



The Officers' Log

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LA CASA: Plan B



La Casa Italiana no longer serves its creators, the Italian Americans

Having suffered a reversal in court, our Institute has already changed gears in its quest to restore the original mission of *La Casa Italiana* at Columbia University in New York City.

Recalls Executive Director John Mancini. “We launched this project by reaching out to Columbia in 2009. We were rebuffed. We appealed to the Attorney General of New York State who has authority over non-profits like universities. The AG secured for us most of the historic documents we needed but declined to get more involved. That’s why we went to court.”

Mancini sees no hope in a court appeal and certainly no money to try. What he is counting on is a new approach to the Attorney General. “For one thing, there is a new AG. Andrew Cuomo was replaced by Eric Schneiderman, whose focus is on illegal

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POSITIVE!

While the struggles with Columbia University and CBS-TV may seem “negative” to those who like their *italianita* upbeat, fighting for our heritage is a positive thing.

Is it easier to raise \$15 million for a new cultural center at Columbia than to reclaim one that was built for us by our grandfathers? “It is a mark of immaturity,” observes Advisory Council Chairman Alfred Cardone, “not to value what was given us.”

Adds Exec. Dir. John Mancini: “Negative images overwhelm good works. We don’t work in a vacuum.”

Good works like the forthcoming *Italic Way* can only spread a positive message so far. Our recent Italy and the Holocaust report would have greater impact if we had money to advertise it in the Jewish media.

“We have lots of projects underway but need more funding than we have,” says Mancini. “I’m positive of that.”



CBS-TV Stonewalls Us

For the last few months we have been appealing to CBS-TV to delete some dialogue in the hit series *CSI* (Crime Scene Investigation) and *Mike & Molly*. In *CSI*, a character states that “As the Italians say: if you want to live a little you have to cheat a



**CBS-TV
President
Nina
Tassler**

little.” In *Mike & Molly*, a sitcom, a main character is called a “wop.”

Having worked our way up from the CBS vice president of “Diversity” to the CBS president Nina Tassler, we have hit a stone wall. Our Executive Director John Mancini has filed complaints with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and reached out to Congressman Steve Israel of Long Island.

“The FCC is accountable to Congress,” explains Mancini, “and Rep. Israel has agreed to follow up on our FCC complaints. Israel recently spoke out against an insulting

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activities of non-profits,” explains Mancini. “Secondly, we now have a lot of new documentation such as personal letters between Columbia and the Paterno Family detailing what the family expected for their donation.”

Chairman Rosario Iaconis, himself an adjunct professor, lauds Columbia’s Kraft Center for promoting Jewish culture and scholarship. Yet, he asks, “Why won’t the university allow *La Casa Italiana* to fulfill it’s educational mission: the promulgation of across-the-board



The Kraft Center at Columbia University was provided by the university in 2000 to serve Jewish and Israeli studies. It is the epicenter for Jewish students and faculty. It is what *La Casa Italiana* used to be.

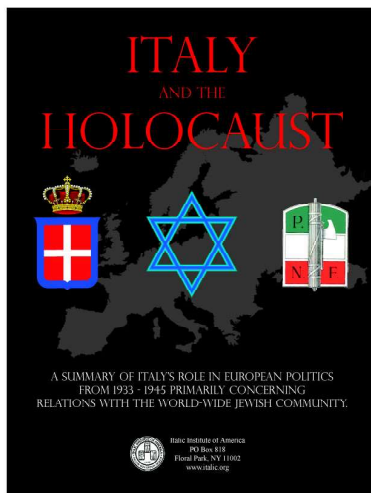
italianita`. The Kraft Center is an apt model. No one would think of expunging this citadel of its Judaic core. But *La Casa Italiana* was shorn of both the Italian Language Dept. and the Paterno Library.”

If you want to know what drives the Italic Institute to continue this struggle, Mancini has a short answer: “If Italian Americans created it, we are obligated to redeem it. What we do defines the kind of people are we.”

An Institute Exclusive!

The only complete summary of Italy’s role before and during the Holocaust

This 58-page, easy-to-read report with photographs is only \$15 postage & handling (\$25 for non-members).



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Jewish reality show. He understands what is at stake here.”

Long Island Congressman Steve Israel has also objected to the trash image of Jews on the reality show *Princesses*.



The problem with these hit shows is their rebroadcast market. “This is not an obscure cable station we are talking about,” says President Bill Dal Cerro. “CBS is a national broadcast network. *CSI* and *Mike & Molly* are viewed by tens of millions of Americans. These shows are rebroadcast and then sold to syndication. They will be shown for decades to generations of Americans.”

How do these zingers find their way into the scripts in the first place? “It usually starts with a self-loathing or benighted Italian-American staff member,” laments Chairman Rosario Iaconis. “In *CSI*, the director was a Louis Malito. Why did he allow the word ‘Italians’ in that dialogue? In fact, there is no such adage or folk tale encouraging cheating in the Italian heritage. Similiarly, in *Mike & Molly*, the actor being called a ‘wop’ is Italian American. Why didn’t he object to the word during rehearsal? Not to mention ‘greaseball’.”

So, it is left to the Italic Institute to try to clean up the mess.

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Five Reasons to Sustain the Cause



Chairman
Rosario A. Iaconis

1. GUARDIANS OF HERITAGE

I am often compelled to correct untruths and combat outright bias in the media with a letter to the editor, an op-ed or even a television interview. As a result, the Italic Institute has become quite familiar to the *NY Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, *Investor's Business Daily*, CNN, FOX News, local television and a host of other outlets.

Whether it's a general disdain for Italy or a story linking a current calamity to the Italian national character, the IIA is ready with a rapid media response—or a proactive rhetorical strike. Recently, the word “wop” was casually uttered on *Mike & Molly*, a nationally successful CBS sitcom. The IIA swiftly excoriated the network; and we continue to hold CBS executives accountable.

When the media habitually disdain Italy—or link a current calamity to the “flawed” Italian national character—the IIA is ready with a proactive rhetorical response.



Vice President
Anthony Vecchione

2. SPIRITUALLY TRUE

America is changing. In the past few decades, tens of millions of immigrants from Asia, Africa, and Ibero-America have entered our country. The media and the government has insured that these newcomers are given respect for their image and traditions - something that they do not do for Italian Americans. Their children, now all-American, watch the same movies and television shows as the rest of us. Some of these fictional works, like *The Godfather* and *The Sopranos*,

have become American classics. These new Americans are rising to prominent roles in our society with their heritage extolled, and in many cases expunged of unpleasant truths. Meanwhile, our Italian heritage is repeatedly depicted as synonymous with organized crime or dumb guidos. Even Italian American politicians see no need to object to these false and damaging images and pay lip service to our cultural needs. We are noticing that even some major Italian American organizations have pulled out of the anti-defamation cause. The Italic Institute is not resigned to defamation and never will be. We certainly do not believe that these offensive images should be entertainment for millions of new Americans.



Governor
Don Fiore

3. CONSISTENT

Our mission is the same today as it was when we were founded. Part of that mission is to disseminate the classical Italian heritage. That often means challenging those individuals and groups who continue to dumb down our community or misdirect the community's efforts. For 26 years our Institute has not flinched from speaking the truth, whether condemning the media for defamation or calling out fellow

Italians who, wittingly or unwittingly, help propagate some of the most ugliest stereotypes.

Our task is daunting because the Italian heritage has suffered immensely in this country, tainted by every fear America had of anarchism, the Mafia, Fascism, and even racism. It is no wonder that assimilation became a priority. But so did self-denigration as practiced by our own filmmakers. It is this double-edged sword we battle every day, but this is why the Italic Institute exists. You can trust us to do the job even as others drop out or sell out.



President
Bill Dal Cerro

4. UNIQUE & POSITIVE

I travel quite a bit both overseas and within the country. While I respect the various efforts being made by other Italian Americans, from social events to cultural projects, I must say that no one in this country can duplicate what the Italic Institute has done over the past twenty-six years. Our magazine, *The Italic Way*, stands alone in its original and hard-hitting contents. What other Italian American organization can truly be called

a think-tank? Our in-depth analyses of subjects like *Italy and the Holocaust* or the ultimate reality of *The Godfather* will not be found anywhere else. In short, the Italic Institute is not just another feel-good organization but rather a serious vehicle to explore our Italian legacy.

5. SO MUCH TO DO

We often look behind us and see absolutely nothing. There is no younger generation prepared to carry on the classical Italian heritage. That's because the major organizations have built nothing with the millions of dollars that they raised -- no academies, no youth programs, not even a national cultural center. Our Institute is the only think-tank with a classical agenda and the vision to carry it out.



Exec. Dir.
John Mancini

Gondolfini's Legacy



In a recent letter to the *New York Daily News*, Chairman Rosario Iaconis deflated the budding sainthood of the late James Gandolfini, star of HBO's *The Sopranos*. The media has gone to great lengths in extolling Gandolfini's reputed talents. One inane columnist compared Gandolfini's role as a crime boss to Louis Armstrong's lifelong fight against racism. In response, Iaconis wrote:

"Gandolfini became an international star by resurrecting, reinforcing, and institutionalizing a hurtful stereotype. Therein lies the secret of Tony Soprano's success: It's the bigotry, stupid. Having garnered record ratings via obscenity-laden violence, female nudity, and serial misogyny, creator David Chase secured his place in cable TV firmament by rooting his show in America's only acceptable prejudice – anti-Italian intolerance. Where else could viewers openly delight in ethnic defamation?"

Executive Director John Mancini posits this observation: "It has been instructive to follow the real-life trial of crime boss Whitey Bulger in Boston. It was mainly an Irish-American show, replete with corrupt FBI agents allowing murders, escapes and mayhem to go on for decades. It was, in part, the story of strangling a girlfriend, mutilating her corpse, having sex with a stepdaughter and all manner of betrayal and human degradation. In short, it was organized crime as it really is: multi-ethnic and depraved. Neither *The Godfather* nor *The Sopranos* would survive as "art" if they were true to the reality of the underworld. Would it be "art" to create a show of the Nazi SS using sympathetic '3-dimensional' characters' exterminating victims?"

Notes Vice President Anthony Vecchione, "Gandolfini's costar Steve Schirripa, by his own admission the grandson of a Jewish mobster, has codified the title of 'goombah' as a badge of honor in three 'goombah' guide books. Surely Gandolfini's work as Tony Soprano has earned him the title of Goombah Jimmy, nothing more."

Member Actions

We would like to acknowledge the good work being done by some of our members.

Maria Gloria of California has a column in *l'Italo-Americano*, a bilingual newspaper in southern California. She recently wrote a piece on the British Navy in WW II. At our suggestion she added a lengthy sequel to inform readers how the Italian Navy successfully engaged the Brits during that struggle.

Mario Ignagni of Minnesota has updated Wikipedia entries dealing with Italy on the internet with important details culled from *The Italic Way* articles and his own research.

Bill Cerruti and **Richard Vannucci** of California were active in the struggle to retain the Columbus Day holiday in their state. A recent attempt by an assemblyman to convert the holiday to a Native American Day was soundly defeated by two Italian American legislators. ****

A Sad Generation

The vast majority of Italian Americans do not often stumble upon the bits and pieces of defamation that contribute to our popular image. Recently, the State of New York had to inform the owners of a food truck that was scheduled to serve at the Saratoga Race Track that their business name – The Wandering Dago – was insulting to Italians.

Of course, the owners claim to be Italian Americans and see no harm in the word dago.

"It is a play on the fact that we are Italian and we get paid as the "day goes" (shortened to "Dago") and we wander from town to town in our truck. Our goal is to be regarded as hard working Italians, just like our ancestors."

- Brandon & Andrea

Sometimes you have to remind yourself this is 2013 and wonder what passes for self-respect. ****



