

What do you say we all just 'unfriend' Columbus Day

Kathy Hedberg/Lewiston Tribune

After the latest celebration of Groundhog's Day - the galas, the entertainment, the next-day hangover - I began to wonder if maybe the big problem in this country is that we have too many holidays.

Let's take Groundhog's Day, for example. Whose idea was that? The notion that a rodent in Pennsylvania is exalted because he supposedly can predict whether spring is right around the corner or not sounds like some kind of hocus-pocus ritual dreamed up by some of our weirder ancestors who also believed in burning witches at the stake.

Regardless of the intent, what does a groundhog in Pennsylvania have to do with the weather in Idaho? Has anybody checked this overgrown ground squirrel to see if he has anything to say about climate change? And even if he did, what does Groundhog's Day do for us, other than prolong our depression over the relentless winter weather?

At least, thank God, the post office stays open on Groundhog's Day. Which is more than we can say about Columbus Day. Do they even teach about Columbus in schools these days, and if they do, is it still the selective historical narrative we learned when we were kids?

How long are we going to keep celebrating this Italian despot who was callous and cruel to his crew and exploitative to the native people he discovered? I started losing faith in Columbus Day when I found out he wasn't even the first one to discover America. And then there were all those abuse allegations and I thought, hey, why not celebrate Al Capone Day? Marquis de Sade Day? Attila the Hun Day? Shouldn't people who merit a bank and postal day off at least have to be a good guy? I mean, Christopher Columbus was no different from any other male - he set off on a voyage, refused to ask directions, ended up lost and then pretended that's where he intended to go in the first place. He got a river and a city named after him; that should be good enough.

It seems ridiculous to have holidays that really mean nothing to the average person and for which we don't get presents, anyway. We could be a lot more efficient society if we didn't muddy up our calendar with a lot of meaningless holidays, but the trend is not fewer, but more stupid holidays that we have no clue about how to celebrate.

The other day I saw a message on my Facebook page: Happy Friends Day, Kathy.

"Our friends make us who we are. So we made you this video to celebrate them. From all of us at Facebook, we hope you enjoy it."

Number one, I am mere acquaintances with at least half of the people who are "friended" (not a real word) on my Facebook page, so I don't have a lot of confidence in Facebook's definition of a friend, anyway.

And, number two, it doesn't take a special day to celebrate my real friends. They, like me, don't need one more holiday to complicate their lives.

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