



TESTIMONY OF LETITIA HARMON
POLICY DIRECTOR, AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION OF KANSAS
IN SUPPORT TO HB 2009
KANSAS HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FEDERAL AND STATE AFFAIRS
FEBRUARY 6, 2019

Thank you, Chairman Barker, and members of the committee for affording this opportunity to provide testimony on HB 2009. My name is Letitia Harmon and I serve as the Policy Director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Kansas, a membership organization dedicated to protecting and strengthening the freedoms and democratic processes guaranteed to all of us by the United States Constitution.

We, as a nation, as Americans, as people that engage in communities and societies, value symbols and their meaning. We designate these symbols to indicate our pride and love, whether that be a flag, a work of art, or a holiday that is set aside to honor and commemorate something that we find precious.

As we grow as people, and as we become more inclusive and just as a society, those symbols and those means of commemoration will change. Just such a change has been proposed in HB 2009. This bill acknowledges a history and a fundamental part of American identity that has been overlooked and even suppressed for centuries. Though much more is required of us as a just and equitable society that seeks to honor Indigenous Americans, this is a small way we can show honor and value and representation to the people who were here long before Europeans. Rather than setting aside a national holiday for someone who brought slavery and genocide to this continent, we must alter our preconceptions of history and what deserves to be remembered. Columbus Day elevates a moment in history that many Americans would rather forget. Indigenous People's Day is a step toward the visibility and representation of nations that have existed long before that moment, and will continue to enrich this country long after. As previously stated, symbols are important, because they show

and amplify what we value as a society. It is a matter of integrity that we eliminate symbols that honor oppression, and uplift those that illustrate our values; values of equality, honoring diverse cultures, and freedom from oppression.

The ACLU fights for these values through litigation and policy, and believes strongly that the language we use, the symbols we fly, and the days we observe, should all reflect those values. HB 2009 indicates that we value our rich heritage and all the cultures that contributed to it, and should be passed into law.

We strongly urge you to support HB 2009, and in so doing to support the Indigenous Americans whose voices have been suppressed. This is a simple, yet important way, to acknowledge who we both are and aspire to be as Kansans and as Americans.