



H.E. Ronald J. Gidwitz

Acting Representative of the United States
to the European Union
Zinnerstraat - 13 - Rue Zinner
B-1000 Brussels, Belgium

Brussels, June 23, 2020

Dear Ambassador Gidwitz,

We, Members of the European Parliament, are writing to you to express our deep concern by the recent wave of attacks against the monuments of European historical figures in the United States, and to urge you and all levels of the US authorities to ensure the protection and preservation European legacy in America.

On June 20th, the statue of the Spanish writer Miguel de Cervantes in San Francisco's Golden Gate Park was sprayed with red paint, and the word "*Bastard*" written on it. Not only did the world-renown author of "*Don Quixote*" never set foot on American soil, or was in any manner connected to the Spanish exploration and conquest of the Americas, but Cervantes himself was a victim of slavery, spending five years in captivity in North Africa.

Equally shocking has been the attacks on Saint Junípero Serra - canonized by Pope Francis in 2015 - whose statues have been defaced and brought down in San Francisco and Los Angeles. Father Serra was instrumental in establishing and expanding the Mission system in California and, as Pope Francis declared in Washington, D.C: "*[Saint] Junipero sought to defend the dignity of the native community, to protect it from those who had mistreated and abused it [...] he made them his brothers and sisters*".

These last events come amidst a wave of attacks against other relevant figures of the European history of America, like the Genoese discoverer Christopher Columbus, and Queen Isabel of Castile, herself a staunch defender of rights and dignity of the native populations. Other explorers like Juan de Oñate, Diego de Vargas, Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo, the Polish revolutionary hero Tadeusz Kościuszko and even some of the US Founding Fathers like George Washington and Thomas Jefferson, who helped shape the modern history of North America, have faced similar attacks.

As the baffling defacement of Cervantes' statue shows, this movement has transcended any debate on minority rights in the US or the critical revision of European colonialism, and has degenerated in an all-out offensive against anything that evokes the European legacy of the modern United States.

This aggressive and unilateral rewriting of history constitutes an attack not only on the legacy of Europeans and Americans of European descent - including the Spanish language spoken by over 40 million people in the US - but also on the Catholic faith of millions of Americans who prize the evangelizing efforts of Father Serra, Antonio de Montesinos or Bartolomé de las Casas, and their unwavering defence of the life and dignity of the native populations.

Europe and America share a rich history in common that needs to be protected, as well as the values of freedom, justice, and equality, on which our friendship was built. None has ever expressed this mutual commitment to liberty better than Miguel de Cervantes, whose eternal Don Quixote so passionately declared that,

"Liberty is one of the choicest gifts that heaven hath bestowed upon man, and exceeds in volume all the treasures which the earth contains within its bosom or the sea covers. Liberty, as well as honor, man ought to preserve at the hazard of his life, for without it, life is insupportable"

Yours sincerely,

José Ramón Bauzá

Adrián Vázquez

Maite Pagazaurtundúa

Susana Solís



Javier Nart

José Manuel García Margallo

Juan Ignacio Zoido

Dominique Riquet

Vlad-Marius Botos

Paco Millán Mon

Leopoldo López

Mazaly Aguilar

Dolors Montserrat

Rosa Estarás

Gilles Lebreton

Philippe Barruel

Jorge Buxadé

Thierry Mariani

Derk-Jan Eppink

Esteban González Pons

Pablo Arias

Gabriel Mato

Rob Rooker

Javier Zarzalejos

Robert Roos

Gianna Gancia

Tom Vandendriessche

Isabel Benjumea

Members of the European Parliament