

Editorial

Giving thanks to those who have helped us all deal with the tragedy; we are not alone.

As Americans, we have so much to be thankful for. Religious freedom, democracy and public education are high on the wish list of many other countries. As Americans, we are extremely fortunate.

As Elon students, we are even more fortunate. One month ago today, our nation suffered a loss no one could have prepared us for. And since then, our administration, professors and staff have been working their

hardest to make sure every single Elon student feels informed, supported and above all safe.

Meetings, forums, church services and memorials have graced our campus and helped us deal with a national tragedy that hits each of us differently. We prayed, talked, sang, cried, and listened as our Elon network tried to help us make sense out of something that seems so senseless.

Now it is time to say thank-

you. To the president, who grieved with us, that first day at College Coffee, to the chaplain who prayed with us, to the staff who spent their nights by the phone, waiting for students to call, waiting to give support. To all of Elon who have worked together to help us deal with all of this as a community, thank you. Your efforts are the reason we have been able to maintain even the smallest amount of normalcy on our campus. You are the reason we can sleep, feel safe and believe there is hope. You are the reason we are still here, grieving as a campus. Thank you for never letting us feel, not for one minute, that we are alone.



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Controversy surrounds Columbus Day and historical figure

Jessica Vitak

Chief Copy Editor

Looking back at our history, there have been innumerable accounts of one group oppressing another. The Christians were oppressed by the pagans following the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. The Jews have survived widespread genocide at the hands of the Nazis during the 1930s and 1940s. Blacks were not only picked up from their native lands and thrown on ships to the New World, but were then forced into slavery for more than three centuries. Natives living in otherwise uninhabited land have been displaced over and over again throughout history, simply because they were considered uncivilized and inferior.



On Monday, the nation remembered and celebrated the 509th anniversary of explorer Christopher Columbus' amazing journey across the Atlantic and his "discovery of America."

However, a critical look at the events of the time, as well as the controversy surrounding Columbus, paints a very different picture. In fact, after spending class time

Monday discussing the actual details of Columbus and his sweep across the Caribbean in the late 15th century, I reevaluated my stance on the national holiday. I can see both sides of the story now, and I understand both the positive and negative implications of that fated journey from Portugal in 1492.

The issue is one of hot debate among both intellectuals and youth in society. In an article in the Ayn Rand Institute's publication, *The Philosophy of Objectivism*, author Michael Berliner declares Columbus Day "a time to celebrate," but not for the traditional reasons.

Instead, he sees its global implications - the colonization that swept across the western hemisphere during the next five centuries may very well have been stunted, delayed or altered significantly. No one can say for sure what may have happened if Columbus had not made the fortuitous discovery that there was land past the horizon.

"Columbus should be honored, for in so doing, we honor Western civilization," Berliner said. "But the critics do not want to bestow such honor, because their real goal is to denigrate the values of Western civilization and to glorify the primitivism, mysticism, and collectivism..."

The critics Berliner speaks of comprise a large number of students and human-rights activists across the country. Transform Columbus Day (TCD) is an alliance of people who feel the country should not place a

slave trader on such a high pedestal in the American eye. With the support of dozens of local, state and federal agencies, TCD held numerous events in Denver, Color., from Oct. 5-8, including a national march against Columbus Day, police brutality, corruption, intolerance and denial of human rights, among other issues.

TCD offers quite a different perspective on Columbus' life. They see his background as a slave trader and the degradation of Caribbean native cultures as a direct result of European colonization. The organization's mission statement says that "celebrations honoring Columbus reinforce a historical process of racism, theft, lies, murder, slavery and the destruction of all aspects of the environment."

The activist group seeks to educate the public about the realities of Columbus and to eventually have the holiday removed from the calendar.

But will they actually succeed? I myself am very surprised at the information I have learned over the past several days, both in a class lecture and through individual research. It is estimated that more than 15 million indigenous people living on the Caribbean Islands Columbus governed died within one generation of his "discovery," the first, but certainly not last, mass genocide in recorded history. When I read this, all I could imagine was the first time I read Wiesel's

"Night" and cried for hours thinking about the inhumanity of such senseless murders. The numbers killed during the Holocaust are roughly comparable to those killed during Columbus' escapades, yet no one considers this (or probably even knows this) when looking back at history.

Columbus also instituted what would become common practice in the following centuries by entering a foreign land, viewing the indigenous people as somehow inferior and instating laws regulating all freedoms. These people, in essence, became slaves. Refusal to comply with the laws or disagreement with the Christian ideals forced upon them resulted in immediate death. Any civil liberties these people had vanished with the European's first step on land. In following years, this trend of religious and intellectual dominance was a key characteristic of exploration and settlement in the New World.

As much as I agree with what groups like TCD have to say, my practical side agrees with those on Ayn Rand's side, understanding the global implications of Columbus' voyage. It is difficult in this day and age, but one must consider that people in the 15th century believed Columbus would fall off the edge of the earth when he reached the horizon. His voyage opened a floodgate of exploration and discovery; without it, neither you nor I may have been here today.

THE PENDULUM

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