Università di Firenze Dipartimento di Formazione, Lingue, Intercultura, Letterature e Psicologia

Corso in Lingua e Cultura degli U.S.A. John Gilbert

“Columbus Day No Reason to Celebrate”

By Mary Annette Pember, 6 October 2006

The Salt Lake Tribune, Salt Lake City, Utah

Instructions: Put the following paragraphs in the appropriate order to reconstruct the article. The first two paragraphs have already been done.

\_\_1\_\_ A. In 1492, Columbus sailed the ocean blue on a mission of plunder for Spain. When he arrived here, he commenced the virtual annihilation of the indigenous peoples of the Americas.

\_\_2\_\_ B. A culture and nation founded on the murderous, exploitive philosophy of this act has two choices: apologize and make reparations, or cunningly twist the facts and make it an opportunity for celebration.

\_\_\_\_\_ C. So we're pretty ambivalent about the whole celebration idea surrounding our near-demise. The Columbus attitude has justified U.S-Indian policy all the way from stolen lands and broken treaties to recent attacks on tribal sovereignty and the failure to make good on Indian trust funds.

\_\_\_\_\_ D. The European "discovery" of America is a misnomer. This victor's history is still very much at the heart of the American psyche. By ignoring the fact that the place was already inhabited by millions of indigenous peoples, the celebration of Columbus Day exalts a criminal act.

\_\_\_\_\_ E. Asking the U.S. government to abandon Columbus Day in favor of Indigenous Peoples' Day is akin to asking for a sea change in the national psychology. It demands a soul-searching objectivity that is simply too threatening to the mainstream culture and economy.

\_\_\_\_\_ F. I bet few Americans would see the irony.

\_\_\_\_\_ G. As a native woman, experienced in the repercussions of American policy-making, I'm waiting for the president's supporters to propose establishing a George W. Bush Day in Iraq, celebrating the civilizing of that country.

\_\_\_\_\_ H. This philosophy has allowed the current Christopher Columbus reincarnation, George W. Bush, sufficient national support in his efforts to bring democratic light to the darker regions of Iraq.

\_\_\_\_\_ I. Currently, mainstream America has a "just get over it" attitude to native peoples, dismissing our grievances as political correctness gone awry. But in the recent words of an elder, "If the shoe were on the other foot, Americans would carry laminated copies of their ancestors' treaties until they got their just dues."

\_\_\_\_\_ J. The United States has chosen the latter.

\_\_\_\_\_ K. At the time of European "discovery" in the 15th century, there were more than 10 million native peoples in North America. But by the beginning of the 20th century, our numbers had dwindled to less the 230,000.

\_\_\_\_\_ L. Mostly, we simply say, "Ouch," and go on with the business of surviving the policies borne out of a ruling government's mindset that sees Christopher Columbus as a national hero.

\_\_\_\_\_ M. In many ways, the whole Columbus Day debate is a big yawn for native peoples, just another in the ongoing pinches in the rear that define being Native American in America.

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