

**Speech for the commemoration of the 60th Annual Wreath Laying in
Cabrillo National Monument – September 29th, 2023**

Mister Honorable Consul of Spain,
Madame Honorary Consul of Spain,
Dr. Iris Engstrand,
Civilian and Military Authorities,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a **privilege** for me that I address you today, **as we are gathered here**, to commemorate the 60th Annual Wreath Laying in Cabrillo National Monument.

Today once again, we commemorate how the **Spanish explorer Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo** discovered California after a long travel overseas.

Thus, I would like to **share with you**, perhaps the latest episode about the so-called **Spanish black legend**, and the personality of the Spanish discoverer Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo. It has taken place **recently here in California**, and came to conclusion in September the 8th, 2023.

With **your permission** Dr. Engstrand, I will use your words. I found this document in the web (an online talk between you and more than 130 participants, about Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo) and I was surprised to find your ideas **very close to the feeling** we have in Spain about this period of history.

The Cabrillo College Governing Board recently voted to delay a long-awaited name change for the campus.

Proponents of an immediate name change said the move is long overdue, given the history of the college's namesake, Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo, a 16th-century Spanish explorer, supposedly known for his violence toward Native Americans.

Cabrillo College has finally decided to delay changing its name until 2028 (it was decided in September the 8th, 2023, that is, 21 days ago). "We have many reasonable doubts, thus we recommend postponing the process, fostering further investigation and discussion on renaming the college, until at least 2028 and potentially longer," the report states.

As Cabrillo College explores whether to rename the college (or not), in response to a request made in the wake of widespread social unrest, the question naturally arises:

Who was Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo?

To answer that question, the College turned to Dr. Engstrand, who shared her research in an online talk, in March 2023.

Cabrillo was born in Palma del Rio, Cordoba, Spain. He has been celebrated as a Portuguese navigator, but Dr. Engstrand cited documents unearthed in the past decade by researcher Dr. Wendy Kramer, starting with a 1532 deposition in a lawsuit over theft of gold, from a ship headed from the New World to Spain.

Cabrillo denied taking the gold. Upon arrival in Spain, a hearing took place where Cabrillo had to truthfully state his name and his birthplace — he said “Palma del Rio”. “You’re not going to lie in a deposition,” said Dr. Engstrand. Since her initial discovery, Dr. Kramer found 25 references to Cabrillo’s life in Palma del Rio, historical references found in Seville (in the General Archives for American Affairs). Cabrillo’s birth name was Juan Rodriguez, so he added Cabrillo as a surname, a nickname, or even a job.

Cabrillo was a Ship-Builder

He was 13 or 14 when he decided to join a Spanish fleet of warships to the Americas. He had trained in the crossbow and he became known as a ship-builder, building galleons that were perfect for exploration. As we all know, he sailed into San Diego Bay in September the 28th, 1542, establishing friendly relations with natives. Along the coast, when natives appeared, Cabrillo ordered his men not to shoot their arrows.

As for claims that Cabrillo was involved in criminal activity, Dr. Engstrand said, “None of the generalizations were true.” She addressed each question during the online talk one by one:

Was he involved in genocide?

No, he was a soldier under command of the Spanish military for part of his life.

Was he a murderer?

No, in today’s laws of war, we do not call sailors murders if they are following orders, and there are no records of him personally murdering anyone.

Was he a slave trader?

No, Queen Isabella outlawed slavery in the New World, but Cabrillo did have slaves in Guatemala. In pre-industrial times, slavery was the only source of labor. The Portuguese got their slaves from Africa as well.

Was he a sex trafficker?

No, few areas today do not have sex trafficking. It is endemic to the global world. It is not fair to single out Cabrillo.

Where did the rumors about slave trading begin?

It's very hard to pin down. The natives were under the control of the Spanish but they were fed. We've done research in the actual archives, but we don't know exactly how the natives were treated.

Should Cabrillo be remembered?

*"Cabrillo discovered the winter wind pattern ... a forerunner of useful navigational information worth of being remembered". "Cabrillo is the person who gave California to the world ... he was a navigator and made some good discoveries ... **People just have make up their mind — Cabrillo was a man of his times, not ours, it was a different world.**"*

Very kind of you to listen to my words. Thank you Dr. Engstrand for inspiring this speech, as part of the Spanish feeling about California and Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo. Thank you so much everybody.

Colonel Spanish Airforce, Francisco Martin-Alonso