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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

IAHS Condemns Violence by Italian Americans, Calls for Permanent Removal of Columbus Statues

Comments by Gabriel Piemonte, founder and president, IAHS

“We are here first and foremost to condemn the series of acts of violence and intimidation that have taken place in the past two weeks in the name of protecting these statues of Christopher Columbus. We stand with Miracle Boyd and the other citizens who were assaulted by police at the Friday, July 17th rally at the Grant Park Columbus statue and we stand with the people who have been assaulted and intimidated by the pro-Columbus Italian Americans who are roving our city and threatening especially Black and Brown citizens.

“The Italian American Heritage Society of Chicago calls upon Mayor Lori Lightfoot to make permanent the removal of Christopher Columbus statues here and in Grant Park in response to the threats, violence, and intimidation that have taken place since Chicagoans have begun to call for the removal of these monuments to genocide. From the assault of an 18 year old girl in Grant Park by a police officer to online threats and racist epithets to physical intimidation, these statues have awakened their legacy of hatred and violence once again upon members of the Indigenous community and other citizens. As Italian Americans, we condemn the honoring of Columbus the murderer, mutilator, and enslaver and wish to convey loud and clear that there are members of our community who do not see this figure as a positive presence in our city.

“We further demand that the Joint Civic Committee of Italian Americans publicly condemn the actions of members of their organization and other Italian Americans who have been harassing and threatening people who disagree with their position on the murderous Christopher Columbus' statue and to direct their members to cease political activity and intimidation tactics. Members of the Committee, a 501c3 organization, have been seen assaulting a protestor, have threatened people online and used racist language, and have appeared maskless in a pack at a ward office, intimidating residents of the local community.

“Let’s be clear: All of the acts of violence and intimidation in the name of protecting these figures are at best perverse and in many cases criminal. Understand that figures like Columbus are steeped in the blood of the past and do not only live in the past. They unleash the brutality of the state and hate-filled citizens. That is the lesson of these last two weeks. Let us end the danger to our city of more agitation and violence. This symbol is dead. Italian Americans do not want it. It is a disgrace to the city. Make the removal permanent.”

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