

NY TIMES CONSISTENT DEFIANCE ON SERRA

NY TIMES PIECE ON ST. SERRA NEEDS CORRECTION 10/1/15



Bill Donohue comments on a front-page article that appeared in yesterday's *New York Times* and his request for a correction:

Yesterday morning I emailed the following letter to *New York Times* reporter Laura M. Holson about her article, "Sainthood of Serra Reopens Wounds of Colonialism in California":

You said that "Historians agree" that Fr. Serra had Indians "tortured to death." I have done research on Serra and written about him, yet I know of no historian who makes such a claim. Please name them. I can name many who never made such a claim.

Holson never responded. Today I asked for an entry in the "Corrections" section of the newspaper, and I also contacted the public editor. This is a serious issue: when a reporter blithely says that "Historians agree," readers take it that there is at least a consensus among historians about the subject. But such is not the case on this issue. The only persons given to such an accusation are radical activists, not professional scholars.

To read a list of the most authoritative books on Fr. Serra, click [here](#).

Not one of them accuse this saintly priest of torturing Indians. Holson quotes Steven Hackel in her article, and though he is somewhat critical of Fr. Serra, he never makes such a claim. The one person who says torture took place,

Elias Castillo, never indicts Fr. Serra. None of the other books come even close to accusing Fr. Serra of torture. Quite simply, it is a lie.

NEW YORK TIMES SMEAR OF ST. SERRA STANDS 10/7/15



Bill Donohue comments on the professionalism of the *New York Times*:

On September 30, the *New York Times* ran a front-page story that smeared St. Junipero Serra. Repeated attempts to have the paper correct the record have failed.

On the day that Laura M. Holson's news story appeared, "Sainthood of Serra Reopens Wounds of Colonialism in California," I sent her the following email:

You said that "Historians agree" that Fr. Serra had Indians "tortured to death." I have done research on Serra and written about him, yet I know of no historian who makes such a claim. Please name them. I can name many who never made such a claim.

[Click [here](#) to read them.]

The following day I contacted the "Corrections" section of the paper, as well as the public editor, sending them the above email. I also said, "Ms. Holson has not responded. Assuming she cannot name historians who have made such a claim, I am requesting that this merit inclusion in the 'Corrections' section of the Times."

One week went by after my email to these two parties, and still no response. Yesterday, I wrote them again, sending the previous emails: "Please let me know if I can expect a correction to Ms. Holson's story. If her account is accurate, she should be able to name the historians who say that Fr. Serra tortured Indians. This story is particularly important because Pope Francis just canonized Fr. Serra when he was in

DC. Thank you.”

Another day has passed, and still no reply. This is yellow journalism at its worst. When I submit paid ads to the *Times*, I am often asked to identify my sources. Yet it accepts hit jobs like Holson’s. The fact is there is no list of historians who claim Fr. Serra tortured Indians, and the *Times* knows it. We are sending this news release to a wide audience.

Contact Margaret Sullivan, the public editor:
public@nytimes.com

NEW YORK TIMES REMAINS DEFIANT ON SERRA 10/9/15



The following exchange occurred yesterday:

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