The Italian American Experience
Muddies the Waters of Racial Discrimination

NOTA BENE: There Have Been Other Painful Episodes In The Italian American Experience.

AMONG THEM:

The World War II Internment, Relocation and Restriction of Italian Americans

PHOTOS ABOVE: *Photo of Guard and Italian Americans arriving at internment camp in Missoula, Montana*

During World War II, over 600,000 Italian Americans were restricted, and thousands subjected to forced relocation from the West Coast while community leaders were interned and imprisoned without trial or due process.

These restrictions included fingerprinting and carrying a government issued identity card, curfews, bans on travel more than 5 miles from home, seizure of personal property and businesses. The Italian language was banned in public as the enemy's language. Their only crime was being of Italian ancestry. At the time, Italian Americans were the largest immigrant group in the United States and in California. These events silenced Italian American culture for a generation and the effects are still being felt.

For decades after World War II, American teachers taught a false history about the wartime experience of Italian Americans, denying that Italian Americans had been interned, relocated or restricted as had the Japanese.

Italian American students who raised the issue in class were told it did not happen or their papers on the topic were poorly graded. Parents who told their kids about their experiences were met with the same denial and told it was “Not in the history books.” Our story is still not included.

A review of 22 U.S. college and high school history textbooks conducted in 2004 (The Italian American Textbook Project), revealed that none mentioned the WW II experience of Italian Americans other than to mention “they were spared internment, unlike Japanese Americans,” “they were not presumed disloyal by virtue of their national origin,” and “they were never relocated.” All statements in the textbooks used in our schools and all false history. If mentioned at all, it was their association with crime. Chicago mobster Al Capone, the poster boy for organized crime, is featured in virtually every textbook.

How can we expect Italian American youth to be proud of their heritage, which is stigmatized and marginalized in the education they receive. How can we expect them to celebrate their heritage when the symbols of their identity like Columbus Day are trashed and portrayed as bad when they are not. But we do get to learn about other people’s history and culture in school, just not our own.

For some 60 years the federal government had denied that Italian Americans had been suppressed during the war years, but Italian American historians documented the truth and as truth be told, in 1990 the federal government admitted these events happened with the passage of the Wartime Violations Italian American Civil liberties Act of 1990.

LINKS – on website – Rosie the Riveter and the website section on WWII

CLICK TO VIEW WWII Italian American Articles

CLICK TO READ Rosie The Riveter

The Anti-Columbus Hysteria of 2020 - The Journey Ahead!

PHOTOS ABOVE: *The Statue of Columbus and Isabella stood in the California State Capitol Rotunda since 1883, and the removal of the statue in 2020.*

PHOTOS ABOVE: *The Statue of Columbus in California Capitol Rotunda in Sacramento*

The hysteria and mob riots of 2020 accelerated the mass destruction of all things Columbus. Parades were banned, statues and monuments erected by our ancestors removed and violated, Columbus Day holidays replaced by tribal holidays.

Even the statue of Abraham Lincoln was removed in Boston - and he freed the slaves. Go figure. How many more historical figures will be ideologically lynched and when and how will it be stopped.

In California, The Statue of Columbus and Isabella was removed in 2021 from The Rotunda of the State Capitol where it had stood since 1880. The California State Columbus Day Holiday was replaced by Indigenous Peoples Day in 2021.

The Columbus international Highway Sign in southern California was removed by the State to be replaced by a native American one. In Los Angeles, the county government banned references to Columbus in public spaces.

These anti- Columbus political actions were taken in California by a political party and Governor with an anti-Columbus bias and ideology. The combination of racially motivated interest groups in league with the political and administrative power of the government has left Italian Americans unprotected and unrepresented in California, at all levels of government.

Sacramento County - As recently as April 18, 2023, of this year, the Sacramento County Board of Supervisors replaced Columbus Day with Indigenous people's day. Courtesy of the (DEI) Diversity, Equity and Inclusion staff in collusion with native American advocates. The County even issued a misleading Press Release saying Columbus Day is not a National Holiday. Nothing could be further from the truth. However, Indigenous People's Day is not a national holiday until Congress says it is.

The Italian community of Sacramento area numbers more than 60,000 people. On their behalf, the Society is challenging the county to reaffirm the Columbus Day holiday. We believe the county's action was racially motivated. We believe the County made a mistake by taking sides and discriminated against Italian Americans when they replaced Columbus Day. We are informed they knew the holiday was associated with Italian Americans.

The county action took place just two months before the Supreme Court of the United States declared that race-based discrimination and diversity policies and goals are a violation of the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment. Diversity is no longer acceptable as justification for discrimination. When will the County change its ways.

We believe the county used diversity considerations as a justification for replacing Columbus Day. There was no good reason for the county to replace Columbus Day with Indigenous Peoples Day, and to do so behind closed doors. No notice to the public or the Italian American community.

The real issue is whether Italian Americans, in their long and heroic struggle for acceptance are once again being marginalized as second-class citizens.

This cultural conflict is happening nationwide. Italian Americans have been on the frontlines challenging these attacks on our American lives and culture by pushing back with advocacy and lawsuits. Italian Americans have a number of ongoing court cases, and one is against the Mayor of Philadelphia for unilaterally replacing Columbus Day with Indigenous People's Day, which is before the U.S. Supreme Court.

Ask us how we really feel!