

The Final Round¹

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Resolved: Christopher Columbus' role in American history should continue to be celebrated in the United States.

A Note about the Notes

I've reproduced my flow chart for the final round below augmented by what I remember from the debate. The notes are limited by how quickly I could write and how well I heard what was said. Others may have slightly different versions. I'm sure the debaters will read them and exclaim, at points, "That's not what I said!" I apologize for any errors, but I hope debaters will appreciate this insight that what a judge hears may not be what they say or wish they had said.

There are two versions of the notes. The one below is chronological, reproducing each speech in the order in which the arguments were made. It shows how the debate was actually presented. The second is formatted to look more like my written flow chart, with each contention "flowed" across the page as the teams argued back and forth. It's close to the way I actually take notes during the debate.

The Final Round

The final round was between Stamford (David Retter and Kevin George) on the Affirmative and Hamden (Eric Kirchner and Khalid Lum) on the Negative. The debate was won by Hamden.

1) First Affirmative Constructive

- a) Introduction
- b) Statement of the Resolution
- c) Christopher Columbus ("CC"²) may have been the discoverer of America, the popularizer of the idea, or guilty of launching genocide, but his voyages were a net positive and a turning point in history.

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² This introduces an abbreviation. I will use "CC" in the place of "Christopher Columbus" in the rest of these notes.

- d) A1³: No one is required to celebrate CC, it is a matter of personal choice.
 - i) No one is forced to participate in Italian American or Native American (“NA”) oriented activities.
- e) A2: CC was a pioneer and symbol of his time
 - i) The Renaissance was starting
 - ii) CC opened new territory and trade opportunities
- f) A3: The deaths of NAs was to primarily to the mixing of the Old and New Worlds
 - i) CC was not the cause of the diseases, which no one understood or could prevent at the time
 - ii) CC was not the cause of the inevitable cultural clashes.

2) Cross-Ex of the First Affirmative

- a) Do we celebrate holidays on our own time? Yes
- b) Without Federal declarations or laws? The resolution is about CC not Christopher Columbus Day (“CCD”)
- c) Isn’t CCD the main celebration of CC? Yes
- d) Is CC celebrated in any other way? We are arguing about CC’s role not CCD.
- e) Are there other ways to celebrate? Yes
- f) Was CC an American? No, he was Italian.
- g) CC voyages led to a clash of cultures? Yes
- h) Didn’t CC believe he was in Asia? No
- i) Can you give us examples of other ways CC is celebrated? In textbooks, and by Italian Americans.
- j) Are there other reasons to celebrate CC? He was the most famous explorer of his time, perhaps of all time.

3) First Negative Constructive

- a) The Affirmative gave no definition of terms. We define “continue to celebrate” as meaning that the US will continue to have CCD as a national holiday.
- b) N1: CCD is not an accurate portrayal of American values.
 - i) There should be no holiday for genocide
 - ii) Columbus stood for cultural and racial domination
 - iii) US holidays, like Thanksgiving, celebrate unity, not imperialism and control.
- c) N2: US holidays should celebrate Americans
 - i) CC was not an American, as the Affirmative admitted in cross-ex
 - ii) CC never set foot in the US, but sailed mostly around Hispaniola
 - iii) CC is as relevant to the US as the explorers who discovered Australia
 - iv) The English colonization is much more closely related to the US
- d) N3: CCD is unnecessary
 - i) For most it’s just a day out of work or school
 - ii) There is no cultural significance, as CC was a non-American promoting a non-American culture
 - iii) Students would be better off if they stayed in school
 - iv) 17 states don’t observe the holiday.
- e) A1⁴: Celebration really isn’t a personal choice if it’s a national holiday

³ I will use “A1” to refer to the first affirmative contentions, “N2” to the second negative contention and so forth.

- f) A2: How can Columbus be called a pioneer when he didn't really know where he was?
 - g) A3: The cause of the clash of cultures is not relevant; it all came about as a result of CC's voyages.
- 4) Cross-ex of the First Negative**
- a) Do people celebrate CCD to celebrate genocide? CC's voyages had impacts that must be recognized.
 - b) Does CCD celebrate his discoveries or the death of NAs? Few celebrate the holiday personally, but it should be seen as a symbol of mass death.
 - c) CC was not an American? No, he was not.
 - d) Didn't his voyages bring about America? CC had no contact with the US.
 - e) But didn't he discover the New World? Not North America.
 - f) Does the day have significance? Yes.
 - g) Wasn't CC in search of a way to India? He didn't know where he was.
- 5) Second Affirmative Constructive**
- a) N1: Compare CCD to Veteran's Day. Both memorialize men who were heroes to some, killers to others, but all put their life on the line for a cause.
 - i) CC sailed when most people thought the world was flat.
 - b) N2: We celebrate many non-American holidays in America, for example St. Patrick's Day, Haitian Flag Day.
 - c) N3: CCD gives teachers a reason to teach about CC's legacy of the new world, exploration and trade.
 - i) CC made 4 voyages that were significant historically
 - ii) In cross-ex (CX) the Negative admitted that CCD celebrates positives, not CC as a killer
 - iii) CC is an icon of his time, much as the Mona Lisa in art.
 - iv) CC's voyages catalyzed the colonization of the entire new world.
 - d) A1: The celebration of CC is a personal choice; we shouldn't deny the right to celebrate
 - e) A2: CC was the right guy in the right place at the right time, and symbolizes it.
 - f) A3: CC was not responsible for the diseases that killed most of the NAs. It's only in modern times that we have learned the cause and cure
- 6) Cross-ex of the Second Affirmative**
- a) How can you equate Veteran's Day with CCD? Many argue CC killed NAs
 - b) The NAs were our enemies? Many were killed.
 - c) Is Veteran's Day about killing? No.
 - d) Is Haitian Flag Day a national holiday? No.
 - e) Isn't St. Patrick's Day a religious and not an ethnic holiday? I don't think there is a difference here.
 - f) I am an Algerian and a Muslim? Aren't most Irish Catholic, and St. Patrick a religious holiday? Not all.
 - g) What is the point of your third contention? It clashes with the idea that CC was as killer.
 - h) How does negating the resolution affect A1? It could prevent a day off and the parades

⁴ Here the First Negative is entering rebuttal arguments against the first Affirmative contention, A1.

- i) Do you need a holiday to celebrate or to take a day off? No
- 7) Second Negative Constructive**
 - a) We note the Affirmative has not disagreed with our definitions.
 - b) A1: This contention doesn't matter. Those who want to can celebrate on their own.
 - i) No need for a Federal holiday, school closings.
 - ii) CC is just not that significant to the US
 - c) A2: There is no other national holiday celebrating a non-American
 - i) St. Patrick's Day is Irish and a Catholic holiday
 - d) A3: CC wasn't the first, he was one of many, and he just wasn't that important
 - e) N1: American values are those of unity and compromise, e.g. Thanksgiving
 - i) CC was looking for domination.
 - ii) It would be like the Arabs celebrating the invasion of Lebanon
 - iii) Veteran's Day isn't about killing but service. It originally was Armistice Day celebrating the end of a war
 - f) N2: CC wasn't an American. Why not have Alexander the Great Day?
 - g) N3: No one gets excited about CCD. It's just a day off.
- 8) Cross-ex of Second Negative**
 - a) You said we should have no holiday celebrating non-Americans? Not individuals.
 - b) Doesn't Thanksgiving celebrate English Puritans? They and their descendants became Americans
 - c) Wasn't CC a catalyst to all this settlement? Only very indirectly
 - d) Why do you say that? Others would have made the voyage eventually
 - e) So CC isn't significant? No
 - f) He doesn't represent the discovery, and his voyages didn't lead to a growth in trade and settlement? His specific impact was minimal.
 - g) Would people celebrate if there were no holiday? They could privately if they wanted to.
 - h) The resolution does not seem to require the Negative definition and include the holiday? We believe the two are linked.
 - i) No other way to celebrate CC? None currently.
 - j) CCD is against US values? Yes
- 9) First Affirmative Rebuttal**
 - a) If, as the Negative claims, CC has no real role, why are we debating the resolution?
 - i) Negative misinterprets CCD. We celebrate the good, not the bad, and CC's discovery led to a movement.
 - ii) St. Patrick's Day and CCD are not ethnic holidays as currently celebrated
 - iii) The resolution is not about holidays. We are discussing CC, not CCD
 - iv) The Negative definition is incorrect, especially if one refers to the packet along with the resolution
 - b) N1: We celebrate CC for the positives, the movement that resulted from his voyages
 - c) N2: We do celebrate non-Americans. We should celebrate greatness regardless of country.
 - d) N3: The Negative never backed up their claim the holiday was unnecessary.
- 10) First Negative Rebuttal**

- a) The Affirmative did not define terms, so the Negative definition holds.
 - i) CCD is the main celebration.
- b) The Affirmative has given no proof of the cultural significance of CCD
 - i) An indirect catalyst is not enough
- c) If we are celebrating the movement not the man, then the legacy is one of mass murder.
 - i) If there is no cultural significance, mass murder is all that is left
- d) N2: There is no other Federal holiday that is not fully American
 - i) St. Patrick's Day is a Catholic celebration
- e) CCD is not used for learning. It's just another day off.

11) Second Negative Rebuttal

- a) The resolution and the packet both point to CCD. There is no other celebration
- b) A1: No rebuttal to our arguments. It essentially celebrates destruction not unity, in contrast to Veteran's Day or Thanksgiving.
 - i) Resolution doesn't prevent personal choice to celebrate on one's own time
 - ii) CCD is an unnecessary use of government's time—no holiday for St. Patrick
 - iii) School would be a better use of the time than a day off to do nothing
- c) A2: CC not really related to the US
- d) A3: We can blame CC if we are going to celebrate him as a symbol.

12) Second Affirmative Rebuttal

- a) Negative case is based on accusations of genocide
 - i) Under cross-ex, Negative admitted CCD looks to the man and the idea of exploration, the movement, not genocide
 - ii) CC is a symbol, like the Mona Lisa
- b) N2: American values are celebrated—unity, equality, the melting pot
 - i) Celebrating only Americans ignores the contributions of other cultures
- c) N3: The Negative mocks the holiday, but how many get excited about Martin Luther King Day
 - i) Why Martin Luther King? He was a great man, but so were others
 - ii) Lack of excitement among many doesn't deny his importance
 - iii) Negative admitted CC was significant, and we believe he deserves celebration
- d) A3: The deaths of the NAs were due to a mixing of cultures
- e) CC voyages catalyzed colonization
 - i) CCD represents that movement.