

I. Goals of the Commission for Social Justice

Our goals of fighting bias, bigotry and discrimination against Italians and Italian Americans and promoting a positive image of Americans of Italian descent are accomplished through our Complaint Directory, our many programs including the Medal of Honor, the Holocaust Memorial Program, our video-documentary “Italian American Recipients of the Congressional Medal of Honor,” positive image materials, speaking engagements, and the publication of our CSJ newspaper *Justice*. We underscore the importance of retaining and supporting our present CSJ members as a high priority.

II Italian Language Program

Update to the Italian Language Program at St. Finbar’s Elementary School. Unfortunately the Diocese of Brooklyn chose to close St. Finbar’s this June. Most of the students transferred to nearby Our Lady of Guadalupe School. At a meeting with their principal, Ms. Diana Meringolo, she is enthusiastic about absorbing the entire Italian Language program into that school, as part of the curriculum, depending on a grant from IACE, for teacher’s salaries. If the grant received does not cover salaries for teachers of all grades, the program will continue for the lower grades only. Because OLG has twice the number of students as St. Finbar’s, they will be requiring additional books for the program. We will be working with the school to assist in obtaining the additional books.

One of our priorities is to bring the Italian Language into the schools. A committee has been formed and we plan to work with our District Chairpersons and liaisons in this endeavor. We have already established a grant of positive image material to all teachers who form an Italian Club in their school. We presently provide material to Italian language and social studies teachers to be utilized as teacher’s aids.

III Complaint Directory Issues:

We have been contacted by members on various occasions, requesting CSJ intervention on an issue of bias and/or bigotry against Italian –Americans. We try to respond to every issue brought to our attention. It would be most helpful if you provide us with the TV or radio station, date and time of the program, and as much information as possible so that we can properly respond to the issue. Some issues are beyond our realm.

On several occasions, we have received an irate email asking why we haven’t handled a complaint. Upon investigation, it was found that the complaint was made to another party and was never related to us. We have also received email asking us to handle an issue that occurred several months ago. By the time we looked into the matter, it was no longer an issue. After much discussion concerning the handling of complaints we developed guidelines for this purpose.

- **Ken Pringle, Mayor of Belmar, NJ.** – I received many telephone calls and emails concerning Pringle’s derogatory remarks concerning the “Guido’s” and the “big haired girls” that visit his town on the Jersey Shore during the summer months. CSJ was contacted by NYC Councilman Tony Avella, various members and non-members concerning these insensitive remarks. After speaking with John Dabbene, I emailed Pringle offering him the opportunity to publicly apologize for his insensitive remarks at the Garibaldi Meucci Museum, to Staten Island officials, and New York and New Jersey CSJ. However, I received no response from the Mayor. I was contacted by Tom Bergbauer, OSIA President of New Jersey, to attend a Town Hall Meeting in Balmar, NJ concerning the matter. However, because of very short notice, I was unable to attend. At the meeting, Brother Bergbauer reiterated the suggestion that the mayor meet with us at the Museum to publicly apologize, but he stated that he already apologized and the apology was accepted by NIAF. In essence – the matter was considered closed.

- **U.S. Open – June 15, 2008** - During NBC’s nationally aired coverage of the U.S. Open, featuring Tiger Woods and Rocco Mediate. Sportscaster Johnny Miller made derogatory remarks concerning Rocco Mediate by stating, “*Mediate looks like the guy who cleans Tiger’s swimming pool,*” and “*Guys with the name of Rocco don’t get on the trophy, do they?*” To quote the NY Times, according to Miller, “An Italian guy who looks like a pool cleaner, with his name on a trophy with Tiger’s, sounded wrong.” Not only was his verbal diatribe aired on national television but was reproduced via a film clip on the internet, and printed in the New York Times and other newspapers. We wrote to Richard Ebersole, President -NBC Sports, concerning these derogatory remarks on national television, asking that Mr. Miller be removed from his sensitive position. Our National CSJ President, Anthony Baratta, conducted a national campaign to this endeavor. A very half- hearted apology was published by Mr. Miller, which is not acceptable to us. We have not given up on this matter. We again emailed Richard Ebersol that Miller’s half-hearted apology was hardly acceptable and suggested that he be placed in another position where his insensitive and unethical remarks could cause no harm.
- **Fordham University - “The Soprano’s – A Wake”** - A symposium was held at Fordham University, Lincoln Center Campus, “The Soprano’s – A Wake,” which was held on the weekend of May 24th. It consisted of a series of lectures, conducted by professors, adjuncts and lecturers from all over the world, who seemed to have found some redeeming value to this series. This symposium was supposed to be a sociological study comparing the *Soprano’s* family/characters to any other American family and their friends. We did write to the President of Fordham, concerning the use of this prestigious University for this symposium, and received a letter of apology – with the notation that the University did not advertise or promote the symposium and would not offer their facilities for anything like it in the future.
- **HBO – Boardwalk Empire** - It was brought to our attention that HBO is planning to air a new series “Boardwalk Empire,” based on Nelson Johnson’s book, *Boardwalk Empire: The Birth, High Times and Corruption of Atlantic City*, about the beginning of organized crime in 1920’s Atlantic City. It is our understanding that Terrence Winter, of *Soprano’s* fame, will be writing the series. We wrote to Michael Lombardo, President, HBO asking that this series not replicate another tiresome, stereotypical "Mafia" series. We further requested his cooperation and intervention in preventing this series from becoming another *Mafia-fest*. In a return email – he stated very briefly that this was not about Italian Americans.

IV. NYS CSJ Annual Fundraisers

NYS (CSJ) – B’nai B’rith Breakfast - Twenty-Seventh Breakfast of Solidarity – June 1, 2008

Our 27th annual breakfast held jointly with B’Nai B’Rith Metronorth Region, held on June 1, 2008 at the Woodlands. Lehman Laguardia Awards were presented to Howard Meier, Chairman Holocaust Memorial and Tolerance Center of Nassau County and Dr. Margaret Cuomo Meier, a medical professional, educator involved in the promotion of Italian Language Studies. Former Governor Mario Cuomo and his lovely wife, Mathilda Cuomo were in attendance as we honored their family for all their good works. There was an atmosphere of shared camaraderie and acknowledgment of our similar causes, to fight bias and bigotry. I thank Marge Moschella, Sal Moschella, Enrico Annichiarico, Richard Haemmerle, Eleanor Jobbagy and Maria Kobylarz, for a job well done.

V Seventh CSJ-B’nai B’rith Essay Contest

The NYS and National CSJ/OSIA, and the MetroNorth Region of B’nai B’rith International again sponsored writing contest entitled "2008 Enlighten America - Enlighten the World Youth Essay Award." New York State demographics indicate changes in the ethnic makeup of our population. Students were asked to address

the following topic: “**How has diversity enhanced or broadened your experiences in your school and in your community?**”

Three prizes were awarded as follows: First Place- \$500. U.S. Savings Bond, Rafael Tangorra; Second - \$250 U.S. Savings Bond, Michael Hand; Third - \$100 -US Savings Bond, Jenna Maresco. A certificate of participation will be issued to every student submitting an essay. On June 26, 2008 we were invited to a meeting of the Herricks School Board to present Michael Hand with his award. In attendance were Stella Grillo, CSJ President, and Barbara Glenbourtt and Doris Levinson, B’Nai B’rith Metronorth Division. We were invited to speak before the members and were able to tell them about the goals of both Organizations.

VI ITALIAN LANGUAGE ADVANCED PLACEMENT TEST

The Advanced Placement Program allows students to pursue college level studies while they attend high school. The test was first offered in Italian in May 2006 but now faces the possibility of elimination. While the number of students taking this test has increased to over 2,000 students in 2008, the College Board feels that there is a lack of participation. Italian American Organizations and the Italian Embassy have galvanized in their efforts to save the Advanced Placement Test in Italian.

According to a recent article in the Washington Post, College Board officials’ concern is purely financial. After a meeting between Ambassador Castellaneta and College Board President, Gaston Caperton, it was decided that a task force be formed to raise funds to save the program. Embassy officials have not as yet been informed as to the amount of funds required. College Board has made it clear that they wish to sustain the AP in Italian, but also made it clear that more funds are required to take the test beyond 2009.

We are still encouraging teachers, members and friends to continue to send emails to gcaperton@collegeboard.org - President, College Board and tpacker@collegeboard.org, Vice President in charge of AP Programs.

In the meantime, Task Forces will be formed across the USA, of *teachers and advocates* of Italian Language and culture to:

- Report on the status of the AP Programs in Italian within a geographical area
- To help establish AP programs in Italian in high schools not currently offering such programs
- To advocate for the establishment of middle and high school Italian Language classes in local high schools.

Italian Language teachers are asked to encourage students to take the Advanced Placement Test in Italian.

VII District CSJ’s

District I – Chairman Rick Annichiarico reports that the District has active meetings.

District II – Chairman, Lee Cerullo and the District II Liaisons had a very well attended meeting on June 26th at the Columbus Lodge. Three students were given awards for excellence in Italian Language studies. They plan another fund raiser in the fall – perhaps a trip to the historic sights in Philadelphia, Pa.

District III –District Chairperson, Josephine Truglio and District III liaisons met to revise and update the CSJ pamphlet.

District IV – Chairperson, Felicia Bonvino keeps us apprized of activities in District IV by sending copies of news articles of interest to us.

District V – Sal Marasa, District V Chairman, advised that the Filippo Mazzei Lodge arranges to have positive image displays at various local libraries and public areas.

Districts VI – Joseph DiCarlo, Gabriela DiNunzia Lodge and Anna Maria Saia have volunteered to co-chair the District CSJ Liaisons. We wholeheartedly welcome them.

District VII – We are seeking a District Chairperson in this district. We have had some volunteers to participate as Liaisons and have written to them and have provided them with CSJ Liaison information. Carmine Federico has been working with our liaisons in District VII. We appreciate Brother Carmine's assistance.

District VIII – Joseph Berta, newly elected State Trustee has offered to assist Lou Giambra, who has been ill. We deeply appreciate Brother Joe's assistance.

Letters are being sent out to all Lodge Presidents asking that, if the lodge does not already have a CSJ liaison, that they encourage a member to participate in the District CSJ meetings and activities.

VIII Congressional Medal of Honor Video Documentary

We are continuing our efforts to promote and distribute this wonderful positive image video to lodges, state CSJ's, military groups, and other interested parties around the country. The videos have been purchased all over the country with many OSIA groups, military groups, etc. We encourage the showing of the 6-minute promo tape and the sale of the video documentary, when displaying the Congressional Medal of Honor Program. The cost of the tape has been reduced to \$5.00 plus \$2.50 for postage and handling.

IX Video Tape Library

Our video-tape library has been categorized and shelved at the Garibaldi Meucci Museum. We have developed a system for the tapes to be loaned to lodges, organizations and individuals. We welcome donations of video-tapes and DVD's appropriate to our collection. The complete listing can be downloaded from our web site, together with rental information, www.nyscsj-osia.org/ We encourage Lodges and other organizations to utilize the films in this collection. There is no charge to borrow the tapes.

X Positive Image Material

The CSJ is continually developing and distributing our positive image material to teachers, filial lodges and members. We have ordered additional Columbus bookmarks for distribution during the month of October at parades, various functions and feasts. We also have a supply of Italian National Anthem cards, in both Italian and English, that can be placed on tables at dinner/dances so that everyone can join in singing the Italian National Anthem. Our latest poster features Italian American – Sports Hall of Famers – which was prepared by Anthony Corsello and Sal Moschella.

XI Calendar of Events – New York State CSJ

Italian Night at Shea Stadium - Wednesday, August 20, 2008, game starts at 7:10 PM – tickets are \$32. per person. Join with us to show our strength and support. Contact Sylvia Summa ASAP for tickets – 718-384-7915.

Belmont, Day at the Races – Saturday, September 13, 2008, \$45.00 per person, Contact Anthony Corsello, Chairperson ASAP for reservations – 516-766-5518.

Teacher's Conference, September 21, 2008 - 9:30 AM at Hofstra University - Informative conference held for Italian Language and Social Studies teachers. Teachers are supplied with a tube of positive image educational material to be utilized as teaching aids. More information will be provided - Marge Moschella, Chairperson.

