Maud Yorke

Engl 11000 – K

Professor Carr

11/22/2021

***Columbus Day***

Holidays are certain time periods that are put aside to celebrate an event or tradition. There are a lot of holidays in the U.S and some of them are after people in history that have done a lot of remarkable things. There are also terrible things that they have done. We celebrate people based on the achievements they made that helped the nation to progress. Some of them are Martin Luther King Jr., Veteran’s Day, Memorial Day, Columbus Day, etc. There has been a single story which has been in history for a long time and is being taught in schools, which is that Christopher Columbus discovered America which is not true at all because it already existed at the time. It was just that it was not on the global map at the time. After he found the Americas, he committed a lot of atrocities against the Native people of the land. Till this day, he is still celebrated. The atrocities that Christopher Columbus committed are the reasons why Columbus Day should not be celebrated to honor him.

Christopher Columbus was an Italian explorer that sailed to The New World also known as America and ‘discovered’ it. He was sailing in search of a new trade route to Asia after the Silk Road had been closed and everyone was in search of a new trade route. That was when he mistakenly ‘discovered’ The New world (America) and thought that he had landed. After ‘discovering’ this large piece of land, he committed a lot of atrocities such as rounding up the Native people, killing them, raping the women and children, killing them and many more. He made some remarkable achievements which are not remarkable but appalling. His actions led to the start of a big evolution and lifestyle. It also led to slavery, which changed the lifestyle and destiny of continents and countries.

According to the book, “Christopher Columbus and the Enterprise of the Indies” by Geoffrey Symcox and Blair Sullivan, “As the voyage proceeded amid lush landscapes and friendly people, the idea of founding a colony began to take shape in Columbus’s mind. Soon after his first landing he had noted how easy it would be for a small number of well-armed Europeans to subdue the peaceable indigenous population” (Symcox and Sullivan 17). After landing in the new world, he did not think about the reason he was there but immediately thought of how easy it would be to destroy the peace of the Native people. This shows how evil he was and did not think about the Native people as people but as ‘servants.’

No one in their right mind will think ‘oh, that person will make a good servant’ as soon as they see someone different from them in another place. And if he really thought that he was in Asia, did he already have such thoughts before even sailing? “Significantly, he observed that they would make excellent servants and laborers. (Symcox and Sullivan 15). He only thought of making servants out of the Natives. He only thought of himself and what would be good for him. This shows that he is very selfish. The author states, “Early in 1494 he had shipped twenty or so captives to Spain for sale as slaves, and later in the year he ordered a wholesale roundup to provide another shipment. Well over a thousand Indians were captured, and roughly half of them were loaded aboard ships and sent to Spain” (Symcox and Sullivan 22). He then started rounding up Natives and selling them as slaves. After he started having the thought that the Natives would make great servants, he started rounding them up, shipping them, selling them, and enslaving them. He was one of the first people that did this. He did not regard the Indians as people but as servants and as a result treated them as such.

This is not any new news to anyone. We all know of the atrocities he committed and what he did to the Native people of the Americas as well as Africans. Rounding them up, forcing them onto ships to enslave them. After he mistakenly took the Americas as Asia and later found out that the gold that he wanted was not there, he forced the Indians to give the little gold they had to him. Either they did that, or they were killed, a part of their chopped off and many more. Even his underlings/followers followed exactly what he did and did the same to the Indian Natives. “Ojeda also ordered his men to grab another Indian, bring him to the middle of his village, and "'cut off his ears' in retribution for the Indians' failing to be helpful to the Spaniards when fording a stream." (Bergreen, 170-171)” (Mathews). His followers continued his legacy even after Columbus had left the Americas. Even his followers did not care about the lives of the Natives and just followed his footsteps.

Columbus Day is celebrated to commemorate Christopher Columbus’s landing in the Americas. He did great by ‘mistakenly’ landing in the Americas, and his landing in the Americas showed the world the ‘free’ and rich lands which are now the United States of America. Everyone is grateful for him ‘mistakenly’ landing in the U.S. and giving a lot of people the opportunity, they have now. But has anyone ever thought about how much the Indians and other slaves suffered in his hands? Yes, people are grateful but putting aside a day just for him does not seem right.

 Columbus Day should still be celebrated because him finding the Americas helped a lot of immigrants to leave their countries and to find a better lifestyle in the US. The atrocities he committed do not matter much because it is already in the past. Yes, it sad and bad that he did all that, but we can continue to celebrate him. His accomplishments helped change the lives of a lot of people.

Dedicating a complete day to Christopher Columbus and his ‘discovering’ of the Americas just to celebrate him and the one ‘accomplishment’ he made seems a bit too much. His atrocities seem more than this one accomplishment he made which indeed changed lots of lives. There is no need to dedicate a complete day to him because he does not deserve it. The things he did were the start of a chain of issues which some are still happening now. His deeds led to slavery, racism, a better lifestyle, the creation of the United States of America.

There have been so many debates and articles on why Columbus Day and why it should not be celebrated. In the article, “Sanitizing history: National identification”, negative stereotypes, and support for eliminating Columbus Day and adopting Indigenous Peoples Day, a group of people were asked if Columbus Day should be celebrated. And of course, there were mixed results. “Beyond the limited coverage of contributions of people of color, mainstream educational curricula in the U.S. often downplays the horrific abuses of the past-such as Native American genocide and violent attacks on civil rights leaders-while avoiding acknowledgment of the systemic nature of past racial atrocities such as colonization and slavery (Brown & Brown, 2010;Eason et al., 2021;Salter & Adams, 2016)” (Article). Celebrating Columbus Day means that we are ignoring all the atrocities Christopher Columbus committed and endorsing the one good thing he did which is ‘mistakenly’ finding the Americas. Even in schools, students are taught about the remarkable thing he did but never the many atrocities he committed. This is an example of a single story. Columbus Day should not be celebrated but should be changed to Indigenous people’s day. States such as Michigan and Wisconsin have stopped celebrating Columbus Day and changed it to Indigenous people's day to “recognize the native populations that were displaced and decimated after Christopher Columbus and other European explorers reached the continent” (Willingham CNN).

Christopher Columbus was an Italian explorer that traveled and mistakenly ‘discovered’ the New World (Americas). He showed the world that there were vast and ‘free’ lands that could be inhabited by others though the lands were already inhabited. Apart from taking away the lands from the Native people, he killed and forced them to become slaves for him. And sold a lot of them to other countries. He treated them very badly. He did not even treat them as humans. Columbus Day should not be celebrated because of the atrocities he committed. Columbus could be changed to Indigenous people’s day.

**Works Cited**

*Eason, Arianne E et al. “Sanitizing History: National Identification, Negative Stereotypes, and Support for Eliminating Columbus Day and Adopting Indigenous Peoples Day.” Cultural diversity & ethnic minority psychology 27.1 (2021): 1–17. Web.*

Matthews, Dylan. “9 Reasons Christopher Columbus Was a Murderer, Tyrant, and Scoundrel.” Vox. Vox, October 13, 2014.

Symcox, Geoffrey, and Blair Sullivan. *Christopher Columbus and the Enterprise of the Indies: A Brief History with Documents*. Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2005.

Willingham, AJ. “These States and Cities Are Ditching Columbus Day to Observe Indigenous Peoples' Day Instead.” CNN. Cable News Network, October 14, 2019. <https://www.cnn.com/2019/04/22/us/indigenous-peoples-day-columbus-day-trnd/index.html>.

**Reflection Paper**

This was one of the toughest papers I have written since becoming a college student. Although I had my evidence and thoughts, it was hard to put it into writing. It was even harder when I was trying to combine everything together to make sense. Even reading it does not make sense to me too, but I know that I have tried and can do better. I had to look for new sources to cite as evidence because some of the sources I had before did not help. I was able to find better sources which supported my work and helped me to explain my work better.

I still feel that even after the peer review and the feedback I got, and the corrections I have made, my work is still not the best. But then it is the best it can be for now. The corrections and feedback I got were immensely helpful and helped my paper to be better. I can see that there are a lot of things that could be said in a better way but then when changed, the meaning I would like to put forward to the audience would be lost.

Finding evidence was the hardest part of this paper. Anytime I found evidence, I had to take time and think about what I wanted to say and if that piece of evidence found fits what I want to say or adds to it. My topic seemed to not have been discussed a lot because I could not find articles to support my argument but was rather finding evidence for the opposing side. It took me an exceptionally long time to find evidence to support my argument.

Explaining my point and writing to make it make sense was not smooth at all. There were a lot of bumps. If I typed and re-read what I read and I did not like it or it did not make sense, I had to delete it and come up with another. Writing an argumentative essay is way harder than writing a regular essay. Although writing a regular essay that needs evidence is a lot of work, but it is way better than an argumentative essay. In an argumentative essay, I have to think for the other side and find evidence for that side as well as mine. It was very hard.

As I was making PPT after writing this paper, I realized that in the ppt, I was able to list three reasons to support my claim/thesis. While in this paper, I am all over the place with my point and evidence. In the PPT as well, I was able to say points that I had wanted to say in this paper but could not since my mind was a mess and could not bring two and two together make sense.