

Present Day Biases –The Good, The Bad And The Ugly



Watch What You Say Pilgrim

**Legends Better Watch What They Say As
They'll Be Judged Not By The Standards Of
Their Times, But By Current Events**

Thomas J. Madden, Chairman and CEO, [Transmedia Group](#)

Protests over police brutality have brought hundreds of years of American history bubbling up through so many of our country's historic monuments and statues, now coming down left and right, mostly left.

In Portland, Ore., demonstrators protesting police killings turn their ire on Thomas Jefferson, toppling a statue of the founding father for enslaving people in his day. Never mind the good things he did like signing the Declaration of

Independence.

In [Richmond, VA.](#), a statue of the Italian navigator and colonizer Christopher Columbus is spray-painted, set on fire and thrown into a lake. Disgrazia!

In the tumultuous District of Columbia, clashes break out as protesters try to pull down a statue of Andrew Jackson, a target of demonstrators because of his treatment of Native Americans. The statue is in Lafayette Square, dangerously near the White House where President Trump doesn't much appreciate the hullabaloo rocking our country coast to coast.

Now Even Frank Rizzo?

Rizzo was mayor of the City of Brotherly Love, Philadelphia, whom I covered when I was a reporter there for The Philadelphia Inquirer? Him too?

In Philadelphia I went to Temple University undergrad and University of Pennsylvania graduate school. Ironically today my [PR](#) firm [TransMedia Group](#) represents GOP Congressional candidate in the 22nd District of Florida, Darlene Swaffar, the 9th grandniece of my graduate school's founder, Ben Franklin, who back in the 18 Century freed his indentured servants and was an outspoken opponent of slavery. Please don't take statues of him down!

Back to Rizzo, supporters went to court in Philadelphia to block the removal of a statue of my former mayor.

The mayor was known for his boldness and bravery in fighting crime, but some remember and cite only what they call his discriminatory policies and they wanted a statue of him removed in the middle of the night.

"You just can't let the mob rule," said lawyer George Bochetto whose petition blocked it.

William Penn still standing.

William Penn is one of the so-far good guy statues remaining, at least until something bad comes out about him that runs counter to today's culture. The figure of William Penn atop Philadelphia City Hall is placed so that his eyes are fixed gazing toward Treaty Park, the scene of Penn's memorable meeting and negotiation with the red men of the forest, and the spot where were laid the foundations of the longest peace ever kept between the native American and the European settlers."

Back to one of my film heroes, John Wayne, whose manly walk I still occasionally try to imitate to impress my wife, Rita, when we walk on the beach.

John Wayne Airport

In the latest move to change the names of U.S. places tied to racist ideas, leaders of Orange County's Democratic Party are pushing to drop my hero's name from the county's airport because of some racist things and bigoted comments he made in an interview with **Playboy Magazine**, in which my brother Don Madden's salty cartoons appeared monthly for decades alongside the sexy centerfolds.

The party's executive committee in Orange County adopted a resolution condemning Wayne's "racist and bigoted statements" in a 1971 interview and called on the county's board of supervisors to drop his "name and likeness" from the airport.

"An international airport that serves millions of people each year should not be named for someone who, in real life, opposed our nation's values of opportunity and justice for all," Ada Briceño, chair of the Democratic Party of Orange County, said in a statement.

The push to oust Wayne, a longtime county resident who died in

1979, from the airport's name, has a lengthy history. Wayne's bigoted statements against Black people, Native Americans and the LGBTQ community in a 1971 Playboy interview are often cited as the reason it's ill-suited to welcome visitors to the diverse Southern California county widely known for its scenic beaches and as the home to Disneyland.

In the interview, Wayne is quoted saying, "I believe in white supremacy until the blacks are educated to a point of responsibility. I don't believe in giving authority and positions of leadership and judgment to irresponsible people." He also said he felt no remorse for the subjugation of Native Americans and called movies such as "Easy Rider" and "Midnight Cowboy" perverted.

The airport in the heart of Orange County was named after Wayne when he died in 1979. Deanne Thompson, an airport spokeswoman, said the county has no plans to change the name or remove a statue of Wayne from the airport, which received more than 10 million passengers in 2018, though the issue comes up periodically.

The Latest Push

But the current push comes as thousands of Americans have taken to the streets to protest police brutality against Black people and systemic racism in the wake of the Minneapolis police killing of George Floyd. In many places, communities have moved to take down statues of former slaveholders – or topple them – and remove the Confederate emblem from imagery including Mississippi's state flag.

It also comes as Orange County has gone over the past four decades from being a predominantly Republican, suburban enclave to a region of more than 3 million residents that is now home to more Democrats than Republicans. The county has also gone from being largely white to much more diverse, with large Latino and Asian communities.

Board Chair Michelle Steel, a Republican, said Wayne's comments are "wrong and sad" but she supports keeping his name on the airport, arguing "a person should be judged on the totality of their actions and contributions to society." She said Wayne also supported U.S. military personnel and Vietnamese refugees who arrived fleeing communism.

Wayne starred in such noble films as "The Alamo," "The Green Berets" and "True Grit," for which he won an Academy Award, while portraying the gruff, rugged cowboys and brave soldiers who were his stock in trade.

Ethan Wayne, the movie star's son, said his father was not racist and hired and worked with people from diverse backgrounds. He said it would be unfair to judge him based on a single interview.

I kinda agree, *Pilgrim*, using one of Wayne's favorite words.