



Written by [Selwyn Duke](#) on October 9, 2023

## “Anti-statue” Activists Are Actually Anti-goodness, and They’ve Won a Striking Victory

On this Columbus Day, it’s worth noting that the war on the eponymous explorer and other famed Western historical figures hasn’t ceased. The fate of a Columbus [statue](#) in Pittsburgh is unknown, as a legal case surrounding it proceeds, while a different Columbus statue has just received a [new home](#) in Johnston, Rhode Island, after being expelled from nearby Providence. Many other Western-hero statues are staying in place, however (for now), but only because of a compromise reached that one commentator calls a “startling victory” for the cultural devolutionaries.



meshaphoto/iStock/Getty Images Plus  
Christopher Columbus

In a Saturday [article](#), English historian David Abulafia points out that we’re now living in an Orwellian time, where the past is rewritten as “Big Brother’s enemies” are “eliminated from history,” to quote the novel *1984*. This brings us to the aforementioned victory: the determination “that controversial monuments should be matched by counter-memorials that set out a balanced explanation of the person or event being commemorated,” as Abulafia puts it. The commentator relates that in Britain, this policy goes by the catchphrase “Retain and Explain.”

Abulafia considers this folly. “What, though, is one expected to learn?” he asks. “For those who describe themselves as ‘anti-racist’ activists it is surely the lesson that society is and always has been ‘systemically racist’, a way of viewing the past through the distorting lens of their simplistic and disruptive ideology.”

“Merely by identifying certain statues as suitable for a counter-memorial a question is raised about the unworthiness of selected people in the past,” the historian continues — “as if, like Churchill’s statue at Westminster after it was defaced, they carry a splash of red paint to warn observers of the demerits of the subject.”

Of course, also clear is that this is just an intermediate revolutionary phase: The activists want Western culture destroyed root and branch and, if its demonization continues, the statues, along with our entire cultural edifice, will fall.



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Yet a word Abulafia used, “unworthiness,” brings us to a deeper point. While figures such as Columbus and George Washington surely deserve their honors (I discussed this [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#)), there’s a life lesson here, one that maturity should *ideally* bring: Given man’s fallen nature, no one is truly worthy of being a leader, parent, teacher, counselor, or clergyman — or hero.

But somebody has to be.

We have not angels but only flawed humans to fill these roles. A corollary: Moral infallibility is not a prerequisite for performing them — and “hero” isn’t synonymous with “perfect.”

Yet we still hear (when the culture destroyers are being charitable) that people such as Columbus and Washington were “complicated” figures. Really?

Who isn’t?

Muhammad Ali was married four times, was pathologically unfaithful to at least some of his wives, and said in a 1975 *Playboy* interview that a “black man should be killed if he’s messin’ with a white woman.” Yet Louisville Regional Airport was [named after him](#) just four years ago. Albert Einstein [was an adulterer](#) who married a cousin. Martin Luther King, Jr. [was also a womanizer](#) — and allegedly [an accessory to rape](#). Mohandas Gandhi [left his wife and kids](#) and had a homosexual affair with a German bodybuilder.

Of course, we can argue about who should be heroized. But the above men’s sins don’t diminish their legitimate accomplishments — and, *if* they are worthy of recognition, their turpitude doesn’t require equal time with their triumphs. It’s also plain that there’ll be no serious movement to include perspective-lending information when they’re honored.

Moreover, you don’t have to be a Christian to understand why Jesus instructed to cast “out first the beam out of thy own eye, and then shalt thou see to cast out the mote [speck] out of thy brother’s eye.” We humans are very quick to see fault in others, even when it’s absent, but not so good at seeing fault in ourselves, even when it’s profound; we assign blame much better than we accept it.

And our revisionist-history obsession is comical in a way: We can fixate on officially sanctioned slavery because, in this time of rapid moral decay and steroid-engorged depravity, it’s one of the few sins we’re *not* currently guilty of. The carnal trespasses of Ali, Einstein, King, and Gandhi are now, too, not even frowned upon in this sexual-devolutionary age. We don’t want to talk about them, either — too many of us are guilty of similar things! (In reality, of course, many don’t even recognize such sins as sins, blinded as they are by those eye-occluding beams.) But it’s satisfying to engage in moral preening, and it’s easy beating up on men who aren’t around to defend themselves — and point a finger right back at us.

And these people of the past, and all their contemporaries, would be absolutely shocked at our ubiquitous sexual degeneracy, rampant abortion, and child-mutilating “transgender” agenda. They’d view us as just as evil as the most evil among us view them.

This is why the “conservative” defense that we “can’t judge the past using modern values” is actually quite lacking. What “modern values” would these be? If we judge the past against the modern values reflected in the above paragraph, it looks downright spectacular.

The reality is that we can’t rightly do what we instinctively do: Judge modern values using modern values (a yardstick can’t be its own measure). We should judge them, and the past’s norms, using the universal and eternal: the virtues. Then we’ll see who has the speck, who has the beam — and who



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deserves the pedestals.



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