

Republican Perspective
4 October 2017
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Historical Villains

The movement to tear down monuments and to rename buildings, schools, and streets seems to have hit an orgasmic crescendo. And it has gone well beyond symbols of the Confederacy. It reaches out now to all symbols of white supremacy, white privilege, whiteness, Western Civilization...and all things Caucasian and therefore now thought to be at the heart of all evil.

When you and I were going to school, Christopher Columbus was an explorer, adventurer, sailor. A pretty gutsy guy for risking it all on the belief that the Earth was round, not flat. Columbus sailed under the auspices and financial backing of the Spanish crown. He sailed forth to spread Christianity, claim lands for Spain, and return with gold. That's what explorers did in the Age of Exploration. That was his job.

"In fourteen hundred ninety-two, Columbus sailed the ocean blue."
Remember that one?

For some five centuries most folks believed this was a great achievement. It was taught in school. It was history. But suddenly it's no longer true! Columbus is now called a racist and an exploiter of indigenous people.

The natives would have been better off if Europeans had never appeared on their shores. They would have invented the wheel, the alphabet, vaccines, electric power, flush toilets, television, and the Apollo space program all by themselves and without having to suffer the presence of white folks and the industrial revolution.

So statues of Columbus are being defaced, decapitated, splattered with paint, and torn down by vandals. But, if the vandals don't get to them first, these symbols of the birth of our American civilization are being covered up or removed by city councils and other local jurisdictions.

Well, enough about Columbus. Being a West Coast guy, my sympathies go with another occupant of the endangered species list---Father Junipero Serra. In the 1700s, Father Serra established the California missions. He was canonized by Pope Francis in 2015. He brought Christianity to the California natives. Of course, he is now accused of also bringing them exploitation and slavery.

I grew up in a small town on the California coast. A key feature of our town was one of Father Serra's missions. Established in 1770, the mission is still functioning today and is Father Serra's burial place. When I was in school, the Catholic kids all went through grammar school at the mission, and the rest of us went to the public grammar school. Then we all ended up together at the public high school.

Now three points:

→Our public high school's mascot was named for (of course) Father Serra: The Padres.

→Each State is represented in the U.S. Capitol by statues of two of its most important historical figures. Of the two who represent California in Statuary Hall, one is Father Serra.

→In my home town a life-size and beautifully maintained statue of Father Serra on a high pedestal presides over the intersection of Camino del Monte and Serra Drive.

I'm sure it will be only a matter of time that my Padres are renamed, Father Serra is ousted from Statuary Hall, and his statue at Camino del Monte and Serra Drive is vandalized, destroyed, or banished.

The movement to erase American historical figures, or to re-cast them as villains, marches on.