



Know Columbus!

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Five Largest Italian American Groups in the Nation Unite to Defend Columbus. The Columbus Citizens Foundation, the Italians Sons and Daughters of America (ISDA), the National Italian American Foundation (NIAF), the Order of the Sons and Daughters of Italy (OSDIA), and UNICO National -- gathered together in an unprecedented show of Italian American unity to form, and fund, the National Columbus Education Foundation. John M. Viola, executive producer of the Italian American Podcast, and former president and chief operating officer of the National Italian American Foundation (NIAF) was unanimously named the Foundation's first executive director.

A new organization is seeking to dispel the myths surrounding Christopher Columbus, and it is being backed by the five largest Italian American organizations in the United States and their millions of members and followers.

In the wake of the unprecedented attacks on the reputation of Christopher Columbus that have spread throughout the country, the five most significant Italian American organizations in the nation decided that the Genovese navigator deserved a fair and balanced examination and the more than 20 million-person Italian American Community must help lead the effort to make sure he gets it.

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The National Columbus Education Foundation was organized as a way to conduct and distribute research, studies and analysis relating to Christopher Columbus. The Foundation intends to develop policy solutions and proposals to address the preservation of Columbus Day with an emphasis on correcting the false narrative surrounding the famed explorer. Resources will be directed towards educating the general public to promote an active discussion to verify the great accomplishments of Christopher Columbus and why Columbus Day should be preserved, and celebrated by all Americans.

The National Columbus Education Foundation will concentrate its educational and outreach activities on correcting the false narrative about Christopher Columbus. The Foundation will also undertake a variety of research projects to assist with developing educational materials and multi-media content that are accessible to the general public, as well as to grassroots leaders and policymakers.

“The fact is that the popular conversation surrounding Columbus today is filled with misconceptions and one-sided history, and as the community most closely associated with Columbus and Columbus Day, we felt it was our civic duty to present and defend the other side of the story” said Angelo Vivolo, who was unanimously elected chair of the new organization. “When you study the historiography around this man, you come to see that the historical sources that celebrate him as a great figure far outweigh the few that cast him in a negative light, and we have to ask ourselves why the majority of the sources are being ignored and repressed while one of the oldest American holidays and first American heroes is summarily wiped away without any objective conversation?”

The Foundation is set to launch a large public campaign and website called KnowColumbus.org in order to disseminate facts and findings and present a more objective approach to how we examine our complex history in the face of ongoing agitation about Columbus and other long-revered American historical figures. In addition, the National Columbus Education Foundation will sponsor workshops on results of the research for citizens and community leaders.

While the National Columbus Education Foundation may express a point of view or set forth recommendations on an issue, all publications will be written with a view toward exploring the broad range of approaches and solutions to complex public policy surrounding the preservation of Columbus Day and other aspects of American history and culture.

Upon the official formation of the Foundation, John M. Viola, executive producer of the Italian American Podcast, and former president and chief operating officer of the National Italian American Foundation (NIAF) was unanimously named the Foundation’s first executive director.

“The mission of our new foundation is to bring a nuanced and fair perspective to the examination of a complex historical figure,” said John M. Viola, executive director. “It is our immediate intention to begin the work of building a coalition of Americans of all ethnic, religious, and political backgrounds to make clear that our nation deserves an honest look at Columbus and all aspects of its history. Up until now, critics of Columbus have refused to have an open discussion and based their vitriolic attacks on one or two accounts of Columbus’ life written hundreds of years ago by people with their own agendas, and we think that ought to be corrected. At this critical moment in American social history, if we really want to correct historical wrongs, then we can’t perform that delicate surgery by chopping at it with a blunt axe, and that is what is happening.”

About the National Columbus Education Foundation

The National Columbus Education Foundation was organized to conduct and distribute research, studies and analysis relating to Christopher Columbus. Comprised of members from all major national Italian American organizations -- Columbus Citizens Foundation, the Italians Sons and Daughters of America (ISDA), the National Italian American Foundation (NIAF), the Order of the Sons and Daughters of Italy (OSDIA), and UNICO National-- the Foundation intends to develop policy solutions and proposals to address the preservation of Columbus Day with an emphasis on correcting the false narrative surrounding the famed explorer. Resources will be directed towards educating the general public to promote an active discussion to verify the great accomplishment of Christopher



Columbus and why Columbus Day should be preserved.

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