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September 28, 2017

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Office of the Governor  
Anchorage

Governor Bill Walker  
550 W 7<sup>th</sup> Ave, #1700  
Anchorage, AK 99501

*Bill:*

Dear Governor Walker:

I want to congratulate you on your idea to create a state holiday honoring Alaska's indigenous people. Our state owes a great deal to the rich cultural heritage of its Native people. However, I disagree strongly with your plan to celebrate it in lieu of Columbus Day. By so doing, you are dishonoring Native Americans, and reducing their special day of remembrance to a protest or a poke in the eye of anyone who wishes to honor the European discoverer of the New World.

Of course, vilifying Columbus has become vogue in recent years, pushed by leftists under the guise of Native American sensitivity. Throughout history, whenever someone wants to overthrow a society, they attack their heroes and founding fathers, toppling their statues and sullyng their memories. Ironically, these modern-day anti-Columbus activists are simply continuing a battle first started by the KKK in the 1920s. They objected to honoring an Italian Catholic who sailed for Spain, so they began a character assassination campaign.

The torch was picked up in the '90s by disgraced Colorado professor and Indian poseur Ward Churchill, who perpetuated the myths of Columbus's brutality and willful destruction of the American natives. In reality, Columbus made friends with many of the native people he met, and he forbade unfair trading by his men, and other forms of maltreatment. For a 15<sup>th</sup>-century man, Columbus was relatively enlightened and benign.

Many of the claims of anti-Columbus agitators have been debunked by scholars. The tales of genocide through deliberate infection of smallpox and other diseases don't hold up, as people of that time didn't even know how disease was spread. Early natives suffered from the diseases they caught from Europeans, but it wasn't deliberate. And no one has proven it was Columbus's crews that infected them. On the other hand, Europeans took home American diseases they caught from the natives, such as syphilis, hepatitis, and polio, not to mention tobacco and cocaine addictions.

Our modern society is afflicted with a destructive habit of judging past individuals through the lens of modern-day values. Columbus wasn't perfect, but by the values and ethics of his day, he was an honorable man who ushered in the emigration that led to the founding of the United States. There is room to honor the original inhabitants of Alaska



and America – for all their own past imperfections – and to honor the man who made it possible for you and me and 300 million other Americans to live in the greatest country the world has ever known. I ask you not to let yourself be swayed by people who wish to pit one group against another, which is exactly what you will be doing by supplanting Columbus Day with Indigenous Peoples Day. Holidays are a time to honor, not resent.

Sincerely,



Mike Porcaro