

Indigenous Law Institute

P.O. Box 188 ALPINE, CA 91903

Governor Jerry Brown
c/o State Capitol Building, Suite 1173
Sacramento, CA 9814

July 20, 2015

Dear Governor Brown,

We are sending you this letter to explain why we are asking you to oppose the sainthood or canonization of Father Junipero Serra. This past January, when you were asked about Pope Francis' decision to canonize Serra, you were quoted as saying that "Father Serra was a very courageous man, and one of the innovators and pioneers of California." You also acknowledged the "horrible devastation of the native peoples."

Serra was a principal agent of that horrible devastation inflicted on nations and peoples in Baja and Alta California as a result of the Spanish Catholic missions. His use of a brutal system and forced labor to build those missions was a direct consequence of a conceptual and behavioral system of domination and dehumanization that the Holy See of the Catholic Church promulgated and promoted. The Holy See did so by means of various papal edicts, such as the papal bull *Dum Diversas* of 1452 and the *Romanus Pontifex* of 1455, as well as the papal edicts issued by Pope Alexander VI in 1493 shortly after Cristobal Colón's first voyage to the Caribbean a year earlier.

Dum Diversas and *Romanus Pontifex* were applied to non-Christian Africa and to other non-Christian lands. Those documents authorized the monarchy of Portugal "to invade, capture, vanquish, and subdue," all Saracens and pagans, "and other enemies of Christ," "to reduce their persons to perpetual slavery, and take away all their possessions and property." This language from the Holy See provided a key part of the context for the African slaver trade, even before the language was carried to the western hemisphere.

If you care to read those papal documents for yourself, and study their language advocating and promulgating enslavement, domination, and dehumanization, they are found in the book *European Treaties Bearing on the History of the United States and its Dependencies to 1648*, published by the Carnegie Institution in 1917. The book is available by searching Googlebooks online. Notice that the title of the book mentions "Treaties." Those Holy See documents form part of the conceptual context for the international law system that has also been used against original nations and peoples.

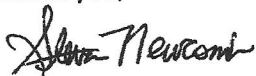
A saint is said to be deserving of great respect, reverence, and veneration. How can the principal agent who brought a deadly system of what the Holy See called *imperii Christiani* (Christian empire)—with its intention to "reduce" and "subjugate" (dominate) our nations and peoples—be deserving of veneration and great respect, let alone reverence? Is it because he is now

considered to have been "compassionate" in his efforts to invade the territories of original nations and forcibly impose a foreign cultural pattern of Spanish Catholic domination on our ancestors? How does someone compassionately subjugate free and independent peoples by stripping of their independence?

When Serra is said to have been an "innovator" and "pioneer," the question arises: In what way was he innovative, and innovative toward what? An innovator is generally understood as someone who "introduces new methods, ideas, or products." What new methods, ideas, or products did Serra introduce and to whom where they "new?" The Holy See's Latin ideas of "*imperii Christiani*" and Christian "*deprimantur*" were certainly "new" to the original nations and peoples of the continent in Baja and Alta California. A pioneer is typically defined as "a person who is among the first to explore or settle a new country or area," or, in short, as a colonizer. Colonization is a process of invasion on behalf of an empire, which, with regard to Serra, happened to be the Spanish Catholic Christian Empire.

Why would anyone associate the idea of "sainthood" with the violence, enslavement, death and destruction inflicted on original nations and peoples of the continent and the hemisphere? Why would anyone associate "sainthood" with the "innovative" and "pioneering" invasion and colonization of the lands and territories of our original nations by the Spanish Catholic empire, and its mission system of domination? For all the above reasons, Governor Brown, we are asking you to sensibly go on record as opposing Pope Francis' decision to grant sainthood to Junipero Serra.

Thank you,



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