

**New York State Commission for Social Justice**  
**2019 Spring Plenary Session**  
**Report**

Brothers and Sisters;

I want to thank all our Brothers and Sisters for their support for our CSJ.

CSJ Luncheon

This year's luncheon was held on February 2019 at Russo's on the Bay in Howard Beach. This year's honorees were Carol Sorace Whalen, the Grand Niece of Dr. Vincenzo Sellaro, Carol Delaney, noted author of Columbus and the Quest for Jerusalem, and Rabbi Joseph Potasnik, a man that has been fighting social justice issues for many years. I would like to thank all who attended this event, placed an ad in our journal and those who donated a gift for our raffle. I especially want to thank our dinner chair for the last 38 years, Josephine Morici Cohen.

Update on our efforts to preserve Columbus Day and our Statue

The fight continues to defend and preserve our Columbus holiday and it is getting more and more frustrating. We win one and lose two more, it is like plugging a hold in a dam only to find more holes. Many times, I am asked, by people who truly support our efforts, if it is time to throw in the towel and just change the name from Columbus Day to Italian Heritage Day. I know many are getting worn down, so do I at times, but we cannot surrender to those that we know are pushing a false narrative about Columbus. Plus, by agreeing to change the name we end up giving up a federal holiday in his name. No, we will continue to fight this

bigotry and racists attack on our culture. And yes, that is exactly what it is, a bigoted and racists attack on US. If Doctor Sellaro was here, he would be leading the charge against those racists and political pandering politicians that are perpetrating this bigotry against us.

In Southampton, the School Board has made a change. They decided to add Italian Heritage Day to Indigenous Peoples Day. This move will not change our resolve to have Columbus Day placed back on the calendar. We are continuing to work with the residents to overturn this school board's decision. The Southampton community, under the leadership of Rocco Corriero, are seeking candidates to run for the school board in May, that support Columbus Day. We need to win just one more seat to be able reverse this decision.

This month, we were given more news, Maine and Vermont voted to change Columbus Day to Indigenous Peoples Day. Maine's Governor Janet Mills has said that she will be signing this legislation. Governor Scott from Vermont is also expected to sign this legislation. CSJ has sent a letter to both Governors asking for a meeting with the Italian Community leadership before signing these bills. Now, this week we were hit with one more attack in Glen Rock, New Jersey they are trying to remove Columbus Day. Unico has planned a rally on May 8, 2019 at 6:00PM in front of Glen Rock Boro hall, 1 Harding Plaza, Glen Rock, NJ. The New York CSJ is in support of Unico's action and wants to send a strong contingent there to voice our opposition.

Columbus, as Taught in the Schools

We are beginning to investigate the false narrative taught in the public schools regarding Columbus. I set-up a sub-committee chaired by Lou Gallo to investigate this situation. We are looking to schedule meetings with the State Council of History Teachers, the Bureau of Social Studies, the Board of Regents, the State Council of School Superintendents and the school text book publishers. We are also looking into setting up booths at Social Studies Conferences and locate supportive journalist of our cause.

### Wendy's is at it again

#### Wendy's Parmesan Caesar Salad TV Commercial, 'Poker'

After trying a bite of Wendy's Parmesan Caesar Salad, a member of the mob mentions to his friends how surprisingly good it tastes. However, his fellow mobsters grow weary at his claim due to them believing salads never taste good, leading them to assume he's wearing a wire. Though these mobsters might not believe it, Wendy's invites you to find.. This commercial is totally offensive to our community and will be filing a complaint to the Wendy's Corporation.

### New Orleans Lynching's Effort

I am very pleased to announce that on April 12, 2019, Mayor LaToya Cantrell issued a public apology for the 1891 lynching of 11 Italian immigrants. This took place at the Italian American Museum in the area known back then as Little Sicily. Present at this event was me, New York State President Robert Ferrito, National 1st Vice President Nancy DiFiore Quinn and husband John, National Executive Director and COO Joseph DiTrapani. The event was mced by Michael Santo, who was our lead person working with the people and the government of New Orleans. Also present was the Italy's Consul General Hon. Federico Ciattaglia. We were also pleased to have descendants of the lynching victims present as well as the food being supplied by the descendants of

Chief Hennessey. People came to New Orleans for this monumental day from California, New York, Florida and New Jersey. Many in attendance said, “this was the most important event to take place in the Italian American Community in last fifty years”, I agree. We are now working on placing a monument to the 11 victims in New Orleans. We have been given a sculptor, from New Orleans, who will make a mock up for us to view. The expected costs is \$200,000.00 and we hope to unveil it next year.

I want to publicly thank Mike for all the hard work he has done on this issue. In addition, I want to thank Frank Maselli, the owner of the Italian American Museum, Charles Marsala and Sal Perricone for all their work with Mike and the local elected officials. I especially want to thank Mayor Latoya Cantrell for her leadership, compassion and understanding about the importance of this issue.

In addition to New Orleans, we have already contacted the New York Times executives demanding an apology for their coverage of the 1891 lynching. The day of the lynching the headline read, Chief Hennessey Avenged.

The following day they ran an article that read,

*“these sneaky and cowardly Sicilians, the descendants of bandits and assassins, who have transported to this country the lawless passions, and oath-bound societies of their native country, are to us a pest without mitigations. Our own rattlesnakes are as good citizens as they...these men of the mafia killed Chief Hennessey in circumstances of peculiar atrocity...lynch law was the only course open to the people of New Orleans to stay the issue of a new license to the mafia to continue its bloody practices”.*

The New York Times must step up to the plate and issue a formal apology for this disgusting article. We have presented to 30 executives of the Times a 75-page document, with letters of

support from over 30 major Italian Organizations, from across the Country, demanding an apology.

CSJ has updated our complaint report and directory. This new form was sent to all lodge presidents to be copied and given to all members. We are asking our members to use this form when notifying us of issues.

### Positive Image

#### John Dabbene Immigrant Contest

We have received 21 essays from six of the eight lodges across the state. The winners of the John Dabbene Immigrant Contest are:

<u>District</u>	<u>Category</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Lodge</u>
1	MS	Ava Lucie	Perry Com Lodge #2846
1	HS	Anna Segal	Perry Como Lodge #2846
2	MS	Alaina Pinto	America Lodge #2245
2	HS	Deanna Magino	Columbus Lodge #2143
3	MS	No entrant	
3 #2344A	HS	George Arianas	Per Sempre Lodge
4	MS	Enrico Lomonaco	La Amiche Lodge #2550
4 #213	HS	Sara Amello	Antonio Meucci Lodge
5		No Entrants for either category	

6	MS	Morgan Konow	Columbia County # 659
6	HS	Jenna Fazzone	Gabriele D'Annunzio
Lodge #321			
7	MS	Christopher Reiter	Progresso Lodge #1047
7	HS	No entrant	

I want to thank Charlie Lucie for taking the lead in implementing this program.

### La Bella Lingua Award

Every district across the state was notified in January, with the applications for the LaBella Lingua program. This year's winners of the LaBella Lingua Program are:

**District I Recipient:**

Mikaela Gordon  
Harborfields High School, Greenlawn

**District II Recipient:** Note: There will be two Award recipients in District II. The second \$500 Award recipient (a student from Mineola High School) is being funded by "La Bella LinguaAward" founder Lee Cerullo in memory of his mother and father.

Rachel Nuccitelli  
Syosset High School

**District 3**

No information yet.

**District V**

Have not made their selection yet.

**District VI**

Cecare Maniccia responded: "I don't have any, Schools offer no Italian."

**District VII Recipient:**

Jack Gilbert

In addition, the SCJ will be issuing a \$150.00 to each district to help pay the costs of the awards ceremony. I want to thank Mary Ann Rispoli and Jean Gagliardi for all they do in implementing this program.

**A New Bookmark**

A new bookmark for Basketball legend Hank Luisetti is being printed and will be available at this year's convention. In 1936, Hank reinvented the sport of basketball. He popularized the one-handed shot and the behind the back dribble. Hank is known as the man who changed basketball.

In closing, I am urging all to stay united and involved in our fight to defend our heritage. If you hear of any issues negatively affecting our heritage, please get it to us ASAP.

Our CSJ is only as great as the brothers and sisters on our executive board and our lodge liaisons. Each of them is totally committed to defending and promoting a positive image of our heritage. I thank each of them.

Brothers and Sisters, I want to thank you for your support to CSJ.

Fraternally,

*John A. Fratta*