

National Holidays

1. Begin by introducing yourself and your organization. Prepare attendees by explaining how you will facilitate the conversation. For example, “*Today we are going to be talking about national holidays. We will look at a couple of different texts and photos to help guide our conversation. I encourage you to listen to each other with respect and share your opinions and thoughts openly with the group.*”
2. **Introductions – 10 minutes**
 - a. Introduce yourself
 - b. Have participants go around the circle and name their **favorite national holiday**.
 - c. Ask participants:
 - i. Did anything stand out or surprise you?
 - ii. Would 1 or 2 people like to explain their response?
3. **Small Groups – 15 minutes**
 - a. Break Participants into groups of 2-3 and pass around Normal Rockwell’s *Freedom from Want* image.
 - b. Have participants discuss the image:
 - i. What’s happening in this photo?
 - ii. What message is this image trying to convey?
4. **Whole Group – 20minutes**
 - a. Bring participants back to the larger group to discuss:
 - i. How do national holidays bring people together?
 - ii. How do national holidays represent bigger ideas about shared ideas?
 - iii. When do national holidays help tell a story?
 - iv. How important is a shared national identity?
5. **Small Groups – 20 minutes:**
 - a. Break participants into small groups of 2-3 and pass out the *2023 Columbus Day Presidential Proclamation* by former President Joe Biden.
 - b. Have participants discuss:
 - i. Is there anything in this statement that surprised you?
 - ii. How has the meaning of this holiday evolved over time?
6. **Whole Group – 15 minutes:**
 - a. Are there any other holidays where the meaning of the holiday has changed?
 - b. When do you celebrate a holiday versus commemorating?
 - c. Are there any new national holidays that you think should be created?
 - d. Are there any national holidays that should be changed?
7. **Wrap-Up:** Have everyone go around one more time and say one word or phrase that they think of when they think of national holidays.

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Additional Questions

1. How do national holidays differ from state holidays?
2. If you could establish a national holiday, what would it be?
3. How do holidays help us commemorate our history?
4. How should we commemorate national holidays with more difficult histories?
5. How do national holidays change over time?
6. What celebrations or festivals are important to your community?
7. How do holidays bring people together?
8. How are national holidays established?
9. How do you feel about changing or discontinuing national holidays?
10. What is the role of popular culture in national holidays?
11. What stories are associated with national holidays?
12. How do you feel about not everyone participating in national holidays?
13. How would you feel if Election Day became a national holiday?

A Proclamation on Columbus Day, 2023

Today, we celebrate all the Italian Americans, whose courage and character reflect and help define our Nation.

In 1891, 11 Italian Americans were murdered in one of the largest mass lynchings in our Nation's history. In the wake of this horrific attack, President Benjamin Harrison established Columbus Day in 1892. For so many people across our country, that first Columbus Day was a way to honor the lives that had been lost and to celebrate the hope, possibilities, and ingenuity Italian Americans have contributed to our country since before the birth of our republic.

More than a century later, we mark Columbus Day with that purpose — celebrating the heritage of Italian Americans, whose hands helped build our Nation and whose hearts have always carried faith in the American Dream. For many Italian Americans, the story of Christopher Columbus' voyage — from the Spanish port of Palos de la Frontera on behalf of Queen Isabella I and King Ferdinand II — remains a source of pride. It reflects the stories of trips across the Atlantic that so many Italian Americans grew up hearing at the dinner table, whether tales of ancestors who set sail on wooden boats across rough waters to begin new lives on our shores or grandparents who immigrated here with little more than hope in their hearts. These are stories of people leaving everything they knew and loved behind for the promise of opportunity in the United States.

Today, we honor those stories told around the dinner table and celebrate what these hopeful Italian American newcomers brought to our Nation. Italian Americans are educators, service members, doctors, engineers, artists, Government officials, and leaders and innovators in every field. The Italian American community is also a source of strength for our Nation's enduring relationship with Italy — an essential NATO ally and partner in the European Union. Together, we are working to address the challenges of our time, especially supporting the people of Ukraine in defense of their freedom.

America was founded on an idea: that we are all created equal, endowed by our creator with certain inalienable rights, and deserve to be treated equally throughout our lives. Though we have never fully lived up to that idea, our aspirations have never let us walk away from it either. Today, we honor all the Italian Americans who never walked away from our fundamental creed and who, for generations, have helped realize the full promise of our Nation.

In commemoration of Christopher Columbus' historic voyage 531 years ago, the Congress, by joint resolution of April 30, 1934, and modified in 1968 (36 U.S.C. 107), as amended, has requested the President proclaim the second Monday of October of each year as "Columbus Day."

NOW, THEREFORE, I, JOSEPH R. BIDEN JR., President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim October 9, 2023, as Columbus Day. I direct that the flag of the United States be displayed on all public buildings on the appointed day in honor of our diverse history and all who have contributed to shaping this Nation.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this sixth day of October, in the year of our Lord two thousand twenty-three, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and forty-eighth.

JOSEPH R. BIDEN JR.

Freedom from Want

OURS...to fight for



FREEDOM FROM WANT

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16. Norman Rockwell, *Freedom from Want*, 1943. Retrieved from:

<https://americanart.si.edu/artwork/freedom-want-80786>.

17. President Joseph Biden, *A Proclamation on Columbus Day*. October 6, 2023. *The White House*.

Retrieved from: <https://bidenwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2023/10/06/a-proclamation-on-columbus-day-2023/>.