

## **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**

When the College Board announced in spring 2008 the discontinuation of several AP courses, the College Board's trustees indicated that if external funders came forward to supplement the College Board's investment in AP Italian, the program could be sustained. A heroic effort was made, led largely by the Italian Language Foundation's leaders Dr. Margaret Cuomo and Louis Tallarini, true champions of Italian language and cultural studies in the United States.

However, the valiant effort to raise the needed funds was confronted head-on by the unforeseen challenge of the current economic situation, which appears to have restricted organizations', corporations', and governmental abilities to partner with the College Board to save AP Italian. **Accordingly, with great sadness it was announced that AP Italian will be suspended following this current, 2008-09 academic year, and will not be offered in the 2009-10 academic year.** While AP Italian will not be offered in 2009-10, if at some future date the funding partnerships needed to support an AP Italian program arise, the Board of Trustees will consider renewing work to develop and offer the AP Italian course and exam.

Please see a [message below from the Italian Language Foundation](#), which details their continued deep commitment to AP Italian and their continued efforts on behalf of Italian teachers in the U.S. The government of Italy is also interested in the effort to revive AP Italian at some point in the future, and plans to work closely with the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other Italian State Institutions in hopes of raising the funds needed.

While AP Italian will no longer be offered, the College Board strongly recommends that secondary schools make no changes to their fourth- and/or fifth-year Italian courses beyond simply removing the "AP" designation. Instead, these programs should continue to be offered. They further encourage schools to apply the following policies to sustain student enrollment in these capstone Italian courses:

- Encourage schools to give the same GPA weight to their capstone Italian course as they do to AP courses, so that students have the same incentive to take Italian as they do to take AP course work in other languages.
- On your school profile, you are encouraged to note that your capstone Italian program is offered at the same level as the AP programs in other programs. Offering such courses of study beyond the more commonly taught languages demonstrates to admissions offices your school's commitment to providing an array of rigorous academic opportunity for your students.

They further encourage school counselors to remind students of the following points:

- Because Italian placement exams are provided by college and university departments nationwide, students who remain in your school's Italian program through your capstone Italian course can continue to receive through the departmental exam the same sort of placement the AP Italian Exam qualified them to receive.
- Admissions officers want to see that students take the most rigorous course work available to them, and in the case of Italian, persisting in the course of study through the capstone course offered by your school will provide admissions officers with evidence that students have studied Italian at the highest and most rigorous level available.
- The College Board continues to offer the SAT® Subject Test in Italian each December, which students can use to demonstrate their proficiency to colleges and universities, and possibly earn placement into intermediate and advanced Italian courses.

To All Advocates of Italian Language Education,

As a bright new year approaches, the advocates of Italian language education can reflect on many significant accomplishments in 2008.

The Italian Language Foundation, Inc. was established on July 3, 2008 and received its IRS approval on August 8, 2008 as a 501(c)3 not-for-profit corporation. The ILF dedicated itself to the fundraising effort for the support of the Advanced Placement Program in Italian Language and culture.

Individual American and Italian donors and not-for-profit organizations in both countries understood the importance of the mission of the Italian Language Foundation, and provided over \$650,000 in funds and contingent commitments since July. We are grateful to all of you who contributed, and who encouraged others to follow your example. This official effort served to galvanize the community of Italian language educators and advocates in an unprecedented and highly organized manner.

Originally, the College Board's financial requirement was \$9.5 million in total funding over a 10-year period. \$4.5 million for this support was due in 2008/09 to convert AP Italian to an internet model (similar to that funded by the Chinese and Japanese governments for AP Chinese and AP Japanese) that would have enabled the College Board to offer AP Italian at lower cost. However, the College Board was also willing to retain the current scoring model for one more year, which would have reduced the financial requirement to \$1.5 million for 2008/09, but would also have increased the funds needed for years beyond 2008/09. With a substantial increase in enrollment of students taking the AP Italian exam, that financial requirement would be reduced accordingly in future years.

The cataclysmic change in the economic climate since July, 2008, has adversely affected this vital fund raising effort. The full financial partnership that was required from the Republic of Italy has not been forthcoming. All of the financial commitments made to the Italian Language Foundation by Italian American organizations were conditioned upon support from the Republic of Italy.

Therefore it will not be possible to meet the immediate financial commitments and guarantees of future funding in 2009 required by the College Board for the continuance of the AP Italian Program past May 2009. We remain hopeful that the Republic of Italy will review and reconsider its position. While it is now too late to fund AP Italian for the 2009-10 academic year, the College Board has agreed to reinstate

the AP Program in Italian Language and Culture in 2010-11 or beyond if and when financial support becomes available from the Republic of Italy. The ILF is confident that the same Italian American organizations will step forward again with funding commitments if we receive equal support from the Republic of Italy.

The Italian Language Foundation, Inc., is dedicated to the support of Italian language education. We will continue to support Italian language education through professional development workshops and summer study in Italy experiences for teachers of Italian. Plans are in progress for a 2009 summer institute for teachers hosted by the University of Palermo in Sicily. We will encourage study abroad programs for high school students of Italian through the San Vigilio Foundation in Trento.

In the months ahead, we will continue our fund raising efforts in the hopes of meeting the financial goals presented by the College Board for the support of the AP Italian Language Program.

We realize that we will all share a deep sense of disappointment after the diligent and tireless effort on the part of the Italian Language Foundation and yourselves. However, we will continue to fund raise because we believe that our children and grandchildren and all American high school students deserve the opportunity to experience a first class Italian language education in the United States of America.

**To express your personal disappointment, kindly share your thoughts with the following representatives of the Republic of Italy:**

**Sebastiano Cardi - Embassy of Italy**    [sebastiano.cardi@esteri.it](mailto:sebastiano.cardi@esteri.it)

**Marco Mancini - Embassy of Italy**    [marco.mancini@esteri.it](mailto:marco.mancini@esteri.it)

**Francesco Talo' - Consul General, New York**    [francesco.talo@esteri.it](mailto:francesco.talo@esteri.it)  
[segreteriaicg.newyork@esteri.it](mailto:segreteriaicg.newyork@esteri.it)

**Cecilia Piccioni of the Republic of Italy**    [c.piccioni@palazzochigi.it](mailto:c.piccioni@palazzochigi.it)

**B. Archi of the Republic of Italy**    [b.archi@palazzochigi.it](mailto:b.archi@palazzochigi.it)

### **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.

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.

- **Columbus Bashing** - In October 2008, a Global Studies Teacher at the Bronx School of Law and Finance wrote a column printed in the *Journal News, Westchester County* entitled, "Rethinking Columbus: Great Explorer or a Greedy Conqueror?" He questioned

Columbus' right to discover anything because his ships landed on inhabited territory. He further lambasted Columbus as the original slave trader and continued in a pattern that solely blamed Columbus for all the problems incurred by the resettlement of Native Americans. We responded to his column and provided him with two pamphlets of factual information compiled about Columbus.

- **Chris Berman, ESPN Anchor** – On December 21, 2008, upon reporting the NFL's highlights of the day, that included a move by Sabby Piscatelli, Berman changed his persona and language to a "Brooklyn Italian accent" skillfully attaching an uneducated, uncultured Italian American dialect to Piscatelli's name. This verbal diatribe was aired nationally. Further, an article in the *New York Post* by *Phil Mushnick*, entitled *Italian Americans are Still Fair Game for a Cheap Laugh*, correctly reported Berman's stereotypical and ethnic slur, which was neither entertaining nor amusing. A letter was sent to ESPN protesting Berman's actions. A letter was also sent to Mushnick of the Post, praising him for his positive article.
- **The Mafia Boss** - another game posted on the Internet, that invites players to play the game based on real Mafia life and enter the **The Mafia Boss** World, where you will become a **boss** of a crime gang giving the choice of collecting money from casino's etc.. The game was produced by a company based in Cyprus and offered on the internet. We wrote to this company stating our views, asking that the game be withdrawn. Much to our dismay, the game is still widely advertised on the Internet. How do we combat this problem-- **do not visit the website or play the game!**
- **Taxpayer.com** – This was an ad on television, advertising a tax service, only known as Taxpayer.com. The scene depicted two obviously Italian American men, in their sleeveless undershirts, touting the wonders of this tax service in *Brooklynese*. When I visited the web site, I found that it was based in Canada. I did email them indicating our displeasure with the ethnic undertones of their ad. I have not seen it again.

#### **IV Men of Vision – Garibaldi and Meucci Documentary**

The New York State Grand Lodge Foundation together with the CSJ joined together to fund the production of a 40- 60-minute film entitled, *Men of Vision – Garibaldi and Meucci*, which will be written and produced by Marino Amoruso of Mymar Entertainment, which will be owned by NYSGLF and CSJ. We recently received an update from Amoruso, that the film is progressing and they are presently working with the Garibaldi Meucci Museum to get the final script in order, and also to schedule filming at the museum. They have all the photos and artwork needed, and will be bringing in the historians and experts to be interviewed for the film. The film will be on the PBS Network and other national and regional network for which this film is deemed suitable programming ie Documentary Channel. We look forward to viewing this wonderful undertaking. Amoruso's other films include, *Pride and Passion*, *Bravissimo: Italian American Sports Legend* and *Our Contributions: Italians In America*, among others.

#### **V. NYS CSJ Annual Fundraisers**

**NYS CSJ's 29<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Dinner-Dance – Sunday, Feb. 22, 2009**

**On Sunday, February 22, 2009, at our 29<sup>th</sup> Annual CSJ Dinner-Dance**, the CSJ will honor two committed individuals –Dr. Carlo Sclafani, full time Professor and Chairperson of the Westchester Community College Modern Languages Department, among other achievements and Robert Spiotto, Artistic Director, Community Arts Programs and Executive Producer, Hofstra Entertainment among other accomplishments. Our honorees have distinguished themselves by their contributions to the Italian American Community by fighting bias, bigotry, and discrimination against all Italians and Italian Americans. They are positive role models for all of us. We are proud and honored to be able to pay tribute to them.

### **NYS (CSJ) – B’nai B’rith Breakfast - Twenty-Eighth Breakfast of Solidarity – May 31, 2009**

We plan to celebrate our 28<sup>th</sup> NYS CSJ – B’nai B’rith Breakfast of Solidarity, during which Lehman-LaGuardia Awards, will be presented to two deserving individuals from the Italian American and Jewish Communities. The breakfast will be held at **Verdi’s in Westbury, NY**. Notifications will be sent out shortly. We look forward to another successful event.

### **VI Snug Harbor, Staten Island**

Snug Harbor Tuscan Gardens in Staten Island has recently been opened to the public. The Garibaldi Museum was given exhibit space in the Exhibition Hall and has asked CSJ to assist in funding and putting together the various exhibits for display. Stella Grillo and Josephine Truglio will meet with John Dabbene and Robert Necci to evaluate the exhibits and determine what is required to put the projects together.

### **VII 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.

### **VIII 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/](http://www.nyscsj-osia.org/) We encourage Lodges and other organizations to utilize the films in this collection.

### **IX Positive Image Material**

The CSJ is continually developing and distributing our positive image material to teachers, filial lodges and members. We still are receiving requests for our Women's Posters from teachers in anticipation of Women's History Month. We provide positive image material to teachers at no cost to them, to be used as teacher's aids. We encourage our Lodges to also distribute positive image material to libraries, local schools and community- based activities.

NYS CSJ is proud of the fact that our positive image material has become known throughout the country. We supplied material to the California CSJ for their use during the month of October, 2008.

I recently received a call from an 83-year old woman from Evansville, Indiana, who was sent a Columbus bookmark by a relative in New York. She contacted us to compliment us on the informative bookmark and requested several more, so that she could "educate" people in her town about Columbus. Not only did we send her more bookmarks, but included a pamphlet about Columbus and a copy of the national magazine, because she was interested in the Organization. She called back to thank us for the material and let us know that she planned to join the Order.

I also recently received a telephone call, followed by several letters from a woman in Lake Grove, not a member of the Order, who started an Italian Culture Club at her Condo. Various members of her condo community joined her club and became very interested in Italian Culture. Although her Condo Board did not encourage her club, it is thriving. We sent her some positive image material to share with her members.

## **X Calendar of Events – New York State CSJ**

**Sunday, February 22, 2009 CSJ Dinner Dance, Russo's On The Bay, Howard Beach, New York, honorees – Dr.Carlo Sclafani and Robert Spiotto. Contact Josephine Cohen – (631) 345-6586 for more information.**

**NYS (CSJ) – B'nai B'rith Breakfast - Twenty-Eighth Breakfast of Solidarity – May 31, 2009**