

September 16, 2019

Mr. Jason Kelly
Associate Editor
Notre Dame Magazine

Dear Mr. Kelly,

As Columbus Day 2019 approaches and the murals controversy is still with us, I write to respond to your article: ***Columbus: When the Past Presents Problems***, published in the Spring 2019 issue of the Notre Dame University Magazine*. In the article, you present a number of questionable points related to the controversy surrounding Notre Dame University President John I. Jenkins' decision to cover the Christopher Columbus murals in the Main Building of the University. As part of your case against Columbus, you state: "[Columbus] ushered in an era of decimation and degradation among native peoples [in the new world with a long history] of cultural heritage." Publishing such a negative portrayal of Columbus on the basis of a post hoc, mistaken generalization is deeply misleading and unfair. You are unwise to ascribe the totality of atrocities and injustices to Columbus simply because he was the first European to arrive in the New World. It is this same kind of distorted reasoning that also led you to make other inaccurate accusations that you claim were committed by "Columbus' own hands."

I would like to begin my response with the comments you reference by Pope John Paul II regarding "the encounter [between native and European cultures] in a 1987 meeting with the native peoples of the Americas." You wrote: "... the encounter was a harsh and painful reality for your peoples. The cultural oppression, the injustices, the disruption of your way of life and of your traditional societies must be acknowledged." However, like President Jenkins' letter of January 20, 2019 to the Notre Dame community, you ignore the other key element of Pope John Paul's message: "At the same time, in order to be objective, history must record the deeply positive aspects of your people's encounter with the culture that came from Europe. Among these positive aspects I wish to recall the work of many missionaries who strenuously defended the rights of the original inhabitants of this land." (Stephen Beale, "Catholic Identity at Stake in Notre Dame Decision on Columbus Murals," National Catholic Register, February 1, 2019, pages 3-4). Obviously, John Paul's conciliatory message did not fit with your narrative.

Your case against Columbus starts with a reference to "chilling atrocities [that] happened at Columbus' own hands." The first "chilling atrocity" that you cite involved "a crew member on the second expedition ... [who] raped a captured native woman ... [whom] the Lord Admiral allowed him to rape." Michele de Cuneo, a "childhood friend [of Columbus] from Savona," was the name of that crewmember. You found it convenient to go along with Laurence Bergreen's claim that Columbus "allowed" the "rape" of the Carib woman by de Cuneo. This interpretation of the incident is incorrect since there is no mention of the word "rape" in de Cuneo's

letter, which is the only evidence available that describes the incident. De Cuneo's letter states: "[he and the Carib girl]... came to an agreement in such manner that I can tell you that she seemed to have been brought up in a school of harlots." ("Michele de Cuneo's Letter on *The Second Voyage of Discovery 1493-1496*," October 28, 1495, page 212; published in Taino Library by Phoenix Aurora, August 3, 2017). Yet, Bergreen omitted the key word "agreement" when he writes: "... I (de Cuneo) captured a very beautiful woman, whom the Lord Admiral gave to me. When I had taken her to my cabin she was naked-as was their custom. I was filled with a desire to take my pleasure with her and attempted to satisfy my desire. She was unwilling, and so treated me with her nails that I wished I had never begun... Eventually we came to such terms, I assure you, that you would have thought that had been brought up in a school for whores." (Laurence Bergreen, *Columbus: The Four Voyages*, Viking (Penguin Group), New York, 2011, page 143). Mr. Bergreen's interpretation of the incident is inexcusable since major writers on Columbus' life: Bartolome de Las Casas, Samuel Eliot Morison and Peter Martyr, never used the term "rape" in their respective accounts of the incident.

Obviously, you either did not read de Cuneo's letter or you chose to follow Mr. Bergreen's dishonest misrepresentation of de Cuneo's description of the incident. Moreover, Mr. Bergreen shows a lack of probity when he uses the de Cuneo incident to make the following misleading generalization: "So began the European rape of the New World." Here, Mr. Bergreen distorts the facts to make another exaggerated and unfounded claim in order to suit his anti-Columbus narrative. As for you, Mr. Kelly, your reliance on Bergreen's distortions, without prior verification of the facts, does a disservice to your readers who want the truth about Columbus.

The second incident you cite refers to Columbus's direct role in ordering the severance of the ears of some natives for minor offenses, which is incorrect. According to accounts of the incident provided by Bartolome de Las Casas and Samuel Eliot Morison, two key authors who have written on the life of Columbus, it was Alonso de Hojeda whom Columbus entrusted during an expedition to the Cibao region of Hispaniola in April 1494, who committed the crime. Hojeda also was directly responsible for sending several other natives "off in irons" to Queen Isabella for execution. Columbus was not a participant in Hojeda's expedition, and, much to his credit, never carried out the threat of the "public beheading" of the natives. Las Casas, used the latter incident to point to Columbus's sense of justice that prevailed when he writes: "... the admiral did heed the plea of [a native lord] and spared their lives." (Nigel Griffin, Editor and Translator, *Las Casas on Columbus: Background and The Second and Fourth Voyages*, Volume VII, Brepols Publishers, Turnhout, Belgium 1999, page 115). The fact that the threat of "public beheading" of the natives never took place demonstrates that Columbus did make "moral concessions."

An additional example of Columbus's penchant for moral restraint and self-control had to do with the destruction of the La Navidad fort and the killing of thirty-nine Spaniards by natives in 1493. La Navidad was the first Spanish settlement in

Hispaniola. The La Navidad incident took place as Columbus was in Spain preparing for his second voyage. The incident caused a change in the Spanish perception of the natives as “docile” and “peace-loving,” as originally described by Columbus and Las Casas. Much to Columbus’s credit, the death of 39 Spaniards did not induce Columbus to push for retaliation upon returning to Hispaniola on November 28, 1493. Again, you ignore this additional moral concession and the courage shown by Columbus in restraining those under his command from “the spilling” of additional blood. Certainly, these two examples of the moral fortitude shown by Columbus raises questions regarding the inaccurate, “one-dimensional” interpretation and portrayals disseminated of “... evil Spaniards and moral natives,” which, according to Professor Bill Donovan, “renders any detached discussion of [Columbus and] Spain’s colonial experience difficult.” (Herma Briffault, Translator, Bartolome de Las Casas, The Devastation of the Indies: A Brief Account, John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1992, pages 19-20).

Also, you state that Columbus executed “natives for minor offenses,” though you fail to mention specific cases and references of these injustices. Further, in the same paragraph, you write: “Reports of brutality [made] by his enemies, possibly exaggerated ... led to his arrest and an inquiry in which Columbus acknowledged the truth of many of the charges against him.” However, you make no mention of the specific charges made against the Genoese navigator. It should be noted that Las Casas believed that “most of the charges against [Columbus were] unfounded and frivolous.” However, the Spanish Crown had other reasons for briefly imprisoning Columbus. Two reasons that Morison puts forth are: a) Columbus had not brought back adequate “returns for the Crown” in light of what it was paying to keep the Indies enterprise afloat, and b) Columbus had provided “small returns in the saving of souls.” (Samuel Eliot Morison, Admiral of the Ocean Sea: A Life of Columbus, Little, Brown and Co., Boston, 1942, page 569).

Additionally, it is important to note that King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella stopped short of apologizing for Columbus’s imprisonment which, in the words of Las Casas, “... had not been the result of any wish of theirs [the Crown], and especially not of her most serene highness Dona Isabella ... who was more conscious than the king of the incredible service he had done them by discovering the Indian world over here.” (Nigel Griffin, Editor and Translator, Las Casas On Columbus: Background and the Second and Fourth Voyages, page 186). As a result, the Spanish Sovereigns ordered Francisco de Bobadilla, who was appointed new Governor of Hispaniola in the Spring 1499, to “restore to the admiral and his brothers [all that was taken away from them].” (Ibid. pages 181-182).

Writers like Bartolome de Las Casas, Samuel Eliot Morison and Peter Martyr have pointed out that Columbus was not a perfect man; he had his faults and made errors of judgment. However, Las Casas, did view Columbus as possessing “sweetness and benignity,” and who “erred on the side of gentleness.” Morison, who agrees with Las Casas on this assessment of the explorer’s character, also intimates that these drawbacks often surfaced when he began acting as a colonist. This was an area that

Columbus was the least skillful, trying to manage a colony of men who were dishonest, disloyal and “only concerned in growing rich without work.” (Samuel Eliot Morison, Admiral of the Ocean Sea: A Life of Christopher Columbus, page 572). Columbus was an explorer and navigator who felt very much at ease when practicing these skills. However, as the Crown’s Governor of Hispaniola, Morison points out that “Columbus as governor of a colony had been a failure. He had been weak when he should have been firm, and ruthless at the wrong time.” (Ibid. page 571). Morison’s empathy for Columbus surfaces when he refers to the misfortunes of the explorer in dealing with distrustful and treacherous individuals around him, he writes: “... [Columbus had] the extreme difficulty governing undisciplined men who have undergone hardships with the sole hope of gain, and who want it quick.” Additionally, Morison adds: “Possibly a Spaniard would have done better in dealing with Spaniards, who had a superabundance of “ego in the cosmos”; certainly Governor Ovando, Bobadilla’s successor, acted with far greater severity than Columbus has ever presumed, both toward Indians and toward colonists.” (Ibid. pages 571-572).

In dealing with arrogant and recalcitrant subordinates as early as 1494, Columbus experienced difficulty reining in the disloyalty and dishonesty of “the Catalan clique” that included Fray Buil, a Benedictine monk who was in charge of conversion and Mosen Pedro Margarit, a captain of Fort Santo Tomas in Hispaniola. In 1495, Columbus also had to deal with an overbearing and disdainful Juan Aguado, sent by the Crown to investigate Columbus. Las Casas perception of Aguado was that “his brief was rather like that of a spy.” Las Casas further adds: “This Aguado talked and behaved in public as though he had much more authority than the king and the queen has actually given him ...” (Nigel Griffin, Editor and Translator of Las Casas on Columbus: Background and The Second and Fourth Voyages, pages 154-155).

In addition, Columbus had to deal with the leader of a rebellion, Francisco Roldan, a Spaniard whom Columbus appointed “alcalde mayor or chief justice of [Hispaniola]” in the summer 1498. Again, Las Casas writes the following not just about Roldan but also on the “knight-commander Francisco de Bobadilla” who forcibly chained Columbus, as depicted in one of the murals, on questionable charges: “[Both men] had been at the bottom of so many of the damaging outrages to afflict this island (Hispaniola).” (Ibid. page 192). These were just some of the individuals who indulged in “calumnies” and “treachery,” and who practiced a “hard-boiled” policy toward the Indians. These men, along with other “encomenderos” (settlers/colonists), did whatever they pleased in the name of greed and lust for gold, without any remorse and nothing but contempt for Columbus whom they considered a “foreigner” and not one of them.

Another example you refer to involves the sending by Columbus of “hundreds of Native Americans [to Spain] to be sold as chattel in the Seville slave market.” Morison points out that “... about five hundred [able men and women]... were loaded on the four caravels ...[that] set sail from Isabela in Hispaniola on February

24, 1495.” (Samuel Eliot Morison, Admiral of the Ocean Sea: A Life of Christopher Columbus, page 487). I do not question the veracity of this unfortunate episode. However, it is important to note that a year later “Queen Isabela stopped the sale [of the native captives] and ordered all the Indian slaves in Seville to be taken from their masters and sent back to their former homes.” (Anthony Pagden, The Fall of Natural Man: The American Indian and the Origins of Comparative Ethnology, Cambridge University Press, New York, 1982, page 31). An explanation as to why Columbus resorted to the sale of native captives is provided by Professor Pagden when he alludes to “the legitimacy of the slavery, a policy that was [already in place and was] continued by King Ferdinand beyond 1504 when the Sovereign called a meeting of “the first junta of civil lawyers (letrados), theologians and canonists” who met to discuss the legitimacy of the Spanish occupation. (Ibid. page 28).

According to Professor Pagden, at the meeting of “the first junta,” it was decided “in the presence and with the opinion of the Archbishop of Seville (Diego de Deza) that the Indians should be given [to the Spanish] and that this was in agreement with human and divine law.” (Ibid. page 28) He also adds that this decision allowed “the crown [to hold] firmly to the belief that the bulls of donation granted to Ferdinand and Isabel in 1493 by Alexander VI conceded them the right not only to conquer but to enslave the inhabitants of the Antilles.” (Ibid. page 29) Thus, given the continued support of King Ferdinand and the Spanish Church for the slave policy, it is not inconceivable that Columbus may have used the policy to send natives as “chattel” to Spain. Also, the explorer may well have resorted to this practice as a way to raise money for expenditures associated with the payment of salaries of Spaniards brought to the new world as well as goods and provisions from Castile.

Undoubtedly, the most extravagant accusation made against Columbus was that he was guilty of “initiating genocide,” a view popularized by the revisionist historian Howard Zinn. This far-fetched characterization of Columbus is never mentioned in Las Casas writings on the explorer. As an eyewitness soon after his arrival in Hispaniola on April 15, 1502, Las Casas, in his roles as “encomendero” (settler) and, soon after, ordained priest, witnessed the injustices against the natives committed by “Spaniards” on Hispaniola and Cuba. In 1511, as a priest, Las Casas accompanied an expedition to Cuba where he observed an unprecedented level of atrocities and other injustices committed by the “Spanish settlers, the conquistadores, [and] even members of the clergy.” While in Cuba, Las Casas makes the following two observations:

“... The Christians inspired by the Devil, and without the slightest provocation, [they] butchered, before my eyes, some three thousand souls – men, women and children – as they sat there in front of us. I saw that day atrocities more terrible than any living man has ever seen nor ever thought to see.”

“During the three or four months I was there, more than seven thousand children died of hunger, after their parents had been shipped off to the mines, and I saw many other horrors also.” (Nigel Griffin, Editor and Translator, Bartolome de Las Casas: A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies, Penguin Books, London, England, 1992, pages 29 and 30).

Las Casas experience as an “encomendero” in Hispaniola from 1502 to 1510, also allowed him to observe the “cruelties” committed by colonists against Amerindians. On two different occasions, this is what he wrote:

“Up to then [1504], only a small number of provinces [Hispaniola] had been destroyed through unjust military action, not the whole area [island]...” (Ibid. page 25). As to who was responsible for the “rapacious horrors of the conquest,”

Professor Pagden writes:

“It was the Spanish settlers, men precisely like Las Casas as he had once been, who had transformed a trading and evangelical mission ... into a genocidal colonization.” (Ibid. page XV, Introduction). These atrocities were not committed by Columbus’ “own hands,” since the explorer left Hispaniola in chains in October 1500.

Another issue used to discredit Columbus involves the native population statistics. There is disagreement among historians of the New World regarding the “contradictory and flawed calculations” that blame the Spanish for having “killed millions of Indians through enslavement and outright murder.” (Herma Briffault, Translator, Bartolome de Las Casas, The Devastation of the Indies: A Brief Account, page 18). Professor Pagden writes the following about the population in Hispaniola and the Antilles both before and after the arrival of Columbus:

“[Las Casas] figures for the pre-contact population of the Antilles [including Hispaniola] are necessarily wildly approximate. The highest is about eight million, the lowest ... and most reliable – is around half a million. The total population of the islands when the Short Account was written (1542) did not exceed three hundred thousand...” (Nigel Griffin, Editor and Translator, Bartolome de Las Casas, A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies,” page 24). Yet, you indicate:

“As many as one-third of Hispaniola’s estimated 300,000 inhabitants died within four years of his [Columbus’s] arrival (October 1492).” Your total population numbers are attributed only to Hispaniola contrary to Pagden’s population estimate for “the islands” that included Hispaniola. No matter what the population estimates are, the underlying assumption you make is that Columbus was directly responsible for the depopulation of natives in Hispaniola. Moreover, to attribute most, if not all, atrocities as the principal factor for the depopulation of Amerindians raises further reliability issues since it does not take into consideration the role of diseases, particularly syphilis on “the terrestrial paradise that was Hispaniola.”

Oddly, what is noticeably missing from “the full story” of Columbus’ voyages to the New World, is the role of two powerful forces that you ignored in your article: the Spanish Sovereigns, Ferdinand and Isabella, and the Spanish Catholic Church. These two dominant institutions are most responsible for what happened in the New World. Las Casas does not hesitate to show the responsibility of both institutions in creating and prolonging an unfortunate environment in Hispaniola and elsewhere in the Indies. Besides the colonists, Las Casas “insisted that the Crown had seriously mismanaged its colonies ...” (Nigel Griffin, Editor and Translator, Bartolome de Las Casas, A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies, Introduction by Pagden, page XV). It would be foolish to think that the Crown and the Spanish Catholic

Church were simply bystanders when both institutions failed to condemn slavery and other injustices committed by Spaniards. Their main interest was to promote Columbus' enterprise since it promised vast riches of gold, acquisition of new lands and the proselytization of indigenous people in the New World. Thus, Columbus was used as an agent and scapegoat by the Crown and the Church to advance their interests and to cover-up their mismanagement and shortcomings.

Was Columbus a patsy? Perhaps, considering the shabby treatment accorded to Columbus by the Crown and the Spanish Church. Morison best describes the explorer's tribulations when he writes:

"In spite of all his enemies, he has done more for the Sovereigns than any subject ever did for his prince... He has laid the foundation for vast crown revenue ... and win [new] lands ... where Christianity will have so much enjoyment, and our faith in time so great an increase... Columbus had made it possible for the Catholic Church to conquer a new world, for Christianity to enter on its first era of expansion in a thousand years. Yet, this explorer returned to the country upon which he had conferred this immeasurable benefit as a prisoner, confined to his cabin and leaded with chains." (Samuel Eliot Morison: Admiral of the Ocean Sea: A Life of Christopher Columbus, pages 547 and 561).

Just as the Spanish Sovereigns and the Church did not hesitate to use Columbus as a convenient scapegoat, those who condemn and judge his actions according to today's standards are indulging in a similar and disingenuous exercise. The current level of indoctrination, manipulation of information and scapegoating has become the order of the day as the truth has been set aside for fake news and misinformation. Unfortunately, the murals controversy at Notre Dame has focused on promoting the anti-Columbus narrative rather than emphasize "the full story" of Columbus as "one of the most skillful navigators that ever lived."

An example of the Notre Dame anti-Columbus narrative is exemplified by President Jenkins' misguided contention, quoted in your article, that "Columbus' arrival brought ... exploitation, expropriation of land, repression of vibrant cultures, enslavement, and new diseases causing epidemics that killed millions." It is unfortunate for President Jenkins to make such a sweeping statement without reference to any sources. Moreover, his statement presupposes that all native people in the Americas were negatively affected by the arrival of Columbus, and, that includes America's indigenous people. Any association between Columbus and native tribes in the United States is faulty since the Genoese explorer never set foot in this country. Thus, Reverend Jenkins makes the mistake of blaming Columbus for crimes and injustices that were initiated by government officials at the state, federal levels, and "squatters," aka white settlers and French Jesuits. The latter's actions and words helped to facilitate the expropriation of land that includes the current site of Notre Dame University.

There is no doubt that President Jenkins is fully aware of the dark history of the "Treaty of Chicago" signed in 1833 between the US Government and "the

Potawatomi, Chippewa, Ottawa, and other Native American nations.” The various bands of the Potawatomi Indian tribe, who lived in the Saint Joseph and adjoining counties of Northern Indiana, were subjected to deplorable and appalling treatment, and forcibly removed from their lands that they inhabited and owned. Ironically, none of the Notre Dame University murals depict what happened to the Potawatomi and other local Indian tribes. The natives depicted in the murals are not representative of the Potawatomi and other tribes that flourished in Northern Indiana and Michigan. In 2014, a Notre Dame University “student-run, daily” highlights this point about the murals:

“ It is unfortunate that these are the only stories still told about Native Americans on Notre Dame’s campus. The story that should be told and celebrated instead is the story of the Potawatomi tribe ... and the origins of the University as we know it. Most people do not know that Notre Dame was built on Potawatomi lands...” (“The ND-Native American Story,” Editorial Board, Observer, Friday, November 21, 2014, page 2). Professor Christian Moevs offers a related message to the University of Notre Dame, when he states:

“... covering [the murals would be] an embarrassment without addressing the deeper source of shame, [that]... extends far beyond Columbus’ actions, to the soil that has nurtured Notre Dame itself ... and Catholicism’s – own deep and revealing history of engagement with Native Americans.”

These messages should be taken seriously by Notre Dame students like Zada Ballew, President of the Native American Student Association, and Marcus Winchester-Jones, both “tribal citizens of the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi.” Ms. Ballew, Mr. Winchester and other students report being emotionally affected and perturbed by the Luigi Gregori murals. They are naïve in believing that covering the murals will rectify the miseries and misfortunes experienced by their ancestors who once lived at the present site of the University. Mr. Winchester praised President Jenkins’ decision to cover the murals as “a good step towards acknowledging the full humanity of those native people who have come before us.” The praise is shortsighted since it does not consider the “full humanity” and history of his Potawatomi ancestors and their descendants who, to this day, are still questioning the dispossession of their lands including a part of the site of the University of Notre Dame. On December 23, 2003, the Hannahville Indian Community Tribe, descendants of the Potawatomi, sued the University in federal court. The lawsuit “alleges that the state of Indiana illegally transferred Potawatomi-owned land to Notre Dame in violation of treaties dating back to the 1820’s.” (Tom Tiberio, “Tribe Sues Over Piece of Campus,” Notre Dame Magazine, Spring 2004). Though the case was dismissed in favor of the University, there is still residual discontent among the descendants of the Potawatomi.

Students at the University of Notre Dame would be better informed if they read, with an open mind, the following account by James Clifton who writes: “The US government profited [from the sale of Indian lands]... The amount paid per acre for Indian land was far less than the price when the same land was later sold to settlers through government land offices. Large profits flowed into the nation’s

treasury. Individual states also benefited... Overall, the business of Indian land treaties was a great money-raising operation. The traders, the federal government, and the states all profited. So did the marginal people, now known as “half-breeds,” “mixed bloods” ...[who received] cash rewards, they were commonly granted tracts of land, usually a section 640 acres or half a section each.” (James A. Clifton, The Potawatomi, Chelsea House Publishers, New York, 1987, page 62).

Besides being swindled of their lands, an even worse tragedy faced by the Potawatomi was the forced “removal and relocation of eight hundred and fifty-nine Potawatomi Indians” on “September 2, 1838.” More than 40 Indians including children perished during the “660-mile” forced migration to a Kansas “reservation provided to them by the government west of the Missouri river.” Even Father Benjamin Marie Petit, a much-loved and respected Catholic missionary, who joined the march known as the “Potawatomi Trail of Death,” could not help the demoralized Indians. In fact, General Tipton who kept a diary of the journey was grateful to Father Petit for his assistance when he wrote:

“... he [Father Petit] has, both by example and precept, produced a very favorable change in the morals and industry of the Indians; that his untiring zeal in the cause of civilization has been, and will continue to be eventually beneficial to these unfortunate [Potawatomi] when they reach their new homes, where they anticipate peace, security and happiness.” (Daniel McDonald, A Twentieth Century History of Marshall County, IN, Volume 1, Lewis Publishing Co., Chicago, IL, 1908, pages 26-27).

The shameful experience of the Potawatomi was repeated numerous times with dozens of other indigenous tribes throughout the nascent U.S. mainland for almost three centuries. Yet, Notre Dame and other colleges and universities have continued to set a negative tone, to scapegoat Columbus, who died on May 20, 1506. According to Professor Bill Miscamble, a faculty member at Notre Dame University, this false narrative has been used by Notre Dame, to promote “... image over substance, ratings over principles, and, ultimately [the pursuit] of a false prestige over truth ... [The prevailing tendency has become] to accommodate to the dominant culture of the American academy and society... in order to obtain its approval.” (Father Bill Miscamble C.S.C., “*Sorin’s Bold Vision & the Future of Notre Dame*,” Url: sycamoretrust.org 2017).

The issue of the murals also raises questions as to the true motives behind President Jenkins’ decision to cover the 12 murals. Again, I rely on Father Miscamble, who provides a common sense view when he writes:

“... none of the atrocities committed against indigenous people are celebrated or even depicted in the murals... Only one person is shown in chains - and that is Christopher Columbus. Please explain to me how any of the murals demeans Native Americans and the ancestral Potawatomi land on which the University is built.” Moreover, Father Miscamble adds:

Given the “confusing nature of his [President Jenkins] decision ... to cover them up in one place [and] brought out somewhere else – it suggests that Father Jenkins

knows himself that these murals are not deeply offensive.” As for the other location, according to Dennis Brown, an Assistant Vice President for News and Media Relations at Notre Dame, the “high-resolution images” [of the murals [would be displayed], “ in a room adjacent to their current location [away from “a heavily trafficked hallway and into an area [where visitors can] reflect more deeply on the subject.” It becomes obvious that President Jenkins’ questionable actions, according to Patrick Reilly, President of the Cardinal Newman Society, can be “attributed [to the] influence of political correctness on campuses like Notre Dame...[and a concern by] university leaders...with their social reputation and the prestige of the university... would choose political correctness over Catholic identity and the truth.” (Stephen Beale, “Catholic Identity at Stake in Notre Dame Decision on Columbus Murals,” National Catholic Register, Feb. 1, 2019, pages 2-4).

Thus, by indulging in political correctness and political expediency, President Jenkins has intentionally set aside “the full story” on Columbus and Notre Dame University. “The full story” at Notre Dame should not be focused on the murals but on the suffering and tribulations experienced by American Indian tribes that flourished on “the soil that has nurtured Notre Dame itself...” Pablo Piccato, a History Professor at Columbia University, has questioned the “rosy” interpretation of history that the Jesuits “fought for the rights of native populations.” Professor Piccato alludes to the role played by Bartolome de Las Casas and Jesuits in the post-Columbus New World when he writes:

“... he [Bartolome de Las Casas] and the Jesuits did not challenge Spain’s right to impose its colonial domination over those indigenous populations in America, using war and forcible relocation, if necessary, but instead furthered it on theological grounds. They also agreed on the value of slave labor to supplement indigenous labor in mines and plantations. In fact, Jesuits owned a considerable number of African slaves.” (Pablo Piccato [Letter to the Editor], “Jesuits in the New World,” The New York Times, June 28, 2013). Professor Piccato’s letter was in response to an op-ed by Marie Arana who praised Las Casas and the Jesuits as “self-proclaimed soldiers of God” [who] “often aligned themselves with the continent’s Indians.” (Maria Arana, “Preparing for the Pope,” The New York Times, June 19, 2013).

Again, I firmly believe that *Notre Dame Magazine* and President Jenkins need to tell “the full story,” and not hide, in Professor Moevs words, behind “a curtain [that] can be easy and cheap, both intellectually and financially.” Last, contrary to your view, Mr. Kelly, the “past [does not always] present problems” if “the full story” is told about Christopher Columbus and Notre Dame University.

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The City University of New York (CUNY)

cc: Kerry Temple, Managing Editor

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