



Written by [Selwyn Duke](#) on October 9, 2017

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Killing Columbus: Seeking the “Undiscovery” of America

That the victors write the history is also true in the wake of culture wars. Unfortunately, when those winners happen to be losers (intellectually and morally), the history they write may be your civilization’s last chapter.

Our current cultural revolution, which would do China’s Red Guards proud, has again kicked into high gear, with Confederate statues getting the Taliban treatment. Yet much as how forces winning battles and taking territory move on to the next campaign on Conquest Road, today’s cultural revolutionaries now have in the cross hairs even Founders such as Thomas Jefferson and the father of our nation, George Washington. Yet under withering direct assault currently is a “softer” target, Christopher Columbus.



In my birthplace, Yonkers, New York, a statue of the Italian explorer was recently vandalized; this was followed by similar incidents in the Big Apple borough of Queens and Manhattan’s Central Park. A “community organizer” (no, not Barack Obama) — or, as they used to be called, an agitator — has proposed replacing a Columbus statue in St. Paul, Minnesota, with one of late pop star Prince and one chosen by the “Native Community.” Even more significantly, the city council in our country’s second-largest metropolis, Los Angeles, voted 14-1 on August 30 to replace Columbus Day with “Indigenous People’s Day.” If this keeps up, the rhyme we all learned as children will be changed to, “In 1492, Columbus assailed all that was good and true.”

But is this true? Who was Christopher Columbus? And, more significantly, what did he accomplish?

Christopher Columbus (Italian: Cristoforo Colombo), the son of a wool merchant, was born in the Republic of Genoa, likely in 1451. His life as an adventurer got off to a fitting start, as History.com explains: “When he was still a teenager, he got a job on a merchant ship. He remained at sea until 1470, when French privateers [legalized pirates] attacked his ship as it sailed north along the Portuguese coast. The boat sank, but the young Columbus floated to shore on a scrap of wood and made his way to Lisbon, where he studied mathematics, astronomy, cartography and navigation. He also began to hatch the plan that would change the world forever.”

History.com relates that vision’s origin, writing that at “the end of the 15th century, it was nearly impossible to reach Asia from Europe by land.” Not only was the route long and arduous, but hostile encounters with the Muslims who controlled it were common. (This was one of the issues that sparked the Crusades earlier in history.) “Portuguese explorers solved this problem by taking to the sea: They sailed south along the West African coast and around the Cape of Good Hope,” the site continued. “But Columbus had a different idea: Why not sail west across the Atlantic instead of around the massive



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African continent?"

Columbus was certainly well-suited for such an endeavor. As geographer and writer Robert Fuson put it, Columbus was probably "one of the best 'dead-reckoning' — that's where you use a compass — ... sailors that ever walked the planet." His math, though, at least in this instance, left something to be desired. Columbus estimated the Earth's circumference to be approximately 2,300 miles. (Yes, he, and all educated Europeans, knew the world was round.) This helps explain why he thought he'd reached the East Indies upon landing in the Bahamas.

On this point contemporary nautical experts generally disagreed, adhering "to the (now known to be accurate) second-century B.C. estimate of the Earth's circumference at 25,000 miles, which made the actual distance between the Canary Islands and Japan about 12,200 statute miles," writes Biography.com. Nonetheless, the site further informs, "Despite their disagreement with Columbus on matters of distance, they concurred that a westward voyage from Europe would be an uninterrupted water route."

One could wonder if Columbus' reckoning of distance was more selling point than savvy analysis, because he certainly needed selling points. As Biography.com also tells us:

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Columbus proposed a three-ship voyage of discovery across the Atlantic first to the Portuguese king, then to Genoa and finally to Venice. He was rejected each time. In 1486, he went to the Spanish monarchy of Isabella of Castille and Ferdinand of Aragon. Their focus was on a war with the Muslims [the *Reconquista* — Muslims had occupied Spain for approximately 700 years], and their nautical experts were skeptical, so they initially rejected Columbus. The idea, however, must have intrigued the monarchs, for they kept Columbus on a retainer.

Columbus continued to lobby the royal court, and soon after the Spanish army captured the last Muslim stronghold in Granada in January of 1492. Shortly after, the monarchs agreed to finance his expedition. In August of 1492, Columbus left Spain with three ships [and 90 men]. He was sailing in the Santa Maria, with the Pinta and the Niña alongside.

On October 12, the ships made landfall on a Bahamian island, which Columbus, again, assumed was the (East) Indies. Columbus and his men then "continued their journey," writes Biography.com, "visiting the islands of Cuba (which he thought was mainland China) and Hispaniola (now Haiti and the Dominican Republic, which Columbus thought might be Japan)."

Columbus would make three more voyages to the New World, landing in South America but never finding his alternative water route to the Indian Ocean. He died on May 20, 1506, four years after his last expedition. Some say he went to his death believing he'd landed in Asia, plausible given the human tendency to rationalize and a desire Columbus might have had to not see his life's work as a failure. Others say he eventually recognized his discovery, and it has even been alleged that he knew but lied about the matter to protect whatever fortune he had left.

Whatever the case, his missteps and misconceptions are now sometimes used to portray him as an incompetent oaf, a man hardly worthy of honor. Yet this reflects profound ignorance and arrogance. Remember that to 15th-century Europeans, the notion there might be some great, unknown continent west of Europe is a bit like someone today claiming another planet, more magnificent than Earth



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herself, lies on the other side of the sun. Believable? Columbus was operating based on accepted knowledge of the day about the world. As *Smithsonian* wrote in 2009:

Men, confronted with things they do not recognize, turn to the writings of those who have had a wider experience. And in 1513 it was still assumed that the ancient writers had had a wider experience than those who came after them.

Columbus himself had made that assumption. His discoveries posed for him, as for others, a problem of identification. It seemed to be a question not so much of giving names to new lands as of finding the proper old names, and the same was true of the things that the new lands contained. Cruising through the Caribbean, enchanted by the beauty and variety of what he saw, Columbus assumed that the strange plants and trees were strange only because he was insufficiently versed in the writings of men who did know them. "I am the saddest man in the world," he wrote, "because I do not recognize them."

We need not deride Columbus' reluctance to give up the world that he knew from books. Only idiots escape entirely from the world that the past bequeaths.

And only the idiotically unwise condemn a dead man's insight or foresight through the lens of their hindsight.

Of course, it is true that Columbus did not, in a true sense, "discover" the New World. Norse explorer Leif Eriksson is currently credited with having been the first European to do so, supposedly landing in Newfoundland early in the 11th century. According to scientists, American Indians arrived here from Asia more than 15 millennia ago. A theory holds that the Chinese explored the New World 3,300 years back, and the "Solutrean Hypothesis" states that a stone-age European people called the Solutreans were here before anyone, 20,000 years ago. Perhaps all the assailed Columbus monuments could be replaced with the Statue of the Unknown Solutrean.

So if Columbus was wrong about so many things, if he wasn't the first to discover the New World and didn't even set foot in North America, why recognize him? Well, the answer lies in what I stated earlier, about how staggering the notion of a New World was: Columbus introduced the New World to the Western one, thus paving the way for the New World to become part of the Western world. This was one of the most momentous events in history.

Columbus literally started it all. As *Live Science* put it in 2011, "News of the success of his first voyage spread like wildfire through Europe, setting the stage for an era of European conquest. One can argue whether the conquest was good or bad for humanity [note: One could, but shouldn't]... But it is difficult to deny Columbus' direct role in quickly and radically changing the world." Biography.com elaborated on this radical change:

In what is known as the Columbian Exchange, Columbus' expeditions set in motion the widespread transfer of people, plants, animals, diseases, and cultures that greatly affected nearly every society on the planet. The horse from Europe allowed Native American tribes in the Great Plains of North America to shift from a nomadic to a hunting lifestyle. Wheat from the Old World fast became a main food source for people in the Americas. Coffee from Africa and sugar cane from Asia became major cash crops for Latin American countries. And foods from the Americas, such as potatoes, tomatoes and corn, became staples for Europeans and helped increase their populations.



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Columbus also appears to be the first European to encounter cocoa beans, brought back to Spain after his fourth voyage. Of course, chocolate's introduction alone should be enough to warrant celebratory statues of the Italian on every street corner! (And not just in Hershey, Pennsylvania.) In a nutshell, Columbus' voyages changed waistlines — and the world.

But now cultural revolutionaries are bent on changing his legacy. This new portrayal of Columbus was summed up well in 2006 by Peta Lindsay in *Socialism and Liberation* magazine, expressing sentiments that, lamentably, have been embraced far beyond radical-fringe circles. To wit, "To celebrate Columbus is to celebrate a legacy of genocide, slavery, rape and plunder. It commemorates the violent and bloody accumulation of capital for the ruling classes of Europe and, later, the U.S." Of course, were it not for Columbus, the United States might not exist — which, presumably, would suit socialism-and-liberation types just fine.

This conception of Columbus as a cruel, genocidal slave-master and would-be tyrant is prevalent today, but some challenge this politically correct narrative. For example, in a 2015 piece entitled "Why the Left Hates Columbus," Randall University history Professor Steve Byas (who also writes for *The New American*) wrote, "Bartolomé de las Casas, a Spanish priest who advocated for better treatment of the native peoples, is often cited as the source of much of the alleged cruelties of Columbus. The truth is that las Casas was complimentary of Columbus in his *Historia de las Indias*. 'He [Columbus] was a gentle man of great force and spirit, of lofty thoughts and naturally inclined to undertake worthy deeds and signal enterprises; patient and longsuffering, a forgiver of injustices who wished no more than that those who offended him should recognize their errors, and that the delinquents be reconciled to him.'"

Then there's political writer and attorney Tommy De Seno. He claims that the current anti-Columbus narrative is the handiwork of a man, Francisco de Bobadilla, who wanted the explorer's job as governor of Hispaniola. As De Seno put it at Fox News in 2010:

In 1500 the King and Queen sent him to North America to investigate claims that Columbus wasn't being fair to the European settlers (which means Columbus was protecting the Indians). So de Bobadilla came here, and in just a few short days did his investigation (with no telephones or motorized vehicles to help him), and promptly arrested Columbus and his brothers for Indian mistreatment and sent them back to Spain, sans a trial. Oh and, he also appointed himself governor.

... The King and Queen [found] out these shenanigans and sent for be [sic] Bobadilla two years later, but he drowned on the trip home. Columbus was reinstated as admiral.

But what we know of Columbian malfeasance comes from a defrocked liar, de Bobadilla.

Nor was Columbus involved in the slave trade, as critics like Howard Zinn and Noam Chomsky have asserted. One of his boats crashed in Haiti [Hispaniola]. He had no room for 39 men, so he started a colony there.

Columbus came back a year later to find that the Taino Indians killed all of them and left them where they fell. Columbus went to war with the Tainos and took 500 of them as prisoners of war, *not* slaves. They were released after the war.

(Most of the above appears to come from a report by The Order Sons of Italy in America [OSIA], which credits, as it writes, "Columbus scholars Robert Royal, Ph.D., president of the Faith and Reason



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Institute; Joseph Scafetta, Jr. and David Curfman, M.D., president of the National Columbus Celebration Association in Washington, D.C.,” with providing the information.)

Making this story even more intriguing is that, rumor has it, Columbus had previously had an affair with de Bobadilla’s niece, Beatriz de Bobadilla. Could this have evoked ill will? Note, too, that a “lost document” rediscovered in 2005 — outlining the Italian’s allegedly cruel behavior as governor and which appears to figure prominently in the case against him — was a report written by de Bobadilla himself.

Of course, it’s hard to know here what is and isn’t, to use Napoleon’s cynical characterization of history, merely “agreed-upon myths.” Are De Seno and the OSIA influenced by ethnic patriotism? Perhaps. Are the leftist Columbus critics motivated by a lack of American patriotism? For sure. But it’s important to be suspicious when a historical figure’s history is entirely rewritten in a way that just so happens to align perfectly with the spirit of the age (today, political correctness). Remember that WWII-era pontiff Pope Pius XII was a hero until approximately five years after his death in 1958.

Then he became “Hitler’s Pope,” an accusation everyone just “knew” was true.

That is, until Ion Mihai Pacepa, the highest-ranking communist intelligence officer to ever defect to the West, revealed in 2007 that the notion was a lie, the result of Soviet agitprop designed to discredit the Catholic Church.

Whatever the truth of Columbus’ character — and I don’t place him in the category of, let’s say, George Washington — his critics reveal their character in the dishonesty of their charges. Consider the “genocide” accusation. There certainly were a great number of American Indian deaths after the Europeans’ arrival, but most of these were due to disease, notably smallpox. This often occurs when new populations mix for the first time because one (or more) may not have an immunity to disease carried by another. This phenomenon has killed countless millions throughout history, including Europeans. For example, the Black Death, which wiped out one-third to one-half of Europe’s population during medieval times, came from Asia. Smallpox itself likely originated in Egypt and once killed 30 percent of its victims in the Old World; in fact, it might have hastened the decline of the Roman Empire, even claiming one of its most famous emperors, Marcus Aurelius.

Note, too, that germ theory wasn’t even proposed (let alone proven) until 40 years after Columbus’ death. Thus, he is being condemned for creating a phenomenon that he could not possibly have even understood.

Moving on, one thing Columbus certainly did understand was slavery. But do his critics? For if the explorer did own slaves, it certainly didn’t make him unusual, as slavery has been ubiquitous throughout the world since time immemorial. The ancient Greeks engaged in it. So did the Romans, Africans, Chinese, and many American Indians, and it still exists in parts of the non-Western world today. In fact, it’s hard to find prominent pre-Enlightenment historical figures who didn’t participate in, defend, or justify slavery. The aforementioned Columbus contemporary, Bartolomé de las Casas, did come to see all forms of slavery as wrong later in his life; Popes Eugene IV and Paul III condemned the practice in the 15th and 16th centuries. But they were outliers, as even the great ancient Greek philosophers Plato and Aristotle justified slavery. And what of Islam’s “prophet” Mohammed? Among his sins (the lesser of them, actually) was that he traded in and owned slaves. Yet we don’t, and won’t, hear calls to purge his name and teachings from the world.



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In reality, were we to discard the wisdom of bygone days' slave owners/enablers, we might have precious little wisdom left. And who but a fool throws the baby out with the bathwater? Albert Einstein is rightly viewed as one of history's greatest theoretical physicists. Should his scientific legacy be obscured because he apparently was an unfeeling, insensitive husband and an adulterer who sometimes engaged in lewd behavior around women? Yet the cultural revolutionaries' actions make sense when you understand what really bothers them — what their goal truly is.

If they really cared about slavery and "racism," they might busy themselves combating the extant slavery and rampant racism in the Third World. If they really cared, they'd also extol the civilization that did more than any other to combat these two evils: Western civilization. For while it likely wasn't the first to practice slavery, it was the first to eliminate it. It wasn't the first to violate human rights, but it was the culture that birthed the whole concept of human rights to begin with.

But, you see, it's not these sins that really bother leftists (they never troubled over the Soviets' use of slave labor). As for Columbus' sins, there's only one leftists truly take exception to, the one they consider the world's greatest sin: spreading Western civilization and its foundational faith, Christianity.

As to this, aside from being an adventurer, Columbus was more interested in evangelization than one might think. As Professor Byas wrote:

The Muslims had conquered Constantinople a few years previously [previous to Columbus's conceiving of his expedition], completing their multigenerational conquest of the Christian world in the East, including the Byzantine Empire and the lands where Jesus had lived, died, and risen from the dead. Columbus, after a careful study of the Old and New Testaments, along with some readings in the works of the first century Jewish historian Flavius Josephus and the noted early church "father" Augustine, had concluded that the city of Jerusalem must be in Christian hands before Jesus would return.

While certainly the desire to reach the East by sailing west involved economics, Columbus did not set out from Spain to enslave American Indians. Indeed, he was ignorant of their very existence. After reading the travels of the Venetian Marco Polo, Columbus desired to reach the Grand Khan, the Mongol ruler of China. The Chinese monarchs had expressed an interest in the Christian faith. This created the idea within Columbus to convert China, and then with these combined Christian forces, proceed to drive the Muslims from the Holy Land.

What happened instead was, again, something equally momentous: a discovery that would spread history's greatest civilization and lead to the birth of history's greatest nation — the United States. Thus, those who hate and aim to destroy that civilization and nation will hate Columbus. As for his sins, real and imaginary, they're merely a convenient vehicle through which to advance today's anti-American agenda. As an SDS (Students for a Democratic Society) extremist once wrote, "The issue is never the issue. The issue is always the revolution."

As for our anti-Western cultural revolution, the issue is also that too many good people are cowed by callow arguments. Just consider the pseudo-intellectual gripe that labeling Columbus as a discoverer of the New World is just viewing matters from a "Western perspective." Of course, given that this criticism is leveled by the relativistic Left — which purports to believe that all perspectives are equal — we could ask, what's wrong with that? To paraphrase William F. Buckley, however, everything is a matter of perspective. If we say we're located at 41°24'12.2"N 2°10'26.5"E, well, relative to what? If we say



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something is bad or good, relative to what? Of course, the only perspective that really matters is God's — for that perspective happens to be the Truth.

So the answer to this criticism is: Of course we view things from a Western perspective. What should our perspective be? We're a Western civilization! If anyone finds this intolerable, I'm quite sure North Korea, Iran, Sudan, and some other non-Western nations are accepting defectors.

Speaking of perspective, a little more is needed here. Good little skulls-of-mush college students are supposed to lament European colonization, believing pre-Columbian America to have been Paradise. But the Noble Savage myth is just that — a myth — and it deserves to be savaged.

First note that many Europeans' distant ancestors once were colonized "Noble Savages" themselves. Having been conquered by the Romans (and perhaps Charlemagne), they no doubt could have issued the same complaints we hear today: Their cultures were being suppressed and "values" were imposed on them (if only they had the ACLU to run to). Looking back, however, it's clear that the spread of Roman culture — superior in many ways — and, ultimately, of Christianity, brought light into their world.

As for the New World, it was a place in which not just slavery, but cannibalism and human sacrifice (sometimes on a massive scale) were practiced. And just as Christianity had ended the brutality of the Roman arena, tamed the British knights after the Viking invasions, and otherwise civilized Europe, so did the new faith vanquish New World darkness. Thus, as Professor Byas put it, "If Columbus is to be blamed for events which occurred long after his death, then he should be credited with certain achievements resulting from his voyages, as well."

But much nonsense is disgorged when the aim is spreading lies. In the area of firsts and founding, for instance, we'll often hear that the "Indians were the first Americans." Untrue. As Sitting Bull's great-grandson Ernie LaPointe pointed out when responding to Barack Obama's having included the chief as one of 13 American role models in the children's book *Of Thee I Sing: A Letter to My Daughters*, "He never was an American" (Sitting Bull, that is, not Obama — though the latter has been contended, too). "I don't think he should be included in any book about Americans.... He was a Lakota," LaPointe explained. "America" was a Western creation, named after Florentine explorer Amerigo Vespucci; thus, the first Americans were the Westerners who created the civilization.

As for those creating division and self-loathing, something else can be said. One benefit of knowing the Truth (Christianity, in other words) is that it frees you from being a slave of your age, from merely viewing matters from some transitory "perspective." Barring this, we descend into errors such as foaming at the mouth over unfashionable sins and being unmoved by fashionable ones. As to this, Ambassador Alan Keyes has rightly called prenatal infanticide the "slavery issue of our time." Yet the people seeking to destroy the past are generally passionately for prenatal infanticide, not to mention being lustful, licentious, vulgar, and largely vice-ridden. So who are they to mount a moral high horse and look down their noses at Washington, Jefferson, or even Columbus? Their lack of self-knowledge is striking, truly a result of "eyes blinded by sin." They should take the log out of their own eyes — then they might think a little less like someone with a wooden head.

Once again, Columbus is not the issue — the issue is always the revolution. After all, you can't put your image on a slate before first wiping the slate clean. The French revolutionaries sought to start history over in 1789 with their new calendar, China's Red Guards attempted this with their 1960s "Cultural



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Revolution,” and Cambodia’s Khmer Rouge had their “Year Zero.” That’s how a civilization goes from hero to zero. And if our cultural revolutionaries can convince people that Columbus, George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and the rest of the men who birthed America were profoundly rotten trees, the conclusion will be that their fruits can’t be any better and should be toppled just like a Confederate statue.

As George Orwell put it, “The most effective way to destroy people is to deny and obliterate their own understanding of their history.” We should defend Christopher Columbus because since he’s not the issue, countering the revolution must be — to us. Remember that our history is just that: *our* history. And it tells America’s story. To erase that history is to erase America.



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