

News Release: Coalition of Italian American Groups Meet with MTV over “Jersey Shore” Program

At the request of the counsel for the New York State Commission for Social Justice (CSJ), Order Sons of Italy in America (OSIA), four MTV Executives met with leaders John Dabbene, National President Emeritus, CSJ, Andre DiMino, National President of UNICO National, and CSJ counsel Michael A. Santo at Viacom Headquarters in New York City on May 20th to discuss the concerns over the depiction of Italian Americans in the MTV “reality” show, *Jersey Shore*.

This was the second face-to-face meeting set up with the MTV Executives and OSIA representatives, and the first with a UNICO representative. The leaders were also endorsed by three other nationally respected groups (National Italian American Foundation[NIAF]; National Organization of Italian American Women [NOIAW]; and the Columbus Citizens Foundation). Mr. Dabbene and Mr. DiMino expressed the angst demonstrated by tens of thousands of Italian Americans concerning the negative stereotypical depiction of their Italian ethnicity in the program, and made suggestions to help address them.

Both Mr. Dabbene and Mr. DiMino stated that they were “pleased with the reception and remarks” made by the executives: Tony Di Santo, President of Programming, Jeannie Kedas, Executive V.P. of Communications, Janet Borelli, Senior V.P. , Standards and Practice, and Virginia Lazalde-McPherson, Senior V.P., Business and Legal Affairs. The leaders also stated that they were “comfortable” in knowing that the four executives were concerned enough by the complaints so as to meet with them and have an “intelligent and communicative dialogue.” Mr. DiMino stated that “the dialogue will continue and we will address any future concerns that may arise.” The executives promised an “open ear” to the leaders. As Mr. Dabbene said, “we hope to close this chapter on the denigration of Italian Americans.” The CSJ counsel, Michael A. Santo remarked that “such a coalition was essential to helping create a swift response,” and believes that such cooperation is essential to addressing Italian American bias. While no future meetings are scheduled, all of the parties agreed that “the doors remain open.”

The OSIA is the largest and oldest national organization of men and women of Italian heritage in the USA. Commission for Social Justice is their anti-defamation branch.

UNICO National is the largest Italian-American service organization in the USA.

NIAF is a nonprofit, nonpartisan educational foundation that promotes Italian American culture and heritage.

The Columbus Citizens Foundation is a non-profit organization in New York City committed to fostering an appreciation of Italian-American heritage and achievement.

NOIAW seeks to create a national network to support the educational and professional aspirations of its members and to combat ethnic stereotypes by promoting positive role models.

