



Taking Back the Narrative: Indigenous Peoples' Day

By Educator Barnes - October 14, 2019

Too many school books leave out the truth. School is the foundation where people learn about history. Parents across the nation send their children off to school each day hoping they will learn all they need to know to become successful citizens. With parents living in the fast lane trying to make sure they are providing for their children, many times, they don't have time to ask their children specific questions about their learning. This is problematic especially if you are a parent of non-white children.

Knowledge shared in schools has a Eurocentric focus. That focus is mostly centered around white people and their side of the story. When you have ownership and control of the narrative, you get to decide how the story is told and the parts to leave out. A villain can be written as a hero, and this is how Christopher Columbus is currently portrayed in too many classrooms today. Indigenous Peoples' Day is an opportunity to learn about various Indigenous people and to learn the entire truth, the truth omitted in history books.

Christopher Columbus is not a hero. If you are a teacher still asking students to memorize, "In 1492, Columbus sailed the ocean blue" in your lead up to teaching students how Columbus discovered America, stop. Don't do it! You cannot discover a place that is already inhabited. This is a slippery slope that has children praising a person who should not be praised. Eurocentric curriculum twists events. It is not right to allow children to think it is okay to sail up to a place, force your customs and ways onto the people who are already there, and torture, rape, and kill people. Don't worry; the manifest destiny mindset means it's all okay because the actions are divine from God.

Let's take a look at an excerpt of Columbus's journal in 1492:

They are all of fair stature and size, with good faces, and well made... They should be good servants and intelligent, for I observed that they quickly took in what was said to them, and I believe that they would easily be made Christians, as it appeared to me that they had no religion. I, our Lord being pleased, will take hence, at the time of my departure, six natives for your Highnesses, that they may learn to speak.

Did you get to read Columbus's journal when you were in school? Probably not. The physical terror and genocide were not enough. We have Indigenous people today posting #WeAreStillHere because the truth is distorted, and they are being erased from the history books. Indigenous Peoples' Day is an opportunity to put the focus where it should have been all along. Columbus should have never had a holiday. When you are reading about Indigenous people, ask yourself, "How would they tell this story?" Better yet, read about Indigenous people by reading the stories they have written.

I know some people don't understand what the big deal is. It is time for us to be unafraid and push back. Honestly, Columbus Day is not the only day that should disappear.