



# UPDATE

Italic Institute of America  
“Italian Pride on a Classical Foundation”

January, 2020

[www.italic.org](http://www.italic.org)



## Our 33rd Year!

by John Mancini, Executive Director



For those of you who have been with us awhile, you know that we have created programs and undertaken initiatives that were novel to the Italian American community. Over the years, we produced professional videos on heritage, designed multi-site cultural classes for pre-teens, published *The Italic Way Magazine*, created an on-line research library; we still broadcast weekly blogs, and we continue to take on Hollywood, Madison Avenue, television, academia, and the press to defend the image of the Italic People.

From the start, we pioneered the use of the word Italic to encompass our community in the U.S. and those around the world. We also use it to restore the thousand years of our history taken from us by half-baked academics who can never grasp the debt owed by all Italians to Classical Italy.

Not all our projects were sustainable over the long term, mainly due to a lack of resources or the realities of intermarriage and assimilation. Yet, nothing has been lost and we still use the knowledge and tools we accumulated from Day One.

We invite you to read the letters on pages 3 and 4 that our officers have written to the mainstream press in the past month in defense of our common heritage. We are unique among the organizations in having this kind of access.

Another unique tool we exercise is correcting Wikipedia entries. Our Minneapolis analyst Mario Ignagni has edited a number of entries dealing with Italic issues to insure that disinformation is nipped in the bud. Keeping this on-line encyclopedia accurate is an integral part of our global image. Mario just revised the *Casa Italiana* at Columbia entry, which had Mussolini founding the center instead of our American community and misstated our 2012 lawsuit. \*\*\*\*\*

## A Dose of Reality

If you haven't heard, the Italian Advance Placement Test for high school students lost 268 students and 39 schools this year. The Italian AP is near the bottom of foreign languages along with Japanese. This, after a \$3 million investment by our community and the Italian government. The test hit a high in 2018 of 2,926 student-takers but, despite much flag-waving by Italian teachers and Italian diplomats, dropped to 2,658 in 2019. The make-or-break number is supposed to be 2,500 — our AP is heading in the wrong direction.

Like so many other facets of our heritage in America, all evidence points to our community not living up to expectations. Those Pollyannas who deal with problems they can't solve by ignoring them, believe their own upbeat propaganda.



**Many community leaders use the same rationale for our “declining” Italian heritage in America.**

Cartoon by Dana Frador via The New Yorker and Conde Nast

To our clueless university academics who have abandoned Columbus for a few shiny beads from their politically-correct administrators, or the Italian government which only values Consumer-Americans not Italian-Americans, things are just fine.

When we informed the Italian Department at Columbia that the Italian AP tests went south this year, they had no comment. Imagine, the Italian AP is their *aglio e olio* — the high school farm teams feeding their enrollment, and it didn't set off an alarm bell. The same deaf ear has been turned by the Italian government which thought \$3 million for tests could replace incentivizing Italian American kids to embrace their heritage.

Wouldn't it be informative if our university cultural centers conducted surveys to take the pulse of our community? For example, when we asked Columbia's Department of Italian how many of its students were Italian American, the response was “it's not one of our metrics.” Well, maybe it should be!

And there is lots of information that surveys could gather as to intermarriage, attitudes of our teens and young adults, and what is wrong with our youth acculturation. But, our community is far from analytical. And these are the intellectuals!

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## Young People?

In proclaiming heritage “success,” the only valid metric is: Who will replace us?

The movers and shakers in our community measure our success in different ways: some rank a good street parade as the ultimate victory, others see handing out scholarships to Business majors as locking in our future, still others believe showering money on Italy for disaster relief is a better investment than sending 500 Italian American kids to immersion classes in Italy.

Shouldn't we tailor our generosity to the needs of the Italian heritage? For many students, their first awakening to cultural heritage is when they are handed a \$1,000 scholarship. Where is their grounding?

So, who will carry on the work of the Italic Institute? Like most Italian Americans of the younger generations, our children had no “Orthodox Italian Church” in which to absorb



**A typical Greek language class for kids, sponsored by the Orthodox Church. We have no Italian acculturation through the “Roman” Catholic Church.**

a classical perspective, learn Italian (or Latin), or find an Italic spouse. Our own staff discovered their classical roots on their own, in books that are easily available to anyone with an urge to delve deeper into heritage.

The fact is, there are no Italian cul-

tural centers on university campuses or off, that can expose young people to the information and perspective that the Italic Institute has provided for the past 33 years. They may learn the Italian language, appreciate Italian cinema, and study the immigrant experience but, they will remain oblivious to the full chain of legacy that made Italy the cornerstone of Western Civilization, even today.

## La Casa Europa

While it's still called *La Casa Italiana*, for all intents and purposes this \$15+ million palazzo built and donated by our community to Columbia University in 1927 to diffuse Italian culture – a living monument to the Italic People – is now under the control of other ethnic groups.

Efforts by all the major organizations to put an Italian American on the Board were summarily ignored by Italian Ambassador Varricchio. Only when we used an Italian citizen (Dennis Mancini) to press



for an explanation did an embassy attorney contact us promising to “investigate” the matter. That attorney, too, has now gone silent.

Subsequently, we reached out to Columbia's Department of Italian, which was housed in *La Casa* for 63 years but removed in 1991 when Italy bought the property. The chairperson informed us that her faculty had no interest in going back or being involved with *La Casa* except that “it would be nice” to have some access to its facilities. To distance herself from our troublemaking, she reported our outreach to Columbia officials...then went silent.

You may file this twelve-year battle with Columbia and the Italian government under ‘lost causes.’ But realize that the Italians are being rewarded for their crude behavior with a NYS tax exemption worth \$150,000 per year — an exemption made law by an Italian American governor and our legislators. Where is the reciprocity... or even the courtesy?

## The Fate of a Classical Italian

We cannot emphasize enough the need to have a classical foundation to appreciate the full scope of our Italian heritage. Imagine Jewish children being taught that their history began with the destruction of Herod's temple in AD 70. Everything before that was “Hebrew” history, unrelated to Jews. Abraham, Moses, David, and Solomon were a separate people. This is exactly what Italian Americans believe about “Romans.” Or, if they acknowledge a relationship, they don't understand the significance.

With this *Update*, we have provided a condensed summary of the Institute's research on this relationship. We call it *The Making of a Classical Italian*. If every Italian American leader and academic incorporated this perspective into his/her thinking it might transform how we educate our youth.

Send a copy to an Italian teacher, your local Italian cultural center, or any friend or relative that loves his/her heritage.

## Donation Guarantee

We don't host galas, and our resources are used solely for defending and promoting the Italian classical heritage.

We are an IRS 501c (3) that allows you to deduct contributions.

We may not cheer you up with our straight talk, but you can be sure we have only one mission: to cut through the hypocrisy and wasted effort in our community while confronting those who demean Italian American contributions.

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**Hillel is the largest Jewish campus organization in the world, working with thousands of college students globally.**

**There is no longer an Italian club at Columbia.**

# CHICAGO SUN★TIMES



Bill Dal Cerro

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### When will Hollywood stop beating up on Italian Americans?

The Bank of America. Planter's Peanuts. Tropicana Orange Juice. Barnes & Noble bookstores. The Radio Flyer Red Wagon. The Securities and Exchange Commission. The Jacuzzi. The pilot ejector seat. The first computer microprocessor. The shopping mall. Multicultural education. And even the McDonald's Big Mac hamburger.

What do all of these long-accepted symbols of Americana have in common?

They sprang from the creative genius of Italian Americans.

Since 1915, however, with the release of the short film "The Italian," Hollywood has told — and sold — a different story.

Contrary to actual history, Italian Americans have been portrayed as either gangsters or buffoons (male) or gum-chewing bimbos (female). And this tradition continues with Martin Scorsese's "The Irishman" — which, despite its deceptive title, conveys the same negative tropes over 100 years later.

In 2015, our educational institute conducted a survey of the Italian image in movies over the past century. Two findings were especially disturbing.

After the success of the 1972 fictional film "The Godfather," there was an 81% increase in the number of mob movies produced by Hollywood over the next four decades, from 98 (1915-1972) to 438 (1972-now).

Even more disturbing: Nearly 90% of mob films feature Italian gangster characters who have no basis in reality; that is, they are entirely fictitious.

In other words, for every film about, say, Al Capone, another eight mob movies feature fake Italian gangster stereotypes. "Reel life" dominates "real life."

A rare film based on a true story, such as "The Irishman," is then used to rationalize Hollywood's obsession with Italian surnamed criminals: "See? The mob existed! You Italian Americans are in denial."

Wrong. It is Hollywood that is in denial.

They continue to deny the complexity — and yes, genius — of actual Italian American history.

*Bill Dal Cerro, senior analyst  
with the Chicago Office  
of the Italic Institute of America*

Chicago Tribune | Section 1 | Sunday, November 10, 2019

## Anti-Italian American prejudice persists

On Nov. 1, 1512, in Rome, Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel frescoes — a triumph of Western civilization — was unveiled. It revealed the depth and breadth of Italian culture, as specifically practiced by Italian men. On Nov. 1, 2019, in New York City, the film "The Irishman" was unveiled, revealing the corruption and violence of Italian culture, as specifically practiced by Italian men in America. Ah, progress!

Although Italian men (and women) have certainly displayed their genius centuries after the Sistine Chapel — in all fields of endeavors — you wouldn't know it if Hollywood is your guide. Despite viewers' constant, defensive protestations that they "don't believe everything they see in the movies," this latest film by Martin Scorsese merely reinforces a prejudice already revealed by a National Opinion Research Center poll taken in the mid-2000s: namely, that 75% of Americans associate a majority of Italian Americans with "being associated with, or connected to, organized crime."

That poll was taken at the height of popularity of HBO's "The Sopranos," a drama series about the mob that ran for six seasons. There is no reason to believe that viewers have suddenly seen the light; indeed, the green-lighting of "The Irishman" — in an age of so-called respect for diversity — shows that anti-Italian prejudice, dressed up as "art," is still a hot commodity.

American journalists have long



Celtic title / Italian mistrels.

been wise to this hypocrisy. In 1958, editor and publisher Harry Golden Sr. wrote, "Has any ethnic group in this country, from the very beginning, had a worse press than the Italians? The Italian American has become the stereotype of the gangster. This is not only unfair, but untrue."

In 1987, Chicago's own Mike Royko coined the term "The Godfather Syndrome," noting how anti-Italian media prejudice prevented one of our most gifted politicians, Mario Cuomo, from running for president.

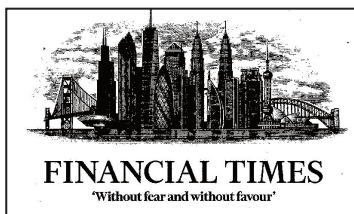
If only Michelangelo were alive today to sculpt the "block-headed thinking" that dominates the minds of American filmmakers, actors and producers.

— Bill Dal Cerro, senior analyst,  
Chicago office of the Italic Institute of America



Rosario A. Iaconis

You can follow Rosario on FaceBook as well as his blog on *italic.org*.



## A sinewy grasp of Latin imparts Ciceronian clarity

Emmanuel Macron's allusion to a Jupiterian presidency is neither a *lapsus linguae* nor a bit of rhetorical hyperbole ("Latin and Greek are not dead languages in modern France", November 1). In fact, his predilection for precise Latin locutions is grounded in history, tradition and, yes, gravitas. Had Julius Caesar not been victorious in the Gallic wars, modern France, the French language and the very notion of a Fifth Republic — *res publica* — might never have come into existence.

Without Rome's global commonwealth, and the Augustan Reformation, America's Founding Fathers would have been unable to forge a "more perfect union" or the US constitution. President John F. Kennedy could not have inspired the west with "*civis Romanus sum*" in his speech to a divided Berlin in 1963. And in a world bereft of what Pliny described as the "*Immensa Romanae pacis maiestas*" (the Immense Majesty of the Roman Peace), there would be no concept of a United Nations.

*Mirabile dictu*: the vernacular of Virgil, Ovid and Tacitus still echoes across the sea of time. Indeed, it remains the lingua franca of the rule of law, sound governance, science and medicine. Today's western leaders would be wise to brush up on this classical Italic tongue. For a sinewy grasp of Latin imparts Ciceronian clarity, logic and eloquence.

**Rosario A. Iaconis**

Chairman,

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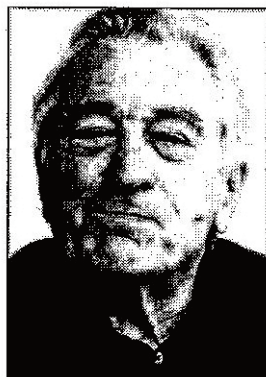
letters@nypost.com

## Scorsese's Gangster Flop: You Can Skip 'Irishman'

•Peyser's vivisection of Martin Scorsese's "The Irishman" is a long-overdue critique of this turgid piece of cinematic tripe.

In addition to the film's glorification of grisly violence, underlying misogyny and lack of narrative cohesiveness, there's another problem with Scorsese's apocryphal mob movie: It's the bigotry, stupid.

Scorsese, Francis Coppola, & Co. — including the likes of De Niro, Al Pacino, Joe Pesci and Chazz Palminteri — have



Robert De Niro

achieved fame and fortune by incessantly depicting Italian-Americans as a vile criminal underclass.

Journalist Clyde Haberman underscored this sad reality: "Among major ethnic groups that have formed the country's social bedrock for at least a century, Americans of Italian origin may be the last to see themselves reflected in mass culture, time and again, as nothing but a collection of losers and thugs."

"The Irishman" is but the latest manifestation of such odious themes masquerading as art.

**Rosario A. Iaconis**  
Mineola

# Whole world should honor the explorer

BE OUR GUEST

BY ROSARIO IACONIS

When it comes to transcendent historical figures, Christopher Columbus doth bestride the narrow world like a colossus. Like Gaius Julius Caesar, his ancient Italian kin, Cristoforo Colombo altered the course of human events.

Columbus was first and foremost an explorer. In fact, he discovered more territories than Ferdinand Magellan. "As a master mariner," wrote historian Samuel Eliot Morison, "Columbus was supreme in his generation. Never was a title more justly bestowed than the one which he most jealously guarded, Admiral of the Ocean Sea."

His supposed sins are, if not fabricated, greatly overstated. Columbus did not introduce slavery to the New World. According to Carol Delaney, a former Stanford University anthropologist, "Slavery was common, even among [native] people in the Caribbean."

Among indigenous peoples — including the Aztecs, Mayans and Incas — ritual misogyny, human sacrifice and cannibalism were not uncommon. In North America, the Mohawk, Atakapa and Tonkawa tribes were known as "man-eaters."

In any event, Columbus Day isn't a feast day for a sausage-and-pepper proletariat. This holiday celebrates the epochal trek that created modernity.

On Jan. 8, 1963, at the opening of the National Gallery of Art's exhibition of Leonardo da Vinci's "Mona Lisa," President John F. Kennedy declared: "At the same time that the creator of this painting was opening up such a wide new world to Western civilization, his fellow countryman from Italy, Columbus, was opening up a new world to a new civilization."

Which is why the time has come to declare Columbus Day a UN holiday. To foster global unity, peace and cultural amity, the United Nations designates key international holidays for commemoration. Among the most important are International Women's Day (March 8), World Day of Social Justice (Feb. 20), International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust (Jan. 27), and International Mother Earth Day (April 22).

Columbus' epic journey of discovery surely merits such recognition.

Cristoforo Colombo's four voyages connected the Earth's two hemispheres. In an NPR in-

terview, Charles Mann, author of "1493: Uncovering the New World Columbus Created," stated that "... to ecologists, he (Columbus) was this super-important figure, and the reason is that 200 million years ago, as you remember learning in school, the world was a single giant land mass they call Pangaea, and geological forces broke it up, creating the continents we know today."

Columbus' journey across the wine-dark Atlantic led to the Columbian Exchange, accelerating *la forza del destino*, linking humanity's diverse peoples, and forging the Earth we call our home.

Ironically, the National Education Association, which is supposed to believe in spreading knowledge to young people, has passed a resolution calling for Columbus Day to be replaced by Indigenous Peoples' Day.

Had Columbus not ventured into the unknown, the rich, variegated and vibrant Hispanic world we know today would not exist. Is NEA President Lily Eskelsen García unaware that Puerto Rico boasts two Columbus Day events, the October federal holiday and the Nov. 19 (Discovery Day) celebration, which commemorates the Italian navigator's sojourn to Puerto Rico?

Should we now rename the nation's capital Washington DIP (District of Indigenous People)? Will Eskelsen-Garcia ask Columbia University to discard its namesake and become Iroquois University?

The Columbian epoch brought the great gifts of the Italian Renaissance to the shores of the New World: modern science, art, music, architecture, accounting, the rule of law, capitalism and, yes, ultimately the American Republic. Absent Columbus, "the last best hope of Earth" and the United Nations might never have arisen.

Morison underscored this unifying reality: "The whole history of the Americas stems from the four voyages of Columbus; and as the Greek city-states looked back to the deathless gods as their founders, so today a score of independent nations and dominions unite in homage to Christopher the stout-hearted son of Genoa, who carried Christian civilization across the Ocean Sea."

Honor him, all across the globe. Iaconis is chairman of the Italic Institute of America.