal government will defend Columbus, because of the punishing political cost. Rather, [virtue-signaling elected officials](#) are [wasting no time](#) in [removing Columbus statues](#) before the seething mobs can. [Even in Columbus, Ohio](#). What's next? Will they [change the name](#) of the city, too?

Heck, let's just line up everyone named Christopher against a wall and execute him. If a woman can be [fired from her job](#) at a mortgage lender for being the stepmother of a police officer indicted for using deadly force in an apparent self-defense situation, [assassinating real-life Christophers](#) can't be too far behind. We've [seen things in this country](#) lately that would've been [unimaginable](#) even six months ago.

While New York Governor Andrew Cuomo and New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio – both of whom identify as Italian-American – have expressed [verbal support](#) of the Columbus Circle statue erected a year after the New Orleans lynching, it remains to be seen whether they will defend it from *physical assault* by the barbarians at the gate. Judging by how [the looting spree](#) in midtown Manhattan was handled, it's an open question.

Astonishingly, we can't look to our political "leaders" in either party to stop the ongoing assault on public art, civility, and Constitutional rights being waged by undereducated radicals with college degrees. Short of tricking

them into leaving Columbus statues alone by renaming them “Cristóbal Colón” (what Queen Isabella of Spain called him), We, the People will have to defend our *shared* American history – whether it’s Columbus or Jefferson or Washington.

It should be politically damaging to disrespect Italians; they are an important component of our [immigrant melting-pot culture](#).

Basta!

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