



# The Officers' Log

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## LA CASA ITALIANA IN COURT

As expected, attorneys for Columbia University have filed a motion to dismiss our lawsuit in New York Supreme Court.

In a 26-page brief, Columbia asserts that descendants of the Paterno family that donated *La Casa Italiana* have no say in how the donation is being used. In refuting our other charges Columbia neglects to address why the 1927 mission statement was radically changed in 1990, the status of the Building and Book Endowments, and the absence of Italian Americans on the Board, the staff, and fellowships. The thrust of their brief is that although Italian Americans created *La Casa*, built it, and operated it for 63 years, we warrant no special treatment today.

“What else is new?” asks Institute governor Don Fiore sarcastically.

Our attorney, James DeCristofaro, is preparing his response.

“If we can successfully overcome the challenge of family standing,” suggests Institute governor George Ricci, who is also an attorney, “Columbia might want to reconsider its position.”

Stay tuned.

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## WITH FRIENDS LIKE THESE...

Our opposition to the sideshow that passed for “art” in Columbus Circle made quite a stir in the media. Filmed interviews with our chairman, Rosario Iaconis, aired on NBC, CNN and FOX. Quotes by Executive Director John Mancini and Chairman Iaconis were featured on public radio and in the Associated Press, the *NY Post*, and local CBS newscasts. [Go to our website [italic.org](http://italic.org), under “News/Press Releases” to see the videos and newsprint.]

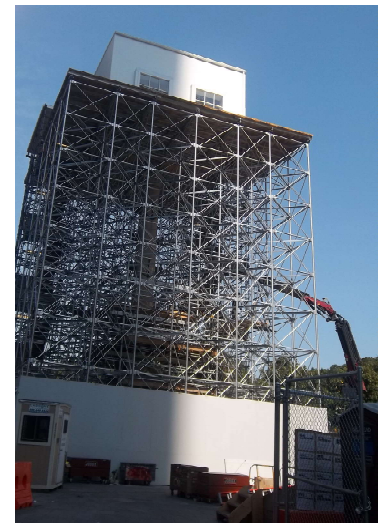


*Vice President Anthony Vecchione (foreground) and Chairman Rosario Iaconis hand out Columbus brochures to exhibit visitors.*

“The Italic Institute was out front on this issue,” says president Bill Dal Cerro. “All the other Italian American opponents of this exhibit chose not to cross the Columbus Club and NIAF.”

The media coverage revealed that the Columbus Citizens Foundation (the formal name of the private dining club in Manhattan that operates the Columbus Day parade monopoly) was more than just a patron of Japanese artist Tatzu Nishi. According to statements by Nicholas Baume of the Public Art Fund, sponsors of Nishi, the CCF “enticed” the Fund to stage the exhibit during October. This resulted in a full covering of the Columbus Memorial with scaffolding and a shed (pictured).

Perhaps not so surprisingly, neither NIAF nor the Columbus Citizens Foundation appeared



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## **We Don't Have A Side Business**

Heritage is too important to be left to social-charity organizations.

If you take your heritage seriously you need the Italic Institute.

### **We are the Alternative!**

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**Italic Institute of America, PO Box 818,  
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## **IT'S THE KIDS!**

Italian history is Institute Governor Don Fiore's passion. He has been recognized for his expertise by being made a *cavaliere* by the Italian government. With such a reputation he was recently asked to speak on Christopher Columbus to the 900 students



Don Fiore with a fellow guest speaker and principal of Melrose Park School.

attending the Melrose Park Elementary School outside of Chicago. Don took the day off from his (and wife Renee's) real estate appraisal business to help students aged 6 thru 13 appreciate the explorer's accomplishments.

## **A MEMBER REACTS**

From member Anna Maria Schoenike of Rocheport, MO:

*"I am really enjoying the current issue of The Italic Way. As a dual citizen I am especially fascinated by the sections "World Notes" and "Target Italy," I actually keep re-reading them, and have discussed them with my family. I believe everyone should read them, not just our membership.*

*It is very true that journalists, and the media in general, usually paint a very bleak scenario of Italy and its 'disastrous' economy. I occasionally watch the RAI International channel but now avoid the "TeleGiornale" news broadcast because it makes me feel so sad and angry about pretty much anything they report.*

*Our magazine has lots of insights that make me feel A LOT better, and it restores my confidence in Italy's abilities, expertise, creativity, etc. As I said, why doesn't everyone read this??"*

## **FILM SCHOOLS LOBBIED**

Our *Italic Way Magazine* feature on the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *The Godfather* has made its way to some 20 film schools around the country. "Being a film and communications teacher myself," says President Bill Dal Cerro, "I thought the article should get into the hands of future filmmakers. They should understand the power of film as propaganda as well as entertainment."

Dal Cerro hopes the schools will provide some feedback and spread the word.

# INSTITUTE'S STRATEGY IN ACTION

**With Friends Like These...**, from p. 1 at the opening ceremony hosted by Mayor Bloomberg. But our Institute reps were there to monitor the event. More telling, neither group posted anything about the exhibit on their websites.

At the ceremony, artist Tatzu Nishi revealed that Columbus had nothing to do with his inspiration. All he wanted was a statue high above the street for effect. *"I never thought about the historical thing. It's purely visual,"* And by the way, his real name is Tatsuro Nishino. *"That's also one of my art pieces: to change names."* And to trivialize historic monuments, we might add.

Columbus was a prop, collateral damage, if you will. Columbus literally became the "800-lb gorilla" standing on a coffee table in an ersatz New York City apartment. One *NY Post* photo (below) had a California visitor poking around the Discoverer's crotch.



"Consider the fact that the statue is to be restored after the exhibit," explains Vice President Anthony Vecchione. "If this were really about Columbus, shouldn't he be on display after restoration? A *NY Times* art critic wrote that the marble statue looked like "cast concrete" and that the exhibit was "not quite as nifty as I'd hoped."

James Panero of the *Wall Street Journal* panned the exhibit outright as "A Monumental Problem." He wrote that "the temporary hijacking of Columbus Circle" reflects "the unease, bordering on contempt, with which cultural progressives [Tatzu Nishi, et al.] regard traditional monuments."

"Funny how art critics saw through this exhibit while the erstwhile protectors of our heritage gave it their blessings, and then disappeared," suggests Executive Director John Mancini.

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Our officers took a two-pronged approach to the *Discovering Columbus* exhibit – to raise questions of public safety and artistic integrity.

Situated atop a construction scaffold six stories above the sidewalk, the exhibit was planned to accommodate 50 visitors every thirty minutes for two months for a total of 100,000 people.

"Before the exhibit opened," explains Executive Director John Mancini, who managed Manhattan hi-rises for 30 years, "we bombarded the New York City Dept. of Buildings about the failure to post a Public Assembly Permit. We also lobbied the Fire Dept.'s Public Assembly unit which had not been involved with the exhibit. Eventually, the Fire Department reacted and permits were issued for only 25 visitors at a time. The change in assembly cut the potential visitor count in half. I think we had something to do with that."

Mancini credits fellow Institute members Frank Fortino of Metropolis Consulting, a building codes expert, and Nick Montesano of DTM Elevator Corp, for their help and expertise in this issue.

To deal with the education side of the equation, as a public service, our Institute created an original brochure about Columbus and the memorial designed by Gaetano Russo in 1892. On Columbus Day our officers worked the crowd, passing out the brochures to visitors waiting to ascend the exhibit. (A copy of the brochure is enclosed with this *Log*.)

"Why hadn't the Columbus Citizens Foundation or NIAF insisted on such material?" wonders President Bill Dal Cerro. "Instead, they both gave a Japanese artist, the elitist Public Art Fund, and Mayor Bloomberg an unconditional blessing. When our Institute offered the Public Art Fund the material just before the opening, it was already too late. The one-sided deal had been made months earlier."

"Even assuming 50,000 visitors, that's quite a lot of people who could have been enlightened," laments Chairman Rosario Iaconis. "Isn't education why the Columbus Club and NIAF exist? We encountered American Indian activists at the site peddling anti-Columbus materials." \*\*\*\*

# AP REALITY, AGAIN

There was lots of hoopla last year when some of the major organizations and the Italian government paid the College Board \$3 million to restore the Italian Advanced Placement tests. At that time, the tests had been suspended by the Board for lack of high school student takers. The last round of tests in 2008 had less than 2,300 students registered, not enough to keep the tests financially solvent. Consequently, there were no Italian tests given from 2009 – 2011, a three year gap.

This year, the tests started up again but only 1,806 students paid to take them, less than the number in 2008. No doubt, the three year gap was one factor in the decline.

The Italian AP was first instituted in 2005 with a \$500,000 grant from the Italian government. The first tests were given in 2006 to only 1,600 students. To date, a sum of \$3.5 million has been invested — and we are back to Square One. Despite the efforts of the major groups and the Italian Language Foundation, demand has yet to meet expectations. These are the same folks who eschewed after-school language courses like our *Aurora Heritage Program* that actually create demand.

By comparison, Latin, the “dead” language of our ancestors, rose from 6,044 students last year to 6,424 this year. Imagine if the Italian AP had such numbers!

## SPINNING LAS VEGAS

Two items about Las Vegas cropped up recently.

*Vegas*, a new CBS-TV series, starring Michael Chiklis as fictional Chicago mobster Vincent Savino and Dennis Quaid as rancher/sheriff Ralph Lamb. Literally a “Cowboys vs the Mob” plot, the series may be a new genre of western. Set in 1960, it is an “inspiring” tale of how a courageous man on horseback fights the Italic corruption of otherwise wholesome Las Vegas.

Based on some sketchy remembrance by Sheriff Lamb, the series was “fleshed out” by *Goodfellas* author Nicholas Pileggi. “Once again,” complains President Bill Dal Cerro, “we can thank our own Hollywood crowd for keeping the world safe for mafia mythology.”

In the real world, in an interview by *The New York Times* African American composer/musician Quincy Jones credited Frank Sinatra for going to bat for him in the Vegas of the 1960s. Seems that Vegas had a racial barrier that kept Nat “King” Cole, Lena Horne, Quincy Jones and Sammy Davis Jr. from

performing. Sinatra even brought Sammy Davis into his inner circle.



Frank Sinatra with Quincy Jones

“Seems like Sheriff Lamb had an Italic deputy in combating injustice, suggests Vice President Anthony Vecchione. “Let’s see if Pileggi sneaks that fact into his *Vegas* script.”

## MEET FRANK PORCU

When we made our stand against the *Discovering Columbus* exhibit, a number of artists contacted us to urge us on. One of them was Long Island artist extraordinaire Frank Porcu. Frank is as close as you can get to Leonardo daVinci without a time machine. Like Leonardo, Frank is an anatomist. He teaches dissection at Columbia University Medical School and applies his knowledge to sculpture. Behold the bust of Lincoln Frank created for a wealthy client (below).



“I had the pleasure of meeting Frank Porcu during the Columbus controversy,” says Executive Director John Mancini. “He is also appalled by the cavalier hijacking of Gaetano Russo’s monument, both as an Italian American and an artist.”

We hope to feature Frank Porcu (a Sardinian surname) in the next *Italic Way Magazine* issue. He is an amazing young man with talents that echo our classical forebears.

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