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THE COUNCIL
OF
THE CITY OF NEW YORK
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August 22, 2017

The Honorable Bill de Blasio
Mayor
The City of New York
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

The Honorable Melissa Mark-Viverito
Speaker
The Council of the City of New York
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Dear Mayor de Blasio and Speaker Mark-Viverito,

The reign of terror on statues has begun. A conversation, once grounded in rational questions over the complexity and legacy of Confederate war monuments and slavery, has now devolved into calls for the removal of Washington, Jefferson, and Christopher Columbus statues. Whether you intended to or not, you have helped validate President Trump's question of "who's next?"

Before the city devolves into Jacobinism, riots, and anger over monuments like Columbus's pillar, which stood seemingly without controversy in Columbus Circle just last week and posed proudly in front of the camera lenses of thousands of tourists all summer, I am calling on you to present *a clear and concise document outlining the specific criteria* which the removal of the city's public monuments and the renaming of the city's public spaces and buildings will be judged. Additionally, I am calling on you to immediately reconsider any removal of statues, monuments, and buildings named in honor of Christopher Columbus, a revered figure in Italian-American culture.

The citizens of New York may be demanding a public conversation on its monuments and memorials. As two elected officials who have separately demanded the removal of statues and plaques, I believe it falls on you to develop these public guidelines with public input. *Although your intentions may be well placed, I fear that an examination into these particular statues, as well as the many others the city hopes to "review," will present complex and cloudy historical interpretations that will only serve to deepen gaps between people of New York with different backgrounds and historical worldviews.* I will also bluntly remind you that it will not change the history of those they commemorate, controversial or otherwise.

I recognize, as I am sure you do, the tremendous can of worms that the city of New York has now opened. Once again, I urge you to immediately reconsider any removal of Christopher Columbus statues or place names, and publish your criteria on how monuments will be judged as soon as possible.

Respectfully Yours,

Joseph C. Borelli
Member of the Council
51st District