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A Legacy not at Rest: The Struggle over Christopher Columbus in American Culture

Christopher Columbus discovered the American continent in 1492. This statement, accepted as a valid historical fact in Western historiography, has been challenged by minority histories, as has been the figure of Columbus as a great discoverer, explorer and governor. This presentation looks at the history of the cultural presence of Columbus in the US, re-visiting pivotal moments in the series of culture wars in which his symbolic figure has been at once glorified as well as crucified. The presentation maps the ways in which his controversial character has been suspended within the web of historical signifiers and argues that his legacy will never be at rest unless stakeholders recognize the historical and human complexities that shape human action and give up the practice of unilateral assessment as well as of the appropriation and exploitation of the past for the sake of particular gain in the present.

Irén Annus is Associate Professor at the Department of American Studies at the University of Szeged, Hungary. She is a cultural studies scholar, whose main interest lies in visual culture, identity studies and 19th-century American culture. She has widely lectured and published in these fields, including seven volumes she has authored and (co)edited. She is a founding member of the Gender Studies and the Inter-America Studies research groups at her university and sits on the editorial board of two journals, *Americana* and *TNT E-journal*. She has also served as the Secretary of the Hungarian Association of American Studies for two terms.