

NEW YORK TIMES REMAINS DEFIANT ON SERRA

The following exchange occurred on October 8:

Dear Mr. Donohue:

You might have been busy with your news release of October 1 and did not have a chance to keep up with Laura Holson's coverage of the shooting in Oregon. She began filing from Oregon last Friday. So while our editors discussed your complaint when it was received, we waited to go over it with Ms. Holson until she had reached the point where she was not inundated with her coverage of that horrific event.

Certainly you have very strong views on this issue and have written extensively on it. But after many discussions, a review of past Times coverage and other resources, I agree with Ms. Holson's editors that "historians" is accurate, and therefore no correction is required.

At one point you sent us a list of books you considered to be "the authoritative books on Fr. Serra." Ms. Holson had already reviewed the writings of some of the historians you cited in that list.

If I thought having an extended conversation on this would help, I would be happy to. But after re-reading your correspondence, I cannot think of anything we could do or say that would convince you that our coverage was fair and complete – or that the reference to "historians" is accurate.

We respect your opinion and I hope you will respect our decision – even if you do not agree with it. If nothing else, rest assured that your points have been thoroughly reviewed and a great deal of time has been put into making this decision.

Sincerely,

Greg Brock
Gregory E. Brock
Senior Editor for Standards
The New York Times

Dear Mr. Brock,

Thank you for taking my complaint seriously. I have just one question: Who are the "historians" who claim that Fr. Serra tortured Indians?

Sincerely,
Bill Donohue

We at the Catholic League take great pride in providing readers with factual material; we are always ready to back up our work with evidence. It is one thing to offer an opinion, quite another to make unequivocal statements of a condemnatory nature in a news story. That is exactly what the New York Times did. Worse, it is considered the newspaper of record.

The Times only made matters worse when its Senior Editor for Standards took the side of the reporter without identifying the historians who claim that Fr. Serra tortured Indians to death.

We are disappointed that this incredible fabrication was not challenged by others. Surely there are scholars and members of the Catholic Church who are in a position to know that what the Times said cannot be substantiated. That said, we are happy that we didn't miss the opportunity to challenge them.

Bill Donohue