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dell'Udienza
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Unification of Italian Americans
Will County Italian American Association

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Christopher Columbus Statue to return to Chicago's Little Italy

After four-plus years of litigation and negotiation, the Christopher Columbus Statue that once stood in Arrigo Park will have a home.

Today, Cook County Circuit Court Judge Michael T. Mullen ruled the matter between the Chicago Park District, Lori Lightfoot and The City of Chicago VS. The Joint Civic Committee of Italian Americans has been officially resolved.

It was July of 2020 when Mayor Lori Lightfoot removed the statue in the dark of night because of safety concerns during the George Floyd protests. Since then, Chicago's Italian American community has been fighting to get that one back along with another that was removed from Grant Park and a third from the south side.

The deal is that the City of Chicago will give the Christopher Columbus Statue to the JCCIA on loan to be housed in a new Chicago Museum of Italian Immigration located in Little Italy on Taylor Street. JCCIA President Ron Onesti has led the fight with a prominent legal team headed by Enrico Mirabelli, Frank Sommario and Anthony Onesto.

"This resolution is a huge victory for our community, and to all those who believe in free speech and artistic expression," Onesti said. "This is the first step in getting all three statues back to our community."

The other half of the negotiation was determining what would replace the Columbus Statue in Arrigo Park. "Part of what dragged this on for so long was that we demanded that the Columbus Statue be replaced by another prominent person of Italian heritage, such as Mother Cabrini. We got that too," Onesti said.

"The importance of returning the Columbus Statue to the embrace of the Italian community cannot be understated. The lawsuit served its purpose, to reunite the Statue with its community," lead counsel Mirabelli said.

"Of course, our goal was the return of all three statues to their original locations. But in this current political environment, this solution is a positive step towards an ultimate outcome of bringing the statues back to the community in a way any other ethnic group would want," Onesti said.

The Chicago Museum of Italian immigration will tell the story of the contributions made by Italians to the development of Chicago. It is set to open in October of 2025.