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COLUMBUS QUINCENTENNIAL RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, A Presidential Commission is planning a massive celebration to take place in 1992 on the 500th anniversary of Columbus's voyage, with festivities including a trip to Mars by three solar-powered "space caravels," the sale of commemorative coins, and the scholarship program designed to "both honor the achievement of Columbus and encourage young people who embody his spirit and accomplishments to carry forward his legacy into the century," and

WHEREAS, Columbus's voyage to America began a legacy of European piracy, brutality, slave trading, murder, disease, conquest, and ethnocide, and further, engendered the Native American Holocaust which saw a population of over 5,000,000 American Indians in the land area of the United States decline to about 250,000 by the last decade of the 19th century, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, The American Library Association urges libraries to provide Columbus Quincentennial programs and materials which examine the event from an authentic Native American perspective, dealing directly with topics like cultural imperialism, colonialism, and the Native American Holocaust.

ADOPTED BY THE
COUNCIL OF THE AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION (ALA)
June, 1990, in Chicago, Illinois

Linda F. Crismond
Secretary of ALA Council

VOTED, That the People's Services Policy Resolution--MD#1--be referred to the ALA Committee on Access on Information. It was asked if a specific timetable was requested for reporting on implementation of the resolution. Councilor Horrocks responded that he would rely on the Chair of the Access to Information to move expeditiously.

RESOLUTION ON COLUMBUS QUINCENTENNIAL (MD#2--Exhibit 28.2). Ms. Mitchell reported that the Resolutions Committee felt that this document, as passed by the membership, is consistent with existing policies, and no further action is necessary unless the Council wants to be more specific about the phrase (how ALA should urge libraries to comply). It was noted, however, that the Executive Director and the Public Information Office will automatically disseminate this information.

RESOLUTION ON CLOSING SCHOOLS OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE (CD#89, MD#3--see Exhibit 25). Ms. Mitchell pointed out that this Membership document was approved in Council II.

GUIDELINES FOR LIBRARIANS INTERACTING WITH SOUTH AFRICA (MD#4--Exhibit 28.3). Ms. Mitchell stated that MD#4 has in its text various ALA policies, and the text of the document is consistent with those policies. However, the policies refer to the organization and library level and the document enunciates guidelines to be followed at the librarian level. She further stated that if there is continued concern about this document in Council members, the Resolutions Committee would recommend that the document be referred to a joint committee of the International, Intellectual Freedom and the Professional Ethics Committees for their review and recommendation. It was pointed out that Membership had amended Guideline 2.3 to read, "we note that the lack of free flow of information to and from the mass democratic organizations and anti-apartheid institutions in South Africa has inhibited the evolution of South African democracy." The following ALA groups endorsed Membership Document #4: ACRL, AASL, PLA, ALCTS, ALSC, International Relations Committee, ALA Black Caucus, IRR, RTSD, YASD, Committee on the Status of Women, and GODERT.

Councilor Gerald Shields, Professional Ethics Committee Chair, read for the record PEC's position paper which concluded, "...this Association as an institution has gone on record in opposition to any suppression of the right of a human being to free and untrammelled access to dignity and free choice. Our ethics statements place upon the shoulders of those who claim professional status a commitment to fair, equitable, and just treatment for all. I urge that the disposition of this impassioned document not be voted down nor adopted as policy for the entire Association. We advocate its continued presence among the units of this Association as an advisory testament to our already stated opposition to apartheid not only in South Africa but in every nation of the world including our very own."

Councilor Shields, and several seconders, moved that the MD#4 be referred to a joint committee of the Intellectual Freedom, International Relations, and

COLUMBUS QUINCENTENNIAL RESOLUTION DOCUMENTATION

The standard Columbus Day image of Columbus is false.

[Koning, Hans. Columbus: his enterprise. Monthly Review Press, copyright 1976. p.10.]

When [Columbus] discussed his Westward voyage, he always dwelt on its religious aspects: to convert the Asian "heathens" to Catholicism, and/or to use their gold for the reconquest of the Holy Land from the Moslems.

[Ibid. p.34.]

Columbus' own words about his impressions of the Indians..."Here was a people to be converted to our Holy Faith by love and friendship and not by force... They would make fine servants...these people are totally unskilled in arms, as your Majesties will learn from seven whom I had captured...should your Majesties command it, all the inhabitants could be taken away...or made slaves on the island. With fifty men we could subjugate them and make them do whatever we want."

[Ibid. pp.52-53.]

These Indians were destined not even to live as slaves; they were to die...And no...man in that Church...which Columbus invoked so frequently, spoke of the sanctity of life and tried to save them. In fact, Friar Buil, head of the contingent of priests to come out later, equaled the soldiers in bloodthirstiness.

[Ibid. p.55.]

Every visitor, in the first days, describes with astonishment [the Arawaks'] friendliness, innocence, and high spirits, they clearly did live at peace with themselves and their environment.

[Ibid. p.56.]

Seven Spaniards...came ashore, and on Columbus' instructions tried to buy the bows and arrows with their hawks' bells and beads. The Indians traded them two bows but refused to sell more. After some shouting, the Spaniards set on them with their swords...two Indians were quickly cut down, and the others fled...

[Ibid. p.60.]

For the native population of America, the second Columbus voyage was perhaps the crucial one. On that occasion, the pattern was set for centuries to come. The pretense was ended, the idyll over...Soon [the Spaniards] would be treating the Indians, in the words of Bishop De las Casas, "not as beasts...but like excrement in a public square."

[Ibid. pp.70-71.]

A canoe appeared around the point of land with four men, two women, a child. When they saw the Spanish fleet, they were so astounded that, in the words of Chanca, "they remained without a motion, a whole hour..." To the Spaniards these people were game rather than fellow beings. Several boats set out to get them...They were overpowered and brought to the Santa Maria. One, whose stomach had been split open by a Spaniard, was tossed overboard, but he swam to shore, holding his guts in his hand. The gallant Spaniards went after him, captured him anew, and this time threw him overboard after binding his hands and feet. The Indian managed to free himself, and swam off once more. Then he was "shot through and through" from the deck of the ship and sank in the clear water.

[Ibid. pp. 74-75.]

Ten women, whom Columbus had captured earlier, jumped overboard and tried to escape. Four were caught...They were to be used as sex slaves for the crew.

[Ibid. p.77.]

Columbus' brother Diego had been in charge...The gold collecting had been entrusted by him to two men, conquistadores, captains, robber barons, bandits: the proper name depends on your point of view.

[Ibid. p.82.]

Columbus...turned to a massive slave raid...The brothers rounded up...Arawaks--men, women, and children--and imprisoned them in pens...guarded by men and dogs...Of the five hundred slaves, three hundred arrived alive in Spain...The slave trade turned out to be "unprofitable, for the slaves mostly died."

[Ibid. pp.84-85.]

There now began a reign of terror on Hispaniola for which I can find no proper historical parallel...The unique horror of Columbus' new state was that even the blindest obedience could not save the people...Every man and woman, every boy or girl of fourteen or older in the province of Cibao (of the imaginary gold fields) had to collect gold for the Spaniards...Every three months, every Indian had to bring to one of the forts a hawk's bell filled with gold dust...Copper tokens were manufactured, and when an Indian had brought his or her tribute...he or she received such a token, stamped with the month, to be hung around the neck. With that they were safe for another three months... Whoever was caught without a token was killed by having his or her hands cut off. There are old Spanish prints...that show this being done: the Indians stumble away, staring with surprise at their arm stumps pulsing out blood. There were no gold fields...It was an impossible task, but those Indians who tried to flee into the mountains were systematically hunted down with dogs and killed...Armor, muskets, swords, horses, and dogs had made the Spaniards invincible. All prisoners had been hanged or burned to death...Thus it was at this time that the mass suicides began: the Arawaks killed themselves with casava poison.

[Ibid. pp.85-86.]

During those two years of the administration of the brothers Columbus, an estimated one half of the entire population of Hispaniola was killed or killed themselves. The estimates run from one hundred and twenty-five thousand to one-half million...In 1515 there were not more than ten thousand Indians left alive; twenty-five years later, the entire nation had vanished from the earth.

[Ibid. pp.88-89]

From the very first, the Spaniards did not come to the Indies...to settle. They came to trade, or to put it less hypocritically, to plunder, and then to return home to Castile with the loot.

[Ibid. p.90.]

The Spaniards were Christians. But that manifested itself in surprising ways. De las Casas reports how they made low, wide gallows on which they strung up the Arawaks, their feet almost touching the ground. Then they put burning green wood at their feet...Chiefs and nobles were...burned to death on grids of rods. Once, he writes, a captain complained that he couldn't sleep because of the cries and he ordered the victims strangled. But the constable...instead put sticks over their tongues so they could not make a sound, and "roasted them slowly, as he liked." Men, women, and children on Columbus' Hispaniola were hacked to pieces, and those pieces were sold from stall to the Spaniards for feeding their dogs.

[Ibid. pp.122-123.]

The docile Arawaks...died like flies. The fiercer Caribs of Cuba were...brought in long chained files to the mines and the fields and exterminated... When they revolted or tried to escape or seemed lazy they were burned to death...beaten to death or torn to pieces by dogs...Never before in history was a whole people so destroyed, and by so few.

[Douglas, Marjory Stoneman. The Everglades: river of grass. Mockingbird Books, 1974, copyright 1947. pp.69-70.]

Columbus observed of the Arawak..."How easy it would be to convert these people..." The Island Arawak Indians were destroyed within 100 years...a result of subjugation by the Spaniards, diseases introduced from the Eastern Hemisphere, and conflicts with...the Carib Indians.

[Thornton, Russell]. American Indian holocaust and survival: a population history since 1492. University of Oklahoma Press, 1987. pp.12-13.]

The 5+ million American Indians in the conterminous United States area...had declined to but 600,000 by 1800...they had declined to about 250,000 by the last decade of the nineteenth century. This was a population some 4 to 5 percent of its previous size, representing a population decline of approximately 1.25 million per century.

[Ibid. p.43.]

The arrival of Columbus in the western hemisphere initiated a campaign of terror and genocide. It took away the economic, political and cultural identity of the native people and imposed upon them a system of subjugation and dominion that has continued to this day.

[Searcy, Emory R. "From the Executive Director." **CALC Report**, Mar. 1990, p.3.]

After failing to find contacts to the emperor of China or the traders of India, Columbus decided to pay for his voyage in the only commodity he found--human lives. He seized 1200...Indians, crammed as many of them onto his ships as would fit and took them to Spain where they were paraded naked through the streets and sold as slaves in 1495.

[Mollenhoff, Lori. "Challenging the lies." **CALC Report**, Mar. 1990, p.5.]

The official version of the Columbus story does more than whitewash...it also justifies. The outright murder, piracy, and slave trading practiced by the conquistadores, if mentioned at all, is said to be the fault of the inevitable "march of progress," unavoidable consequences of spreading our enduring values... For many Native Americans, the legacy of Columbus is not just cultural--they continue to face the same old-fashioned, violent, land-grabbing brand of imperialism Columbus practiced many years ago.

[Nicolai, Dan. "Contesting the Columbus Day Quincentennial." **Artpaper**, Nov. 1989, pp.12-13.]

History is too complex to blame Columbus for the fate of Native Americans. However, he carried the seeds of native enslavement and destruction with him to this part of the world; he engaged in the killing, maiming and demoralizing of native people. He set the tone and paved the way for succeeding generations of Europeans to amass a record of racial and cultural encounters that staggers the imagination in terms of loss of life and disregard for the property, cultural, religious and human rights of Native Americans.

[Buffalohead, Roger. "Celebrating Columbus' voyage: a case of historical amnesia." **Star Tribune**, Mar. 24, 1990, p.15A.]

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