

AN OPEN LETTER TO MAYOR WILLIE BROWN

San Francisco Mayor Willie Brown is caught in a crossfire between Native Americans and Roman Catholics. The city's Art Commission has approved a plaque for public display that blames Catholic missionaries for the deaths of half of California's Indians.

This event stems from the need to relocate an existing monument which depicts an Indian at the feet of a conqueror and missionary. Some Native Americans have denounced the monument and do not want it relocated. Now the Arts Commission wants to replace the monument with a plaque that reads: "With their efforts over in 1834, the missionaries left behind about 56,000 converts—and 150,000 dead. Half the original Native American population had perished during this time from diseases, armed attacks and mistreatment."

William Donohue sent a letter to Mayor Brown protesting the Arts Commission's gambit. The text of the letter is printed below:

"As president of the nation's largest Catholic civil rights organization, I am requesting that you dissuade your city's Arts Commission from erecting a plaque that defames Roman Catholics. If Native Americans feel that the original monument on Hyde and Grove—one that has stood for more than a century—defames their culture, then it is entirely understandable that you would accede to their wish not to have it relocated. But nothing is resolved if by correcting one injustice, the city creates another.

"The prevailing climate of political correctness may argue for exercising tolerance of Native Americans and intolerance of Roman Catholics. But as the Mayor of San Francisco, you

have a commitment to fighting injustice against all segments of your city. That is why I appeal to you to intervene in this matter and prevent any public defamation of Catholics. Surely you must agree that it is preferable to have no monument to one that slanders Catholics.

"Whatever your decision, I will report it in our monthly journal, *Catalyst*. It reaches over 200,000 members nationwide, as well as every Congressman and Bishop in the nation. Thank you for your consideration."

No reply had been received at press time.