

Robert Searing

Selected Audio Transcript

It [the statue] represents many histories. I mean, first and foremost, I think it represents the history of the Italian American community in Syracuse, the struggles that they went through to be accepted as Americans, to be accepted as white people in the city. I think that really speaks to their pride and what they went through as a community to raise the funding.

You know, the monument lacks interpretation, which I think is just generally a problem with so many installations of public art, which this certainly is. It's just a statue with nothing around it and, you know, nothing where it came from. So when I found the histories and when I really researched the histories of the Italian community that came together and rubbed nickels together in many places to bring this thing together, it really put it into a new light. Now, as an American scholar, and somebody who's studied American history deeply, I'm fully aware of the history of Columbus as a man and the atrocities committed both under his direction and while on his watch, which makes it a very weird subject.

So, I mean, it's the histories of the people that built it. Then it's the histories of the Haudenosaunee as well. I mean, this is Onondaga land.

Biography

I'm Robert Searing. I'm the curator of history at the Onondaga Historical Association. I'm also a historian of Antebellum America with two Masters degrees from Syracuse University. In addition, I am an adjunct instructor in the History Department at SUNY-Cortland and Tompkins-Cortland CC.