

COLUMBUS AND RACISM

Question: Was Columbus a racist?

Answer: Racism is defined as prejudice, discrimination, or antagonism directed against a person or people on the basis of their membership of a particular racial or ethnic group, typically one that is a minority or marginalized. Columbus always treated the indigenous peoples fairly, even when some of his contemporaries did not. Indigenous conquests among themselves had been going on long before the arrival of European explorers, and Columbus actually helped establish foundations for the fair treatment of conquered people.

What you should know:

- Phillis Wheatley was an 18th Century freed slave who was the first person to coin the word “Columbia” in a poem. Wheatley was the first Black poet in America to publish a book. The term “Columbia” appears in the opening lines of her poem, “His Excellency General Washington.”
- The Knights of Columbus, which was named for the famed explorer because of his steadfast adherence to the Catholic faith, was founded in 1882 as a mutual benefit society for working-class and immigrant Catholics in the United States. It now grown to support refugee relief, Catholic education, local parishes and dioceses, and global Catholic causes. The Knights of Columbus also condone racism of any kind and stress that their namesake was not a racist.
- Columbus is hated by the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) because of his Catholic faith and Genoese origin. Historically, the KKK is secret hate group in the Southern United States, active for several years after the Civil War, aiming to suppress the newly-acquired rights of Black people and to oppose carpetbaggers from the North. The



KKK was responsible for many lawless and violent proceedings. Formally founded in 1915 as the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, the group continues to be active in the United States, especially in the South, and directs its actions against African Americans, Muslims, Jews, Catholics, foreign-born individuals, and other groups.

- During the 1920s, the Klan sought a repeal of the Columbus Day holiday, writing against it and disrupting its celebrations. In 1924, the Klan burned a cross to disturb a Columbus Day celebration in Pennsylvania. A Klan publication, "The American Standard," ran an article called "Columbus Day, A Papal Fraud" in 1924. And in 1927, the Klan successfully opposed the erection of a statue of Columbus in Richmond, Virginia, only to see the decision to reject the statue reversed.

SEE ALSO: [Columbus and Slavery](#)

SOURCES:

Christopher Columbus

The Hero: Defending Columbus From Modern Day Revisionism by Rafael Ortiz, Create Space, 2017.

Columbus Day vs Indigenous

Peoples' Day: The Truth Behind the Anti-Columbus Movement by Rafael Ortiz, Create Space, 2018.

Christopher Columbus and the Christian Church:

And Why He Matters to Believers Today by Rafael Ortiz, Create Space, 2019.

