

Mock trial indicts Columbus for crimes

ST. PAUL, Minn. (AP) - We know the world turns. It has turned on Christopher Columbus.

The famed explorer who sailed West to go East came full-circle on March 8 when he was indicted by a mock grand jury for crimes committed under his guard as conqueror of the Americas.

In a simulated hearing sponsored by the University of Minnesota's Human Rights Center, Columbus was charged with murder, theft, slavery, forced labor, kidnapping, torture, violence, genocide and crimes against humanity, rape and terrorism.

For his day, he had the power of a Supreme Court Justice, the fame of a Kennedy and the wealth of a heavy-weight boxing champion. Now, he is tarnished like the rest of them.

Officially a "mock indictment," the charges are certainly nothing to laugh at. But the argument that we'd be better off today had he not existed strikes some as flat, like blaming Henry Ford for every drunken driver or Abner Doubleday for Pete Rose.

"You can't indict him for everything bad that's ever happened," said Fredilyn Sison, an attorney with the Ramsey County Public Defender's office who is defending Columbus. "Part of his legacy's not negative and we can't forget that."

"And I think we're going to,"

No bail was set; the late, great 15th century explorer is no longer considered

a flight risk. An actor retained to portray him did not attend the hearing on the advice of counsel.

Hailed as a hero in children's texts, the historical evidence introduced Sunday told the opposite story. Soon after coming ashore, it is now known, he began capturing the indigenous people and selling them as slaves, demanding golden tribute from them or maiming or killing them outright.

One source blamed Columbus and his successors for 19 million deaths. He goes on (mock) trial Sept. 16, the 500th anniversary of his landing in the "New World."

Sison said she will present a three-pronged defense for the ancient mariner.

"They've charged the wrong person," she said. "We're not saying that some of



COLUMBUS IN AN EARLY PORTRAIT
No bail—he's not a 'flight risk,' says jury

the things did not happen, but he was directed by the Crown of Spain to do what he did."

"It was the common practice," she went on. "They discover a country and they were expected to take whatever spoils they could."

"It's unfair to take a man

out of the historical context and blame him for everything that's happened in the last 500 years."

This last argument seemed the most troubling to those on the panel. Although efforts were made to measure Columbus by the standards of his day - a 13th Century Spanish code is one basis for the indictment - the jury also discussed statues as recent as 1975.

That gave some the impression that the great sailor was - excuse the

anachronism - being railroaded. Another troubling aspect in the proceedings was the composition of the hand-picked jury: six of the 23 were American Indian and only one was of any Spanish descent.

A local Gucci distributor was the closest they came to Italy, Columbus' homeland. Dan Buettner, a round-the-world cyclist, brought an explorer's perspective to the panel.

Few on the panel questioned the atrocity of the crimes - references to Nuremberg, the site of the Nazi war trials, were common. But the difficulty in charging someone with a crime 500 years after the fact was evident in the squabbling over whether the occupation was theft, trespassing or a crime against humanity.

In fact, at least one juror complained that charges such as theft - and even rape - trivialized the terror of his reign as Governor of Hispaniola.

Larry Leventhal, who is prosecuting the case, did not speculate on the trial's outcome, saying the process itself will educate people as to Columbus' true nature.

"It's being celebrated as the anniversary of something that's alleged to be beneficial and heroic when in actuality the actions of Columbus were destructive and criminal," he said. "He essentially internationalized the slave trade... and discovered nothing. People were there. In fact, other Europeans had been there."

"(But) they didn't engage in as many crimes, which is why they aren't remembered as well."

Spirit Mountain Development Corporation wants to pay you cash on a daily basis

The Spirit Mountain Development Corporation (SMDC), a subsidiary of the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde is seeking eager, hard-working individuals to help pick forest products which will be sent to locations all over the world.

Several thousand pounds of forest products, including salal, cones, fern, moss, fir boughs and more depending on the season pass through the cold warehouse just one block away from the Willamina Lumber Company.

Most of the products are shipped to Seattle and from there, shipped overseas.

A picker or a forager, picks the forest products on his/her own time and brings it in for cash at the end of every day. Right now the main product is salal and fern, according to Ron Jordan, manager of SMDC.

More than 50 pickers bring in fresh salal and fern everyday and SMDC pays them more than \$1000 per day overall.

"All you need to have to be a picker is

a map which we provide, your own rain gear (optional), and a little knowledge about how and what you are picking," Jordan said. "Between now and July would be a great time to learn how to pick."

The SMDC is extremely picky about what product they buy in the summer time, according to Jordan. His theory is that if you learn train yourself now on how to be a fast, efficient picker, you can earn a lot more in the summer.

Salal, a bush which mainly grows on the coast, also flourishes in the surrounding mountains for 11 months out of the year. The SMDC brings in more than 8,000 bunches of salal tips a month and would like to focus even more of it's business on the salal market.

There will always be room for the fern market. Most of the ferns bought by the SMDC is brought in by pickers who have not had to travel very far to get it. Although it sells as well as the salal, the fern is dipped in a preservative so it will keep for up to three months in a large walk-in

cooler.

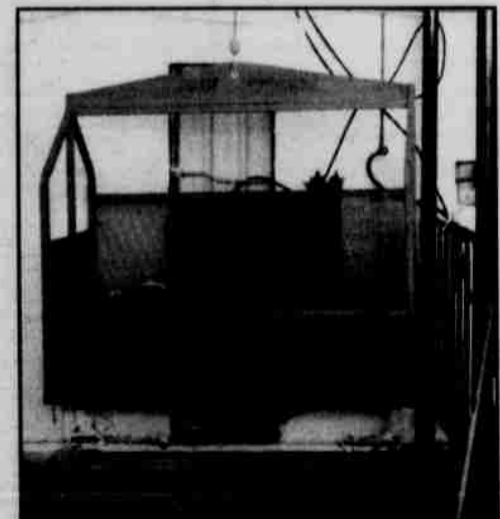
"I will teach any willing tribal member how to pick," Jordan said. "Either in a group or individually. The lesson is the same; there is money to be made."

The SMDC offers competitive prices for forests products and a flexible schedule.

For more information on buying guidelines or on how to get started call (503) 876-2064. You can also stop by one of the buying locations at 942 NW Main St in Willamina and Highway 101 in Beaver.



Large Salal is bunched then stored in the walk-in cooler until it is shipped.



Fern will last three months if dipped in preservative before storing in cooler.