One Ethnicity, Under Columbus, Divided: Christopher Columbus's Evolving Role in the Formation of Italian-American Identity and the Celebration of Italian-American Heritage

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For my Nonne: Antonietta and Rosina

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INTRODUCTION

Every year at the end of July, a crowd of approximately fifty to sixty people gathers at Ewing Park in Ellwood City, Pennsylvania. As guests arrive through the afternoon and attempt to locate the correct pavilion, they need only follow the distinctly Italian-American sound which fills the air. From Italian language favorites such as "Reginella Campagnola," "Mamma," and "Piccolo Fiore, Dove Vai," to Frankie Valli's "Can't Take My Eyes Off of You," the sound of the band is sure to guide participants to the right place. And if more assistance is needed, the boisterous laughter and loud conversations of family members are likely another helpful guide.

Some elements of this ethnic celebration represent what one might deem a celebration of Italian Americanness in general: people are playing bocce on the courts located some forty yards away, an "Italian American" flag is draped over the band's keyboard, and those attendees who brought homemade items - from wines and dried sausages to zucchini fritters and taralli - are most eager to share them with their own children and grandchildren. At the same time, however, the celebration pays homage to a specific village in Italy. A banner of Saint Otto, patron of Castelbottaccio, stands next to the food-covered tables. Additionally, the highlights of the afternoon are the round of applause which the crowd gives for Nonna Antonietta and for those in attendance who were born in Castelbottaccio, and the childhood stories that they share every now and again at a picnic table under the pavilion.

All are gathered to celebrate the "Castle B Picnic." Attendees were either born in the Molisan village of Castelbottaccio (hence, "Castle B"), or are related to immigrants from Italy to Ellwood City (and nearby towns in Pennsylvania and Ohio). This comprises my

most direct experience of an organized celebration of Italian heritage for as long as I can remember. The descendants of Castelbottaccio celebrated on that day, those who live to tell their story of leaving an impoverished existence in the hope of giving future generations a better life, are the heroes in my family's Italian-American story.

Nowhere in this ethnic celebration is Christopher Columbus. As a matter of fact, Columbus, the long-celebrated "hero" to Americans of Italian descent in many parts of the country, meant nothing to me in my own upbringing. Each October in elementary school and high school, Columbus was mentioned once or twice, but he bore no relationship to my own understanding of family history, my experience of being Italian American, and my commemoration and celebration of being an Italian American. The brief description of the "Castle B Picnic" thus partially illustrates what the thesis aims to explore: not simply the Italian American heroization, commemoration, and celebration of Columbus over the span of several centuries, but also the Italian-American fragmentation over Columbus dating back as far as the turn of the twentieth century, and the alternatives to Columbus in the past and present which celebrate Italian heritage in cities throughout the U.S.

Various historical narratives and historiographical contexts merit discussion before attempting to make an original contribution on Columbus commemoration in the thesis's focus region of western Pennsylvania. Every U.S. city has a distinct story when it comes to the adoption of Columbus, the erection of monuments to Columbus, the nature of Columbus celebrations, and the trajectory of Columbus and his commemoration through the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. One of the most important historical narratives to trace, however, is the evolving meaning and significance of Columbus himself in the Italian American community at large. The nature of and motivation for the initial large-scale commemoration

and celebration of Columbus by Italian Americans is strongly tied to complex notions of race and class in the U.S., and a nuanced understanding of these factors is essential in making sense of two central developments. First, it uncovers why segments of Italian America ever adopted Columbus in the first place; second, it explains how motivations for and forms of Columbus heroization and celebration have changed over time. For example, the motivations for and manifestations of Italian-American Columbus commemoration which came in response to late nineteenth- and early twentieth- century xenophobia and bigotry are distinct from those of the Civil Rights-era and twenty-first-century commemoration. Such differences need to be accounted for to understand the evolving significance of Columbus and Columbus Day for Italian America as the position of Italian Americans in American society changed over time. These differences will be further explored in the chapters to follow.

The body of historiography on the subject includes multiple perspectives on how race and class played into what might be called the "Italian Americanization" of the 15th-century explorer. Generally, those who have written on this process acknowledge that racial and class dynamics were fundamental in the early adoption of Columbus. Italian Americans were viewed as morally suspect and "racially in-between" as waves of mass migration entered the U.S. in the late 1800s and early 1900s. As such, adopting Columbus presented an opportunity to construct a uniform Italian-American identity for immigrants who initially felt deeper ties to their birth town and/or region than their birth country, and doing so was to demonstrate Italian Americans' civilization, belonging in the U.S., and fitness for American society.[1] Scholarly debates on this adoption arise over its motivation by those who pushed

[1] Peter Vellon, *A Great Conspiracy Against Our Race: Italian Immigrant Newspapers and the Construction of Whiteness in the Early 20th Century* (New York, NYU Press, 2014), 15. See also: Laura E. Ruberto and Joseph

most strongly for it. Some argue that the *prominenti,* the wealthy and/or well-connected Italian Americans, lobbied for Columbus celebrations and conducted funding campaigns for statue, motivated by self-promotion and profit. The conduct of particular *prominenti* and their opponents' commentary are often cited while presenting this argument.[2] Others contend that while profit was surely a motivation for *the prominenti*, they did have an eye toward posterity, they wanted to celebrate the achievements of Italians and Italian Americans by erecting the statues, and the movement was a generally welcome opportunity for Italian Americans to celebrate their roots.[3] These interpretations of Columbus's wide-scale adoption into Italian-American lore lend a valuable complexity to the story of Columbus proliferation, and they inform the current debate on the status of Columbus as an Italian American hero.

More recent debates, informed partially by both the increasing popularity of Indigenous People's Day and the Black Lives Matter movement, swirl around whether Columbus should be celebrated and whether the statues to Columbus should remain standing. Those who oppose the celebrations and advocate for the removal of Columbus statues focus primarily on the actions of Columbus during his life and on the lasting damage to indigenous populations in the centuries that followed his voyages to the Americas.[4] Those who defend Columbus, his statues, and the celebrations dedicated to him tend to present him

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Sciorra, "Recontextualizing the Ocean Blue: Italian Americans and the Commemoration of Columbus," Process, a blog for American history. October 2017, http://www.processhistory.org/recontextualizing-the-ocean-blue/.

[2] Ruberto and Sciorra, "Recontextualizing the Ocean Blue." See also: Bénédicte Deschamps, "'The Cornerstone is laid': Italian American Memorial Building in New York City and Immigrants' Right to the City at the Turn of the Twentieth Century," *European Journal of American Studies* 10, no. 3 (2015): 13.

[3] Ibid, 14.

[4] Stephen J. Cerulli, "If we do not remove them, someone else will do it for us: Why Italian Americans need to be leaders in removing Columbus monuments," Italian Enclaves Historical Society, June 30, 2020, https://italianenclaves.org/2020/06/30/if-we-do-not-remove-them-someone-else-will-do-it-for-us-why-italian-americans-need-to-be-leaders-in-removing-columbus-monuments/.

as a hero in the Italian-American community, a model of devout Catholic faith, and a symbol of Italian-American heritage and immigrants' contributions to the progress of the United States.[5] Critical to the latter stance is the belief in Columbus as a hero. Because he is the most prominent historical figure representing Italian America (no other "Italian" is celebrated with parades and statues quite like Columbus), the loss of such a figure would effectively be both an erasure of history and a grave instance of anti-Italian discrimination.[6] This position is framed as if the celebration of Italian-American history and heritage is doomed or severely damaged without Columbus as the central figure.

The thesis challenges the position of Columbus as a hero in the broader celebration and commemoration of Italian-American heritage. It does so by exploring alternative, long lasting forms of commemoration/celebration of heritage in Italian America that do not include Columbus - just like the "Castle B" picnic. While the evidence is drawn from a collection of cities, the primary focus is on the city of Pittsburgh and western Pennsylvania. By highlighting local heritage celebrations, monuments to ancestors, ethnic festivals, and more, the thesis will show that in western Pennsylvania - as in other regions of the U.S. - the Italian American approach to celebrating heritage was not, is not, and need not be bound to Columbus. In fact, primary sources will demonstrate that the adoption and celebration of Columbus was a contested process among Italian Americans in Pittsburgh and other American cities well before the erection of Pittsburgh's Columbus statue in 1958. Pittsburgh shows that both "pan-Italian" and locally focused (focused on the Italian hometowns of

[5] "NIAF Statement on Christopher Columbus & Columbus Day," National Italian American Foundation, accessed November 4, 2021, https://www.niaf.org/culture/christopher-columbus/.
[6] Basil Russo, "Save the Date: The First-Ever National Italian American Summit Meeting," February 7, 2021.

immigrants) celebrations of regional identity have been carried on as viable heritage celebrations and commemorations since the early twentieth century.

Additionally, as alluded to in the description of the "Castle B Picnic," the thesis argues that an ethnic hero need not be a single individual and need not be known throughout the world (or country, state, city, etc.). Such everyday heroes have been commemorated in several forms in the U.S. - including statues - and this evidence will serve as another reference point in the attempt to broaden understanding of who can be celebrated and honored, as well as how this can be done. Lastly, the analysis also highlights the importance of forms of commemoration that are smaller in scale and more frequent in practice. These include, but are not limited to, oral, culinary, and linguistic traditions. This is not intended to discredit the prestige of statues, parades, or other forms of public celebration, but to show a more complete, direct, and intentional way of doing what so many Italian Americans claim to be doing in their defense of Columbus: honoring the legacy and celebrating the traditions of past generations.

By the nature of the topic and the amount of time and space which needs to be covered by its backstory, the thesis unfolds in such a way that successive chapters become narrower and draw upon more primary sources. The first chapter presents the historical context for the initial large-scale adoption of Columbus in Italian America. To provide context on why the figure of Columbus was ever adopted by anyone in the first place, the chapter highlights Columbus commemoration in the U.S. before the mass arrival of immigrants from Italy. Many Italians placed little value on Columbus upon their arrival in the U.S., and Columbus still has a minimal role in modern Italian lore and public

celebration.[7] Therefore, it is important to outline the progression of Columbus commemoration in the U.S., which traces all the way back to the founding of the country in the late eighteenth century.[8]

The chapter then discusses racial and class dynamics in the U.S. during mass Italian migration in the late 1800s and early 1900s. These dynamics contextualize the Italian-American experience of bigotry during the period. This, in turn, underscores the *prominenti*-led push for a more unified and civilized Italian America, how the heroization and "Italian Americanization" of Columbus factored into creating this unified, civilized image, and why it was met with opposition from those within and outside of the Italian American community. The chapter also considers the influence of such racial dynamics on the proclamation of national Columbus Day celebrations before 1900.

The second chapter traces the evolution of Columbus's place and significance in Italian America through the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. In a manner similar to scholar Laura Ruberto, the chapter pays particular attention to specific periods of time. For example, a section on the 1920s discusses Columbus's significance to Italian Americans amidst xenophobic immigration quotas and resistance from the Ku Klux Klan. A section on the 1930s focuses on the meaning of celebrating Columbus alongside Mussolini's Fascist Italy (with the latter being quickly abandoned during World War II). The section on the 1960s and 1970s looks at Columbus within the context of white ethnic revival in the U.S., as well the increased Italian-American interest in using Columbus to celebrate ancestry and

[7] Patrizia Costa, "OP-ED: To Take It down or Preserve? The Fate of Pittsburgh's Columbus Statue," Pittsburgh City Paper, September 10, 2020, https://www.pghcitypaper.com/pittsburgh/op-ed-to-take-it-down-or-preserve-the-fate-of-pittsburghs-columbus-statue/Content?oid=17972929. See also: Anthony DiBello, Conversation with Giulia Riccò, February 27, 2022. See also: Anthony DiBello, Conversation with Marylisa Cappelli, July 27, 2021.

[8] Thomas J. Schlereth, "Columbia, Columbus, and Columbianism," *The Journal of American History* 79, no. 3 (December 1992): 940.

heritage rather than the "racial" pride and assertion of civility which characterized past decades. Additionally, a section covering developments since 1992 shows how Columbus Day celebrations and statues were and are defended amid increased calls for their termination and removal.[9] This progression is meant to show how the celebration of Columbus and Columbus Day has changed character across time. Within this chapter, Pittsburgh and western Pennsylvania enter the thesis more directly. Pittsburgh erected its Columbus statue in 1958 after decades of fundraising and negotiation, and the appeals and opposition along the way deserve attention in order to further understand the diversity of thought and experience within the Italian-American community.

In the third chapter, western Pennsylvania is the main focus area, and primary sources appear more prominently than in the first two chapters. The goal is to highlight some of the forms in which western Pennsylvania (with brief mentions of other cities as well) has publicly commemorated and celebrated its Italian-American heritage with no attachment to or mention of Columbus. There are examples from before and after the erection of Pittsburgh's Columbus statue, which illustrate that such celebrations did not necessarily start or stop in response to the memorialization of the so-called Italian-American hero. Aside from these examples of alternative celebration and commemoration (which range from festivals to statues and memorials), the chapter highlights the value of less grand, more local forms of celebration and commemoration in the Italian-American effort to carry on the legacy and traditions of ancestors. The chapter neither argues for or against the removal of the statues in place, nor provides national suggestions on the direction which the Italian American community should take going forward. Rather, the intention is to use past

[9] "Talking Columbus - October 1st 2020," ItalicsTV, accessed July 22, 2021, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lxKSuhZAkp4.

and present examples to argue that other Italian-American celebrations and monuments represent a more direct, effective, and affective way of celebrating identity, ancestry, and heritage than those dedicated to Columbus. These alternative celebrations and monuments are presented as more direct, effective, and affective because they celebrate immigrants directly, honor traditions of their homeland and hometowns, and highlight unique stories of a city's or region's Italian Americans, rather than portray all Italian Americans as sons and daughters of a five-hundred-year-old ancestor who never reached what is today the United States.

CHAPTER ONE: Contested Now, Contested Then: The Turbulent "Italian Americanization" of Christopher Columbus

Recently - especially since the summer of 2020 - defense of Christopher Columbus as a historical figure and of the celebration of Columbus Day by major Italian American organizations has included portrayals of Columbus as an ethnic hero worthy of continued, unanimous support from Italian Americans. Such a defense tends to rely on presenting the adoption of Columbus into the Italian American imaginary as a process that gained unanimous support during a time of discrimination against Italians. As the National Italian American Foundation (NIAF) wrote in its statement on Christopher Columbus, the designation of Columbus Day as a federal holiday in 1937 was a "source of dignity and self-worth for Italian Americans and (more broadly) Catholics in light of the discrimination that these groups were facing. In fact, less than five decades before the holiday's establishment, 11 Sicilian Americans were lynched in New Orleans, the largest recorded mass lynching in American history."[1] Between 1891 (the year of the New Orleans lynching) and 1937, however, NIAF gives little detail on how Columbus gained significance in Italian American communities across the country.

Within the last two years, the Italian Sons and Daughters of America (ISDA) have argued for keeping Pittsburgh's Columbus statue in place. According to the ISDA's plan, the Columbus statue will remain in Pittsburgh's Schenley Park, and "The Native American community will place a statue of a hero of its selection on the adjacent grounds of the park. . . . [S]uch a resolution will . . . serve to educate the public as to the lives and contributions of

[1] "NIAF Statement on Christopher Columbus & Columbus Day," National Italian American Foundation, accessed November 4, 2021, https://www.niaf.org/culture/christopher-columbus/.

each community's respective hero."[2] Just as the NIAF provided little context on exactly how and why Columbus Day came to be an important celebration for Italian Americans, the ISDA assumes that Columbus is the hero of the Italian American community without explaining how Columbus achieved such a status in the first place.

Major Italian American organizations posit that Columbus should continue to remain widely celebrated as an ethnic hero, and that statues of him need to be protected in the name of preserving heritage and fighting discrimination.[3] What they do not address, however, are the disagreements which surfaced within the Italian American community over both the erection of statues to Christopher Columbus, and the very adoption of Columbus as a figure worthy of veneration by Italian Americans. Therefore, this first chapter demonstrates that the adoption of Columbus was neither a linear nor unanimous process for the Italian American community. The figure of Columbus already occupied a place of importance in the white, Protestant U.S. imaginary before large-scale Italian immigration to America began in the late 1800s. As such, Italian Americans therefore found a familiar figure through whom they could argue for their group's civilization and right to acceptance and opportunity in their new country. This was a central aim of the wealthy *prominenti* (wealthy Italian-American community leaders) who advanced the espousal of Columbus, but it certainly was not a major objective for Italian Americans across all socioeconomic statuses and political orientations.

The first chapter begins in the late eighteenth century, well before the large-scale arrival of Italian Americans to the United States. The section focuses on the earliest

[2] "Plaintiff's Proposed Resolution to Italian Sons and Daughters of America v. City of Pittsburgh, et al.," Docket No. GD-20-10732, Allegheny County Court of Common Pleas, 2020.
[3] Basil Russo, "Save the Date: The First-Ever National Italian American Summit Meeting," February 7, 2021.

instances of Columbus's adoption into the U.S. imaginary. Rather than Christopher Columbus himself, the idealized figure of the period was an adapted one: the goddess Columbia. The chapter's discussion of Columbia, her rise to prominence, and her symbolic importance to a young United States, provides foundational context for the "Italian Americanization" of Columbus - that transformed Christopher Columbus into a revered Italian American - in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The effectiveness of choosing Columbus by Italian Americans stemmed in part from the preexisting significance of Columbia to the United States.[4]

After establishing this framework and highlighting the American significance of Columbia, the second section addresses how Christopher Columbus came to be interpreted and adopted by a large portion of Italian Americans in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Three major factors served as driving forces behind the adoption of Columbus as a central figure in Italian America. First were prejudices against immigrants of southern Italian descent in the late 1800s and early 1900s. By examining the lynching of eleven Sicilians in New Orleans in 1891, the chapter reveals that the Italian American community had reason to believe that it needed a historical hero of their own at the time. Under the context of the tragedy in New Orleans and other instances of discrimination and bigotry, the *prominenti* and their adherents chose to honor and celebrate the figure of Columbus - an established representative of bravery and virtue in mainstream American lore - as a brave, virtuous Italian American. Doing so allowed Italian Americans to argue for acceptance and

[4] Thomas J. Schlereth, "Columbia, Columbus, and Columbianism," *The Journal of American History* 79, no. 3 (December 1992): 937.

opportunity in a society that tended to view the immigrant group as "swarthy" and morally inferior.[5]

The second major factor behind the push for Columbus is the role that Columbus played in forming an Italian American ethnic community that was more unified and civilized in the eyes of other groups in the U.S. Many of the early Italian immigrants to the U.S. had little concept of a national identity, and relations with Italian immigrants from other regions were often marked by indifference or contempt.[6] Therefore, not only was the adoption of Columbus viewed as a necessary response to discrimination, but the public celebration of Columbus was also valuable in promoting unity among subgroups of immigrants who had previously viewed each other as disparate. Additionally, through public celebrations and the erection of statues, Italian Americans offered non-Italian Americans a more refined, polished view of this immigrant community than the *feste* (religious festivals) of the time.[7]

The last of the three major factors behind adopting Columbus as an Italian American hero is the economic motivation. Those who led fundraising campaigns for the statues faced significant opportunities to gain individual wealth, so for the *prominenti* who served as community leaders during this era, statues to Columbus and other individuals of Italian origin provided an opportunity to plant themselves in the upper echelons of their

[5] Laura E. Ruberto and Joseph Sciorra, "Recontextualizing the Ocean Blue: Italian Americans and the Commemoration of Columbus." Process, a blog for American history. October 2017, http://www.processhistory.org/recontextualizing-the-ocean-blue/. See also: Peter Vellon, *A Great Conspiracy Against Our Race: Italian Immigrant Newspapers and the Construction of Whiteness in the Early 20th Century* (New York, NYU Press, 2014), 7.
[6] Stefano Luconi, "Forging an Ethnic Identity: The Case of Italian Americans," *Revue Française d'études Américaines*, no. 96 (2003): 90.
[7] Bénédicte Deschamps, "Italian-Americans and Columbus Day: A Quest for Consensus Between National and Group Identities (1840-1910)," in *Celebrating Ethnicity and Nation: American Festive Culture from the Revolution to the Twentieth Century*, ed. Jürgen Heideking, Geneviève Fabre, and Kai Dresbach (New York: Berghahn Books, ed.2001), 130.

communities.[8] Within this economic analysis, the chapter also considers the potential for reduced workplace discrimination and fuller participation in the American economy which the adoption of Columbus presented to Italian Americans at large in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[9]

Finally, the chapter demonstrates that the process of adopting Columbus as an ethnic hero was neither unanimous nor linear for Italian Americans. On the contrary, individuals and groups from within the Italian American community opposed the adoption and celebration of Columbus on two levels. First they rejected Columbus on ideological grounds; citing their conception of the legacy of Christopher Columbus as a historical figure, this form of opposition tended to come from Italian American individuals and groups who were more politically left-leaning.[10] Others were opposed to the manner in which the espousal was being carried out. Some individuals and groups argued that fundraising needed to be directed toward initiatives such as schools and hospitals instead of statues,[11] and others

[8] Bénédicte Deschamps, "'The cornerstone is laid': Italian American Memorial Building in New York City and Immigrants' Right to the City at the Turn of the Twentieth Century," *European Journal of American Studies* 10, no. 3 (2015): 13-14.

[9] "Il 4o. Centenario Della Scoperta d'America; La Celebrazione in New York; Il Monumento a Cristoforo Colombo e Le Feste Inaugurali; Memorie Di Un Testimone Oculare," in "Guida Italiana e Calendario Universale Del Progresso Italo-Americano per Gli Stati Uniti, Il Canada, Il Mexico, Etc. Dono al Suoi Abbonati per l'anno" ["The 4th Centenary of the Discovery of America; The Celebration in New York; The Monument to Christopher Columbus and the Inaugural Celebrations; Memoirs of an Eyewitness," in "Italian Guide and Universal Calendar of *Il Progresso Italo-Americano* for the United States, Canada, Mexico, Etc. Gift to its subscribers for the year"], translated by Author, New York: Tipografia del progresso italo-americano [Press of *Il Progresso Italo-Americano*], 19th century (exact date unknown): 91.

[10] William J. Connell, "Who's Afraid of Columbus?," *Italian Americana* 31, no. 2 (2013): 141-2.
See also: Bénédicte Deschamps, "'The cornerstone is laid': 13.

[11] Bénédicte Deschamps, "'The cornerstone is laid': Italian American Memorial Building in New York City and Immigrants' Right to the City at the Turn of the Twentieth Century," *European Journal of American Studies* 10, no. 3 (2015): 13.
See also: Lina Insana, "Discord in the Italian Immigrant Press over Statue Plans," Columbus, Interrupted: Searching for "Small" Philanthropy in Pittsburgh's Italian Immigrant Community, accessed December 11, 2021, https://scalar.usc.edu/works/columbus-interrupted/discord-in-the-italian-immigrant-press-over-statue-plans.

opposed statues due to their belief that such projects placed special interests above those of the community at large.[12]

The initial large-scale Italian American effort to adopt and celebrate Columbus in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century encountered rejection from members within the ethnic community. Choosing to honor and celebrate Columbus did offer Italian Americans the opportunity for acceptance, assimilation, and advancement on multiple fronts, but the decision to do so was never unanimous. The first chapter aims to bring this oft-omitted fact to attention to better understand the history of the Italian American community's relationship to Columbus.

From Goddess to Frontiersman: Columbus in the American Imaginary Before Wide-Scale Italian Immigration to the United States

On the bicentennial anniversary of Christopher Columbus's 1492 voyage across the Atlantic Ocean, there were no grand parades in his honor. Nor were any Columbus statues raised. In fact, there is no record of any form of commemoration in what is today the United States.[13] By the tricentennial of Columbus's voyage, however, the importance which a young U.S. placed on the explorer had grown considerably. Beginning in about 1770, the figure of Columbus came to take on a central role in shaping the imaginary of the newly independent United States (Here, "imaginary" is defined as "the way a given people imagine

[12] Lina Insana, "City and Italian Community Reject Planned Columbus Statue," Columbus, Interrupted: Searching for "Small" Philanthropy in Pittsburgh's Italian Immigrant Community, accessed December 11, 2021, https://scalar.usc.edu/works/columbus-interrupted/italian-community-rejects-columbus-statue.
[13] Schlereth, "Columbia, Columbus, and Columbianism," 937.

their collective social life which enables and at the same time legitimizes sense making processes and practices.").[14]

In Columbus's early adaptations into the U.S. imaginary, however, he was not conceived as Columbus. Instead, the figure was that of Columbia, a feminized, mythical deity derived from Columbus. She was a pure, feminine goddess which Thomas Schlereth describes as a "classical deity . . . symbolizing liberty and progress."[15] Exactly when and how the mythological Columbia came into existence is not known; occasional references in varying contexts date back as early as the 1690s. One of the first individuals to carry Columbia to a more prominent position was Phyllis Wheatley, a female, enslaved African American poet.[16] Her poetry portrayed Columbia as a guiding light to the young American nation, and perhaps her most famous poetic iteration of this theme was in her 1775 poem titled "His Excellency General Washington." In praising George Washington and defending the American Revolution as a worthy cause, she wrote,

Proceed, great chief, with virtue on thy side,
Thy ev'ry action let the Goddess guide.
A crown, a mansion, and a throne that shine,
With gold unfading, WASHINGTON! Be thine.[17]

Wheatley assigned great responsibility to Columbia in this poem as Washington's guide. Doing so not only implies Wheatley's trust in Columbia, but it also makes it apparent that Columbia was to embody all that was good and virtuous about a nation fighting for its

[14] Brigitte Nerlich, "Imagining Imaginaries," Making Science Public, April 23, 2015, https://blogs.nottingham.ac.uk/makingsciencepublic/2015/04/23/imagining-imaginaries/.
[15] Schlereth, "Columbia, Columbus, and Columbianism," 937.
[16] Ibid, 939. See also: Wall text, *Mourning Sampler*, "American Democracy: A Great Leap of Faith," Heinz History Center, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.
[17] Phillis Wheatley, "His Excellency General Washington," text, poets.org, accessed December 11, 2021, https://poets.org/poem/his-excellency-general-washington. 39-42.

independence. It appears that some early Americans even treated Columbia as a motherly founder and guide to the nation. In an 1823 needlepoint sampler by Harriet Lenfestey, Columbia "holds her hand to her face in sadness" over the death of George Washington.[18]

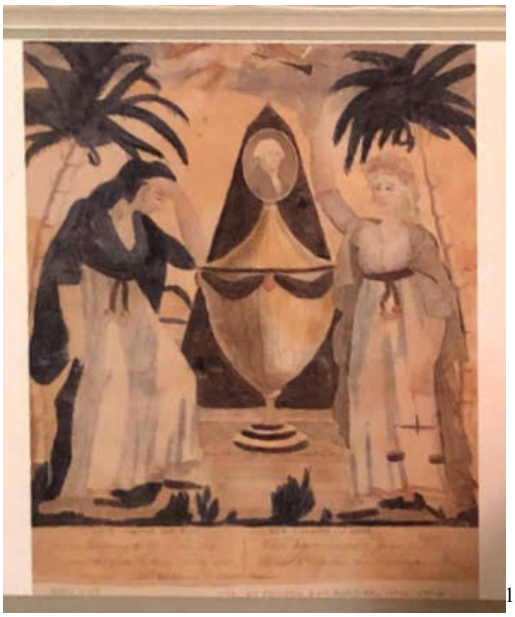 [19]

Figure 1: Photograph of the print by Pember and Luzander that inspired Lenfestey's 1823 needlepoint.

Between Wheatley's poem of 1775 and the creation of Lenfestey's needlepoint in 1823, several other significant developments speak to the level and nature of Columbia's importance. King's College in New York City, which was given its name during the reign of King George III, changed its name to Columbia in the year 1784 in order to exemplify "both the rejection of England and the glorification of America."[20] South Carolina chose "Columbia" as its capital in 1786, and in the decades following the publishing of "Columbia" in 1787, many people in the young United States considered it a national

[18] Wall text, *Mourning Sampler*, "American Democracy: A Great Leap of Faith," Heinz History Center, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.
[19] Photograph of Pember & Luzander's print that inspired Harriet Lenfestey's 1823 needlepoint, "American Democracy: A Great Leap of Faith," Heinz History Center, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.
[20] Schlereth, "Columbia, Columbus, and Columbianism," 939.

anthem.[21] Each of these demonstrate another aspect of Columbia's importance to the United States: as Columbia was based on Columbus, who is generally believed to have been born in Genoa and sailed for the Spanish Crown,[22] Columbia had no direct associations with the legacy of the British Crown or its rule over the American colonies. Therefore, she was a sensible choice in that she was a figure which the U.S. could adopt without feeling that they were borrowing from, or still tied to, British imaginaries and mythologies. With Columbia occupying an important mythical and ideological presence, and with her lack of association with all things British, it is no surprise that there was a debate over whether to rename the United States of America the "United States of Columbia."[23]

While the focus of the chapter is not to track all iterations of Columbus imagery in the United States before the mass arrival of Italian immigrants, it is worth mentioning that a different representation of Columbus arose after the Revolutionary period and before the late 1800s. According to Schlereth's description, as "Columbia" faded in prominence, "Columbus" gained traction. In contrast to Columbia, Columbus was "the masculine, fifteenth-century European . . . who sanctioned nineteenth-century American Manifest Destiny and western expansionism."[24] Though this iteration of Columbus occupied a period in American history which is distinct from that of Columbia, it is worth mentioning in order to demonstrate the "professional elite"[25] presented both figures in a positive light. This is not to say that Columbus was never met with opposition by various individuals and groups within the U.S. before mass Italian immigration, but when large numbers of Italians did

[21] Ibid, 939.
[22] Ibid, 966.
[23] Ibid, 941
[24] Ibid, 937.
[25] Ibid, 938.

arrive in the U.S. beginning in the 1880s, they were not "building something from nothing" when it came to adopting Columbus as an ethnic hero. Rather, there was already wide-scale American familiarity with the iterations of Columbus that informed mainstream imageries and concepts of national identity. He was a not-so-foreign American character, and for a variety of reasons, many Italians in America found it worthwhile to familiarize themselves with and attach themselves to him.

The "Italian Americanization" of Columbus in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries (Ethnic Unification)

As Columbia and the Columbus of Manifest Destiny had symbolic importance which were distinct from each other, the Columbus who achieved the status of ethnic hero to Italian Americans also took on a meaning and significance that was distinct from the prior two iterations. The figure of Christopher Columbus had not been given much symbolic importance in Italy prior to large-scale immigration to the United States, but for the Italian immigrants who arrived in the 1880s, wealthy Italian American community leaders, or *prominenti*, saw multiple opportunities in adopting Columbus. Among them were greater ethnic unification, promotion of Italian Americans as civilized, and economic, political, and occupational advancement.

In the beginning and middle of the nineteenth century, only a small number of Italians immigrated to the United States. From 1820 to 1870, there was no single decade in which more than twelve thousand immigrants arrived in the U.S. Most of those who came to

the United States during this period were from Italy's northern regions.[26] Beginning in the 1870s, however, trends in immigration changed drastically. Total numbers of immigrants from Italy to the U.S. numbered 11,725 between 1861 and 1870, more than 55,000 between 1871 and 1880, increasing to more than 300,000 between 1881 and 1890, and more than 650,000 between 1891 and 1900. In the 1900s and 1910s, more than one million Italian immigrants arrived in both decades, despite the outbreak of World War I.[27] Whereas the majority of immigrants had been from northern Italy prior to this spike in immigration, the majority of immigrants were now coming from the southern regions of Italy, such as Abruzzo, Campania, Puglia, Basilicata, Calabria, and Sicily.[28]

As these immigrants settled in the United States at the turn of the twentieth century, being "Italian" meant little to them. This stems in large part from the fact that Italy had only become a unified country in 1860, and sentiments of Italian nationalism were unfamiliar to many of the immigrants. As written in the *Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups*, "Italy is a comparatively new nation. From the first centuries after Christ . . . until the late 19th century, the Italian peninsula remained a collection of small and often warring states, many of them dominated, especially in the south, by one or another foreign power."[29] Centuries of rivalry and political fracture in Italy, along with significant cultural and linguistic variations, meant that Italian Americans were largely unfamiliar with both "Americanness" and "Italianness" (or *italianità*) as all-encompassing national identities.

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[26] U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1970* (Washington, D.C., 1975), 1, 105-6.
[27] Ibid. See also: "'The Great Arrival,' from 'Immigration and Relocation in U.S. History,'" web page, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. 20540 USA, accessed December 11, 2021, https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/immigration/italian/the-great-arrival/.
[28] Humbert Nelli, "Italians," *Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups*, ed. Stephen Thernstrom, Ann Orlov, and Oscar Handlin (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1980), 545.
[29] Ibid, 545.

Columbus was a malleable figure in the early years of the United States, and his association with virtue and power by the "professional elite" meant that Italian Americans could reshape a figure which was already familiar to Americans and use it for the sake of breaking down some of the barriers which *campanilismo* posed. This word comes from *campanile,* the Italian word for bell tower. Stefano Luconi, Professor at the University of Florence and specialist in Italian immigration to the U.S.,[30] defines *campanilismo* as "a parochial sense of regional, provincial, and even local affiliation. Such an attitude . . . usually confined people's attachments to their respective hometown or - as the Italian expression suggests - within the earshot of the bells of their villages."[31] Living in a new city or country was not enough to weaken these loyalties, because frequent chain migration meant that "fellow villagers and people from the same region or province ended up clustering together in self-segregated neighborhoods within the broader Italian settlements."[32] Thus, in places such as East Harlem, particular streets served as clear boundaries between Italian immigrants from Naples and Italian immigrants from the region of Basilicata.[33]

Before considering Columbus's role in countering *campanilismo,* it is worth noting that this form of regional loyalty sometimes went beyond a simple lack of familiarity with a fellow Italian conational from a different city, town, or region. Rivalry and disdain could also characterize these relationships. Robert Orsi brings the centuries-old north-south Italian rivalry to light when he mentions that "Northern Italian politicians dismissed southern

[30] "Encyclopedia of Greater Philadelphia | Stefano Luconi," accessed March 21, 2022, https://philadelphiaencyclopedia.org/archive/stefano-luconi/.
[31] Luconi, "Forging an Ethnic Identity," 89-90.
[32] Ibid, 90.
[33] Vellon, *A Great Conspiracy Against Our Race*, 19.

Italians as darkskinned outsiders; the ancient term of abuse for them was 'Turks.'"[34] Within northern or southern Italy, the hatred could be just as intense. Joseph Napoli's mother, who was born in the province of Messina, Sicily, strongly disliked Sicilians from the city of Palermo. Her greatest contempt for another group of Italians, however, was for those from the southern city of Naples: "She hated [Neapolitans] openly. With the index and little finger of her left hand she threw 'corni' - horns - at their home or when she saw them in the distance. She crossed the street to avoid walking near the house or near them, thus eluding their malice and their own potent evil eye."[35] These examples are not introduced to advance the idea that all Italian immigrants despised each other upon arrival to the United States. Rather, they serve to suggest that many of the immigrants who came to the United States from Italy beginning in the late nineteenth century had deep local loyalties and little sense of national identity.

Many outside influences can be credited with having transformed these regionally loyal immigrants (and their descendants, as this process took several generations) into the ethnic group that is today referred to as Italian Americans. For example, scorn and discrimination against southern Italians in the U.S., immigration restriction, and the influence of the Italian language press can all be credited in part with this shift. In this section, however, the focus is placed on the role that adopting and celebrating Columbus as an Italian American hero had on the making of a more unified ethnic group. As Bénédicte Deschamps writes,

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[34] Robert A. Orsi, ""The Religious Boundaries of an In-between People: Street *Feste* and the Problem of the Dark-Skinned Other in Italian Harlem, 1920-1990," in *Gods of the City : Religion and the American Urban Landscape* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 258.
[35] Joseph Napoli, *A Dying Cadence: Memoirs of a Sicilian Childhood* (W. Bethesda: Marna, 1986), 58-9, quoted in Luconi, "Forging an Ethnic Identity," 90.

> Columbus Day did not only serve as a means for the Italian communities to enhance their image or seek consensus with their American environment. . . . [C]elebrating Columbus Day was also viewed as a contribution to the shaping of Italian national identity. A main concern for Italian American leaders was to try and organize a heterogeneous community into a national force.[36]

Some Italian American leaders lamented the fact that this unification process did not take place more quickly. As *L'Italia,* an Italian American newspaper, wrote in 1897, "It is unfortunately painful to confess that 37 years after the unification of our homeland, we still find ourselves in the condition which drove the Italian statesman Massimo d'Azeglio to say: 'Italy has been created, and now we need to create Italians.'"[37] Columbus festivities served as an opportunity to advance this work of "creating Italians," that is, Italian Americans.

Prominenti announced Columbus celebrations and festivities with clear intention that all members of "the colony" (i.e., all Italian Americans) rally behind the cause for unity. For example, as Italian American newspapers joined the effort to make Columbus Day a state holiday in Massachusetts, they wrote in 1907, "the aim of the commemoration is to initiate an efficient movement leading the state to declare Columbus Day an official state holiday. Politics, religion, regionalism have nothing to do with it. In this solemn occasion we must all unite and show we are both sensitive and sensible."[38] Dating back even before the largest waves of migration, finer details of Columbus festivities show the attention to unity which characterized such events. For example, in its coverage of the 1869 "Festa di Colombo" (held in a ballroom, not as a public parade), *L'Eco d'Italia* was greatly contented to report that the women who attended the event formed "a bouquet of flowers quite representative of

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[36] Deschamps, "Italian-Americans and Columbus Day," 132.
[37] "La scoperta dell'America," *L'Italia,* 1897, quoted in Deschamps, "Italian-Americans and Columbus Day," 132.
[38] "La festa a Colombo," *La Gazzetta del Massachusetts,* October 12, 1907, quoted in Deschamps, "Italian-Americans and Columbus Day," 133. The wording of the plea is also evidence for the use of Columbus and Columbus festivities as opportunities to demonstrate the civilization of Italian Americans. The chapter will discuss this at length later in the thesis.

the diversity of the different Italian types, from the blond-haired and blue-eyed girls of the North to the black-haired and black-eyed ones of the South."[39] Similarly, newspapers were sure to note that both Genoese-style (Genoa being a northern Italian city) and Neapolitan-style (Naples being a southern Italian city) pasta were served at a Columbus Day dinner in Chicago a few years later.[40]

An Italian-Americanized figure of Columbus was uniquely fitted to the desires of those who wished to unite the Italian American community. Under the view of Columbus as the first immigrant to America (though Columbus never reached what is today the United States), Italian immigrants began to place greater symbolic value on the parallels which they believed to exist between their experiences and those of Columbus: "Like Columbus, [they] had crossed the ocean . . . they had chosen to leave their mother country in order to start a new life . . . they had gone through an ordeal. . . . [H]e was one of them, not only because of his nationality, but also because of his sufferings."[41]

Significant portions of Italian Americans did come to view and celebrate Columbus under this conception. And according to sociologist John Williams, the figure of Columbus as conceived by so many Italian Americans did play a crucial role in fostering greater ethnic unity. This figure and the celebrations around him proved effective toward the goal in large American cities and in smaller cities and towns. For example, in Walla Walla, Washington, and Pueblo, Colorado, Columbus "helped unite a community that was sharply divided between Northerners and Southerners and so helped pave the way for the community's

[39] "Anniversario della Festa di Colombo." *L'Eco d'Italia,* October 15, 1869, quoted in Deschamps, "Italian-Americans and Columbus Day," 133.
[40] Deschamps, "Italian-Americans and Columbus Day," 133.
[41] Ibid, 134.

achievements."[42] Due in part to the perceived similarity of his immigrant experience to theirs, and to the fact that he had no direct association with any particular group of Italian immigrants (thus avoiding widespread regionalist backlash), Columbus-the-ethnic-hero became a figure who encouraged communities of Italian Americans to see each other as just that: Italian Americans.

The "Italian Americanization" of Columbus in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries (Promotion of Italian-American Civilization)

While the Italian American adoption and reinterpretation of Columbus, an adventurer from Genoa who sailed under the crown of Castilla y Leon to the Americas, as the "first immigrant" helped to facilitate feelings of shared Italian Americanness among immigrants, it also gave many Italian Americans a figure with whom to fight the bigotry and discrimination which many of them faced in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Those Italian Americans - wealthy community leaders or not - who invested in Columbus either by celebrating public Columbus festivities or by funding statues to him, used him to argue that they, as upstanding citizens coming from a land with a millennia-long tradition of civilization, had a rightful place in the progress of the United States as it continued to undergo rapid demographic changes.

To the Anglo-Saxon, Protestant majority in the United States of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, multiple characteristics rendered Italian immigrants suspicious

[42] John Alexander Williams, "The Columbus Complex," in *Old Ties, New Attachments, Italian American Folklife in the West,* David A. Taylor and John A. Williams, eds. (Washington: Library of Congress, 1992), 204, quoted in Deschamps, "Italian-Americans and Columbus Day," 133.

outsiders. Such characteristics included a lack of education and "civilization," near-pagan Catholicism, and a questionable racial makeup. Many Italian immigrants who came to the United States from southern Italy during the decades of mass migration - roughly from the 1880s through the 1910s - were uneducated and illiterate as a result of centuries of hardship, poverty, and exploitation. On the condition of post-unification southern Italy, Humbert Nelli wrote, "If the south Italian peasants had hoped to improve their lot through unification, they were soon disappointed. . . . Discriminatory government policies . . . an oppressive agricultural system; and an enormous growth in population guaranteed the southern peasant a dreary, marginal existence."[43] Often arriving with no formal education and little knowledge of the English language, these early immigrants faced a significant challenge when it came to achieving upward mobility through well-paying occupations.

Another element of the Italian American communities made them suspect to the established white majority: southern Italians were seen generally as uncivilized, morally questionable people. One of the main sources of this sentiment was the media awareness and coverage of criminal organizations such as *La Mano Nera* (The Black Hand), which caused even Italian Americans outside of the organization to be perceived as potentially corrupt or dangerous.[44] Another important factor was a phenomenon in which many more Italian Americans openly participated: the *festa. Feste* were Italian celebrations that were most often religious in their origin. They were conducted publicly in Italy, and many immigrant communities brought such festive traditions from Italy to the U.S. Music and processions were often a staple of such celebrations. As Nelli notes, there was a disconnect between

[43] Nelli, "Italians," 547.
[44] Deschamps, "Italian-Americans and Columbus Day," 132. See also: "Black Hand | American Criminal Organization," Encyclopedia Britannica, accessed December 11, 2021, https://www.britannica.com/topic/Black-Hand-American-criminal-organization.

Italian immigrant communities and more established communities of Americans regarding the nature of a *festa* and of the immigrants' practice of Catholicism: "The images and superstitions, the festivals, processions, and feasts that were part of the daily religious life of an unlettered immigrant seemed to the sophisticated more pagan than Christian. The Italians saw these customs as basic to worship and to the maintenance of tradition."[45] Thus, not only were many of the Italian immigrants illiterate (80 percent of Sicilians and Calabrians were illiterate at the turn of the twentieth century, and 47 percent of immigrants arriving from Italy between 1899 and 1909 were illiterate[46]), but their religious expression was viewed as suspect and unenlightened from the outside.

Perhaps the most daunting obstacle to acceptance, assimilation, or advancement was the place of southern Italians in the racial hierarchy of the United States. Commonly acknowledged as a white group today, Italians of this period lived and worked under an American belief system that treated race and color as distinct entities (as opposed to a more modern conception of "race-as-color"). Under this system, Italians were legally white, yet they faced significant race-based discrimination in employment and in the administration of justice. As Thomas Guglielmo writes,

> Italians were not despised and persecuted for their cultural differences alone; they were, to cite two common examples, restricted from immigrating in large numbers to the United States and criminalized mercilessly because of differences and deficiencies often thought to be biological, genetic, and natural. Race was, thus, a central part of Italians' experiences in Chicago — even if they were white on arrival.[47]

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[45] Nelli, "Italians," 554.
[46] Vellon, *A Great Conspiracy Against Our Race*, 10.
[47] Thomas Angelo Guglielmo, *White on Arrival: Italians, Race, Color, and Power in Chicago, 1890–1945,*" Order No. 9990900, University of Michigan, 2000, https://proxy.lib.umich.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/white-on-arrival-italians-race-color-power/docview/304607169/se-2?accountid=14667, 9-10.

Guglielmo focuses on the Italians of Chicago between 1890 and 1945, but his insights are useful for highlighting how he and other scholars consider the Italian experience of race and color during the years of mass migration to the U.S. from Italy.

Other scholars, however, debate whether Italian whiteness of the time can be viewed so securely, or whether whiteness could be a fully distinct entity from one's race in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. For example, as Neil Foley wrote on this question, whiteness was less secure and viewed on a scale. In the 1900s and 1910s, "Whiteness . . . came increasingly to mean a particular kind of white person. Not all whites, in other words, were equally white."[48] Under this assumption, then, being legally white did not necessarily mean that one was considered fully white.

Matthew Frye Jacobson presents a similar argument on the matter. On nineteenth-century immigration in the United States, he writes, "Tacitly assuming that 'race' did not mean 'race' - that Hebrews, Celts, Mediterraneans . . . were *really* Caucasians - is worse than merely underestimating the ideological power of racialism: it is surrendering to that power. To miss the fluidity of race itself in this process of becoming Caucasian is to reify a monolithic whiteness."[49] As this relates to Italians in particular, Peter Vellon sides more with Jacobson and Foley than with Guglielmo, highlighting that ". . . newspaper headlines explicitly described Italians as a group 'between white and black' and questioned the racial fitness of Italian 'swarthy sons of the sunny south' by focusing upon some of the many markers informing race, such as physical appearance, culture, religion, language, color,

[48] Neil Foley, *The White Scourge: Mexicans, Blacks, and Poor Whites in Texas Cotton Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 5.
[49] Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 6.

class, and placement within the hierarchy of labor."[50] Contrary to Guglielmo, Vellon chooses to include color as a category which informed race at the time. The thesis presents these arguments in order to show the intellectual frameworks which can be applied to the evidence that follows below.

While much of the information in the last several paragraphs highlights intellectual debates and newspaper staffs' comments, the following evidence demonstrates the complex racial realities of Italian Americans in the late 1800s and early 1900s by venturing outside of these sources. As Stefano Luconi states, "Ethnic prejudice affected individuals of Italian ancestry especially on the job market. 'No Guineas' was a common sign at places of employment in order to discourage Italians and Americans of Italian descent from applying by using a derogatory term to refer to them."[51] James R. Barrett and David Roediger state that this word was long associated with "African slaves, particularly those from the continent's northwest coast, and to their descendants" before being applied to any other racial or ethnic group.[52] By the 1890s, however, the term was used for groups of non-African geographical origins; it was applied "first and especially to Sicilians and southern Italians who often came as contract laborers."[53]

For many of those immigrants who were employed in unskilled occupations, differences in racial preference of the time were evident to them. As Rose Vigilante stated about her job at a laundry in the 1910s, "The Irish girls worked upstairs on the street level, ironing rich people's fancy clothes. We Italian girls worked in the basement, doing the flat

[50] Vellon, *A Great Conspiracy Against Our Race*, 7.
[51] Luconi, "Forging an Ethnic Identity," 93.
[52] James R. Barrett and David Roediger, "Inbetween Peoples: Race, Nationality and the 'New Immigrant' Working Class," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 16, no. 3 (1997): 7.
[53] Ibid, 7.

work, folding pillow cases, handkerchiefs, and sheets."[54] Hesitations over allowing Italians to perform skilled crafts persisted into the 1930s, as evidenced by the testimony of Frank Sgambato. At the Providence, Rhode Island textile factory which employed him, "The boss . . . wouldn't transfer me to the weaving room. . . . I knew it was a skilled craft . . . and an Italo-American going into a twisting job was a little hard to accept."[55]

The fragile whiteness of Italians was also evident in matters of education, particularly in the American South. One example comes from a Mississippi school district which, in 1906, was unsure whether to allow the children of Italian immigrants to attend white schools. As the *New York Times* headline read, "Italians a Race Issue: Mississippi Undecided Whether They Are White or Not; To 'Jim Crow' Them?; Not Wanted in White Schools - in Gubernatorial Campaign New Race Issue Bobs Up."[56] The most poignant reminder of the Italian racial position of the time, however, came in the form of lynching. While more than eighty-five percent of all lynching victims in the U.S. are reported to have been African American, forty-six Italian Americans are reported to have been lynched.[57] Arguably the most famous lynching of Italian Americans occurred in New Orleans, Louisiana in 1891. As summarized by the *Smithsonian Magazine,*

> The city's police chief had been shot to death, and hundreds of Italian-Americans had subsequently been arrested in connection with the murder. Of them, 19 had been indicted. But for the mob of vigilantes, fired up by anti-immigrant sentiment, due process didn't matter. After six acquittals and three additional mistrials, they stormed the city jail and proceeded to brutally murder 11 men.[58]

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[54] James V. Costanzo, Sr., *New Neighbors, Old Friends: Morristown's Italian Community, 1880-1980* (Morristown, NJ: Morristown Historical Society, 1982), 82, quoted in Luconi, "Forging and Ethnic Identity," 93.
[55] Frank Sgambato as quoted in *Working Lives: An Oral History of Rhode Island Labor,* ed. Paul Buhle (Providence: Rhode Island Historical Society, 1987), 22, quoted in Luconi, "Forging an Ethnic Identity," 93.
[56] Vellon, *A Great Conspiracy Against Our Race*, 82.
[57] Ibid, 86.
[58] Brigit Katz, "New Orleans Apologizes for 1891 Lynching of Italian-Americans," *Smithsonian Magazine*, April 15, 2019, https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/new-orleans-apologizes-1891-lynching-italian-americans-180971959/.

The Italian language press in the U.S. demonstrated their incredulousness at the act, and in doing so, they made clear their contempt for the hypocrisy of a nation that claimed to be the most civilized on earth. The ensuing commentary resorted to racist tropes connected to civilization and savagery in order to ridicule the conduct of white Southerners. Vellon writes that "According to a cynical Italian American press, the line between African 'savagery' and American 'civilization' became blurred: 'But where are we? The only difference now between the free sons of America and the savages of Africa is that Americans have yet to become flesh eating cannibals.'"[59] Similarly, scathing remarks in criticism over the American justice system included brutal references to Native Americans. *Il Progresso Italo-Americano* published after the lynching, "the phrase goes that if you scratch a Russian you find a Cossack… To the citizens of the Crescent City we would change this phrase to the following: if you scratch an American from New Orleans you will find a Pellerossa."[60]

Just one year after the 1891 lynching in New Orleans (and after the killing of over 150 Lakota Indians by U.S. Army troops in South Dakota only three months prior to the lynching[61]), President Benjamin Harrison proclaimed a national celebration of Columbus Day in 1892, the quadricentennial anniversary of Columbus's 1492 voyage. The celebration was not to be "devoted" to Italian immigrants, Native Americans, or any single group in particular; rather, it was meant to celebrate public education in the U.S. This desire was at the forefront of President Harrison's 1892 Columbus Day proclamation, where he wrote,

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[59] *L'Araldo Italiano,* August 11, 1896, quoted in Vellon, *A Great Conspiracy Against Our Race*, 37.
[60] *Il Progresso Italo-Americano,* March 18, 1891, quoted in Vellon, *A Great Conspiracy Against Our Race,* 60. ("Pellerossa" is the Italian word for "Redskin," a slur used against Native Americans.)
[61] Myles Hudson, "Wounded Knee Massacre | Facts, History, & Legacy | Britannica," accessed March 15, 2022, https://www.britannica.com/event/Wounded-Knee-Massacre.

> Columbus stood in his age as the pioneer of progress and enlightenment. The system of universal education is in our age the most prominent and salutary feature of the spirit of enlightenment, and it is peculiarly appropriate that the schools be made by the people the center of the day's demonstration. Let the national flag float over every schoolhouse in the country, and the exercises be such as shall impress upon our youth the patriotic duties of American citizenship.[62]

In New York's Columbus Day parade of 1892, thousands of school children were the highlight of the demonstrations; students from the Dante Alighieri Italian College of Astoria, the Italian American Colonial school, and the Carlisle Indian School.[63] The Carlisle Indian School is noted today for its efforts to erase Native American culture from its students[64], but in the context of such hostile events which unfolded in the two years prior to 1892, the presence of these students in the parade was a significant occurrence.

As for the Italian American community's own connection to Columbus in light of discrimination and bigotry, the figure of Columbus and the celebration of Columbus was part of an effort to assert Italian American civilization and dignity. Commenting on the significance of erecting a monument to Christopher Columbus in New York, the largest city in the U.S., an article by *Il Progresso Italo-Americano* stated that the Italians of the United States have not enjoyed great sympathies, and that a grand, artistic monument to Columbus shall address this by demonstrating that the Italians have the full right to intervene in public life, just as the other nationalities that comprise the great United States.[65] For *Il Progresso,*

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[62] Benjamin Harrison, "400th Anniversary of the Discovery of America by Columbus," The American Presidency Project, July 21, 1892, https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/proclamation-335-400th-anniversary-the-discovery-america-columbus.
[63] Connell, "Who's Afraid of Columbus?," 140.
[64] Addison Kliewer, Miranda Mahmud, and Brooklyn Wayland, "'Kill the Indian, Save the Man': Remembering the Stories of Indian Boarding Schools," Gaylord College of Journalism and Mass Communications, accessed March 15, 2022, http://www.ou.edu/gaylord/exiled-to-indian-countryremembering-the-stories-of-indian-boarding-schools.html.
[65] "Il 4o. Centenario Della Scoperta d'America," 91.

commemorating Columbus meant making a political statement on behalf of the progress of Italian Americans.

The monument in New York City's Columbus Circle was installed in 1892, and, similarly to those who lauded Columbia and Columbus prior to the late 1800s, the dedication ceremony emphasized Columbus's foundational role in the progress of the U.S. Carlo Barsotti, editor of *Il Progresso Italo-Americano* and leader in the campaign for the statue, gave the following remarks: "The name of Columbus can never be dissociated from any American celebration because without Columbus there would have been no America. And it is for us and no one else to unite the sacred names of Italy and America, of Columbus and Washington."[66] Again, the "first immigrant" is heralded for being the cornerstone upon which the United States was built. Barsotti portrays him as "one of us," (i.e., a fellow Italian American), and for that reason, he finds it logical that the Italian American community deserves respect as a civilized, upstanding people. As for the monument itself, such a "grand, artistic," work would have also served a symbolic importance to those Italian Americans who revered Columbus. Something so towering and seemingly permanent likely would have given a Columbus devotee a sense of pride for Italian American resolve and creativity.

Columbus parades and festivities also provided Italian Americans with opportunities to present their case for acceptance and advancement. What became most important in this particular arena was the manner in which Columbus festivities were celebrated. For Italian American newspaper editors and other community leaders, the Columbus Day celebrations could not follow the precedent set by the *feste*. At the highly emotional celebration of Our

[66] Deschamps, "Italian-Americans and Columbus Day," 127.

Lady of Mount Carmel in Harlem, for example, "as the procession made its way to the church of 'Monte Carmelo,' beer and wax amulets were sold on the sidewalks, while the 'penitents crawled up the steps on their hands and knees, some of them dragging their tongues along the stone.'"[67] In fact, most Italian American newspaper editors were against the early celebration of Columbus Day parades due to their resemblance to a traditional *festa*, their being "too ethnic," and the difficulty of organizing such events in an orderly fashion. The Italian immigrant communities were reluctant to give up such celebrations, however, because they "would not give up their fascination for a form of celebration that evoked pleasant nostalgic memories of their mother country."[68] Columbus Day parades continued, but community leaders would not let them continue with the hilarity and southern Italian religiosity of the traditional *feste*.

The way people celebrated Columbus had to differ from the manner in which they celebrated the *feste* if Italians were going to assert their civilization through public displays. Otherwise, Italian-American communities risked presenting further evidence to the outside communities who questioned their level of civilization and their belonging in a majority Anglo-Protestant America. As Deschamps writes, "Italian immigrants believed Christopher Columbus was almost the only Italian yet universal figure who was dignified enough to restore American faith in the qualities of the Italian population, but on the condition their community proved worthy of such a noble figure."[69] If this condition was not fully met, there was still certainly a departure from the "old ways" of celebrating when it came time to

[67] Robert Anthony Orsi, *The Madonna of 115th Street: Faith and Community in Italian Harlem, 1880-1950* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 4, quoted in Deschamps, "Italian-Americans and Columbus Day," 130.
[68] Ibid, 131.
[69] Ibid, 131.

celebrate Columbus Day through parades, banquets, or other forms. Recall that commemorations were to show that Italians were "sensitive and sensible." They were to do so by taking place within a certain window of time and in a certain place, and they were to be conducted so as to "display Italian dignity, control, and order."[70] An example of such an attempt comes from 1909, when Boston Italian societies held a dinner, a poetry reading by upper-class Italian women, and the playing of a Chopin concerto in celebration of Columbus Day. For those in positions of power who were invited to such a gathering, it would have been an opportunity to see what the *prominenti* may have considered "Italians at their finest:" elegant, cultured, well-versed citizens, rather than the Italian Communists and Black Hand criminals circulating in the press.[71] In these wealthier settings, which were more upscale than the streets of Little Italies, community leaders saw Columbus Day events as a chance to publicly counter the conception of Italians as "pagan" or "backward" which *feste* might have offered. The *feste* persisted and evolved in some areas as celebrations of family history and ethnic pride; they will enter the discussion again in the third chapter.

Italian American celebrations of Columbus Day in the 1890s and 1900s - including parades - were meant to present Italian Americans in what the *prominenti* considered to be dignified and respectable ways. When the community did not meet the condition of "proving worthy of such a noble figure," newspaper editors and community leaders publicly chided participants in the festivities for their behavior. For example, after the 1910 Columbus Day festivities in Chicago - the first festivities held after Columbus Day was declared a state holiday in Illinois - the Italian-American newspaper *L'Italia* ridiculed conduct that it believed to have poorly represented the Italian American community. They wrote in dismay

[70] Ibid, 131.
[71] Ibid, 132.

over the fact that their reporters had seen "Shoes covered with mud up to the ankles . . . which is quite unbelievable when we think that all the shoe shiners in Chicago are Italian!," "Many faces with week-old beards . . . while a little washing and shaving would have given their owners a more decent aspect," and "one person . . . inside a gaudy car transporting in the most noisy way chinking bottles of beer as if the point of the commemoration was to celebrate Bacchus instead of Columbus." All these details were noted as having been "not really favorable to some of the marchers."[72] Clearly, the Italian Americans in the parade and attending the parade were held to a standard that was distinct from that of the religious *feste.* One could certainly argue that Italian American attachments to Columbus during this time took on a religious nature, as Italians Americans did push for the canonization of Columbus,[73] but Columbus commemorations and celebrations were to demonstrate a polished, refined version of Italian Americans. Therefore, greater ethnic unity[74] and the assertion of Italian American civilization were both spurred on by the adoption of Columbus which occurred in the years of mass Italian immigration to the United States.

The "Italian Americanization" of Columbus in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries (Economic, Political, and Occupational Advancement)

Economic motivations behind public commemoration and celebration of Columbus also merit discussion. To a certain degree, they have already been addressed: under the

[72] "Il Columbus Day festeggiato dagl'Italiani con parata e carri allegorici – 25,000 in marcia," *L'Italia,* October 15, 1910, quoted in Deschamps, "Italian-Americans and Columbus Day," 131.
[73] Schlereth, "Columbia, Columbus, and Columbianism," 955.
[74] Using the mainstream terminology of Anglo-Saxon Protestants during the period in question, it likely would have been more reasonable to consider this a unity between "races" (that is, between northern and southern Italians of all origins).

assumption that a nationally - though not unanimously - revered figure like Columbus could place Italian Americans in a more positive light, Italian Americans would be less likely to be considered "undesirables" or so firmly prevented from advancing in their occupations. The examples of Rose Vigilante and Frank Sgambato show that such a shift in the mainstream American consciousness was not necessarily sweeping or immediate, but if Italian Americans were frustrated with such a lack of opportunity in employment, then adopting Columbus could have served as one opportunity for personal and community-wide social mobility.

On another level, however, the promotion of Columbus also offered great opportunities for self-promotion and economic advancement of the *prominenti*. One of the most famous individual cases is that of Carlo Barsotti, who owned the New York Italian language newspaper *Il Progresso Italo-Americano* and orchestrated the statue building efforts in New York. While Bénédicte Deschamps posits that Barsotti had multiple motivations for raising statues to famous Italians (including for the prosperity and pride of future Italian Americans), he and others who orchestrated the fundraising for and construction of such statues "[were] undoubtedly motivated by a quest for self-promotion. . . . Dubbed the 'Statue Man' by the U.S. press, Barsotti was certainly raising monuments so as to get the attention of both the Italian Consulate and the city authorities and be seen as a leading figure of the 'colony.'"[75] Considering that Barsotti frequently attempted to have his name carved on the pedestals of statues, and that he faced accusations of "wasting and even embezzling funds from his competitors,"[76] undoubtedly opportunities for great profit and personal recognition were at stake. Therefore, beyond the broad effects that adopting

[75] Deschamps, "The cornerstone is laid," 13-14.
[76] Ibid, 13.

Columbus had on Italian American identity, underlying economic and political motives also played a part in such an enthusiastic embrace of the figure by the *prominenti*.

Community Opposition to Columbus During His Wide-Scale Italian Americanization

Much of the chapter has spoken to the effect that the adoption of an "Italian Americanized" Christopher Columbus during mass migration to the U.S. had on the Italian American community. However, this must be done with an important caveat in mind: as Columbus is currently contested, he was also contested in the early years of his proliferation in Italian America. On account of political, ideological, and economic disagreements, the adoption of Christopher Columbus as an Italian American figure worthy of his own statues and parades was never linear or unanimous.

Among the Italian Americans who opposed making Christopher Columbus into an ethnic hero for the millions of Italian immigrants of the late nineteenth early twentieth centuries, Italian American anarchists appear to have voiced their opposition most strongly. In the 1890s, anarchist publications left no question about their stance on the historical figure. They called him "a pirate and an adventurer," claimed he was "indifferent to massacre," and argued that "his plunder of the New World set the stage for the martyrdom of the negroes in the States of the South, and the prejudices and hatreds of race."[77] Such comments echo the arguments made against Columbus in more recent contexts, and whether

[77] Kenyon Zimmer, "'The Whole World is our Country': Immigration and Anarchism in the United States, 1885-1940," Ph. D. thesis, University of Pittsburgh (2010), pp. 178-9, quoted in Connell, "Who's Afraid of Columbus?," 141.
See also: ItalicsTV, *Talking Columbus - October 1st 2020*, 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lxKSuhZAkp4.

or not the anarchist publishers had ulterior motives for opposing Columbus, their writings indicate a stark division in Italian-American opinions on the matter in the 1890s.

In other arenas aside from the press, anarchists expressed their ideological disapproval of Columbus in a different, arguably more creative, satirical manner. As William Connell writes,

> In Spring Valley, Illinois, there was a large community of anarchist miners who happened to belong to the "Cristoforo Colombo Mutual Aid Society." There, on Columbus Day, 1899, the [anarchist] parade marshal, an anarchist named Joe Gariglietti, presented Columbus as a pirate-general, mounted on a white horse and "wearing a Napoleon-style hat."[78]

The 1899 anarchist celebration of Columbus Day is a fascinating example of protest that stands in contrast to the histories of Columbus and Columbus Day that organizations such as NIAF and ISDA promoted. Columbus was surely a source of pride and hope for many Italian Americans, especially in the face of heinous acts like lynching. However, the anarchist protest is critical in that it complicates the narrative of "Columbus-the-ethnic-hero" in the very span of time when he was supposedly most needed by the ethnic community.

Anarchists' comments on adopting Christopher Columbus were not limited solely to the historical figure. In other instances, they took their critiques a step further and ridiculed those who collected funds to raise statues. In the case of Carlo Barsotti and *Il Progresso Italo-Americano*, Italian-American radical leaders like anarchist Luigi Galleani "systematically tried to undermine Barsotti's efforts because not only did they see memorials as worthless and politically unacceptable, but they also claimed the money sent to *Il Progresso* was being misappropriated."[79]

[78] Connell, "Who's Afraid of Columbus?," 141-2.
[79] Deschamps, "The cornerstone is laid," 13.

Galleani's comments highlight an important element in the story of early Italian American opposition to Columbus, namely that while some Italian Americans raised clear opposition to adopting Columbus the historical figure on ideological grounds, others expressed a less inflammatory response to Columbus: they opposed building monuments to Columbus because they felt that better uses for the funds existed.

Galleani's opposition to Barsotti's practices rested upon both ideological opposition and the idea that such campaigns for statues did little to benefit Italian American communities. As Galleani's *Cronaca Sovversiva* (*Subversive Chronicle*) stated in 1910, Barsotti "will flood New York with great monuments of stone . . . pocketing huge money in addition to applauses . . . [because he understands] the spirit of the colony and knows how to exploit it."[80] Other Italian Americans were not so firmly opposed to Columbus and the heroic significance that certain Italian Americans had given to him, but they, like Galleani, found monument building to be an inefficient and impractical use of immigrants' funds. In New York City, Deschamps writes, "Barsotti's detractors also questioned the very necessity of financing statues when the Little Italies needed hospitals, schools, and libraries. Memorial building was thus anything but consensual, even within the ethnic community."[81] Opponents to funding statues - certainly not the Barsotti types - suggested that there were more urgent and necessary projects to be completed, speaking to working-class concerns in the community and highlighting the role of class differences in the debates around Columbus commemoration. Like the opposition to Columbus himself by Italian anarchists, the class-based discord over how to appropriately allocate money to promote the wellbeing of current

[80] *Cronaca Sovversiva,* 1910, quoted in Deschamps, "The cornerstone is laid," 13.
[81] Deschamps, "The cornerstone is laid," 13.

and future generations is a piece of the Italian American Columbus story which rarely gets acknowledged today.

By 1921, similar discord erupted over the possibility of raising a statue to Columbus in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The staff of the publication *La Trinacria* argued that, while the figure of Columbus was worthy of Italian American praise, more worthy and practical causes than a statue could be supported in his name.[82] As Lina Insana writes on *La Trinacria*'s approach,

> They rail against the growth of an illness ("malattia") among the Italian immigrant community . . . that transforms cities into cemeteries full of statues, instead of using the money for a better, more honorable, and above all more practical cause. . . . [The authors] argue that the Italians of America are in great need--of orphanages, schools, childcare institutions, hospitals. If *L'Unione* dedicates its resources to this kind of Columbus commemoration instead of a funereal statue, they can count on the full support of *La Trinacria*.[83]

This proposed statue was ultimately rejected in 1921, due to community disagreement over the timing of the project, its inappropriate distribution of funds, and its failure to represent the community's desire. Representatives of Italian publications and Italian societies issued a joint statement which read, in part, "the monument . . . is wanted only by the Italian Consolidated Press, Inc.. . . . Therefore the Columbus monument enterprise is nothing but a private speculation, and as such we, representing four-fifths of the Italian press in the interest of the American public and the Italian colony, declare and denounce it."[84] Community disagreements about the usefulness of statues and speculation over the projects serving special interests made raising Columbus statues a contentious issue in the early decades of Christopher Columbus's Italian Americanization.

[82] Lina Insana, "Discord in the Italian Immigrant Press over Statue Plans."
[83] Ibid.
[84] Lina Insana, "City and Italian Community Reject Planned Columbus Statue."

Conclusion

As an Italian American ethnic hero, Columbus served multiple purposes to countless Italian Americans in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. However, "countless" is by no means equal to "all." While his commemoration invited greater ethnic unity among Italian Americans, promoted the view of Italian Americans as civilized, and offered significant economic benefits to *prominenti,* some Italian Americans opposed his adoption and commemoration. Some Italian Americans expressed outright ideological opposition to Columbus commemoration, while in other cases, class differences were instrumental in raising disagreements about how to properly honor Columbus in local communities.

CHAPTER TWO: From Racial Promotion to Ancestral Devotion: Columbus's Voyage Through Italian-American History and Italian-American Historical Memory

Describing the nature of the 1899 Columbus Day celebration in Spring Valley, Illinois, William Connell writes, "Compared with the stiff, drilled parades of the 1950s and 60s, and the glitz of today's celebrations of 'Made In Italy,' this was quite different. It is a reminder that parades and celebrations evolve in ways that are more vibrant and interesting than is sometimes supposed."[1] Connell's reminder lies at the heart of this second chapter: commemorations of certain individuals and celebrations of certain holidays can change in a variety of forms over time. And as Connell notes, Columbus Day is no exception.

There are two primary goals of this chapter. The first is to examine how the Italian-American celebration of Columbus and Columbus Day has changed over the course of the last century in Pittsburgh and in western Pennsylvania more broadly. In doing so, the chapter focuses on public celebratory manifestations, such as Columbus Day parades and ceremonies involving Columbus statues. The chapter also includes banquets, conferences, and newspaper articles. These materials combine to demonstrate that the nature, purpose, and goals behind Columbus veneration and Columbus Day celebration have shifted considerably over the last century.

The second major goal is to explain why this evolution unfolded. The chapter argues that the evolution of Italian Americans in the twentieth century was largely responsible for the evolution of Columbus veneration and Columbus Day celebration. More specifically, the chapter highlights the Italian-American shift in American racial and ethnic hierarchies, the rise in the socioeconomic status of Italian Americans, and the proliferation of new

[1] William J. Connell, "Who's Afraid of Columbus?," *Italian Americana* 31, no. 2 (2013): 142.

generations of Italian Americans as key reasons for the changing meanings and expressions of Columbus and Columbus Day.

In contrast to the first chapter, which established that Columbus was never unanimously revered by the millions of Italian Americans who settled in the United States between 1880 and 1920, this second chapter focuses primarily on those Italian Americans who assigned deep meaning to Columbus and Columbus Day as they evolved. This is due in part to the fact that outward ideological opposition to Columbus - and, more generally, Italian-American leftist radicalism - faded in the early twentieth century as a result of pressure and persecution in the United States. Under the sympathetic view of Columbus, then, the chapter demonstrates that Columbus Day celebrations and Columbus commemoration have evolved such that their primary goal is the celebration of Italian-American heritage and ancestry.

The chapter begins in the 1910s, citing letters written by Pittsburgh residents that help to articulate the range of pro-Columbus sentiments at the time. As Italian Americans were aware of their precarious position in the fabric of American life, the sources from this period describe Columbus Day as a moment of immense pride in both Columbus himself and in the sacrifices of Italian immigrants in America. These sources also illustrate that, while Columbus and Columbus Day engendered great Italian-American pride among the authors, they believed that the man and the holiday ought to be respected and honored by all Americans.

Despite their attempts to argue for greater inclusion and advancement in American society, and especially after having demonstrated loyalty and patriotism in World War I, Italian Americans continued to face hardship and discrimination in many cities across the

United States during the 1920s. From restrictive immigration policies to detestation of Columbus and Columbus monuments by the Ku Klux Klan, the evidence highlights the prevalence of nativist and anti-Catholic sentiment. Under such circumstances, however, writers still dubbed Italian Americans the "race of Columbus," and mutual benefit societies named themselves after Columbus.[2]

By the end of World War II, Italian Americans had experienced additional external pressure to assimilate to their American surroundings and shed regional loyalties, largely due to Italy's entry into the war on the side of the Axis powers. However, the process of assimilation and advancement was by no means complete in the years following the conclusion of the war. Pittsburgh's Columbus statue (not erected until 1958) was used as a tool in the promotion of Italian Americans, many of whom believed that such a project would greatly benefit the "race" in Pittsburgh. Likewise, the methods the community chose to celebrate Columbus Day in 1958 show that the parade and accompanying ceremonies provided a major opportunity for Italian Americans in Pittsburgh to publicly display their "worthiness" in the future of America.

By the 1960s and 1970s, a significant shift occurred in the language surrounding Columbus and Columbus Day. Despite continued adoration of Columbus and celebration of Columbus Day, the meaning of honoring Columbus had changed. In one sense, the celebrations became opportunities to express gratitude to their ancestors and celebrate the economic and social progress which Italian Americans had made up to that point in time. Simultaneously, however, concerns persisted over the continued exclusion of Italian

[2] Giovanni E. Schiavo, *The Italians in Chicago, A Study in Americanization* (Chicago: Italian American Publishing Co., 1928), 15. See also: John R. Paciotta, "Application for Membership" (Sons of Columbus of America, Federation of Italian Beneficial Societies, 1989), Joseph D'Andrea Papers and Photographs, Thomas and Katherine Detre Library and Archives, Pittsburgh, PA.

Americans in political circles and in particular job markets. Thus, Columbus and Columbus Day were also opportunities to continue to argue for Italian-American advancement and belonging. On the whole, though, during this period of white ethnic revival Columbus and Columbus Day become noticeably more about celebrating Italian-American heritage than about celebrating Columbus himself or promoting the assimilation of Italians in American society.

Lastly, in the period leading up to - and following - the quincentenary of Columbus's 1492 voyage, the celebrations and rhetoric around Columbus continue to change. Celebrations of Columbus and Columbus Day continued to become an opportunity to celebrate Italian - and Italian-American - heritage rather than to promote tolerance and acceptance of Italian Americans into American society. A primary difference between this period and the preceding one, however, is that the celebration of Columbus and Columbus Day in this period takes place despite increased public ideological opposition to Christopher Columbus. In the nature of parades and the statements of today's community leaders, it is apparent that celebrations of Columbus and Columbus Day have become distinct from those of past decades. Now assimilated into the United States, the Italian Americans who partake in and defend such activities often cite their ancestors before Columbus himself as cause for celebration.

The 1910s

In the 1910s, some Italian Americans in Pittsburgh embraced the idea of Columbus as the Italian-American ethnic hero who gifted the New World to all of its European settlers.

Granted, not every Italian American in Pittsburgh would have shared this opinion at the time. For example, the writers of *Il Proletario* - founded in Pittsburgh in 1896[3] - ridiculed priests for their role in Columbus celebrations, but they rallied behind the cause of Columbus because "the great Genoan belongs to the whole humanity," and because "October 12 is dedicated to navigation science and not to a stingy feeling of patriotism."[4] While voiced in a different manner from mainstream publications at the time, *Il Proletario*'s statement on Columbus Day reflects that Italian Americans of various - though still not all - political orientations supported the celebrations.

Columbus did engender great feelings of patriotism among some of Pittsburgh's Italian Americans, many of whom were likely the sons and daughters of immigrants from Italy or were immigrants themselves. For example, Vincent Coscia, a member of Pittsburgh's Evening High School and member of the "Admirers of Columbus," wrote about Columbus Day:

> [The Italian] would sacrifice himself in many ways to make his country loved by strangers. It is this spirit of patriotism that partly explains why that craving exists in him to remind the Americans of the marvelous achievements of his countryman, Christopher Columbus. We feel that the contributions Columbus has made to humanity have been unsurpassed in the entire history of the world…Such thoughts…stir [many Italians] to a new love for the land which Columbus discovered, the citizens of which gladly unite every year to honor the memory of the dead unforgotten navigator.[5]

[3] Peter Vellon, *A Great Conspiracy Against Our Race: Italian Immigrant Newspapers and the Construction of Whiteness in the Early 20th Century.* Culture, Labor, History Series (New York, NYU Press, 2014), 28.
[4] Bénédicte Deschamps, "Italian-Americans and Columbus Day: A Quest for Consensus Between National and Group Identities (1840-1910)," in *Celebrating Ethnicity and Nation: American Festive Culture from the Revolution to the Twentieth Century* (New York: Berghahn Books, ed.2001), 130.
[5] Vincent Coscia, "Columbus Day," n.d., Joseph D'Andrea Papers and Photographs, Thomas and Katherine Detre Library and Archives, Pittsburgh, PA.

Coscia's remarks are important for understanding both the character of Italian-American attachment to Columbus at the time and the perceived benefit of publicly professing such proud attachment. As Coscia writes, a major reason for Italian-American pride in Columbus was that he was central to the advancement of the world and the human race. Italian Americans came to see similarities between their experiences and his, but they also felt pride and joy in their belief that a man who was "reared, educated in the land of sunshine"[6] contributed so significantly to world progress. Italian Americans touted the achievements of Columbus to counter discrimination against Italian Americans. And by stating that he would "sacrifice himself" in order to "make his country loved by strangers," Coscia implies that there was still work to be done in order for "strangers" (i.e. Americans of other non-Italian origins) to love Italy and accept Italian Americans.

Other individuals, such as Dr. A.E. Abbate, express similar feelings of Italian patriotism in light of Columbus Day celebrations. In Abbate's "Dodici Ottobre" ("October Twelfth"), he writes disappointedly that although thousands of Italians "have given the fruit of their energies" and "make the field of industry wider," they are not properly appreciated.[7] Immediately after this, he writes, "of Christopher Columbus, here, they speak little and poorly. The Columbus Day celebrations should be made precisely for the redemption of the name of Columbus and of the Italian worker. And in the minds and hearts of those who march today, waving two glorious flags, this high feeling of redemption of the Italic name should be alive."[8] While extolling Columbus with the same patriotism for Italy as Coscia, Abbate's writing differs in that he also celebrates Columbus Day as a celebration of both

[6] Ibid.
[7] A.E. Abbate, "Dodici Ottobre [October Twelfth]," translated by Author, n.d., Joseph D'Andrea Papers and Photographs, Thomas and Katherine Detre Library and Archives, Pittsburgh, PA.
[8] Ibid.

Columbus himself and of "the Italian worker" - the miner, workers in the "steel mills that look so much like Dante's Inferno,"[9] and other individuals of low socioeconomic class who receive miserable pay for taxing work. Abbate, like Coscia, demonstrates that Columbus Day celebrations were opportunities to embrace pride in the "Italic name" and in Italy as a nation; in other words, Columbus was a figure around which to revel in *italianità* (rather than in local, regional loyalties) and argue that Italian Americans should receive the respect that they deserve.

A third and final example from this period comes from Alfred M. Danzilli, also a member of the "Admirers of Columbus," who was a member of the class of 1913 at the University of Pittsburgh. In a piece titled "Give Us Justice," Danzilli laments the treatment of Italian Americans in Pittsburgh and other American cities, ridicules the American press for unfairly blaming "Italians" in crime reports instead of giving individual names in headlines, and touts the historical accomplishments in a manner that appears to straddle patriotism and nationalism. He writes,

> . . . [E]very one who is acquainted with the history of Italy, knows that a nation whose subjects have contributed so liberally to the cause of art, science, literature, and music; and whose subjects have been the only ones to keep in the highest ranks of civilization from ancient times to the present day. . . . [W]hen the Italians are depreciated that group of men who have come down through the annals of ancient, medieval, and modern history as some of the greatest men of all times must also suffer. . . . One need only mention the great Galileo . . . the great mathematician Archimede; the fearless navigators [*sic*] and explorer Columbus.[10]

In his defense of Italy and of Italian Americans, Danzilli treats insults against Italian Americans as insults also against the men who, across centuries, have contributed to Western civilization. Not surprisingly, Columbus is mentioned in this vignette of *italianità*

[9] Ibid.
[10] A.M. Danzilli, "Give Us Justice," n.d., Joseph D'Andrea Papers and Photographs, Thomas and Katherine Detre Library and Archives, Pittsburgh, PA.

alongside men like Galileo, Archimede, Michelangelo, Da Vinci, Cicero, Dante, Marconi, and Verdi. Therefore, in Danzilli's view, to look scornfully upon Italian Americans, many of whom had to learn English in the United States and worked hard to improve their position despite most often being limited to performing unskilled labor, was to insult the nation which made such great contributions to the advancement of the world.

Importantly, Danzilli finishes his piece by crediting Italian immigrants for fighting adversity and working hard to reach their goals: "[With] the numerous handicaps and hardships, frequent ill treatment which the Italian must overcome, he is gradually attaining his desired position. The Italian does not ask for pity or undeserved aid, but he welcomes a helping hand…[O]ne can hear his voice crying, 'Give us justice.'"[11] It is unclear what Danzilli would distinguish between a "helping hand" and "undeserved aid," but the distinction is important in Danzilli's advancement of the argument that the descendants of such a noble *stirpe* (Italian for "lineage" or "stock") seek fair treatment more so than handouts. Danzilli subsequently played an important role in the formation of the Sons of Columbus of America, Inc. in Pittsburgh in the mid-1920s.

While diversity of thought on Columbus and Columbus celebration existed among Italian Americans in the 1910s, these documents from the Heinz History Center demonstrate that, for some people, Columbus served as a source of patriotic pride in Italy and of Italian-American dignity. This came at a time when many Italians felt that such uplift was needed, and when similar conversations about cultural nationalism and the creation of italianità were circulating in Italy. According to the mainstream Italian language newspaper *Il Cittadino,* which wrote on Columbus Day in 1916, "[Italian immigrants] find themselves among a

[11] Ibid.

people who do not credit the Italians with the grandeur of their history and their ancestry: who either know not or forget that their being here in America themselves is due to the genius of one of the Italian race."[12] Honoring Columbus served Columbus's admirers in a time when immigrants to America from Italy continued in record numbers despite the perceptions of Italian Americans as racially in-between, morally suspect, and prone to crime. It also played a part in advancing the idea that all immigrants from Italy came from the stock which was responsible for the existence of America.

The 1920s

Italian Americans continued to assert themselves as worthy participants in the future of the United States who deserved fair treatment in the 1920s. Such efforts achieved limited success. In the face of opposition from the Ku Klux Klan and in response to restrictionist immigration legislation, Italian Americans attempted to assert their own civilization and whiteness in America, and they often did this in the name of Columbus.

Many Italian Americans believed that World War I was an opportunity to significantly improve the perception of their community by other groups in the United States. Peter Vellon highlights this development in great detail in *A Great Conspiracy Against Our Race,* offering considerable evidence from Italian-American mainstream newspapers. He cites *Il Cittadino,* which, after reading the New York English newspapers' positive reports on Italy's valor and role in the war, wrote in 1917 that "an altogether

[12] *Il Cittadino*, October 12, 1916, quoted in Vellon, *A Great Conspiracy Against Our Race*, 114.

different opinion and a new sentiment are awakening in this country toward our race."[13] The newspaper also stated that, on the American side of the war, the Italian American participation in the war would "'coin' real Americans faster than any other process."[14] As far as *Il Cittadino* was concerned, the partnership between Italy and the U.S. in the war was a match made in heaven. Italian Americans were given a golden opportunity to prove that they were "good," civilized Americans, and they appeared to have been rewarded for it.

Likely to the dismay of *Il Cittadino,* other Italian American newspapers, and Italian Americans in general, however, challenges continued after World War I. Vellon notes, immigration debates during and after World War I often focused not only on perceived civilization and virtue, but also on perceived whiteness. As Vellon writes,

> In its adaptation to American racial dynamics, the Italian language press frequently expressed empathy and understanding toward the plight of African Americans. [I]ts readers…became educated in the perils of nonwhiteness. Over subsequent decades, the press would begin to distance the Italian immigrant experience from the African American experience and aggressively assert Italian American whiteness. Influenced by calls for immigration restriction and World War I, mainstream newspapers recognized that Americanness was intimately connected to, and often dependent on, whiteness.[15]

In response to "pro-restriction arguments that cited negative impact of immigrants upon American cities, employment, and racial character,"[16] Italian Americans voiced frustration because of their belief that Italian immigration should continue. Writing for *Il Cittadino* in 1916, Alberto Pecorini, the founder and editor of the publication, wrote, "It is the immigrant again, who has given the US its dominating place in the world, and in this last case it has

[13] *Il Cittadino,* May 31, 1917, quoted in Vellon, *A Great Conspiracy Against Our Race*, 115.
[14] Ibid, December 6, 1917, quoted in Vellon, *A Great Conspiracy Against Our Race,* 115.
[15] Vellon, *A Great Conspiracy Against Our Race*, 126.
[16] Ibid, 116.

been the immigrant of that particular class which is called by many people 'undesirable.'"[17] During this time, Italian American publications also attempted to assert whiteness and dissociate from African Americans with a semblance of scientific legitimacy.[18]

Also by the 1920s, Italian-American leftist and radical ideological opposition to Columbus was in decline due in part to the suppression of leftist and radical Italian-American groups during the Red Scare of 1917-1920. Some Italian-American leftists and radical groups had been decidedly anti-Columbus in the first two decades of the twentieth century, but this was less common after the Red Scare, because many radicals and members of radical organizations buried this marker of identity to avoid political persecution. [19] Particularly detrimental and discouraging to Italian radical and leftist groups was the execution of Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti in 1927, who were charged with robbery and murder in 1920 in Massachusetts despite the presentation of "contradictory and inconclusive" evidence at the trial.[20] As part of Vanzetti's final statement to the judge, he said, "I am suffering because I am a radical and indeed I am a radical; I have suffered because I was an Italian, and indeed I am an Italian."[21] Sacco and Vanzetti may not have taken a known stance of Columbus Day like the anarchists cited in chapter 1, but their story and testimony is important because it speaks to the political pressures placed upon groups like anarchists and radicals during this time. Members of these groups who otherwise would have felt more inclined to continue their resistance to the adoption and celebration of

[17] Alberto Pecorini, "The Facts Concerning Immigration in the United States," *Il Cittadino,* July 6, 1916, quoted in Vellon, *A Great Conspiracy Against Our Race,* 117.
[18] Vellon, *A Great Conspiracy Against Our Race*, 116.
[19] Marcella Bencivenni, "Monthly Review | Lost and Found: The Italian-American Radical Experience," *Monthly Review* (blog), January 1, 2006, https://monthlyreview.org/2006/01/01/lost-and-found-the-italian-american-radical-experience/.
[20] Ibid.
[21] "The Sacco-Vanzetti Case (1927)," WWNorton.com, accessed March 20, 2022, https://wwnorton.com/college/history/archive/resources/documents/ch26_04.htm.

Columbus, may have discontinued the practice due to an awareness of the political climate around them. Thus, while some groups took up the cause of erecting Columbus statues and forming beneficial organizations in the name of Columbus in the 1920s and beyond, their achievements took place in a decade where other Italian Americans likely feared the consequences of protesting such actions or could no longer do so in official publications.

While the Red Scare was detrimental to Italian-American radicals in the 1920s, changes in immigration laws adversely impacted Italian Americans as a whole. The 1921 Emergency Quota Act was made permanent and stricter by the Immigration Act of 1924, and after the passage of the 1924 Act, immigration quotas were determined using ratios from the 1890 census (before the migration of millions of Italians and other Southern and Eastern Europeans).[22] This legislative development was a major setback to Italian Americans. Not only did immigration decrease dramatically (from an average of more than 100,000 immigrants per year in the 1910s to fewer than 4,000 per year after 1924)[23], but it was also a win for nativists who opposed significant racial and religious diversity in the United States.

After 1924, tensions developed in Italian-American communities as nativist opponents to Italian Americans took aim at none other than the figure of Christopher Columbus. Perhaps no group demonstrated this opposition more famously than the Ku Klux Klan, who, during the 1920s, "sought to expunge statues and celebrations of the Italian Catholic explorer who sailed under Spain's banner, precisely because he was Italian and Catholic…The Klan newspaper…attacked honoring Columbus - on the basis that a holiday

[22] "Closing the Door on Immigration (U.S. National Park Service)," July 18, 2017, https://www.nps.gov/articles/closing-the-door-on-immigration.htm.
[23] "'The Great Arrival,' from 'Immigration and Relocation in U.S. History,'" web page, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. 20540 USA, accessed December 11, 2021, https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/immigration/italian/the-great-arrival/. See also:
"Who Was Shut Out?: Immigration Quotas, 1925-1927," accessed February 2, 2022, http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/5078.

for him was some sort of papal plot."[24] Such opposition was not confined to the southeastern United States. In the eastern Pennsylvania city of Easton, Klansmen opposed the placement of a Columbus statue in front of an Easton high school. Threatening to take action if the Easton school board failed to retract its April 1929 approval for the building of a Columbus statue, Klan No. 265 wrote the following: ". . . Easton Klan, Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, went on record as opposed to the action of the members of the Easton School Board … and [will] use any honorable method to prevent the placing of a monument or statue of any alien, especially one who never set foot on the soil of this country of ours, and never did anything for the benefit of the country or any public school."[25] The letters from the Klan and other groups, including the Knights of Malta, led to a temporary reversal of the decision in November 1929. However, in August of 1930, City Council eventually agreed to allow Easton's Columbus committee to erect a statue of Columbus in the city's Riverside Park.[26]

In Pittsburgh, the 1920s are an important time in the unfolding of the city and region's relationship to the figure of Columbus. One year after the ratification of the Immigration Act of 1924, three independent organizations in Pittsburgh - the Italian Workmen's Society, the Royal Marine Society, and the Victor Emanuel Society - merged to form what came to be called The Sons of Columbus of America, Federation of Beneficial Societies. As official Sons of Columbus documentation states, "Not only did they adopt the name of the dauntless and determined explorer - Christopher Columbus - but also the ideals

[24] J.P. McCusker and Patrick Korten, "In Attacking Columbus, Antifa Tries to Finish What the Klan Started," The Hill, August 25, 2017, https://thehill.com/blogs/pundits-blog/civil-rights/347955-in-attacking-columbus-antifa-protesters-try-to-finish-what
[25] Will Scheining, "Born amid KKK Backlash, Columbus Statue Endures," The Morning Call, October 12, 2014, https://www.mcall.com/mc-kkk-fought-easton-columbus-statue-20141011-story.html.
[26] Ibid.

and qualities he exerted in his famous quest."[27] The chosen principles for the organization were Concordia, Honesty, and Duty.[28]

The Sons of Columbus are central to the story of Pittsburgh's Columbus commemoration in part because they led the campaign to have a Columbus statue raised in Pittsburgh. Within the context of the 1920s, however, the decision to merge three Italian American organizations into one group under the name of Columbus has great significance. For one, it signifies that Italian Americans were continuing the process of shedding regionalist loyalties in favor of a more nationalistic concept of Italian-American identity. Members were not required to have origins in a particular part of Italy; rather the organization proposed "[t]o enroll in its membership all persons of Italian descent."[29] In effect, rather than looking with scorn upon Sicilians, Neapolitans, or any other particular Italian-American group, all members of the group were regarded literally as "sons of Columbus."[30] The decision is also significant because it occurred one year after the passage of the 1924 Act; after their defeat by nativist sentiments, the three organizations united under one individual who symbolized dignity and civilization to some, and alien foreignness to others.

Columbus could have been abandoned in light of the attacks which nativist groups like the KKK launched against him. However, Italian community groups like those in

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[27] John R. Paciotta, "Application for Membership" (Sons of Columbus of America, Federation of Italian Beneficial Societies, 1989), Joseph D'Andrea Papers and Photographs, Thomas and Katherine Detre Library and Archives, Pittsburgh, PA.
[28] "Constitution and By-Laws, Federation Sons of Columbus of America, Pittsburgh, PA," Joseph D'Andrea Papers and Photographs, Thomas and Katherine Detre Library and Archives, Pittsburgh, PA.
[29] Ibid.
[30] See the introductory section to Giovanni Schiavo's *The Italians in Chicago, a Study in Americanization* titled "The Race of Columbus." The opening lines of the book are "The Italians have very little to apologize for. Ever since the days of Sicily's glorious civilization nearly three thousand years ago, down to our own times, the Italians have been teachers to the world and often masters of its destinies." Schiavo, *The Italians in Chicago*, 15.

Easton and in Pittsburgh continued to fight for and unite around a man whom they viewed as one of their own and as an exemplary figure for their race. Klan opposition is also important in that today's defenders of Columbus and Columbus Day can - and do - use it as one of the primary reasons behind why Italian Americans should continue to celebrate Columbus. Since Columbus and Italian Americans were former targets of the Klan's discrimination and bigotry, this portion of the Italian-American story needs to be remembered in order to learn from the past and honor those who faced discrimination.[31]

1930-1945

The nature of Columbus Day celebrations takes yet another complicated turn with the rise of Benito Mussolini and Italian fascism. While the roots of the first celebrations of Columbus Day in the U.S. have no ties to Italian fascism, Columbus was declared a federal holiday in 1937 in part due to pro-fascist lobbying.[32] Therefore, Columbus and Columbus Day in the years leading up to World War II are worth addressing to more fully understand the evolution of Columbus and Columbus Day in Italian-American history.

Celebrating and revering Columbus evoked a new-found patriotism and double national pride (for both the United States and Italy) among Italian Americans. Through the difficulties of the 1920s, Italian Americans were far from achieving what Danzilli would have called "their desired position." Moving into the 1930s and the hardships of the Great Depression, then, many Italian Americans found another individual through whom they

[31] The Italian American Podcast - IAtv, *NATIONAL ITALIAN AMERICAN SUMMIT MEETING: 355 Italian American Groups in Inaugural Virtual Meeting!*, 2021, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6u4GKQkxzPo.
[32] Laura E. Ruberto and Joseph Sciorra, "Recontextualizing the Ocean Blue," *Process: A blog for American history* (blog), October 4, 2017, http://www.processhistory.org/recontextualizing-the-ocean-blue/.

could push to advance their standing among American ethnic and racial groups: Benito Mussolini.

Mussolini's rise to power in Italy was a cause for pride for many Italian Americans, but to a smaller contingent, the effect was quite the opposite. Stefano Luconi writes: "Benito Mussolini's seizure of power revitalized radicalism in the 'Little Italies' after leftist movements had undergone a decline in the wake of the Red Scare of 1919. Yet the *Duce*'s opponents remained a minority within Italian-American communities until Italy's entry into World War II…"[33] Luconi cites Mussolini's popularity as "a modernizer and a Bolshevik buster," along with Italy's status as a Great Power, as instilling pride in the fatherland: "their ancestral land did not seem a backward country any longer in the eyes of American public opinion."[34] As both Mussolini and Columbus engendered pride for Italy, Italian virtue, and Italian civilization in their own distinct ways, Columbus Day activities of the 1930s contained fascist elements.

Arguably the most important individual in the intermingling of Columbus Day celebrations with pro-Fascist demonstrations was Generoso Pope, the New York City-based businessman and newspaper owner who, according to Laura Ruberto, "used his Italian language daily *Il Progresso Italo-Americano* during the 1920s and 1930s as propaganda for the Italian dictator."[35] Apart from newspaper articles, Pope is reported to have been influential in making Columbus Day parades into something that looked like a mix of both Columbus Day and Mussolini Day: "[Pope] led Columbus Day gatherings at Columbus Circle where audience members made the fascist salute (and anti-fascist Italian Americans

[33] Stefano Luconi, "Forging an Ethnic Identity: The Case of Italian Americans," *Revue Française d'études Américaines*, no. 96 (2003): 94.
[34] Ibid, 94.
[35] Ruberto and Sciorra, "Recontextualizing the Ocean Blue."

protested both vocally and physically).” Another source claims that, after President Franklin Delano Roosevelt declared Columbus Day a federal holiday in 1937, “spectators at the subsequent parade allegedly cheered loudly and raised their hands in the infamous fascist salute when Italy’s fascist anthem, ‘Giovinezza,’ was played.”[36] The *New York Times* reported that the next year’s Columbus Day parade included shouts of “Viva Mussolini” from spectators along the parade route.[37]

As Ruberto demonstrates, there were both committed fascists and anti-fascists in Italian America. Devoted Fascists are on record for having rallied around Columbus during this period, likely because Columbus was a piece of the mythical Italian past that was so crucial to Italian Fascist ideology and, given the decades of Columbus’s “Italian Americanization,” already familiar to many Italian Americans. By celebrating Columbus Day in the fascist era, pro-fascist and pro-Mussolini Italian Americans could follow Mussolini’s blueprint for rousing Columbus Day celebrations. As Mussolini’s Columbus Day parades were opportunities to celebrate the glories of an Italian race which spanned back to ancient Rome,[38] Columbus Day celebrations in the U.S. were used for the similar purpose of “[heralding] the greatness of Italy and the Italian people.”[39] For the average attendees at a Columbus Day celebration who shouted “Viva Mussolini” in the streets, however, it is difficult to assert that all such spectators - many of whom likely faced economic hardships, weren’t formally educated about Mussolini and Fascism beyond what they could gather from newspapers, and were still trying to navigate the complexities of life

[36] Patrick Breen, “The Fascist Roots of Columbus Day,” *CommonWealth Magazine* (blog), June 25, 2020, https://commonwealthmagazine.org/arts-and-culture/the-fascist-roots-of-columbus-day/.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Maria Laurino, “Let’s Reimagine Columbus Day: From the Start, and for Understandable Reasons, the Holiday Has Been Deeply Divisive among Italian Americans,” nydailynews.com, October 12, 2015, https://www.nydailynews.com/opinion/maria-laurino-reimagine-columbus-day-article-1.2392156.

in America - happily incorporated Mussolini into celebrations of Columbus Day purely for his Fascist ideology. Robert Orsi mentions this complexity in his study of the Italian Americans of East Harlem: "This Italian-American-made popular italianità may have contributed to the fondness many in East Harlem felt for Mussolini, not as a Fascist but as a symbol of the forceful presence that they were still groping for in this country at the time."[40]

It is important to remember that, in Italian America, "pro-Mussolini" may not have meant the same thing as "pro-Fascist" to some people. One Anti-Fascist individual's commentary helps to offer an explanation on this matter: "You have got to admit one thing: he enabled four million Italians in America to hold up their heads, and that is something. If you had been branded as undesirable by a quota law you would understand how much that means."[41] As this source importantly notes, Mussolini's rise took place in the wake of immigration restriction. As a group searching for visibility and "forceful presence," the Italian-American attachment to Mussolini - and the intertwining of Columbus with Mussolini - is more complex than a Fascist-versus-anti-Fascist issue.

By World War II, Columbus was again a symbol with a different significance in America. Still, he served as the same ethnic hero and founder of the New World. However, Luconi writes that, in a few short years since the shouts of "Viva Mussolini" in 1938, ". . . ethnic associations such as the Order Sons of Italy in America launched the major drives to encourage the purchase of war bonds within the 'Little Italies' and did it on the occasion of traditional Italian-American ethnic festivities such as Columbus Day that members of the Italian-American communities continued to celebrate."[42] This remarkable shift demonstrates

[40] Robert Anthony Orsi, *The Madonna of 115th Street: Faith and Community in Italian Harlem, 1880-1950* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 168.
[41] Luconi, "Forging an Ethnic Identity," 94.
[42] Ibid, 97-98.

two important takeaways from the wartime period. First, it shows how quickly Italian Americans attempted to distance themselves from Fascist Italy, which had become an enemy of the United States. For fear of persecution or internment in the United States, and in the interest of demonstrating that they were good immigrants and good Americans, most Italian Americans gave up their attachment to Mussolini - which, according to Luconi, "had been sentimental rather than ideological"[43] - in the hopes of achieving what sociologist Joseph S. Roucek calls "a mirage: American victory without Italian defeat."[44] In the Italian-American story, perhaps this is what occurred. Significant portions of Italy were left in shambles by the end of World War II, but after an armistice was reached in September of 1943, Italy fought alongside the Allies.[45] Second, the shift highlights the theme of this chapter: Columbus and Columbus Day are versatile within Italian American history, and this versatility is partially responsible for the fact that the veneration of Columbus among some Italian Americans has endured to the modern day. In a period when Italian Americans faced outside pressure to conceal elements of ethnicity that might "give them away" as potential Italian Fascists - for example, speaking the Italian language[46] - they continued to celebrate Columbus Day and adapted the celebration with the intent to favorably portray Italian Americans as patriotic to their country of residence.

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[43] Ibid, 97.
[44] Joseph S. Roucek, "Italo-Americans and World War II," *Sociology and Social Research* 29 (1945): 468, quoted in Luconi, "Forging an Ethnic Identity," 97.
[45] Charles Irving Bevans, "Treaties and Other International Agreements of the United States of America, 1776-1949," Text, The Avalon Project ([Washington, Dept. of State; for sale by the Supt. of Docs., U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1968-76]), accessed February 2, 2022, https://avalon.law.yale.edu/wwii/italy01.asp.
[46] Nancy C. Carnevale, "'No Italian Spoken for the Duration of the War': Language, Italian-American Identity, and Cultural Pluralism in the World War II Years," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 22, no. 3 (2003): 3–33. See also: Vellon's epilogue. Government posters urge Italian Americans "not to speak the enemy's language - speak American," and signs in windows of ethnic businesses promise "no Italian spoken for duration of war." Vellon, *A Great Conspiracy Against Our Race*, 130.

Emerging into the postwar years, Italian Americans who supported the war effort - either through direct participation in battle, working in wartime industries, or buying war bonds - again presented their case for fuller inclusion and participation in the U.S. *Prominenti* like Generoso Pope had requested that Italians learn English, naturalize, and register to vote for over a decade before the war.[47] By the end of the war, however, many Italian Americans still faced challenges on racial and socioeconomic frontiers. As late as 1942, government documents described Italian resident aliens as "dark" and "swarthy."[48] Italian Americans' socioeconomic progress occurred over the course of decades following the 1944 GI Bill.

1945-1960

In the aftermath of the war, Italian Americans made significant strides toward escaping negative racial perceptions and achieving greater economic success. According to Nancy Foner, Kay Deaux, and Katherine M. Donato, the latter affected the Italian Americans' and Jewish Americans' becoming part of "an all-encompassing white community":

> The economic prosperity and the enormous expansion of higher education in the post-World War II years and the benefits that came with postwar policies, such as the GI Bill of 1944, provided opportunities for education and job mobility…Climbing the social and economic ladder was accompanied by increased intermixing - in neighborhoods, at work, and eventually in marriage - with those whose roots were in different parts of Europe.[49]

[47] Vellon, *A Great Conspiracy Against Our Race*, 129.
[48] Ibid, 130-1.
[49] Nancy Foner, Kay Deaux, and Katharine M. Donato, "Introduction: Immigration and Changing Identities," *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 4, no. 5 (2018): 1–25, https://doi.org/10.7758/rsf.2018.4.5.01.

Among other critical factors in this transformation, according to the authors, were the shared possession of legal whiteness with other groups of European origin and the ability of Italian and Jewish Americans to "pass" as a member of an older, more established European ethnic group if they "shed cultural features such as distinctive dialects or dress."[50] Such "intermixing" was not possible for African Americans - with whom Italian Americans had been more closely associated in the early twentieth century - as interracial marriage was illegal in the United States until 1967.[51]

Of course, this transformation was a process that occurred over the course of many years. The situation did not magically change immediately after 1945, nor after 1950. Robert Orsi makes this apparent in his citation of an Italian-American priest, who, writing in *The American Ecclesiastical Review* in 1953, asked readers for "a 'more intelligent understanding' of Italians. He went on: 'Italians in [the United States] have not perhaps 'arrived' in material affluence and rightful prestige. But their patriotism in two wars and their marked growth in Catholic living is becoming more and more impressive.'"[52] In this view, though Italians had not "made it" yet, they were at least becoming more Catholic and less pagan in their practice of the faith, which was a promising sign. And while significant change did take place in this regard in Italian America during the 1940s and 1950s, one could argue that the lingering quotas of the 1924 Act would have been an ever-present reminder that true change had not yet occurred.

[50] Ibid.
[51] NPR, "June 12 Is Loving Day — When Interracial Marriage Finally Became Legal In The U.S.," *NPR*, June 12, 2021, sec. Race, https://www.npr.org/2021/06/12/1005848169/loving-day-interracial-marriage-legal-origin.
[52] Orsi, *The Madonna of 115th Street*, xv.

The sentiments of more work to be done and of lasting disappointment over immigration quotas seems to have existed within Pittsburgh's Italian-American community, where members pushed for a Columbus statue in the postwar years. Attempts had failed over past decades, but by 1950, the Sons of Columbus and members of western Pennsylvania's general public made a new, significant push for a monument. In a November 24, 1950 piece from the Pittsburgh-based Italian-language newspaper *L'Unione* titled "Pittsburgh Deve Erigere Il Monumento A Colombo" ("Pittsburgh Must Erect The Monument To Columbus"), "Signore Russo" wrote, "I plan to repeat this title over and over again, until someone wakes up to meet the needs of this community. Pittsburgh must have the Columbus monument and if the leaders don't move, the mass will take their place."[53] The article received positive responses from across the region, including one from Paul Manese of Washington, PA. As Manese wrote, "[Columbus's] appeal is one of great admiration, and should be admired not only by Italian-Americans and by the children of our origin, but by everyone, as Columbus gave the new world to the world…It is our duty to put ourselves at the forefront if we want to see the Columbus Monument erected in the Pittsburgh Metropolis."[54] Some members of the community clearly felt that a monument to Columbus was long overdue, and they were willing to take matters into their own hands if Italian-American community leaders failed.

On the exact same day (November 24, 1950), an official newspaper of the Sons of Columbus also published an article on the need for a Columbus monument. Unlike Manese and Russo, however, the Sons of Columbus article appeals much more directly to the glories

[53] Russo, "Pittsburgh Deve Erigere Il Monumento A Colombo [Pittsburgh Must Erect The Monument To Columbus]," translated by Author, *L'Unione*, November 24, 1950, Joseph D'Andrea Papers and Photographs, Thomas and Katherine Detre Library and Archives, Pittsburgh, PA.
[54] Ibid.

of the Italian "race" and the message which a monument could send to the rest of the community and country. They wrote, "Many times we are made to ask when the monument to Christopher Columbus, the brightest and most striking glory of our lineage, will become a fait accompli…when conditions of time and place will allow it, the work will begin, which was the dream of our pioneers and which still forms today our most fervent and heartfelt aspiration."[55] To the Sons of Columbus, the project was certainly meaningful to the Italian-Americans of Pittsburgh in that it gave them a permanent symbol of pride. At the same time, however, the project was also viewed as crucial because it was a chance for Italian Americans to place themselves on par with other ethnic groups in the city. The article continues:

> Other nations, whose emigrants have lived here for many years…have been able to immortalize in bronze and marble the great ones of their land…Well, the Italians of America…are no less than other ethnic groups. They form a compact and tight mass of ordered and disciplined people, who have always and wherever given a wonderful and praiseworthy example of awareness, maturity and attachment to the laws and institutions of this great Starry Republic…The day is not far off…when the shining and immortal glory of Columbus will be able to shine with radiant and uncontaminated light, through the incorruptible and eternal memory of marble and bronze.[56]

Intriguing in this particular passage from the Sons of Columbus is the permanence and incorruptibility attributed to the statue of Columbus. With modern knowledge of the recent fate of Columbus statues across America, the irony behind the 1950 mention of "immortal glory" and "uncontaminated light" is especially evident.

[55] "A Proposito del Monumento a Colombo [About the Columbus Monument]," translated by Author, n.p., November 24, 1950, Joseph D'Andrea Papers and Photographs, Thomas and Katherine Detre Library and Archives, Pittsburgh, PA.
[56] Ibid.

In the eyes of the Sons of Columbus and their supporters, the statue was meant to offer a lasting testament to the supposed genius of Columbus and to the honor of Italian Americans in Pittsburgh. As the article later indicates, however, the leaders of the project were aware of the deep political significance that they could assign to the statue. The immigration quotas established in the 1920s had not yet been abolished, and to the Sons of Columbus, a statue to Columbus was a sign of protest:

> [The Columbus monument will] remind posterity that the discovery of the great and rich American continent is the glory and the main merit of the Italian race. And perhaps it will also serve to remind the rigid and inflexible legislator, who forms and writes the laws of the nation, that this land should be considered as a colony of Italy, where her children should enter freely - without emigration restrictions, at times exorbitant and drastic.[57]

Whereas New York's Columbus monument of 1892 held a symbolic significance following the New Orleans lynching of 1891, the Columbus monument of Pittsburgh was intended to influence twentieth-century immigration policy. The realities surrounding the Italian American experience were considerably different in these two situations, but both times, the monuments' supporters champion their causes in light of experiences of discrimination.

Less than one year later, in February of 1951, *The Sentinel Press* repeated much of what they and *L'Unione* offered in their writings on Columbus, while reiterating the argument that to honor Columbus was an endeavor which ought to be shared by all Americans. Concerning the project, they wrote, "Of course, this enterprise takes on a universal character and everyone without distinction, even outside our organization, is strongly encouraged to contribute. Because Columbus is not only the glory, honor and pride of our Federation, but of the entire Italian-American mass and of those who live in this great

[57] Ibid.

and rich Republic."[58] While the project was meant to be a cause for promoting "il nostro sentimento di immutato orgoglio di razza"[59] ("our sentiment of unmuted racial pride"), it was a project with significance for the Italian-American community and for Americans at large.

By 1952, the plan was for the Columbus statue to be placed at Pittsburgh's Gateway Center, site of the confluence of the city's three rivers. As Alfred M. Danzilli, the president of the Columbus Monument Committee for the Sons of Columbus, stated, "if we can build it in the Downtown, it will become a new and popular meeting place. People will say, 'Meet me at Columbus' statue.'"[60] Given the mention of racial pride in the documents from 1950 and 1951, a statue at this prominent location in Pittsburgh would have served a significant role in that such a visible public monument and meeting place would be a symbol of Italian-American permanence and belonging. The article also reports, importantly, that "The Sons of Columbus, which started the project over a year ago, have pledged $50,000 to build the memorial. The balance, estimated at $100,000, will be raised by public subscription."[61] Later reports indicate that the total cost of the project was $100,000,[62] but still, a significant proportion of funds for the project came from individuals and organizations. Some of these donors were affiliated with the Sons of Columbus, while some were not.

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[58] "Il Monumento a Colombo sta per divenire una realta [The Monument to Columbus is about to become a reality]," translated by Author, *The Sentinel Press*, February 23, 1951, Joseph D'Andrea Papers and Photographs, Thomas and Katherine Detre Library and Archives, Pittsburgh, PA.
[59] Ibid.
[60] "Columbus Statue Planned at Gateway," *Pittsburgh Sun-Telegraph*, December 18, 1952, Joseph D'Andrea Papers and Photographs, Thomas and Katherine Detre Library and Archives, Pittsburgh, PA.
[61] Ibid.
[62] "Columbus Statue Unveiled: 2,000 Honor 'Discoverer' in Schenley Park," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, October 13, 1958, Joseph D'Andrea Papers and Photographs, Thomas and Katherine Detre Library and Archives, Pittsburgh, PA.

Following negotiations with city officials, the Columbus statue was placed in Pittsburgh's Schenley Park - located about four miles from Gateway Center near Pittsburgh's Oakland neighborhood - and unveiled on Columbus Day in 1958. Prior to the ceremonies, however, individuals still expressed their concerns about the benefit of the project. Little is known about Charles Dugan, but he wrote to the *Pittsburgh Sun-Telegraph* in July of 1958, sharing the following remarks:

> I sincerely hope Americans of Italian descent here in Pittsburgh and beyond will not take offense when I say that the erection of a 30-foot statue to Columbus in Schenley Park next October seems to me the height of extravagance and poor taste…It seems senseless to invest…in so cold and heartless a thing as stone or marble. Why not invest in humans, flesh and blood, heart and soul? Ole Chris has his place in history. He's firmly established.[63]

Though Dugan may or may not be of Italian descent, but his remarks resound with those cited by Professor Lina Insana in the first chapter of the thesis. Without opposing Columbus himself, Dugan questioned why thousands of dollars were going toward a statue instead of other community initiatives. His comments were ridiculed within one week in a letter to the editor in *The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* from native Pittsburgher and then-Columbus, Ohio resident Oresto J. Parco. Parco accused Dugan of "hitting below the belt," citing other welfare agencies, and wrote the following on the importance of raising the statue:

> The Columbus Fund comes from individuals in large and small sums…as a symbol of respect to the memory of a man who has earned a revered niche in the hearts of his progenitors, including you, you and you! I…foresee the day when our rightful place will be justly realized officially in political family circles throughout Pennsylvania. The unified efforts of Italo-Americans in Pittsburgh to erect a Columbus statue is a significant (even though belated) step in that direction.[64]

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[63] Charles Dugan, "Columbus Monument Wasteful," *Pittsburgh Sun-Telegraph*, July 28, 1958, sec. Mail Box, Joseph D'Andrea Papers and Photographs, Thomas and Katherine Detre Library and Archives, Pittsburgh, PA.
[64] Oresto J. Parco, "Columbus Statue Fund Defended," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, July 29, 1958, sec. Letters to the Editor, Joseph D'Andrea Papers and Photographs, Thomas and Katherine Detre Library and Archives, Pittsburgh, PA.

Parco's testimony defended the Columbus monument as a public project which had garnered community support, and he asserted that it was a meaningful step toward greater representation of Italian Americans in Pennsylvania's political arenas. For a then-Ohio resident to have shared such thoughts in response to Dugan, clearly those who supported the project knew it was more than just a work of art.

Pittsburgh's Columbus statue was finally dedicated in 1958, with the unveiling ceremony occupying only a part of the festivities. The Sons of Columbus held their twelfth national convention in the days leading up to the ceremony. Guests included "Manlio Brosio, Italian Ambassador to the United States, Rocco Sicilano, special assistant to President Eisenhower, [and] Judge Michael A. Musmanno, honorary chairman of the monument committee."[65] On Sunday, October 12th, 1958, a "solemn high mass" at St. Paul's Cathedral in Pittsburgh and a "parade through Oakland to the …30-foot bronze and granite monument" preceded the ceremonies.[66]

A few photos from the 1958 ceremonies in Pittsburgh are included here to show that the ceremonies and festivities closely resemble the "stiff" and "drilled" Columbus Day celebrations of the 1950s and 1960s about which Connell writes. In the first photo, the solemn mass has ended, and the parade is about to commence. Accompanied by the Color Corps of the Knights of Columbus, those exiting the church are either in military uniform or in formal dress.

[65] "Sons of Columbus to Unveil $100,000 Monument at Park," *Pittsburgh Sun-Telegraph*, October 11, 1958, Joseph D'Andrea Papers and Photographs, Thomas and Katherine Detre Library and Archives, Pittsburgh, PA.
[66] Ibid.

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Figure 2: Photograph from Columbus Day observances at St. Paul's Cathedral in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, 1958.

In the following photo, the parade route makes its way through the Oakland neighborhood of Pittsburgh to the site of the Columbus statue. Military members, formal bands, and members of the Knights of Columbus give the parade a sophisticated air.

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[67] Photograph of 1958 Columbus Day ceremonies outside of St. Paul's Cathedral in Pittsburgh, October 12, 1958, Joseph D'Andrea Papers and Photographs, Thomas and Katherine Detre Library and Archives, Pittsburgh, PA.
[68] Photograph of the Columbus Day parade from St. Paul's Cathedral to the Columbus statue, October 12, 1958, Joseph D'Andrea Papers and Photographs, Thomas and Katherine Detre Library and Archives, Pittsburgh, PA.

Figure 3: Photograph taken along the Columbus Day parade route in Pittsburgh, 1958.

The final photo was taken at the site of the Columbus monument, where "Miss Columbia," Toni Trimarchi, was given the responsibility of unveiling the statue. Elegance and formality appear paramount.

[69]

Figure 4: Photograph of "Miss Columbia" with two women at the base of Pittsburgh's Columbus statue, 1958.

At the unveiling ceremony itself, the aforementioned convention attendees were joined by Monsignor Renato Luisi, "Chamberlain of His Holiness, the late Pope Pius XII," Mayor David L. Lawrence, and a crowd of about two thousand more people.[70] Monsignor Luisi read an invocation of blessings on the Sons of Columbus and "all the people of the Western continent,"[71] there was a 21-gun salute followed by a "rocket which shot skyward

[69] Photograph of "Miss Columbia," Toni Trimarchi, and two other women at the foot of Pittsburgh's Columbus statue, October 12, 1958, Joseph D'Andrea Papers and Photographs, Thomas and Katherine Detre Library and Archives, Pittsburgh, PA.
[70] "Columbus Statue Unveiled: 2,000 Honor 'Discoverer' in Schenley Park," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, October 13, 1958, Joseph D'Andrea Papers and Photographs, Thomas and Katherine Detre Library and Archives, Pittsburgh, PA.
[71] "Columbus' Statue Is Dedicated Here," *Pittsburgh Sun-Telegraph*, October 13, 1958, Joseph D'Andrea Papers and Photographs, Thomas and Katherine Detre Library and Archives, Pittsburgh, PA.

and released American and Italian flags in mid-air,"[72] and Judge Musmanno said, "'[Columbus] taught man that, no matter what be the opposition or antagonism, if his cause is just, he will still achieve the port of his ambition provided his aspirations ride the caravels of faith, honesty and perseverance.'"[73] Additionally, Musmanno "took sand taken from San Salvador, earth sent from Genoa and earth from Schenley Park and mixed them, saying: 'I shall intermingle these soils so that here at the Gateway to the West we shall have a physical as well as spiritual union of the old and new world.'"[74] In the name of asserting visibility and advancing their goal of being seen as a "desirable" immigrant group, the 1958 Columbus Day festivities were a momentous public display. The notable attendees, their speeches and actions, the dress of the participants, and the form of the parade all point to the occasion being regarded as a watershed moment for Pittsburgh's Italian Americans.

1960-1980

Into the early 1960s, Columbus Day parades continued to serve as opportunities for Italian Americans to publicly celebrate their hero and present themselves in a manner that was favorable and agreeable to the American groups of "older stock." This is evident in Pittsburgh, where much of the same elements from the 1958 parade remained through the first half of the 1960s. The following photos from the 1964 and 1965 parades suggest that, as in 1958, sophisticated dress, orderly and dignified conduct, and regimented ceremonies characterized the celebrations.

[72] Ibid.
[73] Ibid.
[74] Ibid.

[75]

Figure 5: Photograph taken along the Columbus Day parade route in Pittsburgh, 1964.

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Figure 6: Photograph taken from the base of Pittsburgh's Columbus statue, 1964.

[75] Photograph of a 1964 Columbus Day parade, October 11, 1964, Joseph D'Andrea Papers and Photographs, Thomas and Katherine Detre Library and Archives, Pittsburgh, PA.
[76] Photograph of Charles G. Notari, Esq., National President of the Sons of Columbus of America, with "Miss Columbia" at the base of the Columbus statue, October 11, 1964, Joseph D'Andrea Papers and Photographs, Thomas and Katherine Detre Library and Archives, Pittsburgh, PA.

[77]

Figure 7: Photograph taken along the Columbus Day parade route in Pittsburgh, 1965.

In addition to these parades, Italian American discourses on Columbus frequently factored into debates on immigration policy which took place during these years. Danielle Battisti's scholarship provides a vivid example from the OSIA's (Order Sons of Italy in America) John Ottaviano, Jr., who "testified before a House Subcommittee on Immigration and Nationality in May 1965 [that] 'Every ship that comes to America got its chart from Columbus.'"[78] Precedent had been established for Ottaviano's comments years before his testimony. George Spatuzza, also a member of the OSIA, asked in his 1954 Columbus Day speech, "Who would deny the right of those of you of Italian heritage to take your place with the descendants of the Mayflower voyagers?"[79] "Similarly, in his 1955 Columbus Day speech, Spatuzza argued that "there would have been 'no Boston Tea party - no Lexington -

[77] Photograph from Pittsburgh's Columbus Day festivities, October 1965, Joseph D'Andrea Papers and Photographs, Thomas and Katherine Detre Library and Archives, Pittsburgh, PA.
[78] John Ottaviano Jr., "Order's Statement on Immigration," *OSIA News,* July 1965, quoted in Danielle Battisti, *Whom We Shall Welcome: Italian Americans and Immigration Reform, 1945-1965*, First edition, Critical Studies in Italian America (New York: Fordham University Press, 2019), 231.
[79] George Spatuzza, "1954 Columbus Day Speech," box 13, folder 5, Spatuzza Collection, quoted in Battisti, *Whom We Shall Welcome,* 231.

no Concord - no Bunker Hill - no Declaration of Independence…- no United States without Columbus….[M]an's freedom would still be unknown…and the world would still be today…in the hands of ruthless rulers.'"[80] In this era of immigration discourse, pro-Columbus Italian American activists cited Columbus as the progenitor to America's foundation and democratic tradition. In addition, they used such opportunities to emphasize the "positive characteristics possessed by all Italian immigrants"[81] - something perhaps more difficult to argue to lawmakers during the years of the Black Hand and the near-pagan *feste* - to advance immigration reform that was more welcoming to Italian immigrants.

Battisti makes the important point that such arguments were often presented with a focus that was narrowly Italian-American. Many other immigrant groups were negatively impacted by the immigration policies of the 1920s but appeals to Columbus were never used to argue for the inclusion of other groups. As she writes, "Americans did not use Columbus Day to advance appeals for universal immigrant equality, nor did they argue against antiquated arguments that posited certain immigrant groups displayed particular natural or learned traits. They merely asserted Italian access to the pantheon of 'desirable' immigrant groups."[82] While Italian Americans were aware of the similar difficulties which faced other groups - and the discriminatory policies of segregation which faced African Americans - they cited Columbus as a reason for the advancement of Italian Americans.

Perhaps it is unreasonable for one to have expected Columbus and Columbus Day to be used in a more all-encompassing manner, given their meaning to Italian Americans in the decades preceding the 1960s. However, this Italian-American approach to Columbus reflects

[80] George Spatuzza, "1950, 1952, 1954, 1955 Columbus Day Speeches," box 13, folder 5, Spatuzza Collection, quoted in Battisti, *Whom We Shall Welcome,* 231.
[81] Battisti, *Whom We Shall Welcome*, 231.
[82] Ibid, 232.

the tactic which some Italian Americans took to the issue of immigration and discrimination more broadly. This narrowness did not go unnoticed within the Italian-American community at the time. Some individuals, such as activist Rena Trevor, expressed their frustrations. For example, in 1963, Trevor wrote her editorial "The Negro Has Rights Too" in Chicago's *Fra Noi* (an Italian American Catholic monthly). Regarding the stance of the Italian-American community in Chicago on the Civil Rights Movement, she wrote that "it would seem illogical that any Italian Americans, who have known the humiliation of being discriminated against [sic] would practice this same discrimination against any other group of human beings. Yet this paradox exists."[83] Vellon argues that Italian-American separation from the African-American experience began decades before the 1960s, and Trevor brings to light the fact that the effects of such separation continued through the Civil Rights Movement.

The Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965 represents another significant turning point in Italian-American history and in the broader history of the United States. Though some questioned the true impact that the new law would have, the quota system of the 1920s was replaced, and it "provided for preferences to be made according to categories, such as relatives of U.S. citizens or permanent residents, those with skills deemed useful to the United States or refugees of violence or unrest."[84] To those like Ottaviano and Spatuzza, who espoused Columbus in their discourses on immigration reform, Columbus had been instrumental in achieving another victory for Italian Americans.

By the latter half of the decade, new realities challenged Italian Americans and their ways of life. Now however, such challenges were not related to lynching, questionable racial

[83] Rena Trevor, "The Negro Has Rights Too," *Fra Noi*, Chicago, October 1963, quoted in Battisti, *Whom We Shall Welcome,* 202.
[84] History.com Editors, "U.S. Immigration Since 1965," HISTORY, accessed February 3, 2022, https://www.history.com/topics/immigration/us-immigration-since-1965.

status, perceived desirability, or immigration restriction. Rather, these new challenges came from the fact that with the passage of decades, the birth of new generations, increased intermarriage with other ethnic and racial groups, and pressures to Americanize had all recast Italian Americans as a group that had begun to enter more fully into the collective of white Americans. These changes were evident to both outside observers and to members of the Italian-American community.

In his study of the Italian Americans in Boston's West End in the early 1960s, German-born Jewish sociologist Herbert Gans asserted that the community's second-generation residents were not "Italians" like their parents; rather, they were a distinct group that had been notably influenced by having been born and raised in the United States. As he wrote in *The Urban Villagers,*

> Generally speaking, the Italian and Sicilian cultures that the immigrants brought with them to 'America' have not been maintained by the second generation. Their over-all culture is that of Americans. A number of Italian patterns, however, have survived, the most visible ones being food habits…Even so, the food is milder and less spicy than that eaten by their parents…The durability of the ethnic tradition with respect to food is probably due to the close connection of food with family and group life.[85]

An awareness of this change in lifestyle and lived reality also existed among Italian Americans in western Pennsylvania. Alvin D. Copazzi, Esq., the "principal speaker at the Westmoreland County Council's Third Annual Banquet" and member of Sons of Columbus Council No. 27,[86] gave the following remarks in his speech:

> Doctors, lawyers; builders and business leaders; entertainers and political leaders, and we would be hard put today to find any facet of American life in which the American of Italian origin does not have a proud place. But, the past is prologue, and the past is gone. We live in 1967. The Italian-American no longer lives in a ghetto. His endeavors are no longer restricted to the most menial of jobs. His children

[85] Herbert J. Gans, *The Urban Villagers: Group and Class in the Life of Italian-Americans*, Updated and expanded ed (New York: London: Free Press ; Collier Macmillan Publishers, 1982), 33.
[86] Alvin D. Copazzi, "Common Interest Should Keep Us All Together," *The Columbus Sentinel*, June 30, 1967, Joseph D'Andrea Papers and Photographs, Thomas and Katherine Detre Library and Archives, Pittsburgh, PA.

> intermarry with second and third and fourth generation children of other immigrants from other countries. He no longer finds the need of the Sons of Columbus halls as a social center…And so, the reasons which were valid 30 and 40 and 50 and 60 years ago, are no longer valid…Today, the Italian-American is thoroughly assimilated into the community…Given another 20 years, without an affirmative effort on our part, the great traditions - not of Italy - but of the Italian-American will disappear.[87]

Both Gans and Copazzi recognized that, by the 1960s, "Italian-American" and "Italian" were not synonymous. It was difficult for Copazzi to accept that Italian-American practices and traditions appeared to be disappearing by the 1960s, but he nonetheless acknowledged that great change and great social advancement had taken place by that point in time.

Some scholars credit the Civil Rights Movement as a crucial factor in the increased interest in preserving culture and heritage. As Matthew Frye Jacobson writes, the "white ethnic revival" of the 1960s and 1970s stems in part from the fact that ". . . the Civil Rights Movement heightened whites' consciousness of their skin privilege, rendering it both visible and newly uncomfortable. . . . After decades of striving to conform to the Anglo-Saxon standard, descendants of earlier European immigrants quit the melting pot. Italianness, Jewishness, or Greekness were now badges of pride, not shame."[88] While there is much truth to Jacobson's assertion, the pride-shame distinction appears to be a misstatement; past sections of this chapter have shown that "racial pride" was at the heart of the push for a Columbus statue in the 1950s, and the "shame" of being Italian seems to have been imposed from outside of the ethnic community, not within it. However, Jacobson acknowledges another important factor in the white ethnic revival: a "powerful current of antimodernism, a common notion that ethnicity represented a haven of 'authenticity,' removed from the bloodless, homogenizing forces of mass production and consumption, mass media,

[87] Ibid.
[88] Matthew Frye Jacobson, "The White Ethnic Revival," History News Network - Columbian College of Arts & Sciences, accessed February 3, 2022, https://historynewsnetwork.org/article/23824.

commodification, bureaucracy, and suburbanization."[89] Thus, white ethnic revival is presented as both a response to the transformations which the Civil Rights Movement brought about and the product of a newfound desire for uniqueness and authenticity through celebrating ethnicity and honoring the lives of past relatives.

Circling back to Copazzi's 1967 remarks, then, his conclusions on the trend are characteristic of the sentiments of white ethnic revival. After lamenting the disappearance of Sunday dinners, the family unit, and the celebration of Saint's days in his Italian-American community, he writes, "The color and the joy that was found in the Italian–American home and community is fast disappearing. This then is our first great task - to perpetuate and pass on the great traditions in which we were raised."[90] After this first task, the second is to "grow great and strong in order that we may as a group offer help to each other in every facet of American life,"[91] and the final task is to "continue to honor not only the man for whom our order is named, but the men and women just as great who left their homes, their farms, their shops, at a time when the trip was something more than a five hour air flight, and with immense courage, crossed the sea and came to America."[92] It is difficult to know whether Copazzi's ordering of goals was the shared belief of the sons of Columbus, but his suggestions are fascinating for three reasons. First, he places the importance of carrying on ancestors' traditions two steps above that of honoring the organization's namesake. Second, even when he does mention honoring Columbus, he does not give Columbus his own space. Rather, he is mentioned right alongside the immigrants to the country who are "just as great" as he is. Third, and most speculatively, he speaks of the loss of "color and joy" from the

[89] Ibid.
[90] Copazzi, "Common Interest Should Keep Us All Together."
[91] Ibid.
[92] Ibid.

community during an era where the formality of Columbus Day processions suppressed the color and joy which Italian Americans often demonstrated at the *feste* and at other Italian-American celebrations. Given how Columbus-centric the honoring of the man and the holiday were leading up to the erection of Pittsburgh's statue to him in 1958 and given the momentousness of the occasion at the time, the shift in the language of the Sons of Columbus a decade later is remarkable.

By the 1970s, the change in how community leaders spoke to the significance of Columbus and Columbus Day reflected the changing realities of Italian-American life. At Pittsburgh's 1973 celebration of Columbus Day, John Paciotta, National Vice President of the Sons of Columbus, gave the following remarks at the Columbus monument:

> As Italians, we have so much to be proud of. Christopher Columbus gave us this opportunity to work and live in this great country of ours. If we think back just a little bit, we can remember that our forefathers who came to this country, did not know how to read or write in English. Think what a hardship that was! They had to take a backseat. At least today, our children get the opportunity to go to college. Today, also, we see some very important people that are Italian, in high offices. I, as an Italian, am proud to be one.[93]

"Racial" pride has turned ethnic pride by the time of Paciotta's speech, demonstrating how conceptions of race and color have shifted over time in America. Additionally, the remarks clarify that, at this time, while celebrations of Columbus Day do still honor Columbus by name and practice, they also took place with the intent of honoring the example of ancestors and the progress which Italian Americans were able to make.

With the acknowledgement of socioeconomic progress and assimilation, however, there were also those who appear to have believed that Italians faced discrimination well after the Civil Rights Movement. For example, *The Columbus Press* reported that, at the

[93] "Triple Tribute Columbus Day Celebration Grand Success," *The Columbus Press*, October 15, 1973, Joseph D'Andrea Papers and Photographs, Thomas and Katherine Detre Library and Archives, Pittsburgh, PA.

Sons of Columbus's 1976 banquet, the principal speaker, S. Louis Farino, Common Pleas Court Judge, ". . . reiterated his belief that Italo-Americans must be included in the future of America, as it was in its past. His honor again made reference to the fact that Americans of Italian Ancestry were being selectfully [sic] excluded from High Government and Judicial posts, and that this attitude must change."[94] Farino then urged all guests to "work to the goal of having more participation in all future endeavors."[95] Evidently, while some believed that Italian Americans were well assimilated and beyond the days of discrimination, others still cited selective exclusion from judicial and political opportunities. The article does not provide evidence to support Farino's claim, but it is nonetheless intriguing to read the article's summary of his remarks: they imply that Italian Americans faced barriers from being excluded from America's future in the mid 1970s. While it is difficult to determine exactly what the article is referring to here, the language is significant in its assertion that work needed to be done in order to ensure that an ethnic group that had once been included in America's "past" - a loaded clause in itself - was included in its future. As with past grievances, Columbus and Columbus Day were again the focal point around which to make such claims.

1980-1992

The 1980s show a furthering of interest in promoting and celebrating Italian-American culture in western Pennsylvania, as well as the transformation of Columbus Day

[94] "Columbus Day - Sons Of Columbus Style!," *The Columbus Press*, October 28, 1976, Joseph D'Andrea Papers and Photographs, Thomas and Katherine Detre Library and Archives, Pittsburgh, PA.
[95] Ibid.

parades and festivities in light of the transformation of Italian Americans. 1982 marks the founding of The Italian Cultural Heritage Society of Western Pennsylvania, whose president, Joseph D'Andrea, was the Vice Consul for the former Italian Consulate in Pittsburgh. Interestingly, both vice presidents and the society's historian were all medical doctors, suggesting an interest in promoting heritage and culture across various occupations and socioeconomic classes. The nonprofit association was established "for the preservation and promotion of Italian Culture and Heritage…to encourage the study and the understanding of the various aspects of Italian and Italian-American cultures, to promote the Heritage of Italian-Americans and Americans of Italian Descent."[96] This organization distinguished Italian culture from Italian-American culture - thus acknowledging a distancing from the customs and traditions of ancestors - and it demonstrates that community members had a continued interest in uncovering, promoting, and studying Italian-American culture in a way that went beyond the annual celebration of Columbus Day.

As for Columbus Day itself and the ceremonies surrounding it, these offer support to Connell's description of modern Columbus Day parades as "Made in Italy" celebrations. This is not to say that there was no longer any formality or sophistication with which to associate Columbus Day celebrations, but by the 1989 parade, there are certainly signs that the tone and atmosphere around the event had changed. For example, in the following two pictures, notice that while the two women in the top embody pageantry and elegance similar to the winners of "Miss Columbia" in the 1950s and 1960s (these sashes may say "Queen of

[96] The Italian Cultural Heritage Society of Western Pennsylvania, "Inaugural Dinner Program," October 31, 1982, Joseph D'Andrea Papers and Photographs, Thomas and Katherine Detre Library and Archives, Pittsburgh, PA.

Columbus" or "Queen of Italy"), the bottom photo shows an entire flatbed converted into a float for advertising DeLallo Fine Italian Foods. While business advertisements occurred in the parades of past decades,[97] there are no records of such extravagant displays dedicated solely to promoting an ethnic food company.

[98]

Figure 8: Photographs taken from a Columbus Day parade in Pittsburgh, 1989.

In the following photos, the dress of the parades' participants and attendees has also changed considerably. Fashions change over time, but in these photos, it appears that celebrating Italianness and Italian Americanness (notice also that red, white, and green decorations combine with red, white, and blue ones) drive the festivities rather than past decades' focus on asserting worthiness in American society or pushing for immigration reform.

[97] Photograph of a convertible carrying "Miss Columbia" and advertising for Crivelli Chevrolet on its door, [1964?], Joseph D'Andrea Papers and Photographs, Thomas and Katherine Detre Library and Archives, Pittsburgh, PA.
[98] [Top] Photograph of two women along the Columbus Day parade route, [Bottom] Photograph of a Columbus Day parade float for DeLallo Fine Italian Foods, October 1989, Joseph D'Andrea Papers and Photographs, Thomas and Katherine Detre Library and Archives, Pittsburgh, PA.

 [99]

Figure 9: Photograph of participants in front of a Columbus Day parade float, 1989.

 [100]

Figure 10: Photograph of participants in a Columbus Day parade in Pittsburgh, 1989.

As the manner in which Pittsburgh's Italian Americans conducted Columbus Day changed between 1958 and 1989, so did the manner in which they talked and wrote about Columbus Day. A letter printed by the Italian Vice Consul in Pittsburgh in October 1990 describes anticipation for the 500th anniversary of Columbus's "discovery of this continent,"[101] but does so with a warning:

> Yes, we can be romantic and live with nostalgia, but the story of those in American and Western Pennsylvania ought to be told. The achievements and contributions of

[99] Photograph of attendees and participants in front of a Columbus Day parade float, October 1989, Joseph D'Andrea Papers and Photographs, Thomas and Katherine Detre Library and Archives, Pittsburgh, PA.
[100] Photograph of participants wearing Italian-themed hats on a Columbus Day parade float, October 1989, Joseph D'Andrea Papers and Photographs, Thomas and Katherine Detre Library and Archives, Pittsburgh, PA.
[101] Vice Consulate of Italy, "Columbus Day Plans, 1990," October 1990, Joseph D'Andrea Papers and Photographs, Thomas and Katherine Detre Library and Archives, Pittsburgh, PA.

> Italians since mid 1800 in W, PA has not been told. Yes, we have documents of 'notabili', scattered writings in some libraries, but …[w]e need to celebrate the spirit of the 'humble people' who made with their labour this City and vicinity…We owe to ourselves to tell for posterity, in a meaningful way, what it meant to be Italian in the late 1800, early 1900 till the 50's…Should we remember the spirit of italianita only with banquets may the gods forgive bacchus and its spirits.[102]

In this document, the writer asks community members to participate in coordinating such activities "in the spirit of the Great Voyager," but this is the only true reference to Columbus in this source. There were certainly other plans made for Columbus Day in 1992, and it is not clear whether the letter was ever sent out, as there is no signature, and it contains several grammatical errors. However, this source is significant in that it places great emphasis on using the 500th anniversary as an opportunity to more fully tell the story of the contributions of the "humble people" who, in some cases, came to Pittsburgh more than a century ago. Where Columbus Day was once used to immortalize the glory of the "great genius" of the Italian race and promote Italian Americans as refined, in 1992 it was used to encourage people to tell the story of the contributions of their humble, working-class ancestors.

1992-2022

According to Jacobson, "[t]he quincentenary of the Columbus voyage in 1992 loosed the passions all around."[103] Passionate opposition to the celebration of Columbus Day existed within and outside of the Italian-American community well before 1992,[104] but the Italian Americans who held onto and celebrated Columbus Day in 1992 did so with passion

[102] Ibid.
[103] Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Roots Too: White Ethnic Revival in Post-Civil Rights America* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2006), 338.
[104] Ibid.; recall also the Italian-American opposition groups of chapter 1.

of their own. As Jacobson writes, "Italian Americans' hagiographic mood for the holiday - so hard won - would not die easily even amid the gathering dissent. Nor had the holiday become for them anything like a mere 'shopping day': Italian-American communities across the country had developed an array of public pageants, celebrations, and rituals to mark the day and to honor Italian greatness."[105] In Pittsburgh, "honoring Italian greatness" through Columbus Day celebrations took on more than one form.

After the defacement of Pittsburgh's Columbus statue, which took place before Columbus Day 1992, the city's Columbus 500 Committee had the statue restored in time for that year's festivities. In an official pamphlet, they wrote, "This restoration is an affirmation of the American people's belief that symbols, such as the Columbus Monument, stand for America's future as well as its past."[106] It was clear that the committee intended for the statue to remain well into the foreseeable future, but in failing to answer what the symbol actually stands for (besides the country's future and past), they leave room for interpretation on the matter.

While he did not necessarily give a direct interpretation of the meaning of Pittsburgh's Columbus statue, Robert Viscusi attempted to explain what exactly was being celebrated in the Columbus Day parades of 1992 and beyond. In his 1992 work, *An Oration Upon the Most Recent Death of Christopher Columbus,* he expresses sympathy for those who suffered from European expansion, and he writes, "We did not feel ourselves to be conquistadores. Rather, we remembered the bitterness of the Italian revolution or Risorgimento…25 million Italians were to leave Italy to live elsewhere in the world. When

[105] Jacobson, *Roots Too*, 339.
[106] Columbus 500 Committee, "Unveiling & Rededication Ceremony of the Christopher Columbus Monument," October 11, 1992, Joseph D'Andrea Papers and Photographs, Thomas and Katherine Detre Library and Archives, Pittsburgh, PA.

Italians parade in New York, they are remembering these dispossessed ancestors of theirs."[107] Viscusi was not speaking about Pittsburgh, but he was writing about a city which, like Pittsburgh, accepted those "dispossessed ancestors" of many of the Italian Americans living in 1992. As Viscusi frames the parades, they are held in remembrance of the courageous struggle of past immigrants more so than in celebration of the conquest of the new world. As in the evidence and commentary from celebrations of 1892, 1938, and 1958, Viscusi reveals a distinct interpretation of Columbus Day which unfolded with the passage of time.

In addition to Pittsburgh's 1992 Columbus Day parades and statue, an entirely separate celebration took place on the Friday before Columbus Day, and it had little to do with Columbus himself. In a letter that advertised their annual Festa delle Belle Arti ("Fine Arts Festival"), The Italian Cultural Heritage Society of Western Pennsylvania wrote the following: "On the Quincentenary of Columbus we wish to present the history of the Italians of Western Pennsylvania at…the Historical Landmark where many Italian immigrants arrived. We will exhibit their story through documents, photographs, and artifacts. Italy will be present with a Theater Group from Genoa (at Duquesne University), a Folk Group from Spigno Saturnia, and an Orchestra from Sicily."[108] The society worked in cooperation with the Vice Consulate of Italy in Pittsburgh, the Columbus 500 Committee, Il Comitato degl'Italiani [sic] all'Estero (The Committee of Italians Abroad), The Italy-America Chamber of Commerce (Pittsburgh), and Radio Italia WWCS 540AM, and while admission was free, they noted that contributions would go toward "The Italian-American Collection at

[107] Robert Viscusi, *An Oration upon the Most Recent Death of Christopher Columbus* (West Lafayette, Ind.: Bordighera, 1993), p. 8; "Preface" (no page number), quoted in Jacobson, *Roots Too*, 345.
[108] Joseph D'Andrea, July 29, 1992, Joseph D'Andrea Papers and Photographs, Thomas and Katherine Detre Library and Archives, Pittsburgh, PA.

the proposed Pittsburgh Regional History Center of the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania" and the "Caliguiri Scholarship of The National Italian American Foundation."[109] The Festa delle Belle Arti was held on the Friday before Columbus Day, and it was offered partially through the work of the Columbus 500 Committee (a "Columbus 500" emblem is on the advertisement itself), but the actual event had nothing to do with Columbus, and donations went toward no Columbus-specific initiatives. Rather, it was held to showcase the artistic traditions of Italy, celebrate Italian and Italian-American culture and heritage, raise money for an Italian American collection at a future history museum in Pittsburgh, and promote the education of Italian-American children.

For Pittsburgh's final Columbus Day celebration of the twentieth century, a letter to director Roberto Benigni again highlighted the importance of honoring Italian and Italian-American heritage and culture alongside a single mention of Columbus. In an unsigned letter to the director, an anonymous individual wrote of how greatly they would appreciate for a representative of what Jacobson calls "Italian greatness" to participate in the heritage celebration of 1999:

> With your talent, you make Italians and Italian Americans proud…for those of us abroad, you represent 'The Best of Italy'…I would like to invite you…to participate in the celebrations to be held in honor of the great navigator Christopher Columbus on Saturday 9 October 1999. This is an event that is repeated annually to honor the Italian heritage, a legacy rich in a story made of tears and smiles, scattered on the faces of the workers who worked in steel mills, coal mines, railways. They are stones wet from the sweat, fatigue and blood of the millions of immigrants.[110]

It appears that, while in name, the celebration is in honor of Christopher Columbus, in practice, the celebration is repeated every year primarily to honor Italian heritage. This

[109] The Vice Consulate of Italy in Pittsburgh et al., "Flyer for Festival Italia 92 - Festa Delle Belle Arti," 1992, Joseph D'Andrea Papers and Photographs, Thomas and Katherine Detre Library and Archives, Pittsburgh, PA.
[110] Untitled Letter, March 24, 1999, Joseph D'Andrea Papers and Photographs, Thomas and Katherine Detre Library and Archives, Pittsburgh, PA.

sentiment, along with that of celebrating Columbus and Columbus Day in order to celebrate Italian and Italian-American culture, has reverberated strongly in the twenty-first century.

Yet the legacy of Columbus and the celebration of Columbus Day remain contested subjects in the United States. Some Italian Americans, academics and non-academics alike, have advocated against the presence of Columbus statues and the celebration of Columbus Day, citing a legacy of enslavement, genocide, and exploitation which go back to his voyages.[111] In fact, some have even argued that Italian Americans need to be the people at the forefront of the removal of Columbus's statues.[112] Others, however, do not believe that it is time to move on. Instead, they have clung tightly to the figure that has been so closely associated with Italian Americans for over a century. In the 2019 New York City Columbus Day Parade, for example, head of The Italian American Podcast and former National Italian American Foundation President John Viola gave the following remarks on what the celebration of Columbus Day means to him:

> For me, as we make our way through the throngs of cheering paesani, I'm not thinking about Columbus or his impact on the world. I'm thinking of the bricklayers, the seamstresses, the fruit and vegetable vendors. Of the unsung men and women from Italy and all nations who continue to follow Columbus's example, betting on themselves and sailing off into an unknown world, and whose toil and courage have laid the physical and social foundations at the heart of our great American experiment.[113]

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[111] Laura E. Ruberto and Joseph Sciorra, "Toppling Columbus, Recasting Italian Americans," *Process: a blog for American history* (blog), July 23, 2020, http://www.processhistory.org/rubertosciorra-toppling-columbus/. See also: The Italian-American Political Solidarity Club, ed., *Avanti Popolo: Italian-American Writers Sail Beyond Columbus* (San Francisco: Manic D Press, 2008). See also: Katie Lannan, "Some Italian Americans Join Push to End Columbus Day," The Patriot Ledger, September 29, 2021, https://www.patriotledger.com/story/news/2021/09/29/some-italian-americans-join-push-end-columbus-day/5916304001/.

[112] Stephen J. Cerulli, "If We Do Not Remove Them, Someone Else Will Do It for Us: Why Italian Americans Need to Be Leaders in Removing Columbus Monuments," The Italian Enclaves Historical Society, June 30, 2020, http://italianenclaves.org/2020/06/30/if-we-do-not-remove-them-someone-else-will-do-it-for-us-why-italian-americans-need-to-be-leaders-in-removing-columbus-monuments/.

[113] The Italian American Podcast - IAtv, *Marching in the Columbus Day Parade in NYC*, 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1XvWMh_tMmE.

At the country's largest, most famous Columbus Day Parade, Viola expresses honor and gratitude to the sacrifices of immigrants instead of celebrating Columbus or his legacy. Viola claims that they followed the example of Columbus, and thus still ties the holiday to Columbus, but he is most interested in celebrating the "unsung" immigrants from Italy and beyond. In Viola's view, while the celebration is not named after immigrants, Columbus Day is the vehicle through which to celebrate these courageous, venerable individuals who do not have their own holiday.

Also at the 2019 parade, Angelo Vivolo, Chairman of the Columbus Citizens Foundation, stated that "This is a great day for everyone, but especially for Italian Americans, celebrating our heritage, our culture, where we come from, it's just a delight."[114] Viola and Vivolo, like the sources from the 1990s, reiterate the idea that the meaning derived from celebrating Columbus in today's day and age comes primarily from celebrating and honoring "where we come from." In one sense, celebrating "where we come from" implies celebrating Italian and Italian-American heritage and culture, and in another, it implies celebrating the sacrifices and achievements of countless working-class Italian-American ancestors.

Much of the more recent debate on Columbus and Columbus Day comes in wake of the police killing of George Floyd in May 2020, which sparked protests and demonstrations across the country. As a result of these protests and demonstrations, which lasted through the summer of 2020, more than thirty statues to Columbus in the United States were either removed or taken down.[115] Pittsburgh's Columbus statue was impacted by the events of

[114] Ibid.
[115] Christopher Brito, "Dozens of Christopher Columbus Statues Have Been Removed since June," CBS News, September 25, 2020, https://www.cbsnews.com/news/christopher-columbus-statue-removed-cities/.

2020, and its fate remains in limbo. As written in *TribLive* in October 2021, "Pittsburgh officials ordered that the the [sic] Columbus statue be wrapped up early on the morning of Oct. 11, 2020, to protect it from being defaced as part of a nationwide movement last year to remove statues that connoted systemic racism."[116] The statue remains under cover, while its fate remains in the hands of an ongoing lawsuit between The Italian Sons and Daughters of America and the City of Pittsburgh.[117] Thus, the Columbus controversy in Pittsburgh stands at a distinctly consequential point in its history.

One assertion in defense of Columbus and Columbus Day in western Pennsylvania and beyond since 2020 is that attacks on Columbus are attacks on Italian Americans, all of whom are represented by the figure of Columbus. In an email from the Conference of Presidents of Major Italian American Organizations (COPOMIAO) that advertised their first annual Italian American Summit Meeting, President Basil M. Russo stated three main talking points for the February 2021 conference: "A Fragmented Italian America," "Connecting to Younger Generations," and "The Fight for Columbus." In his message on Columbus, he said, "We watched in awe in 2020 as lawless protestors destroyed Columbus statues, and cities and states changed the name of Columbus Day to Indigenous Peoples' Day…We need to find ways to work together to save Columbus Day and protect our heritage from this onslaught of anti-Italian American bias."[118] In addition, during a community meeting leading up to Pittsburgh's 2021 Columbus Day Parade, Russo, who is not a Pittsburgh resident, claimed that "Columbus Day is the day that the Italian-American

[116] Paula Reed Ward, "A Year Later, Pittsburgh Columbus Statue Remains Covered in Schenley Park," TribLIVE.com, October 11, 2021, https://triblive.com/local/a-year-later-pittsburgh-columbus-statue-remains-covered-in-schenley-park/.
[117] Ibid.
[118] Basil Russo, "Save the Date: The First-Ever National Italian American Summit Meeting," February 7, 2021.

community has chosen to celebrate its heritage. We want to celebrate our contributions to America. We want to acknowledge the sacrifices that our ancestors have made. It's our way of saying thank you to our country…The history of Columbus is very, very important and intricately tied to Italian-American history."[119] Russo's interpretation is arguably among the most conservative of contemporary responses to the issue. He fuels a modern persecution complex, and he fails to acknowledge the variety of alternatives which could satisfy his stated motives for celebrating Columbus Day. Regardless, his comments are worth stating in order to understand the reasons behind modern Italian-American attachment to the figure and the holiday.

The language of the lawsuit between the ISDA and the City of Pittsburgh provides the chapter's final example of defending Columbus and Columbus Day as pieces of Italian-American heritage. According to the ISDA's proposed resolution to the suit, the best way to go about the controversy in Pittsburgh is to appease both sides of the debate by having two separate statues in Schenley Park:

> The statue of Christopher Columbus shall remain in Schenley Park to continue to honor the sacrifices and contributions the Italian immigrant community, and all immigrants, have made to the City of Pittsburgh…The Native American community will place a statue of a hero of its selection on the adjacent grounds of the park. The Plaintiff will assist the Native American community in its fundraising efforts…[S]uch a resolution will show proper respect to the heritages of both the Italian American community and the Native American community, and further serve to educate the public as to the lives and contributions of each community's respective hero.[120]

[119] Kimberly Rooney, "Residents Share Polarized Views on Future of Pittsburgh's Columbus Day Parade," Pittsburgh City Paper, accessed February 3, 2022, https://www.pghcitypaper.com/pittsburgh/residents-share-polarized-views-on-future-of-pittsburghs-columbus-day-parade/Content?oid=20288023.
[120] Plaintiff's Proposed Resolution to Italian Sons and Daughters of America v. City of Pittsburgh, et al.," Docket No. GD-20-10732, Allegheny County Court of Common Pleas, 2020.

It remains to be seen what will come of the ISDA's suggestion. Whether the Columbus statue will remain standing - and if it does, whether it will be accompanied by the proposed educational documentary and viewing area - is yet unknown.[121] Again, though, the Columbus-specific appeals and mentions of "respective heroes" appear secondary to the desire to honor the contributions of immigrants. This makes sense in an age in which racism, xenophobia, discriminatory immigration restriction, abject poverty, and lack of education have virtually disappeared from Italian-American life.

Conclusion

Over the course of roughly the last one hundred ten years, the motives of those Italian Americans who celebrate Columbus and Columbus Day have evolved as the Italian-American community has evolved. Prior to the 1960s, attaching to Columbus and celebrating Columbus Day often took place with the hope of asserting Italian-American civilization and belonging in the United States. Since the 1960s, many Italian Americans have continued to celebrate Columbus and Columbus Day, but as the objectives of the first half of the twentieth century had been largely achieved, so have the appearance of and motives for the celebrations. As succeeding generations of Italian Americans have risen in socioeconomic class, and as shifting concepts of race and color in America have rendered Italian Americans part of America's white majority, the celebration of Italian culture and of Italian immigrants' sacrifices and achievements have become significant motivators for the celebration of Columbus and Columbus Day.

[121] Ibid.

CHAPTER THREE: More Direct, More Effective, More Affective: Alternative Celebrations and Commemorations of Italian-American Heritage from the Past and the Present

At the time of the writing of this thesis, Columbus Day parades and Columbus statues occupy a controversial position in the public discourse of cities across the country. Whether one chooses to call it "history catching up with Columbus" or "another victory for the revisionist liberals," will not change the fact that this topic continues to stir newsworthy controversy every October. It is difficult to predict the ultimate fate of these statues and parades. Many cities have already removed their Columbus statues,[1] while others have won legal battles that have kept Columbus statues in place.[2]

In Pittsburgh, the current situation is unique in that the city's Columbus statue remains in limbo. The statue is under a wrap, and its fate is still unknown until the City of Pittsburgh and the ISDA reach an agreement. This state of limbo has been depicted by artist Fabrizio Gerbino, whose 2021 work "Untitled (Colombo)," 2021 shows the bust of the Pittsburgh Columbus statue wrapped in plastic.[3] Behind this image, there is great power and meaning both for those who oppose Columbus and those who support him. To the former, this painting represents Columbus being rightfully cloaked in his burial shroud; it is 2022, and the time has come to bury him. To the latter, Columbus is being wrongfully strangled; the public has unjustly attacked him and Americans of Italian heritage. One can only imagine the discussions which take place at the Pittsburgh coffee shop which displays a "full-body" version of Gerbino's painting.

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[1] Christopher Brito, "Dozens of Christopher Columbus Statues Have Been Removed since June," CBS News, September 25, 2020, https://www.cbsnews.com/news/christopher-columbus-statue-removed-cities/.
[2] ISDA Staff, "Philadelphia's Columbus Statue Saved by Italian American Community," Italian Sons and Daughters of America, August 18, 2021, https://orderisda.org/culture/news/philadelphia-columbus-statue-saved-by-italian-american-community/.
[3] Fabrizio Gerbino, *Untitled (Colombo)*, 2021, Oil on canvas, 44"x40', 2021.

 [4]

Figure 11: Untitled (Colombo) *by Fabrizio Gerbino.*

 [5]

Figure 12: Photograph of Gerbino's full-scale rendition of Untitled (Colombo) *at a coffee shop in Pittsburgh.*

One of the valuable historical lessons from the study of Christopher Columbus as a historical figure is that the passage of time and the unfolding of history allow for different groups of people to assign different meanings to the same figure. There is perhaps no better example of this in American history than Columbus. The Americans of the colonial period championed Columbia. By the nineteenth century, proponents of Manifest Destiny honored Columbus as a symbol of discovery and courage. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth

[4] Ibid.
[5] Anthony DiBello, Photograph of a Columbus painting at La Prima Espresso in Pittsburgh's Strip District, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, 2021.

centuries, some Italian Americans called Columbus their ethnic hero (in modern terminology), while other Italian Americans called him a pirate and marauder. Meanwhile, Klansmen of the 1920s detested Columbus statues for their representation of foreignness and Catholicism. In effect, the Klansmen recognized Columbus's symbolic power as a hero to many Italian Americans. By the second half of the twentieth century, he was used as a political tool against nativist immigration policies. For the last few decades, the claims of Columbus as genocidal, racist, and representative of oppression have grown louder among Italian Americans and non-Italian Americans alike. Still, others have lauded Columbus as the man who represents the resilience and achievement of Italian-American ancestors; where he once represented the glories of the "Italian race," he now represents heritage and the working-class Italian-American immigrants whose families "made it" in America. Surely his place and significance as a historical figure will continue to shift.

In 2022, the celebration and commemoration of Columbus no longer carries the same symbolism and political significance that it once held. The first two chapters have shown that, among the variety of motivating factors for adopting Columbus, one was the ability to argue against nativist, anti-Italian sentiment and assert the worthiness of Italian Americans in the progress of the United States. In different forms and in different contexts, this advantage to adopting Columbus was apparent in 1892 (after the New Orleans lynchings of 1891), in the 1920s (despite backlash from the Ku Klux Klan), and in the 1950s and 1960s (to argue for revisions to quotas on immigration into the United States). Today, however, Italian Americans do not face the same pressures and hostilities of decades past. Granted, there have been protests against the casting of Italian Americans as mobsters in popular

media,[6] but Italian Americans do not suffer from the race-based (that is, race as understood in the first half of the twentieth century) discrimination which they once faced. Lynching of Italian Americans no longer take place, the KKK is no longer a vocal enemy of Italian Americans, Italian immigration to the United States is no longer restricted to the extremes of the early twentieth century, and Italian Americans occupy places in high political and judicial circles. Columbus had a political significance to those Italian Americans who chose to rally behind him, but today, given that Italian Americans are an assimilated group in the United States, a figure like Columbus is no longer needed to achieve such political goals. In this sense, the annual celebration of Columbus Day in 2022 and beyond is, to borrow from Professor Fred Gardaphé, a preservation of history reminiscent of an Italian-American grandmother's preservation of her decades-old furniture by placing plastic over it.[7]

Aside from debating whether the celebration of Columbus and Columbus Day in its current form is outdated, this de-facto national Italian-American celebration and its honoring of immigrant struggles through Columbus has little effectiveness in telling the unique stories of those immigrants who actually helped to build communities across the United States. If the people who are now honored through the celebration of Columbus Day and by the statues of Columbus are in fact the bricklayers, the seamstresses, the fruit and vegetable vendors, and all of the other hard-working immigrants of years gone by, then they deserve to be credited and celebrated directly rather than at second hand through Columbus. Not only did Columbus never hold any of the occupations which Italian immigrants to America held, but, as the first chapter indicates, he was never unanimously embraced by early Italian

[6] Vicki Vasilopoulos, "O.K., What About Sharks Is So Italian?," *The New York Times*, February 29, 2004, sec. New York, https://www.nytimes.com/2004/02/29/nyregion/ok-what-about-sharks-is-so-italian.html.
[7] ItalicsTV, *Talking Columbus - October 1st 2020*, 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lxKSuhZAkp4.

immigrants either. Italian Americans are entitled to commemorate their history, celebrate their culture, and honor their ancestors, but there are more effective ways to meet these ends than to celebrate the entire Italian-American experience under a common icon and narrative represented by Columbus. It is a one-size-fits-all approach to celebrating the true beauty and diversity of the Italian-American experience, and it does so in a manner which only indirectly honors immigrant contributions. Italian Americans have already shown that the Columbus model of culture and heritage celebration is not an approach which will unite them, and it will not do so in the future.[8]

This chapter does not intend to make an argument for either side of the Columbus debate or to predict the future of Pittsburgh's Columbus statue. Given all the competing arguments and narratives surrounding Columbus, his holiday, and his statues, Columbus Day may remain a federal holiday, and Pittsburgh's Columbus statue may remain in its current position in Schenley Park for decades to come. But under the assumptions that Columbus Day parades will continue to face protest from Italian Americans and non-Italian Americans alike, and that Columbus statues will continue to be targeted as public monuments which fail to reflect the values of a great majority of the population, the chapter will suggest ways to more directly and deliberately celebrate Italian and Italian-American heritage and culture. It will do so by focusing primarily on the blueprints provided over the span of decades in western Pennsylvania, including *feste*, family and community gatherings,

[8] Laura E. Ruberto and Joseph Sciorra, "Toppling Columbus, Recasting Italian Americans," *Process: a blog for American history* (blog), July 23, 2020, http://www.processhistory.org/rubertosciorra-toppling-columbus/. See also: The Italian-American Political Solidarity Club, ed., *Avanti Popolo: Italian-American Writers Sail Beyond Columbus* (San Francisco: Manic D Press, 2008). See also: Katie Lannan, "Some Italian Americans Join Push to End Columbus Day," The Patriot Ledger, September 29, 2021, https://www.patriotledger.com/story/news/2021/09/29/some-italian-americans-join-push-end-columbus-day/5916304001/.

and memorials and monuments dedicated to the Italian-American ancestors of specific cities and city neighborhoods.

Celebrating "Our Day" Without Columbus

While some Italian Americans feel little attachment to and/or have moved on from Columbus, Columbus Day, and Columbus imagery, other Italian Americans have not. In fact, on the day after the first celebration of Juneteenth as a federal holiday in 2021, a man selling raffle tickets for a church in Pittsburgh's Strip District expressed his frustration over the fate of Columbus Day in light of Juneteenth. He stated that the "tutsones" (*tutsone* is a derogatory Italian-American slang term used to refer to an African American person) got another day in the form of Juneteenth, while "we," the Italian Americans, were getting Columbus Day, "our day," taken away.[9] Though Columbus Day is not technically "our day" (Italian-American lobbying aided in making Columbus Day a federal holiday, but is not formally recognized as a day for Italian Americans), the holiday is celebrated as such by portions of Pittsburgh's Italian-American community and in Italian-American communities across the country. Therefore, one potential argument for continuing to celebrate Columbus and Columbus Day is that these give Italian Americans an opportunity to publicly celebrate "their day," their culture, and the achievements and sacrifices of their ancestors.

In Pittsburgh, local heritage organizations have already demonstrated that the city's and region's residents are capable of taking a more localized approach to the public celebration of Italian heritage. Presented by the Consulate of Italy and the Italian Cultural

[9] Anthony DiBello, Conversation in Pittsburgh's Strip District, June 20, 2021.

Heritage Society of Western Pennsylvania, the "Festa Italia: Domenica in Piazza" (Italian Festival: Sunday in the Square) was celebrated annually in the 1990s in Pittsburgh's Strip district. Featuring "the sights, sounds and tastes of traditional art, design, music, dancing, drama and foods from the twenty regions of Italy,"[10] Festa Italia showcased Italian culture and heritage - and Italian-American business owners - on an impressive scale; layout plans from 1998 indicate that Rizzo's Malabar Inn, Delallo Fine Italian Foods, Enrico Biscotti, Theresa's Pastry, Piccolo Forno, Touring Club of Italy, Pennsylvania Macaroni Company, Merante Gifts, La Scala Ristorante, and La Cara Cristi Catering were among local businesses featured at the event.[11] Exact attendance of the event for each year remains unknown, but it is worth noting that Festa Italia had an estimated attendance of over ten thousand people in 1996.[12]

[10] Joseph D'Andrea, "Festa Italia '97 - Domenica in Piazza - June 1, 1997," 1997, Joseph D'Andrea Papers and Photographs, Thomas and Katherine Detre Library and Archives.
[11] "Festa Italia '98 - Layout Plan," 1998, Joseph D'Andrea Papers and Photographs, Thomas and Katherine Detre Library and Archives.
[12] Joseph D'Andrea, "Festa Italia '97 - Domenica in Piazza - June 1, 1997," 1997, Joseph D'Andrea Papers and Photographs, Thomas and Katherine Detre Library and Archives.

[13]

Figure 13: Photographs of the Spigno Saturnia Society and the Calabria Club at Festa Italia, late 1990s.


[14]

Figure 14: Children stand around a fountain at Festa Italia, late 1990s.

Similar to modern celebrations of Columbus Day, the Festa Italia showcased heritage and culture on a large scale and in the public sphere. Unlike Columbus Day parades,

[13] Photographs of town- and region-specific Italian-American associations at the Festa Italia, late 1990s, Joseph D'Andrea Papers and Photographs, Thomas and Katherine Detre Library and Archives, Pittsburgh, PA.
[14] Photograph of children at Festa Italia with banners of Italian regions in the background, late 1990s, Joseph D'Andrea Papers and Photographs, Thomas and Katherine Detre Library and Archives, Pittsburgh, PA.

however, the idea of having a "Domenica in Piazza" in Pittsburgh borrows from an enduring feature of Italian life and culture rather than American or Italian-American life. The event was open to the public, and all were welcome to actively engage with and learn more about Italy and Italian America. More importantly for the sake of the thesis, there were also exhibits featuring the Heinz History Center's Italian American Collection and the Italian Cultural Heritage Society of Western Pennsylvania (genealogy resources included).[15] Thus, the Festa was not only an opportunity to showcase Italian Americana, Italian culture, and famous Italians (recall the letter to Roberto Benigni regarding Columbus Day in Chapter 2), but it also allowed guests to engage more deeply and directly with Italian-American heritage. By placing these exhibits in the public celebration of Festa Italia, event organizers highlighted the stories of local Italian-American individuals and families. Rather than parading Italian-American businesses and organizations under the umbrella of Columbus, the Festa Italia directly engaged the community with the region's Italian-American heritage and its Italian-American businesses.

Additionally, "Festa Italia" is interesting for its Italian-language title, given that Columbus Day is typically celebrated as "Columbus Day" and not "Festa di Colombo" in the United States. "Festa Italia: Domenica in Piazza," on the one hand, celebrates bringing a small piece of Italian life - though commercialized and Americanized - to Pittsburgh. On the other hand, Columbus Day remains an English-language title, which likely speaks to past desires to use Columbus Day as a day to promote the belonging of Italian Americans in a majority English-speaking society. This speaks to the fact that Columbus Day is a uniquely Italian-American celebration: it would not be possible to celebrate "Festa di Colombo" in

[15] "Festa Italia '98 - Layout Plan," 1998, Joseph D'Andrea Papers and Photographs, Thomas and Katherine Detre Library and Archives.

the United States as a piece of Italian life and culture, because Columbus and Columbus Day are vastly less important to Italians than they are to Italian Americans.[16]

Beyond Pittsburgh's Strip District, there is another unique, older tradition which qualifies as a local, public celebration of "our day" and has no formal attachment to Columbus. Beginning in 1935, The Italian Sons and Daughters of America (ISDA) advertised for the first "Italian Day" at Kennywood Park, which is an amusement park in western Pennsylvania's West Mifflin neighborhood. An invitation letter from ISDA General Chairman John S. Aldisert stated:

> If there is English Day, German Day, Polish Day, etc., there is no reason why we shouldn't have "Italian Day". . . . [I]t is not worth preaching Italianness when nothing tangible takes place. . . . This celebration . . . will be the celebration of all Italians, who, putting aside their different political or religious ideas, will fraternize on that day as belonging to the same family, and they will inebriate in the memories of that land that is as dear to us as our very existence.[17]

Mentioning Italian Day alongside English Day, German Day, and Polish Day, Aldisert likely believed that having Italian Day was a necessary step in promoting the Italian-American community alongside other ethnic communities in western Pennsylvania. However, rather than the construction of a monument or the celebration of a parade, the outward celebration of heritage came in what was perhaps a purer form. Italy, memories of Italy, and shared Italian ancestral roots were all to be celebrated during a day at the park, and divisiveness over politics or religion was to be left at the park entrance. Aldisert's letter provides insight

[16] Patrizia Costa, "OP-ED: To Take It down or Preserve? The Fate of Pittsburgh's Columbus Statue," Pittsburgh City Paper, September 10, 2020, https://www.pghcitypaper.com/pittsburgh/op-ed-to-take-it-down-or-preserve-the-fate-of-pittsburghs-columbus-statue/Content?oid=17972929. See also: Anthony DiBello, Conversation with Giulia Riccò, February 27, 2022. See also: Anthony DiBello, Conversation with Marylisa Cappelli, July 27, 2021.

[17] John Aldisert, "Italian Day at Kennywood Park," June 20, 1935, Joseph D'Andrea Papers and Photographs, Thomas and Katherine Detre Library and Archives.

into a city- and region-wide attempt to celebrate Italian heritage; he emphasizes Italy and Italian ancestry rather than a famous Italian historical figure.

By the late 1980s, Italian Day remained an important occasion for many Italian Americans in the region. In fact, in the 1988 documentary film "Kennywood Memories," Italian Day was considered the largest ethnic picnic of the year at the park.[18] In one interview, a participant stated, "We've kind of reinstituted the tradition the past ten years, where it's kind of like a family reunion. Family…even our non-Italian friends now come here and everybody's Italian today. We cook all day… tortellini and the hot sausage and the meatballs… you name it and it comes out and we just have a good time."[19] As was the case with Festa Italia, Italian Day at Kennywood was considered "our day" at the park, but participants were happy to prepare original family recipes and share family traditions beyond family circles, thus extending Italian-American identity to people who were not of Italian background. Italian Day still takes place annually at Kennywood,[20] and while it may not carry the political weight of the 1930s or hold the Italian-American interest of the 1980s, it is another example of western Pennsylvania's Italian Americans publicly celebrating a heritage day. They celebrated their family story and enjoyed the company of those who shared a similar Italian-American family story in and around western Pennsylvania.

Other celebrations in western Pennsylvania also celebrate Italian-American heritage, but they do so with an even more local focus, echoing the *campanilismo* which was more prevalent before the more monolithic categorization of Italian Americans. One such

[18] Allen Rosen, *WQED Specials | Kennywood Memories* (Pittsburgh, PA, 1988), https://www.pbs.org/video/wqed-pittsburgh-kennywood-memories/.
[19] Ibid.
[20] "(20+) Italian Day at Kennywood | Facebook," accessed February 22, 2022, https://www.facebook.com/events/kennywood/italian-day-at-kennywood/606274819841564/.

example comes from the Castelbottaccio Picnic, which is the annual celebration mentioned in the introduction to the thesis. Held annually at Ewing Park in Ellwood City, Pennsylvania, the picnic is an "Italian Day" for those who observe it, but it is narrower in scope than a general celebration of Italianness and/or Italian-American immigrants. The "Castle-B Picnic," typically celebrated on the last weekend in July (Castelbottaccio celebrates San Oto on July 31st[21]), incorporates elements of generalized Italian-American culture while ultimately making Castelbottaccio and its emigrants the highlight of the day. For example, the picnic often hires a band to play famous Italian - and Italian-American - songs, bocce at the local courts is a staple, and antipasto trays abound. At the same time, however, Nonna Antonietta's zucchini fritters, her rendition of the song "Mamma," homemade sausage from the Ricciuti family, the round of applause for the remaining emigrants from Castelbottaccio, the emigrants' stories of immigration and life in America, and the raffle of the San Oto banner (Saint Otto is Castelbottaccio's patron saint) are all elements of the event that are tied back to the emigrants and their small Molisan village whose population currently hovers around three hundred residents.[22] The Castle-B Picnic is held in a public space, and it deliberately honors emigrants while celebrating their stories.

[21] "Castelbottaccio festeggia il patrono San Oto, la Madonna delle Grazie e San Ottato [Castelbottaccio celebrates the patron Saint Otto, Our Lady of Grace, and San Ottato]," translated by Author, Primonumero, August 2, 2020, https://www.primonumero.it/2020/08/castelbottaccio-festeggia-il-patrono-san-oto-la-madonna-delle-grazie-e-san-ottato/1530623258/.
[22] "Castelbottaccio - Italy: Information and Town Profile," Comuni-Italiani.it, accessed February 22, 2022, http://en.comuni-italiani.it/070/013/.

 [23]

Figure 15: Two emigrants from Castelbottaccio stand with a San Oto banner at the "Castle-B" Picnic in Ellwood City, Pennsylvania, 2018.

The Italian-American residents of Aliquippa, Pennsylvania, many of whom descend from the province of L'Aquila and the region of Abruzzo, hold a local celebration of their own. Over the course of a weekend in mid-August, Italian-American families join to hold their San Rocco Festa, which has been a community tradition for over 90 years.[24] In its modern iteration, the celebration includes gatherings of family and friends at individual homes on Friday, a state-fair-style Italian festival on Saturday (capped off by a traditional Abruzzese "doll dance" of pyrotechnic, larger-than-life dolls), and a procession of emigrants' descendants into a San Rocco Mass (his feast day is on August 16th), a procession of families through Aliquippa, and family picnics on Sunday.[25] Similar to the picnic in Ellwood City, the San Rocco Festa centers around family and local tradition at its

[23] Gennaro DiBello, Photograph of Antonietta DiBello and Tony Listorti, the last two Castelbottaccio emigrants participating in the picnic as of 2018, in front of the San Oto banner, which reads, "Protettore di Castelbottaccio Benedici i Tuoi Figli" (Protector of Castelbottaccio, Bless Your Children), 2018.
[24] "San Rocco Festa," San Rocco Festa, accessed March 23, 2022, http://www.sanrocco.org.
[25] Ibid.

core. “Pan-Italian” elements and elements of more local significance combine to make a much-anticipated family- and ancestor-oriented celebration.

 [26]

Figure 16: Families process through the streets for the San Rocco Festa in Aliquippa, Pennsylvania, 2021.

Not all families or communities may be able to hold such celebrations, as they may not have living ancestors who emigrated from Italy, or they may not be able to trace common ancestry back to a single location in Italy. The hope, however, is that these celebrations live on as examples of how communities can directly and effectively celebrate their ancestors. Even after all living emigrants have passed on, their memory and example can certainly still be honored through celebrations such as the Castelbottaccio Picnic and the San Rocco Festa. Both the Ellwood City and Aliquippa celebrations do have Roman Catholic roots, but for the sake of this chapter, and out of respect for the celebrations themselves, these celebrations must be evaluated as more than just opportunities to honor a saint and honor one’s ancestors.

[26] Photograph of families carrying banners showing their ancestors and surnames through Aliquippa, Pennsylvania, for the San Rocco Festa, 2021.

As the first chapter mentioned, there were times when Italian-American community leaders looked down upon these Italian-American *feste* for blurring the lines between Catholicism and paganism and marking the Italians in America as suspicious "others."[27] Despite this pressure, however, the *feste* and similar celebrations adapted and endured. The San Rocco Festa of Aliquippa and the Castelbottaccio Picnic are two of western Pennsylvania's iterations of traditional southern Italian *feste*, which have a rich tradition of publicly displaying the unique meanings which Italian Americans assign to religion and family.

Writing about the *festa* of Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Harlem, Robert Orsi considers this celebration as a window into the core beliefs and values which informed - and still inform - southern Italian life. In a beautiful telling of the significance of this *festa,* Orsi states that "religion" in this context is to mean "what matters."[28] By publicly celebrating their religion, the southern Italians of Harlem held onto the celebration because it was here where "the men and women of Italian Harlem revealed their deepest values and perceptions, their cosmology - the way they understood the world to work."[29] Based on Orsi's research on the celebration, he asserts that the religion of Italian Harlem was essentially what he termed the *domus* (Italian home and family). ". . . [I]n some way the Italian home and family . . . *is* the religion of Italian Americans. The people themselves quite clearly identify the domus as the center of their lives and culture."[30] Orsi cites an 1920 interview with an immigrant from Naples who stated that, to him, Italy was "'the little village, my family and

[27] Bénédicte Deschamps, "Italian-Americans and Columbus Day: A Quest for Consensus Between National and Group Identities (1840-1910)," in *Celebrating Ethnicity and Nation: American Festive Culture from the Revolution to the Twentieth Century* (New York: Berghahn Books, ed.2001), 131.
[28] Robert Anthony Orsi, *The Madonna of 115th Street: Faith and Community in Italian Harlem, 1880-1950* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), xvii.
[29] Ibid, xvii.
[30] Ibid, 77.

relatives, and the celebrations we had either in the home of my parents or at my relatives'…Indeed, the immigrants' memories of Italy were really memories of the domus."[31] Continuing to celebrate the feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel essentially meant that the southern Italian immigrants were not willing to give up their celebration of what was most foundational in their lives: the *domus.*

Clinging to the *festa* was not only important for the sake of celebrating the *domus*. The festa was an important opportunity to honor this tradition of the "Mezzogiorno" ("the Midday," another term for southern Italy), but it was also a public arena in which the importance of the *domus* was shared with younger generations of southern Italians. As Orsi writes, "the devotion thus provided for the communion of generations, the sharing of experience, and the moral location and integration of people separated first by different pasts, then by changing lives in the present, and finally by death."[32] The celebration is thus a true family affair in that each generation bears responsibility for carrying on the tradition.

Similar to celebrations of Columbus and Columbus Day, however, some scholars argue that the celebration of Our Lady of Mount Carmel was also shaped in part by complex relationships and tensions between Italian-Americans and other groups with whom they lived. Orsi states that even as the Italian-American population of Harlem declined in the decades after World War II,

> Each July 15th and 16th . . . as the Madonna made her way through East Harlem, Italians marked out certain sections of the neighborhood as their own, and at least on these days, with the Madonna in the streets underneath the arches strung by her faithful people, East Harlem was "Italian Harlem". . . . The assertion that this part of

[31] Ibid, 78. See also: Stefano Miele, "America as a Place to Make Money," *World's Work,* December 1920.
[32] Ibid, 171.

> Harlem was "Italian Harlem" . . . represented not a demographic fact, but a victory over the street life of the community achieved through the exclusion of the others.[33]

Orsi specifically mentions the Puerto Rican residents of Harlem, who, despite outnumbering Italian Americans in Harlem by the 1960s, avoided the feast of Our Lady and the parade route of the Madonna because "Italian Americans were in the grip of a profound experience of their own power and identity…and would not tolerate the appearance of 'outsiders' among them, especially those 'outsiders' who lived inside the neighborhood."[34] In Orsi's view, they would not tolerate outsiders because the street religion of the *festa* was a place where Italian Americans "had to map the meaning of their own identities…in American society," and this mapping typically happened "in relation to the proximate darkskinned other years after World War II."[35] This *festa* was an opportunity for Italian Americans to lay claim to the neighborhood well after many of them had left it, and it served as an acute divider between Harlem residents.

While it is possible that somewhat similar tensions once characterized the San Rocco Festa (as it includes a group procession through the neighborhood), the same speculation would not apply to Castelbottaccio's Saint Otto picnic, as it includes no such procession, and it takes place at a pavilion in a public park. Still, some of the lessons of the *feste* which Orsi shares are applicable to celebrations like the San Rocco Festa and the Castelbottaccio Picnic. These two celebrations are not quite as old - or quite as contested - as the celebration which Orsi describes, but like the modern celebration of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, they are opportunities for Italian-American residents of each respective community to publicly

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[33] Robert A. Orsi, ""The Religious Boundaries of an In-between People: Street *Feste* and the Problem of the Dark-Skinned Other in Italian Harlem, 1920-1990," in *Gods of the City : Religion and the American Urban Landscape* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 266.
[34] Ibid, 272.
[35] Ibid, 278.

profess the lasting importance of family in Italian-American life. Beyond this, they also serve as opportunities for the Italian-Americans of these communities to celebrate heritage and ancestry by spending time with family, honoring culinary traditions, and, most importantly in the context of the Columbus conversation, celebrating the example and memory of generations past. In comparison to the celebration of Columbus Day, which reflects a creation of Italian-American identity that does not represent the entirety of Italian America, the *feste*, as well as celebrations like Festa Italia and Italian Day, show a more localized approach that directly celebrates the contributions of ancestors, honors the centrality of family in Italian and Italian-American life, and celebrates the diversity of Italian-American identity.

Memorializing Immigrants by Memorializing Immigrants

While some Italian Americans may have concerns over the current Columbus Day situation because they fear losing "their day," similar discomfort and tension also exist over the future of Columbus statues in Pittsburgh and beyond. As was the case in the last section about public celebrations and ceremonies, there are also existing cases of monuments and statues which more directly honor Italian-American immigrants and their contributions than do Columbus statues. Granted, there may be more productive ways to engage with both the Columbian legacy and Italian-American history than to decapitate Columbus statues; community members in Pittsburgh have made suggestions in this regard.[36] Apart from

[36] Patrizia Costa, "OP-ED: To Take It down or Preserve? The Fate of Pittsburgh's Columbus Statue," Pittsburgh City Paper, September 10, 2020, https://www.pghcitypaper.com/pittsburgh/op-ed-to-take-it-down-or-preserve-the-fate-of-pittsburghs-columbus-statue/Content?oid=17972929.

Columbus statues, however, western Pennsylvania and beyond show that alternative approaches to localized heritage celebration and appreciation of culture can also apply to public monuments, statues, and memorials.

One of the best examples of this approach in Pittsburgh is the Italian-American memorial in the Panther Hollow neighborhood. Dedicated in 2007, it honors the families of Italian Americans who settled in the neighborhood over a century ago.[37] In both English and Italian, the plaque at the memorial reads as follows: "The first immigrant families began to arrive in Panther Hollow in the late 1800s, mostly from the towns of Pizzoferrato and Gamberale in the Region of the Abruzzi in Central Italy. It is the families listed here whose culture established the character and personality of this neighborhood, and whose hard work contributed to the growth and development of the city of Pittsburgh."[38] Documents from the dedication ceremony of the memorial reiterate the desire to pay respect to those early immigrants who helped to shape the Panther Hollow community:

> Our parents and grandparents were labor class American citizens: steelworkers, construction workers, carpenters, and brick layers - workers whose children went on to become attorneys, judges, community leaders, physicians, teachers and university professors…The names inscribed upon this plaque are the names of our parents, and their parents before them, our beloved families to whom we owe our utmost respect.[39]

[37] Carlino Giampolo, "Panther Hollow Dedication Ceremony," Panther Hollow: A Pittsburgh Little Italy, accessed February 22, 2022, https://www.pantherhollow.us/dedication.php.
[38] Carlino Giampolo, "Panther Hollow - Oakland - Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania," Panther Hollow: A Pittsburgh Little Italy, accessed February 22, 2022, https://www.pantherhollow.us/plaque.php.
[39] Giampolo, "Panther Hollow Dedication Ceremony."

 [40]

Figure 17: Photograph of the flags of the United States (left), Pittsburgh (center), and Italy (right) at a memorial in the Panther Hollow neighborhood of Pittsburgh.

 [41]

Figure 18: Photograph of a bench with the Panther Hollow memorial in the background.

The directional signs in Figure 19 honor the Italian immigrants to Panther Hollow by establishing a distinct sense of place for the neighborhood. Indicating that Panther Hollow is nearly equidistant from Rome (possibly chosen as an homage to the Italian capital city,

[40] Giampolo, "Panther Hollow - Oakland - Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania."
[41] Ibid.

Italian identity, and/or Vatican City, the seat of the Roman Catholic Church) and Honolulu (the westernmost state capital of the United States), the signs situate Panther Hollow as a central point at which Italy and the United States intersect. Additionally, by including Pizzoferrato and Gamberale alongside Rome and Honolulu, the monument credits immigrant families with incorporating the cultural foundations and traditions of their Italian hometowns into the Panther Hollow community.

[42]

Figure 19: Photograph of directional signs at the memorial in Panther Hollow.

The residents of Panther Hollow who raised the funds for their neighborhood memorial are clear in stating their intended honorees. While it is possible that some residents may feel attached to Columbus and Columbus Day, their neighborhood's monument credits ancestors from Abruzzo with establishing a tight-knit community and paving the way for the success of future generations of Italian Americans. As steelworkers, construction workers, carpenters and bricklayers in Pittsburgh – like the bricklayers, seamstresses, and fruit and vegetable vendors from New York City in the second chapter – these are the honorable and

[42] Ibid.

resourceful parents and grandparents to whom the Italian Americans of Panther Hollow show respect through memorialization. These ancestors are the local heroes of the Panther Hollow community, and residents have effectively expressed that appreciation to the public. A passerby may see the monument and have no familiarity with the names listed on the plaque, and this is part of the beauty of the memorial. The Italian-American experience is varied and unique to different communities, cities, and regions across the country, and the residents of Panther Hollow offer a monument that holds great meaning in their own lived experience as Italian Americans in Pittsburgh.

As was the case with public celebrations like festivals, parades, and *feste*, a "Panther Hollow model" is not always attainable for memorializing heritage and/or ancestry in different communities. Not every city or town in America with an Italian-American population needs to memorialize an individual or a group of families, but for those who wish to do so, the memorialized honorees do not have to be named. This form of memorialization already exists outside of western Pennsylvania, and it holds a power and significance all its own.

Located outside of St. Ambrose Catholic Church in the St. Louis neighborhood known as The Hill, "The Italian Immigrants" is a statue that was dedicated in 1972.[43] In honor of the Italian immigrants of St. Louis, many of whom arrived in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries,[44] the statue commemorates no particular individual or family. Instead, it depicts nameless immigrants: modestly dressed, the husband holds only one suitcase, and his wife holds a young child. According to the Regional Arts Commission of

[43] "The Italian Immigrants," Duke Migration Memorials Project, accessed February 22, 2022, https://migrationmemorials.trinity.duke.edu/items/italian-immigrants.
[44] Ibid.

St. Louis, "The woman's eyes are downcast as she clutches her child to her chest, as if already burdened with the trials the small family has endured before arriving in the strange new country…[T]the immigrant father peers into the distance with a hopeful expression, as if anticipating that the future holds a better life than the past."[45] Native to St. Louis, the appeal of "The Italian Immigrants" and statues like it is that it immortalizes the immigrants who are at the very foundation of millions of Italian Americans' family stories. By remaining anonymous, the figures in this statue could be anyone's *genitori* (parents), *nonni* (grandparents), or *bisnonni* (great-grandparents) who emigrated from Italy.

 [46]

Figure 20: Photograph of "The Italian Immigrants," located in "The Hill," St. Louis, Missouri.

"The Italian Immigrants" has received praise for its symbolic power and its broad appeal. In fact, Italian-American sources have commented on the appeal of this specific statue in contrast to that of Columbus statues. Ciao St. Louis, which is "a nonprofit organization that strives to preserve, promote, and celebrate Italian and Italian-American culture and traditions,"[47] stated that the statue was dedicated "to salute the Italians [sic]

[45] "The Italian Immigrants," Regional Arts Commission of St. Louis, accessed February 22, 2022, https://racstl.org/public-art/the-italian-immigrants/.
[46] Photograph of "The Italian Immigrants" in The Hill, St. Louis, MO. From "Italian Culture Still Strong on The Hill in Saint Louis," Wheretraveler, April 25, 2019, https://www.wheretraveler.com/st-louis/play/italian-culture-still-strong-hill-saint-louis.
[47] "Ciao St. Louis," accessed February 22, 2022, https://www.ciaostl.com/.

contribution to America,"[48] and claimed, "While many Italian Neighborhoods decided to dedicate statues to Columbus even as little as 35 years ago [sic] The Hill never did…It was not a historical figure, but it was a monument to a group of people who did more for the Italian Families than any single figure in history."[49] Individual testimony from Professor James Pancrazio states a similar appreciation for "The Italian Immigrants" over Columbus statues: "I wanted to change the focus from the big to the local experience to preserve the oral history of those that lived through the migration…[T]he only statue that believe [sic] reflects my experience is the one that centers on the nameless immigrant, the real hero."[50] Professor Pancrazio is not a St. Louis native; he is from central Illinois and is currently a professor at Illinois State University.[51] While only one of these sources is based in St. Louis, both express an appreciation for this particular statue because of its representation of those ancestors whose sacrifice and hard work ought to be remembered and celebrated.

Conclusion

Festivals and memorials to culture and heritage are an important part of the American experience. Across racial and ethnic lines, many "hyphenated Americans" turn to these forms of expression to celebrate their past and to inform their own lived experiences.

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[48] "Saint Louis's Little Italy: The Hill," *Ciao St. Louis* (blog), July 5, 2020, https://www.ciaostl.com/saint-louiss-little-italy-the-hill/.
[49] Ibid.
[50] James J. Pancrazio, "Re: Columbus, Italian America, and Big History vs. Ancestry," email November 3, 2021. See also: Stephanie Longo, "IAP 158: Conversations on Columbus: Columbus and Italian America by The Italian American Podcast," The Italian American Podcast, September 29, 2020, https://anchor.fm/italianamerican/embed/episodes/IAP-158-Conversations-on-Columbus-Columbus-and-Italian-America-ekb8mq.
[51] "James J Pancrazio," College of Arts and Sciences, Illinois State University, accessed February 22, 2022, https://cas.illinoisstate.edu/faculty_staff/profile.php?ulid=jjpancr.

Nonetheless, the more routine, seemingly mundane practices of celebrating one's culture and heritage will not suffice to completely fulfill this desire in the Italian-American communities across the country. Supporting local Italian-American businesses, learning the Italian language, and carrying on family recipes and traditions are all ways in which to honor and celebrate one's roots, but they do not meet the desire to publicly commemorate, celebrate, and memorialize which has shaped Italian-American identity for centuries.

Italian Americans in Pittsburgh and across the country have demonstrated that an annual celebration of Columbus Day is not the only method by which to publicly celebrate heritage and culture, and Columbus statues are not the only method by which to publicly memorialize it. Other celebrations, like Festa Italia and Italian Day, offered more participatory options than a Columbus Day parade. At Festa Italia everyone was welcome to take advantage of resources for learning more about ancestry and heritage, and the event allowed Pittsburghers to learn about the Italian American experience in their own region. At Italian Day, a highlight of the day was cooking family recipes and sharing them with others in a fun family setting. The *feste* of local Italian origins allow Italian Americans to directly celebrate their families' stories and achievements while also observing traditions that precede Columbus Day and celebrate the familial religion which so often characterizes Italian and Italian-American life. As far as statues and memorials are concerned, the Panther Hollow monument and St. Louis's "The Italian Immigrants" take two different approaches to bringing the immigrant experience to the forefront of public attention. By listing surnames and Italian hometowns, Panther Hollow's monument celebrates the unique story of Italian immigration and success in that specific Pittsburgh neighborhood. The poor,

humble family depicted in “The Italian Immigrants,” on the other hand, allows viewers to see the story of their own ancestors in a more explicit form than a Columbus statue.

Italian-American community leaders and their followers believed that if other groups in America’s cities immortalized their heroes in stone and bronze, then Italian Americans ought to follow suit. While motivations have undoubtedly changed from what they were a century ago, they still fuel fights for Columbus statues and the creation of more localized Italian-American celebrations and monuments. Many Italian Americans still feel a strong attachment to Columbus, viewing him either as a great figure in world history, a symbol of Italian-American heritage, someone who has done great things for Italian Americans, or a combination of these. For those whose attachment is heritage-related, there exist methods of celebration and commemoration which are more local, more direct, more effective, and more fruitful. Time will tell whether Italian-American communities will choose to embrace such methods of public heritage celebration and commemoration more fully in place of Columbus Day and Columbus statues. In choosing to do so, the millions of true heroes to so many Italian-American families might be more appropriately honored and celebrated in cities and towns across the country.

CONCLUSION

For nearly three centuries after Christopher Columbus's voyages, no group is known to have celebrated him. From Italy and Spain to North America, there is no record of any commemorations or celebrations until the eighteenth century. Today, however, he is a contested historical figure in the United States, with some members of the Italian-community clinging to him more strongly than any other racial or ethnic group in the country. In the centuries between the colonial United States and the United States of the 2020s, Columbus's voyage through American history has been a complicated one: numerous groups have assigned multiple meanings to numerous different iterations of Columbus.

Columbus commemoration and celebration were nothing new in the United States by the time of mass Italian migration in the late 1800s and early 1900s. In his earliest adoptions into the imaginary and culture of the United States, Columbus was not memorialized as Columbus, but as the goddess Columbia. Representing liberty and virtue as early as the 1760s, Columbia was a new, non-British symbol who helped the nascent United States distinguish itself from its former British rulers.[1] By the middle and late nineteenth century, Columbus was memorialized as Columbus (not Columbia) and recognized in the popular American imagination as a symbol for the expansion and conquest of Manifest Destiny.[2] Part of the reason that Italian-American community leaders - or *prominenti* - saw Columbus as an effective individual to represent Italian Americans during mass migration, then, was that he was already known and revered as a key figure in American history and mainstream American culture. Columbus was less foreign to Americans than a figure like Dante

[1] Thomas J. Schlereth, "Columbia, Columbus, and Columbianism," *The Journal of American History* 79, no. 3 (December 1992): 939.
[2] Ibid, 937.

Alighieri or Amerigo Vespucci, and under the assumption that Columbus was the "first immigrant," the *prominenti* and their Italian-American followers effectively claimed that Columbus was the progenitor to the United States.[3]

Italian Americans did not have to choose to celebrate and memorialize Columbus as their hero, nor did they have to choose anyone to be their hero. The *prominenti* and many community members made this choice, however, because doing so presented several opportunities. First, it helped to foster a greater degree of nationalistic unity among regionally loyal immigrants. Second, it promoted these immigrants as a civilized race worthy of fully contributing to the progress of the majority Anglo-Protestant United States of the late 1800s and early 1900s. Third, it served as an opportunity for economic and political gain for those who ran campaigns to publicly celebrate and memorialize the newly adopted and newly Italian-Americanized version of Columbus. For a fragmented Italian-American community that was characterized as morally suspect and racially questionable by outsiders, Columbus played the role of Italian-American hero and uplifted Italian Americans.

Many Italian Americans adopted Columbus by the 1920s to advance these goals, but the process was not linear, and the community's support for celebrating and commemorating Columbus was never unanimous. Italian-American anarchists, for example, refused to celebrate Columbus on ideological grounds; they were unwilling to admire someone they viewed as a pirate and a plunderer.[4] Meanwhile, other community members in cities like New York and Pittsburgh were not ideologically opposed to honoring Columbus as the anarchists were, but given the socioeconomic challenges confronting the Little Italies, they

[3] Deschamps, "Italian-Americans and Columbus Day," 127.
[4] Connell, "Who's Afraid of Columbus?," 141.

were more interested in seeing a Columbus school, a Columbus hospital, or a Columbus library than a Columbus statue.[5] Political and class differences were thus crucial in sowing divisions over Columbus commemoration and celebration within the Italian-American community.

By the late 1920s, Italian-American opposition to Columbus had not completely died out, but partially as a result of the Red Scare and the murder of Sacco and Vanzetti, the Italian-American radical voice had faded considerably.[6] Assuming the sympathetic Italian-American view toward Columbus, then, the motivations for holding onto and adapting Columbus continued to shift throughout the twentieth century. In the 1920s, pro-Columbus Italian Americans continued to use Columbus to promote the "race" in contrast to the nativist Immigration Act of 1924. They also continued to build statues to him despite opposition from the Ku Klux Klan, who despised Columbus as an unwanted symbol of foreignness and Catholicism.[7] Whether for sentimental and/or ideological reasons, Columbus came to be celebrated alongside Mussolini at Columbus Day parades to acclaim Mussolini's accomplishments, the emergence of Italy as a world power, and Columbus as a key individual in the Italian mythical past. The Italian-American celebration of Mussolini alongside Columbus stopped once Italy entered World War II as an Axis power, but Columbus Day parades and celebrations did not. In fact, some cities used Columbus Day as

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[5] Lina Insana, "Discord in the Italian Immigrant Press over Statue Plans," Columbus, Interrupted: Searching for "Small" Philanthropy in Pittsburgh's Italian Immigrant Community, accessed December 11, 2021, https://scalar.usc.edu/works/columbus-interrupted/discord-in-the-italian-immigrant-press-over-statue-plans. See also: Bénédicte Deschamps, "'The cornerstone is laid': Italian American Memorial Building in New York City and Immigrants' Right to the City at the Turn of the Twentieth Century," *European Journal of American Studies* 10, no. 3 (2015): 13.

[6] Marcella Bencivenni, "Monthly Review | Lost and Found: The Italian-American Radical Experience," *Monthly Review* (blog), January 1, 2006, https://monthlyreview.org/2006/01/01/lost-and-found-the-italian-american-radical-experience/.

[7] J.P. McCusker and Patrick Korten, "In Attacking Columbus, Antifa Tries to Finish What the Klan Started," The Hill, August 25, 2017, https://thehill.com/blogs/pundits-blog/civil-rights/347955-in-attacking-columbus-antifa-protesters-try-to-finish-what

a day to promote the purchase of war bonds, hence advancing Italian Americans as "good" Americans.[8] In the years after the conclusion of World War II, Italian Americans continued to use Columbus and Columbus Day with political goals in mind. Pittsburgh's erection of a Columbus statue in 1958 is a particularly strong example, as multiple individuals claimed that the statue was essential if Pittsburgh was going to promote the race, advance the political standing of Italian Americans, and reform the nativist immigration laws that had been in place since the 1920s.[9]

By the 1960s and 1970s, Columbus and Columbus Day were still popular in Italian America, but the motives for celebrating the man and observing the holiday had begun to shift. Whereas they had once centered around celebrating Columbus in order to promote Italian-American civilization and belonging, they had now become increasingly concerned with celebrating the achievements and sacrifices of the working-class Italian immigrants who came to the United States to build a better life for themselves and their families. Multiple factors serve as root causes for this shift. First, the Italian-American community of the 1960s and 1970s was almost fully assimilated into American society in comparison to their status in past decades. Intermarriage with other racial and ethnic groups increased after World War II, greater economic success came after the passage of the G.I. Bill, many Italian-American families who had previously lived in Little Italies began to move to suburbs, and the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 repealed the restrictions of the

[8] Stefano Luconi, "Forging an Ethnic Identity: The Case of Italian Americans," *Revue Française d'études Américaines*, no. 96 (2003): 93-4.
[9] "A Proposito del Monumento a Colombo [About the Columbus Monument]," translated by Author, n.p., November 24, 1950, Joseph D'Andrea Papers and Photographs, Thomas and Katherine Detre Library and Archives, Pittsburgh, PA. See also: Oresto J. Parco, "Columbus Statue Fund Defended," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, July 29, 1958, sec. Letters to the Editor, Joseph D'Andrea Papers and Photographs, Thomas and Katherine Detre Library and Archives, Pittsburgh, PA.

1924 Act.[10] As such, the political motives of the past no longer applied in the present. The second main cause for this shift was the white ethnic revival of the 1960s, which took place in part as a consequence of the Civil Rights Movement. During this period, many ethnic groups, including those from Southern and Eastern Europe who had been targeted by the 1924 Act, became interested in promoting their own ethnicity as a badge of pride instead of prioritizing assimilation and Americanization. Various ethnic groups, including Italian Americans, started to view the American experience as a mosaic instead of a melting pot.[11]

These shifts in motivation for celebration and commemoration have endured for decades to the present day. From both inside and outside of the Italian-American community, there has been increasing pressure to move on from Columbus Day or replace it with Indigenous People's Day. In the face of this pressure, many pro-Columbus Italian Americans remain firm in their defense of Columbus. Numerous Italian-American defenses of Columbus Day and Columbus statues claim that Italian immigrants - and in some cases, all immigrants – are the people whom Columbus represents and the focal point around which the holiday is celebrated.[12] The current debate thus pits the facts of Columbus's life and legacy - which those who defend Columbus will nearly always refute or counter with

[10] Nancy Foner, Kay Deaux, and Katharine M. Donato, "Introduction: Immigration and Changing Identities," *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 4, no. 5 (2018): 1–25, https://doi.org/10.7758/rsf.2018.4.5.01. See also: Alvin D. Copazzi, "Common Interest Should Keep Us All Together," *The Columbus Sentinel*, June 30, 1967, Joseph D'Andrea Papers and Photographs, Thomas and Katherine Detre Library and Archives, Pittsburgh, PA.

[11] Matthew Frye Jacobson, "The White Ethnic Revival," History News Network - Columbian College of Arts & Sciences, accessed February 3, 2022, https://historynewsnetwork.org/article/23824.

[12] The Italian American Podcast - IAtv, *Marching in the Columbus Day Parade in NYC*, 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1XvWMh_tMmE. See also: Kimberly Rooney, "Residents Share Polarized Views on Future of Pittsburgh's Columbus Day Parade," *Pittsburgh City Paper,* September 30, 2021. Accessed February 3, 2022, https://www.pghcitypaper.com/pittsburgh/residents-share-polarized-views-on-future-of-pittsburghs-columbus-day-parade/Content?oid=20288023. See also: Plaintiff's Proposed Resolution to Italian Sons and Daughters of America v. City of Pittsburgh, et al.," Docket No. GD-20-10732, Allegheny County Court of Common Pleas, 2020.

other facts - against the symbolism of ancestors' struggle and sacrifice which some Italian Americans have attached to Columbus.[13]

Under the assumption that the Columbus statues and Columbus Day parades are meant to honor immigrant sacrifice and achievement, there are multiple alternative ways to more effectively carry out this goal than to indirectly honor immigrants and celebrate Columbus Day as if there were no diversity in the Italian-American immigrant experience. For example, in New York and in Pittsburgh, the celebration of Saint's Days and *feste* bring forth the "color and joy" of Italian America: these occasions emphasize the centrality of family in Italian America,[14] and they preserve traditions which were inherited from the homelands of Italian immigrants rather than manufactured in the United States. Informal community picnics like Kennywood Day encourage local Italian-American families to share their cuisine and culture with family and friends alike, while ethnic festivals like Festa Italia directly engage the public with the area's unique Italian-American history and its Italian-American small businesses. If the goal is to honor ancestors and heritage, Columbus does not have to take part in "our day."

Regarding the honoring of immigrants through statues or memorials, multiple examples demonstrate that different neighborhoods and cities have already more directly memorialized immigrants in a variety of ways. For example, Pittsburgh's Panther Hollow monument lists the names and hometowns of the families who came to Panther Hollow during mass Italian migration in the late 1800s and early 1900s.[15] In St. Louis, "The Italian

[13] Anthony DiBello, conversation with Giulia Riccò, February 27, 2022
[14] Robert Anthony Orsi, *The Madonna of 115th Street: Faith and Community in Italian Harlem, 1880-1950* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 77.
[15] Carlino Giampolo, "Panther Hollow - Oakland - Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania," Panther Hollow: A Pittsburgh Little Italy, accessed February 22, 2022, https://www.pantherhollow.us/plaque.php.

Immigrants" names no families or hometowns, but its modest depiction of an immigrant family provides an image with which, in theory, Italian-American families can more directly identify than that of a fifteenth-century explorer. Though very different from each other, both examples demonstrate that the memorialization of ancestors can be done more directly than through a distant individual.

Like other communities in the United States, Italian-American communities across the country will likely continue to desire to publicly celebrate "their day" and to publicly honor their ancestors and heritage. In one form or another, this has been the case for over a century with the celebration of Columbus Day and the erection of Columbus statues. However, Columbus did not have unanimous support from the Italian-American community a century ago, he does not have such support today, and he will not have such support in the future. The highlighted alternatives celebrate Italian immigrants and Italian-American heritage more directly, and they often more effectively highlight the uniqueness of the Italian-American experience in different cities and regions of the country.

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Attendees and participants in front of a Columbus Day parade float. October 1989. Photograph. Joseph D'Andrea Papers and Photographs, Thomas and Katherine Detre Library and Archives, Pittsburgh, PA.

Charles G. Notari, Esq., National President of the Sons of Columbus of America, with "Miss Columbia" at the base of the Columbus statue. October 11, 1964. Photograph. Joseph D'Andrea Papers and Photographs. Thomas and Katherine Detre Library and Archives, Pittsburgh, PA.

Children at Festa Italia with banners of Italian regions in the background. Late 1990s. Photograph. Joseph D'Andrea Papers and Photographs. Thomas and Katherine Detre Library and Archives, Pittsburgh, PA.

Columbus Day parade along the route from St. Paul's Cathedral to the Columbus statue. October 12, 1958. Photograph. Joseph D'Andrea Papers and Photographs. Thomas and Katherine Detre Library and Archives, Pittsburgh, PA.

"Miss Columbia," Toni Trimarchi, and two other women at the foot of Pittsburgh's Columbus statue. October 12, 1958. Photograph. Joseph D'Andrea Papers and Photographs. Thomas and Katherine Detre Library and Archives, Pittsburgh, PA.

Parade participants wearing Italian-themed hats on a Columbus Day parade float. October 1989. Photograph. Joseph D'Andrea Papers and Photographs. Thomas and Katherine Detre Library and Archives, Pittsburgh, PA.

Pittsburgh's 1964 Columbus Day parade. October 11, 1964. Photograph. Joseph

D'Andrea Papers and Photographs. Thomas and Katherine Detre Library and Archives, Pittsburgh, PA.

Pittsburgh's Columbus Day festivities. October 1965. Photograph. Joseph D'Andrea Papers and Photographs. Thomas and Katherine Detre Library and Archives, Pittsburgh, PA.

Pember & Luzander's print that inspired Harriet Lenfestey's 1823 needlepoint. Photograph. "American Democracy: A Great Leap of Faith." Heinz History Center, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

[Top] Photograph of two women along the Columbus Day parade route, [Bottom] Photograph of a Columbus Day parade float for DeLallo Fine Italian Foods. October 1989. Photograph. Joseph D'Andrea Papers and Photographs, Thomas and Katherine Detre Library and Archives, Pittsburgh, PA.

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