



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on September 18, 2017

Vandals Strike Again: Statue of St. Junipero Serra Decapitated and Splashed With Red Paint

Under cover of darkness, sometime between midnight and 6 a.m. on September 11, vandals decapitated and splashed red paint on a statue of St. Junipero Serra at the Old Santa Barbara Mission in California.

The *Los Angeles Times* reported that the towering statue of Serra had stood at the foot of a staircase leading into the mission for years. The report noted that Santa Barbara statue is one of several of Serra that have been defaced since Pope Francis elevated the friar to sainthood two years ago. In most instances, the statutes were splashed with paint, toppled over, or decapitated.



Serra founded a mission in San Diego in 1769 and would later personally found another eight of 21 Spanish missions in California from San Diego to San Francisco. The Santa Barbara mission was founded by Padre Fermín Lasuén on December 4, 1786, the feast day of Saint Barbara.

Serra, who was canonized as a saint by Pope Francis on September 23, 2015, is known as the “Apostle of California.” At the canonization ceremony, Pope Francis said, “Junipero sought to defend the dignity of the native community, to protect it from those who had mistreated and abused it.”

The *Times* report summarized some of the other instances of statues of Serra being vandalized:

- On the very day that Francis canonized Serra, a vandal splashed black paint on a statue of the saint at the north end of Carmel-by-the-Sea.
- Several days later, vandals struck the Carmel Mission, where the saint’s remains are buried. They toppled a statue of Serra and splashed it with green paint. The words “Saint of Genocide” were found scrawled on the statue’s base and brown paint was poured on a nearby grave stone.
- In November 2015, vandals splashed red paint across the front door of the Mission Santa Cruz, one of 21 missions established by Spanish Franciscans. The Santa Cruz mission was founded not by Serra but by his successor, Father Fermín Francisco de Lasuén.
- In 2016, a vandal used a sledgehammer to decapitate a Serra statue at Lower Presidio Historic Park In Monterey.
- And just last month, vandals painted the hands of a Serra statue in red and scrawled “murderer” on the monument, which stands at Brand Park across the street from the San Fernando Mission in Mission Hills.

A report from the California Network noted:

St. Serra is under attack by historical revisionists who insist that he is responsible for the plight of



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Native Americans under Spanish, Mexican and later, American rule. However, Native Americans were in decline long before the arrival of St. Serra.

In fact, it was St. Serra who recognized that they were in great danger of extinction as a people, unless they could find a way to assimilate into the dominant culture. He accomplished this by Christianizing thousands of Native Americans, earning him the unofficial title of “Apostle of California.” St. Serra was also opposed to the abuse of Native American people.

The report acknowledged that while the missions succeeded in saving Native Americans as a people, they also contributed to the decline of traditional Native American culture. However, it stated that “the alternative was to allow annihilation from encroaching Europeans” and that “by Christianizing the Native people, St. Serra and others were able to prevent European settlers from wiping out their entire populations.”

The charges leveled against Serra, thereby contributing to the mindset that has fueled the vandalism, are similar to revisionist accusations that have been made against Christopher Columbus. Though Columbus was unaware of the existence of a native population in the lands he inadvertently discovered, there has been a movement in recent years to blame the explorer for the mistreatment of the native American population by European settlers who followed in his wake. Though no one will dispute that there was mistreatment of American Indians by the Spanish, English, and later, Americans, blaming this mistreatment on Columbus is a classic logical fallacy, *Post hoc ergo propter hoc* (“after this, therefore because of this.”)

What is ignored by many revisionists is that Columbus brought missionaries with him who baptized and instructed the natives in the New World in the Christian faith. It is quite likely that those who would tar Columbus and Serra with the same brush object not so much to the priest and the explorer, themselves, as to the fact that they were responsible for Christian evangelization. There is a decidedly anti-Christian slant to the cultural iconoclasts who would remove every aspect of Western Christian Civilization from our nation. This tendency was noted in an article posted by *The New American* in 2015, “[Why the Left Hates Columbus](#).” The writer of that article, Steve Byas, concluded:

The effort to demonize Columbus is part of the larger campaign to attack the foundations of Western civilization. It is the same as the motivation for attacking the historical reputation of men such as George Washington and Thomas Jefferson. Because once these men are set aside as objects of admiration, they can be replaced with leftist icons, for the purpose of advancing a secular and socialist agenda.

In the end, Columbus is hated for his greatest virtue: He brought the Christian faith and western civilization to the New World.

Statues of Columbus have also been receiving the same treatment as statues of Serra. We wrote about this in an article posted on September 4: “[Iconoclasts Vandalize Statues of Columbus in New York and Baltimore](#).”

In that article, we noted that a statue of Christopher Columbus was knocked off its pedestal and broken into pieces in Yonkers, New York, on August 29, with CBS News in New York reporting that it was the fourth time in 10 days that a statue of Columbus had been vandalized.

In that article, we also noted the similarities between the destruction of statues of Columbus and the vandalizing of Confederate monuments. This similarity was pointed out in an article in the *New York Daily News* about the vandalizing of a statue of Columbus in Queens, New York. We observed:



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As anarchy and destruction of property and attacks against historic monuments revered by Americans escalates, it is important to remember that these acts go far beyond grievances against Robert E. Lee or Christopher Columbus, and (soon) even George Washington and Thomas Jefferson.... These acts have a common thread. They are part of a cultural revolution attempting to undermine our civilization.

The destruction of statues of the missionary who brought Christianity to California can also be regarded as part of a cultural revolution attempting to undermine our Christian civilization.

Photo of statue of St. Serra at Santa Barbara Mission: [Brandon / Flickr / CC / Cropped](#)

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