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## Newark Columbus Day Speech: Version 2

Geraldine Ferraro

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REMARKS OF GERALDINE A. FERRARO

NORTH WARD CENTER

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 7, 1984

Thank you, Chairman Rodino, for that wonderful introduction. Every two years for the past 36 years, the people of the North Ward have elected Peter Rodino to the Congress because he shares your values, and he understands what this country is all about. And the people of this country owe you a great debt of gratitude, because the name Peter W. Rodino is known everywhere as a champion of justice.

I'm delighted to be here today at the North Ward Center to participate in this fourteenth annual Columbus Day parade. And I bring greetings from my good Italian friend, Fritz Mondali.

I love Columbus Day parades. When else do you get to hear La Traviata played by a high school marching band?

Of course, Columbus Day is not the real reason we're here today. We're really here to help Steve Aduato, Jr. celebrate his birthday.

Steve, I have to tell you. It's almost an unfair advantage for a bright young Italian-American politician like you to have a

birthday around Columbus Day. And as a woman whose birthday happens to fall on Women's Equality Day, I can offer you a few words of advice: play it for all it's worth.

Columbus Day is a day of pride for all Italians. It is a day on which we celebrate our ethnic heritage. It is a day on which we celebrate the tremendous contributions we have made to this country, from its very discovery.

This marvelous center is itself a monument to the achievements and contributions of Italian-Americans. Steve Aduato, Sr., in founding the center, reaffirmed our belief in family and community. Every day, the North Ward center enriches the lives of the people who live here, giving life to our most cherished values.

I know those values well. They are the values I was taught by my own parents.

My father came here from the small town of Marcianise, in Casserta. He came to this land of golden opportunity, believing that if you worked hard, and played by the rules, and kept faith with your God, you could carve out a better future for yourself and your family.

My mother shared that belief. And when she was widowed with two young children, she went back to work in New York City's

garment district, to make sure my brother and I would have the opportunities she never had.

And because she worked hard, I worked hard. I wasn't about to let her down. After college I taught in the public schools of New York by day, and went to law school at night. It was hard work, but I owed that to her.

Here at the North Ward Center, all the people of the Center Family are working to help the people of this community write their own stories. What you understand is that in our neighborhoods, like in our families, we depend on each other. That we have to help each other. That spirit of shared interests, of mutual caring and working together, we learned from our parents and grandparents. And we will never betray that spirit.

In the North Ward Center Family, those aren't just empty words. You have respect for families and family values. And so do I.

Having respect for families means providing child care so single mothers can work or go to school without having to worry that their children aren't being cared for.

Having respect for families means helping people who need job skills get those skills. And it means running a strong placement

service that results in jobs where those skills can be put to use.

Having respect for families means giving high school and college students the counseling they need so they can choose the college that's right for them, and find the scholarship money to pay for it.

And having respect for families means having respect for our parents and grandparents -- the senior citizens of our community -- who have paved the way for us, and demonstrating that respect through the type of programs that Fran Adubato runs here at the North Ward Center.

Child care, jobs for single parents, education for our young people, and dignity for the elderly -- these are the values the North Ward Center stands for. If somebody wants to know what a true pro-family agenda looks like, they should come here.

I am proud to be an American, and to be an American of Italian descent. No one believes more deeply in the American dream, no one is more proud of both her heritage and this country, than the daughter of an Italian immigrant nominated by her party to be Vice President of the United States.

We have shared in the American dream, and we have made it our own. This is why we are proud to be Italians, and this is why we

celebrate Columbus Day. And this is why we feel so lucky to live in the freest and fairest nation on earth. Thank you.