

INSULT TO SAN DIEGO AND CALIFORNIA SPANISH HERITAGE

The anti-Hispanic efforts orchestrated to distort the 250th anniversary of San Diego's foundation by using Kumeyaay descendants to perpetuate the hypocritical racist agendas of some are pitiable. They seek to minimize the historical facts that San Diego de Alcalá was founded by Gaspar de Portolá, Father Junípero Serra and our ancestors, the "Soldados de Cuera" from the Real Presidio de Loreto during the 1769 Portolá Expedition. They plan to stage an aberration of a one-sided celebration event fully dedicated and inclined mostly to enhance the Kumeyaay historical perspective. There is no role for the thousands of descendants of the "Soldados de Cuera" evident in this event's program. On this July 16th, the event coordinators will be taking over this historical date and location where the Mission and the Presidio were originally founded at today's Presidio Park 250 years ago.

In 1767, King Carlos III of Spain empowered Don José De Galvez to organize an expedition to Alta California to establish missions to convert natives to Christianity and presidios to protect San Diego and Monterey. The presidios were also founded as a colonial strategy against Russia's intentions to colonize these territories and to provide safe harbors to Spanish Galleons from the Manila Trade against British pirates.

Galvez designated Gaspar De Portolá as Governor of California to command a sea and land expedition and Father Junípero Serra to preside over a mission system that provided the natives with both religion and the necessary skills to survive in a settled agricultural community.

These soldiers, missionaries, and natives of the 1769 Portolá Expedition opened the main trail of The Camino Real spanning the length of the Baja California Peninsula, achieving a monumental quest of historical proportions by giving birth to Alta California, where they explored the Northern Coast, discovering San Francisco and founding Monterey. They established the main presidios, missions and first families of Californios in the Old Pueblos of the Spanish Colony of the 18th Century. In addition, the Spanish soldiers who founded Alta California have been officially accepted as Sons of the American Revolution for their contributions to America's War of Independence.

On July 19 2017, our Binational Initiative donated a plaque to the City of San Diego on behalf of all descendants, to honor the men of the 1769 Portolá Expedition; this unveiling event took place at the Serra Museum at Presidio Park with representatives of the State of California, City of San Diego, San Diego History Center, California Mission Foundation and the Consul General of Spain, a ceremony escorted by the "Soldados de Cuera" from the Presidios of Santa Barbara, Tucson and Tubac Arizona and The San Diego Color Guard. The Kumeyaay were invited and listed on the program, but arrived protesting against Spanish colonization to disrupt this ceremony.

With all due respect to this Kumeyaay group, it should not be forgotten that many tribal members carry Spanish DNA and “Soldados de Cuera” family names, making all of us cousins. We sympathize with their cause and grievances but the real demise of California’s Native Tribes came with the 1849 Gold Rush and its aftermath, not during the Spanish Colonial Period.

Nevertheless, no matter what these anti-Hispanic groups try, they will never succeed in their futile attempts to erase the names of San Diego, Los Angeles, Santa Barbara, San Francisco, the name of the great State of California, or take away the historical legacy of this region founded by our ancestors and the first families of the Old Californios.

This 250th anniversary could have been a great opportunity for all Native, Spanish, Mexican, Anglo-Saxon and all descendants of the “Soldados de Cuera” to gather and celebrate in joyous harmony the foundation of San Diego, the birth of Alta California, our shared heritage and today’s interracial reality.

“All historical grievances and injustices are solved
with harmony, not with hate.”

Ignacio Félix Cota
“Founders of the Californias”
Binational Initiative

Iris Engstrand, PhD
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1769 Portolá Expedition Commemorative Plaque at Serra Museum, San Diego.



Source:

"Gateway to Alta California" (The Expedition to San Diego, 1769)
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