



Honourable Members of the State Senate and Assembly
California State Capitol
10th and L Street
Sacramento, California

June 19th, 2020

Dear Assembly Members,
Dear Senators,

I write to you as a Spanish Member of the European Parliament's Delegation for Relations with the United States, and as a sincere friend and admirer of your country and of the State of California, whose history is so closely intertwined to that of Spain.

The cruelty of George Floyd's death has reverberated beyond America's borders. Europe has also seen a profound reflection on our relation with the ethnic minorities of the continent and our colonial past. However, this wave of protests has also led to a worrying revisionist frenzy and the removal of statues of historical figures without the serious consideration and debate that should come with such an examination of history. The recent decision to remove the statues of Christopher Columbus and Queen Isabel of Castile from the Capitol Rotunda is one of such decisions, which I most heartily ask you to reconsider.

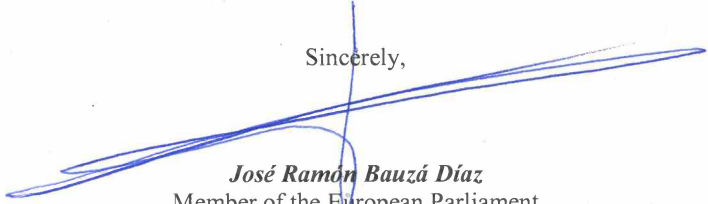
It was thanks to Columbus, and the patronage of Isabel of Castile, that Spain laid on America's shores the very philosophical and spiritual foundations on which the United States later flourished: Western civilization, Christianity, the Enlightenment or the Rights of Man. Columbus statues were not erected because he was a flawless man, but because of the enormity of what his vision achieved, and the impact of his fateful voyages on the history of mankind. And Queen Isabel's genuine concern with the dignity and legal protection of the original peoples of the Americas is beyond question, and far precedes the abolitionist movements of the nineteenth century. From the very first moments of the Spanish presence in America, Queen Isabel insisted that the original population of the recently discovered isles were to be *'well treated'*. Her legacy continued after her death, with the adoption between 1512 and 1513 of the Laws of Burgos, regulating the treatment of Indians and establishing specific rules to prevent their abuse. The Spanish missionary, Bartolomé de las Casas would later be the first *'Protector of the Indians'*, appointed by the Crown to ensure the good treatment of the natives. His appeals to King Carlos led to the adoption of the *'New Laws of the Indies for the Good Treatment and Preservation of the Indians'*, which ended the slavery of the natives. It was also De las Casas who declared, two hundred years before Thomas Jefferson penned the Declaration of Independence, that *'all the peoples of the world are men [...] and to none are they inferior'*. Finally, so inimical was racism to the Christian faith of the Spanish explorers that interracial marriages were legalized in 1514, nearly five centuries before the Loving v. Virginia decision legalised it in the US.

Millions of Spaniards and Americans of Hispanic cultural background see with concern the rewriting and erasure of their heritage from American history. However, it is with a particular sadness that I am witnessing the attacks on my fellow Mallorcan Saint Junipero Serra. In 2013, as President of the Balearic Islands, I had the honour to accompany King Felipe VI in His Majesty's visit to California, on the occasion of Father Serra's 300th birthday, and to pay homage to the evangelizer of California, whose memory is being vandalised today.

The history of every nation is marked by lights and shadows, but we should not judge with today's morals the actions of a world on the cusp between Medieval and Modern times. Much of what made the United States of America a beacon of freedom came to the New World thanks to Columbus' vision, Isabel of Castile's leadership, and Father Serra's determination.

I beg you not to erase them from your history.

Sincerely,


José Ramón Bauzá Díaz
Member of the European Parliament
Committee on Foreign Affairs
Delegation for relations with the United States of America