Celebrate! Columbus "Divided History" and Deserves to be Defended, Not Upended

If we saw a lynch mob coming for some hapless soul, wild-eyed and bloodthirsty and demanding his scalp, we'd say that whatever his alleged crimes, he deserves due process. Yet this has not been afforded to Christopher Columbus. The once-revered Italian explorer has been under withering attack in recent years, with his statues often toppled and his reputation tarnished with nary any defense in mainstream media. But there's good reason why we honor Columbus, as it could be said that this man, whom we're now so divided over, divided history.

Before addressing the charges against him, Columbus's achievements should be put in perspective. This can be done simply and uniquely: Imagine that someone today discovered and visited another planet, more magnificent than Earth herself, on the far side of the sun. Imagine it was home to new civilizations and fascinating creatures; was teeming with resources; and that trade between it and our planet led to an exchange of foods, animals, ideas, innumerable items of value and, yes, diseases. Would this new world's discovery not be a seminal point in history? Would it not be, in a sense, the dawning of a new age?

This is absolutely analogous to the New World's discovery. Remember that 15th-century Europeans and Asians had *no idea* the Americas even existed. Can you imagine how mind-blowing those continents' discovery was to them? What followed was no less staggering. As Biography.com writes:

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

This is why I wrote that Columbus "divided history." For our world's history really could be separated into pre- and post-New World segments. Without Columbus's efforts, the Founding Fathers would've had no place to found anything in, and the United States — the nation that defeated Nazism, Italian fascism, the Imperial Japanese, and the Soviets in the Cold War and which transformed the world — never would've existed.

And this "American story began with the seafaring discovery momentum created by Columbus's feat of sailing from Europe some 4,000 miles south and west across the Atlantic Ocean in the late 15th century," writes Discovery Institute senior fellow Scott Powell, relating the explorer's motivations and character. He continues:

> His quest was twofold: to find a western passage to the Spice Islands and India, and second, to carry the good news of Jesus the savior to people in new parts of the world.
>
> Columbus had grown up in a working-class family and his life was one of hardship, punctuated by near-death and failures that would have been the demise of most ordinary people. If he had not been a man of character and determination with deep faith in God, self-confidence to ignore critics, and go against the crowd and remain steadfast in his vision and his calling, he never could have accomplished what he did….
>
> Columbus left voluminous writings that bear witness to what motivated him to do what he did. Born and raised in Genoa, Italy, he was the consummate self-made man who shipped out at an early age. Experiencing the militant face of Islam at the eastern end of the Mediterranean that created a blockade to Europe's important overland trade with the Orient, he knew that finding a western sea route would have far-reaching benefits.

And what of the charges against Columbus, that he was a cruel, genocidal maniac? While there certainly were a great number of American Indian deaths after the Europeans' New World arrival, most of these were due to disease, notably smallpox. This often occurs when populations mix for the first time because one (or more) may not have an immunity to disease carried by another. This phenomenon has killed countless millions throughout history, including Europeans (the Black Death, which originated in Asia, is a prime example).

Yet did Columbus create these pathogens the way the Chinese did SARS-CoV-2? Note that germ theory wasn't even proposed (let alone proven) *until 40 years after Columbus's death*. He could not have been committing genocide via disease because its transmission was a phenomenon he couldn't have even understood.

As for the various and sundry cruelty allegations against Columbus, they're largely the handiwork of one Francisco de Bobadilla, a defrocked priest who wanted the explorer's job as governor of Hispaniola, according to Fox News. As Fox wrote in 2010:

> In 1500 the King and Queen sent him [de Bobadilla] to North America to investigate claims that Columbus wasn't being fair to the European settlers (which means Columbus was protecting the Indians). So de Bobadilla came here, and in just a few short days did his investigation (with no telephones or motorized vehicles to help him), and promptly arrested Columbus and his brothers for Indian mistreatment and sent them back to Spain, sans a trial. Oh and, he also appointed himself governor.
>
> … The King and Queen [found] out these shenanigans and sent for be [sic] Bobadilla two years later, but he drowned on the trip home. Columbus was reinstated as admiral.
>
> But what we know of Columbian malfeasance comes from a defrocked liar, de Bobadilla.

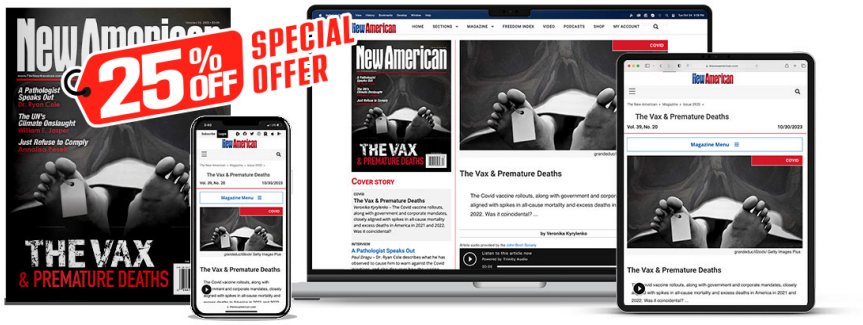
All this said, like man's nature, history is complex; it's also too often, as Napoleon Bonaparte put it, "a series of agreed-upon myths." And being human, Columbus was by definition imperfect. Regardless, having mobs determine our history and heroes makes as much sense as letting them deliver justice. A fair hearing finds that Columbus deserves his place of honor and that, whatever the speck in his eye, it's his log-eyed critics who belong in the dock.

Subscribe to the New American

Get exclusive digital access to the most informative,
non-partisan truthful news source for patriotic Americans!

Discover a refreshing blend of time-honored values, principles and insightful perspectives within the pages of "The New American" magazine. Delve into a world where tradition is the foundation, and exploration knows no bounds.

From politics and finance to foreign affairs, environment, culture, and technology, we bring you an unparalleled array of topics that matter most.



Subscribe

What's Included?

24 Issues Per Year
Optional Print Edition
Digital Edition Access
Exclusive Subscriber Content
Audio provided for all articles
Unlimited access to past issues
Coming Soon! Ad FREE
60-Day money back guarantee!
Cancel anytime.