

## TESTIMONY to Senate Government Operations Committee 2/27/19: S.68, an act relating to Indigenous People's Day

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Member: Episcopal Diocese of Vermont. Bishop Ely has taught us about dignity as integral to being part of the Jesus movement. Our diocese is engaged in a process of trying to heal from the infection of racism, which undermines dignity and community. Our parish in Burlington is planning a series on dismantling racism for this year.

Celebrating Indigenous Peoples Day can help us honor the dignity of Indigenous People who still live here in VT and in the US. We find it shameful to continue celebrating or honoring a man who denied dignity to the people he encountered in the Americas, bringing violence, disease and exploitation wherever he went.

Ally: Migrant Justice/Justicia Migrante. We are working to uphold the dignity and human rights of immigrants here in Vermont, many who are fleeing long-term effects of US and Canadian exploitation of their land and people in Mexico. Chiapas State is the homeland of many farm-workers in Vermont and a place where native people have lived on the land for centuries but have struggled for life itself since the 20<sup>th</sup> century because of economic and political factors including NAFTA. Native people in Chiapas rose up against oppression in 1994 and began to develop community structures as alternatives to external domination and resulting extreme poverty.

Celebrating Indigenous People's Day could honor our Mexican and Guatemalan immigrant neighbors, their dignity and their contributions to our state and country, rather than honoring a cruel and greedy man who persecuted their ancestors centuries ago. Let us not continue this travesty!

Member: Vermont Racial Justice Alliance. We are working to dismantle the implicit bias and systemic racism which infect our whole society in Vermont.

We feel deeply that it is time to align our holidays with our aspirations and positive values. We must remove the name of Columbus, and transform the day to a time of honoring and learning from Indigenous People, our neighbors who live here.

*Please vote S.68 out of your committee before crossover, with a positive recommendation for passage in the Senate.* Thank you for giving me this time to speak.