



NYS Commission for Social Justice Christopher Columbus Essay/Video Award

Arthur Spera, NY State President
Eleanor Jobbagy, NY State CSJ Chairperson



“Discovering The Truth” - The Louis J. Gallo, Jr. Memorial Columbus Award

Over the past few decades, many myths and falsehoods have been spoken and written about Christopher Columbus. Today these falsehoods are being repeated on social media and in our classrooms to the detriment of Columbus and Americans who celebrate Columbus Day.

ASSIGNMENT::

This award is open to students in grades 11-12 and who are children, grandchildren, nieces, nephews, or siblings of lodge members in good standing. The student must select one of the many anti-Columbus myths/falsehoods being repeated today and prove it wrong using reputable sources.

Here are some common myths/falsehoods that can be proven false:

1. Columbus thought little of the natives and abused them.
2. Columbus committed acts of genocide.
3. Columbus brought slavery and imperialism to the New World. His main goals were the acquisition of gold and slavery.
4. Columbus cut off the hands of natives who did not provide their share of gold.
5. Columbus was happy and willing to institute the practice of encomiendas (the forcing of indigenous labor).
6. Columbus engaged in sex trafficking and was abusive to native women. Columbus was sent back to Spain in chains for abusing the Indians.
7. Columbus stole native lands.
8. Columbus was a racist.
9. Columbus did not bring any significant or positive change to the New World.

You can choose a topic from the above list or a new Columbus defamatory myth/falsehood you wish to disprove. You can disprove the myth/falsehood in one of two ways:

- 1) **Essay:** Write a 500 (minimum) word essay stating what anti-Columbus falsehood is being repeated today on social media, or in our classrooms, and prove why it is false.
 - a) The completed assignment must be typed (handwritten submission will be disqualified) and submitted on time in order to be considered for the contest. A copy of the scoring rubric for the award is available below.
 - b) A separate page should contain the bibliography of resources used and referenced in your essay.
 - c) A.I. cannot be used in writing your essay. It will be checked and may be subject to a verbal review.
 - d) The essay should be emailed to the CSJ: CSJD3chair@gmail.com
 - e) A scanned copy of the application form must also be emailed to the CSJ: CSJD3chair@gmail.com.

- 2) **Video:** Compose a 3 minute (minimum) video stating what anti-Columbus falsehood is being repeated today on social media, or in our classrooms, and prove why it is false.
- The video can be as creative as you want it to be and contain visuals, animations, and graphics that help prove your point. A.I. can be used to create visual content (ex: videos and images), but cannot be used to create narrative text.
 - In the video you should reference resources that help prove your point
 - The final 5 secs of the video should show a bibliography of resources used.
 - Video files can be big so if you can't email it, you can upload the video to your google drive and make it shareable with: CSJD3chair@gmail.com.
 - A link to the video should be emailed to the CSJ: CSJD3chair@gmail.com
 - A scanned copy of the application form must also be emailed to the CSJ: CSJD3chair@gmail.com.

The **deadline** for all submissions is **June 1, 2026**. The scoring rubric for this contest is available below. Awards will be distributed as follows: **1st Place: \$800, 2nd Place \$500, 3rd place \$300, and 4th \$200**

RESOURCES:

You can use any reputable source to prove your argument. Here are some suggestions to help you get started:

- New York State CSJ: <http://www.ColumbusTheTruth.org/>
- Columbus Education Project: <http://www.ColumbusEdProject.org>
 - Contains articles, videos, books, and more
- Christopher Columbus The Hero website: <https://www.christophercolumbusthehero.com/>
 - Run by Christopher Columbus researcher and author Rafael Ortiz, this website has several articles written by the author himself. Make sure to check the "Blog Archive" links.

In the spirit of Columbus, EXPLORE these resources, DISCOVER the truth, and SHARE this knowledge with the rest of the world!

NOTE: When referencing a source from your bibliography, please be sure to include the author's name and page number.

"Fourthly, I ordered and begged them not to cause offense or injury to any of the Indians, male or female, and not to take anything against their will. I especially told them to avoid committing any insult or violence against the women which might cause outrage, or give a bad example, or bring us into disrepute among the Indians, who are sure that we have all come from Heaven and are ambassadors of the heavenly virtues."

-January 2, 1493, Columbus's instructions to his men before his first return trip to Spain.

- p161, "The Voyage of Christopher Columbus" Columbus' Own Journal of Discovery
Newly Restored and Translated by John Cummins

Essay Rubric:

Points:	4	3	2	1
Number of reputable sources in bibliography	5 or more	3-4	2	1 or no sources
GRAMMAR AND USAGE	Virtually no spelling, punctuation or grammatical errors - well written	A few spelling and punctuation mistakes and minor grammatical errors	A number of spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors - poorly written	Many punctuation and grammatical errors that interfere with comprehension
Usage of quotes from bibliography to prove their point	5 or more	3-4	2	1 or no sources
Was the goal/thesis achieved	Essay proved beyond a shadow of a doubt the Columbus lie	Essay proved its point in dismissing the Columbus lie	Essay somewhat proved its point	Essay did not effectively prove its point
Word count	700 words or more	600 words or more	500 words or more	Less than 500 words

Video Rubric:

Points:	4	3	2	1
Length of Video	5 + mins	4-5 mins	3-4 mins	Less than 3 mins
Visuals (was the video captivating or stale)	Very interesting, captivating, excellent usage of media and graphics. Creative and artistic.	Interesting, captivating, good usage of media. Can be clearly heard.	Somewhat captivating and interesting.	Too stale and not captivating. Not clear or easy to understand.
Was the goal/thesis achieved	Video proved beyond a shadow of a doubt the Columbus lie	Video proved its point in dismissing the Columbus lie	Video somewhat proved its point	Video did not effectively prove its point
Number of reputable sources in bibliography	5 or more	3-4	2	1 or no sources
Usage of quotes from bibliography to prove their point	5 or more	3-4	2	1 or no sources



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(Print neatly)

Student's Name: _____

Student's Address: _____

Student's phone#: _____

Student's email address: _____

Student's School _____

Grade: _____

Do you have a family member that belongs to the Order Sons and Daughters of Italy in America (OSDIA)?
YES NO

If so, what is the family member's name: _____

Which lodge do they belong to: _____

Relation of family member to you: _____

What did you submit for this award? Essay OR Video

What Columbus falsehood did you set out to disprove? _____

The name of the video file or essay document file you submitted: _____

NOTE: We value the time and effort that you put into your research! As noted above, one of the objectives of this contest is to share the knowledge you discovered with the world. Therefore, by submitting your work, and if your video or essay is accepted as the winner, you are allowing the Commission for Social Justice and/or the Order Sons and Daughters of Italy in America (OSDIA) to share your work with its members or followers on social media platforms and organization's websites. Please sign below to agree with these terms. If for some reason you would like to remain anonymous, please check the box below.

Student's Signature: _____

Parent/Guardian's Name (print): _____

Parent/Guardian's Signature: _____

Date: _____

Please do not use my name when recognizing my work.