

Buccaneer-Americans celebrate
Talk Like A Pirate Day promotes diversity, celebrates culture
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By Rick Snee

For those of you smartly paying attention, Tuesday, Sept. 19, was International Talk Like A Pirate Day. Being international, that translates into what you savvy good rats call “diversity.” That’s right: pirates are a culture, too, and like other cultures, we Buccaneer-Americans have been sorely misrepresented by movies, history books and rum advertisements. Well, maybe the rum ads are accurate, but admitting you have a problem can be painful.

Cathy Keen, of the *University of Florida News*, and Jason Acosta, a history student at the university, are setting our record straight. In the June 26 article, “Study: Pirates pursued democracy, helped American colonies survive,” Acosta’s thesis compared the Declaration of Independence and US Constitution to pirate ship charters. “[Acosta] was amazed by the similarities,” Keen said.

Acosta credits pirates with “founding democracy in the United States and New World,” “[developing] three branches of government with checks and balances,” “emphasizing written laws, democratic representation and due process,” “helping struggling settlements” and welcoming “escaped slaves” into our motley crews.

Let’s see Johnny Depp pull off all that in *Pirates of the Caribbean 3*.

So if that is the truth about seadogs, what happened to our image? Before Hollywood, there were books (for more information on books, consult your local library). Unfortunately, we didn’t write any. Alexander Exquemelin, a lifeless landlubber, wrote a best-seller about *Buccaneers of America* in 1678 that described the pirate Henry Morgan as “a monster of depravity and cruelty.” This is according to Kenneth Maxwell in the March 6, 1997 *The New York Review* article, “Pirate Democracy.”

“Morgan brought suit for defamation of character [against Exquemelin].... The matter was settled out of court and Morgan received substantial damages,” Maxwell said.

Despite the results of that case, we still suffer from a stereotyped image. We can attribute this to a few bad apples. While pirates of the 17th and 18th centuries helped create the fledgling United States, the scurvy media reports on the pirates that shanghai cruise ships and loot Metallica songs online.

To combat this negative image, we Buccaneer-Americans – and our brethren worldwide – must take steps to separate ourselves from those piratical extremists who would sully our good name.

First, we must re-appropriate the hate language. We have already adopted slurs like “seadog,” “bilge rat” and “curt” as our own monikers, taking away their once-hurtful meanings.

Second, we must perform more community service. I recommend teaching blind kids sea shanties, spaying and neutering stray cats with our cutlasses, donating the blood of our enemies to the Red Cross and taping more public service announcements on responsible drinking like Captain Morgan.

If we join together, we can teach the world a lesson about love ... and booty.

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