

## Statement for Indigenous People's Day

October 9, 2016  
Rev. Rebecca M. Bryan  
First Parish in Brookline

It is that time in the service when we move into a place of prayer, meditation, centering. This morning, I would like to take this time to recognize the injustices committed against American Indians. Our forebears, yes, and those that we continue to this day. I lift up the movement of changing Columbus Day to Indigenous People's Day and invite us all to consider supporting that each in our way.

Columbus Day. Thousands and thousands of children, and adults are taught, believe, and live as though Columbus was a great man who discovered America. They may put a disclaimer in there that says something like, "Oh yes, I know there were people here, I know that..."

Do they really?

Do I?

Do I really know and live working toward a place of atonement with the fact that not only did Columbus not discover America, but that he initiated the slave trade? His "discovery" marks not the start of a new world but rather an explosion of European colonization. Bill Bigelow from the Howard Zinn Education project writes this, "If Indigenous peoples' lives mattered in our society, and if Black people's lives matter in our society, it would be inconceivable that we would honor the father of the slave trade with a national holiday."<sup>1</sup>

Our denial of this started with and continues to this day with The Doctrine of Discovery. This doctrine, most notably advanced by the 1823 Supreme Court decision Johnson v. M'Intosh, and I quote now from the UUA, "*specifically sanctioned and promoted the conquest, colonization, and exploitation of non-Christian territories and peoples. Hundreds of years of decisions and laws continuing right up to our own time can ultimately be traced back to the Doctrine of Discovery—laws that invalidate or ignore the rights, sovereignty, and humanity of indigenous peoples in the United States and around the world.*"<sup>2</sup>

Scholar Stephen Newcomb refers to this as the "Doctrine of Discovery dominion, and domination." His work including articles, video on YouTube, and film are found on a handout on the table by the door. Please consider learning more and becoming part of our national atonement to our indigenous peoples.

We will sit together now in a few minutes of quiet meditation. When the time is finished I will ring the singing bowl.

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<sup>1</sup> Abolish Columbus Day: Resources and Tools Zinn Education Project, "Time to Abolish Columbus Day" page 4.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.uua.org/multiculturalism/dod/what-doctrine-discovery>