

Hello, my name is Elena Izcalli Tlauixochitl Medina. I would like to thank all of my relatives here today, the city council, the Kumeyaay community, the sky, the earth, the life and energy around us.

I am 17 years old, a high school student at High tech High Chula Vista. I am indigenous to Northern Mexico but have lived on the unceded territory of the Kumeyaay nation in Chula Vista my entire life.

I grew up playing softball at Discovery Park. I would pass the Columbus statue multiple times a week, literally looking up to a man who had committed mass genocide to people just like me. And I would enter and leave Discovery Park asking myself questions I pose to you today. Who are parks for? Who has the right to tell their story in this community?

Many would define parks as community spaces of wellness, healing, family, comfort, connection, escape. Public. Something I had been told was a space shared with me. For everyone. But at Discovery Park, I felt nothing short of invisible and unwelcome in the place I called home.

Because statues are not educational — they are

celebratory, trophies. As a young person, I am inheriting a culture that makes it acceptable to put someone like Columbus in a park where families take their children. The Columbus statue and monuments alike are reminders to my peers that white supremacy is not only condoned in our city, but glorified and honored.

Monuments are not museums, where the public has the choice to enter. These are public, visible, structures. Monuments are a work of a person or people erected for a specific purpose of keeping human deeds alive and present, in the consciousness of future generations. This Columbus statue was built to resurrect what we thought was dead. And it haunts us. It has haunted me and every other indigenous and young person of color in this community.

We are the children who play at your parks. We grow up here. We deserve a safe space that empowers and represents all, especially the original peoples of this land. A space that inspires and motivates the change we need in this world. Does this statue represent the values of our home?

What story do you want young people to be left with when they pass this statue, when they walk through your

parks, our city? Because this is what it left with me.