

Presidential Documents

Proclamation 7039 of October 10, 1997

Columbus Day, 1997

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

The life and achievements of Christopher Columbus demonstrate how powerful and lasting an influence one individual can have on the course of human history. Although great explorers reached the shores of this continent both before and after Columbus, few have captured the American imagination as he has. Perhaps because we have always been an adventurous people, eager for challenge and change, we feel a special affinity for this extraordinary man who left the safety of known waters to pursue his vision across the ocean to the threshold of a new world.

Although his momentous voyages across the Atlantic took place more than 500 years ago, their impact can still be felt today. Columbus' discoveries in the West Indies brought about substantive and continuing contact between the peoples of the Old World and the New, contact that gave rise to misunderstandings and conflicts that we still seek to reconcile today. He also made possible the exploration and settlement of North America and opened the door to our continent for generations to follow—people of every race and culture and ethnic origin, who have given our Nation its rich and unique diversity. Christopher Columbus, a son of Italy whose bold enterprise was made possible by the Spanish crown, holds a special place in the hearts of Americans of Italian and Spanish heritage. But, as we prepare for our own voyage of discovery into the next millennium, all Americans can draw inspiration from the character and accomplishments of Columbus. With vision, courage, imagination, and optimism, we can create a future bright with promise and a new world where all of us can pursue our dreams.

In recognition of the enduring achievements of Christopher Columbus, the Congress, by joint resolution of April 30, 1934 (48 Stat. 657), and an Act of June 28, 1968 (82 Stat. 250), has requested the President to proclaim the second Monday in October of each year as "Columbus Day."

NOW, THEREFORE, I, WILLIAM J. CLINTON, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim October 13, 1997, as Columbus Day. I call upon the people of the United States to observe this day with appropriate ceremonies and activities. I also direct that the flag of the United States be displayed on all public buildings on the appointed day in honor of Christopher Columbus.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this tenth day of October, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-seven, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-second.

