

Columbus statue misrepresents history, over 80 sign on

The Bethlehem Gadfly Columbus monument September 7, 2020 2 Minutes

🍷 Latest in a series of posts on the Columbus monument 🍷

published in the Bethlehem Press, September 2, 2020

Dear Editor:

This letter written in solidarity with protests across the country calls for removal of the Christopher Columbus monument located in the Bethlehem Rose Garden.

The monument was installed in 1992 by the now-defunct Bethlehem chapter of Unico, an Italian-American service organization. It was commissioned, as stated on the inscription, “to commemorate the 500th anniversary of the discovery of America.”

Columbus did not discover the Americas: he accidentally happened upon them while searching for a westward route to Asia. They were already inhabited by Indigenous populations with rich and ancient cultures.

The monument, therefore, literally espouses misinformation to the public.

As the commission indicates, we know that, for some Italian Americans, Christopher Columbus is a revered figure and a symbol of belonging. We, some of us of Italian descent ourselves, call on these members of the Italian American community to reconsider Columbus’ status as a “hero” and join us in honoring Indigenous lives.

This monument glorifies Columbus as a hero when he is nothing of the sort. Columbus’ legacy has been shaped by a Eurocentric education system that has promoted false information, the erasure of Indigenous stories, and the devaluing of Indigenous life. As primary sources from



the period document, Columbus' crimes against the Indigenous peoples were horrific in every way: He raped countless women and children, tortured entire communities, forced human beings into slavery, and killed countless others. His actions began a genocide against the Indigenous population of the Americas.

A monument to this person does not belong in our community.

Bethlehem prides itself on going through a cultural renaissance, but we cannot make genuine progress in this area if we insist upon honoring as a hero a man who committed heinous acts of violence against Indigenous people. A city such as Bethlehem that celebrates diversity needs to lead Pennsylvania and its sister cities in correcting an unjust spotlight.

Considering the aforementioned issues, we, the undersigned, call on the City of Bethlehem to remove the statue during its renovations of the Rose Garden, slated to commence at the end of this month (August 2020). Upon receipt to the City, this letter will also be made available to the wider public to sign in support.

Elena Fitzpatrick Sifford, Laura Kemmerer, Jaclyn Dorney, Taylor Alexander, Stephanie McCain, Justin Sifford-Angotti, Chelsea Cianciotto-Grimmett, Gregory Grimmett, Gina Salazar, Mary Anne Madeira, Adam Hoff, Lauren Barbarito Churchill, Laura Oswald, Timothy Churchill, Patricia Miller, Errol G. Wilson, Emanuela Kucik, Emily Orzech, Justin Alexander, Tamara Nisic, Katie Stafford, Monica Najar, Holona Ochs, Emily Pope-Obdela, Jennifer Swann, Allison Mickel, Jon Irons, Margo Hobbs, Randall Anthony Smith, Kassaandra Hartford, Nobuko Yamasaki, Suzanne M. Edwards, Hyacinth Kucik, Maura Finklestein, Drew Swedberg, Dana Francisco Miranda, Caitlin Charos, Christy Chong, Dale Grandfield, Connie Wolfe, Andrea Aveiga, Jacqueline D. Antonovich, Brian D. Shaw, Christa Irwin, Robin Riley-Casey, Joanna Chatzidmitriou, Matthew Caltabiano, Leticia Robles-Moreno, Matthew Bush, Anastasia Caltabiano, Michelle Ramirez, Susan Ott, Debbie Graul, Deena Stoudt, Elizabeth Firsten, Courtney Landau, Daniela Colaianni-Poe, Christine Leigh Melnychenko Westrich, Brian Tervo, Andrea N. Roloson, Alison Farrell, Jessica Kucsanz, Amy Corbin, Sarah E. Baer, Kristina Morris, Jenna Katsaros, Jillian Krill, Kathy Bulman, Richard Warmkessel, Maggie Urban-Waala, Alyssa Ascher,

Kara Tervo, Arthur Hutcheson, Jennie E. Hoose, Purvi Parikh, Fadeth Gomez, Penny Hutcheson, Katelyn Haydt, Maia Knowles, Gabe Knowles, Nate Knowles, Cady Darago, George Varghose, Jeremy Alden Teissere, Emily Drake, Rachel Hutcheson, Kate Wilgruber

see also Allison Mickel, “Your View by Lehigh professor: Columbus is still killing people. Take him down.” Morning Call, July 10, 2020.