

January 30, 2010

Dear NYS OSIA President Salvatore Lanzilotta,, National and State Officers, Lodge Presidents, Sisters and Brothers:

We extend greetings on behalf of the New York State Commission for Social Justice, and express our appreciation to the Columbus Lodge 2143, for their generosity and hospitality today.

The CSJ is continually pursuing our expanded goals of fighting bias, bigotry and discrimination against Italians and Italian Americans by sending out letters addressing negative advertising, stereotyping and other forms of bigotry. We don't always receive responses to our complaints, but we must continue to make our feelings known, whenever a bias situation arises. Many times, the persons involved are not really aware that they are being offensive.

We have attended meetings and events, whereby we have been able to distribute our positive image material. We continue to make a constant effort to provide information on the many accomplishments of Italians and Italian Americans. We are presently working on new and innovative positive image material.

We thank the National and State Officers, Lodge Presidents and our sisters and brothers of the Order, for their constant support, both financially and with their presence at our fundraising events. Your generous donations, during the year and at convention, help us to carry out the work of the CSJ, and enable us to continue to create and disseminate positive image materials.

Always remember that if you're a member of OSIA, you're also a member of the CSJ.

Sincerely and Fraternaly,

Stella Grillo
NYS CSJ President

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.

In December 2009, our OSIA National President Joseph DiTrapani convened conference call discussions with OSIA Vice Presidents and OSIA State Presidents, to discuss recent developments in the Advanced Placement Italian Language Examination, focusing on the matter of whether and to what degree to support the recent proposal put forth by the government of the Republic of Italy to provide \$1.5 million of funding for the AP exam, over a period of three years, to be matched by the Italian American community. As the oldest (founded 1905) and largest (550,000 family members residing in 50 states and the District of Columbia) organization representing Italian Americans in the U.S., OSIA considers the preservation and promotion of the Italian language as part of its mission and *raison d'être*. It was agreed unanimously that OSIA must and would support the AP exam.

National CSJ learned of the new initiative in late November, through a conference call to our National Executive Director hosted by Italy's Ambassador to the U.S., Giulio Terzi Di Sant' Agata, and included Justice Dominic Massaro, John Calvelli, Louis Tallarini, and John Marino. Dr. Piccigallo informed all at that time that OSIA finances adhered strictly to biennial budgets, the most recent of which was unanimously adopted in convention in August 2009, and that no surplus funds for such a project were currently available. Moreover, for special projects, such as the AP exam funding, OSIA had traditionally resorted to appeals made directly to its national membership and the state organizations. This was how OSIA raised its previous \$66,667.00 contribution to the funding of the AP exam in March 2004. OSIA national and state officials who participated in the two aforementioned conference calls agreed to proceed similarly in regards to the present appeal.

Accordingly it was decided that OSIA can and will pledge, at this time, to provide funding for the AP exam project a total of \$75,000 *over a three year period with a strong possibility of increasing that to \$150,000 over the same period*, if subsequent membership contributions so materialize. It is understood that the College Board and our participating collegial organizations need to pledge specific contractual amounts. However, because of our organizational structure and policies, OSIA is unable to pledge more than \$75,000 over the initial three- year period. **The OSIA Supreme Council also has insisted on reviewing any contract to be signed with the College Board, including detailed information on all proposed expenditures, before OSIA would be signatory to such an agreement.**

Students should be reminded of the following:

- Because Italian placement exams are provided by college and university departments nationwide, students who remain in their school's Italian program through the capstone Italian course should be able to 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 the 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.

We commend our District II Liaisons for their annual Bella Lingua Awards Program encouraging excellence in Italian Language studies at the high school level.

We also praise Pat Matarazzo, Librarian at the Drexel Avenue Elementary School in Westbury for her development of an Italian Culture program in October and November 2009 at her school. She brought our attention to the need for positive image material geared for elementary school children. We are planning to sponsor a statewide bookmark contest, for elementary school children, whereby the children would prepare a biography in bookmark form on one of four historical Italian American figures. Details are being developed.

We also commend Santina Haemmerle for her development of a large Italian American Club at the Parkway School in East Meadow. When children of all ethnic groups are introduced to Italian language and culture at early age, there is a strong possibility that they will be interested enough to study the language in high school.

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. However, it is important that we are provided with detailed information such as 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.

- **“Gossip Girl” on NBC’s Saturday Night Live** – While the essence of *Saturday Night Live* is to ‘spoof’ current situations, the skit “Gossip Girl” has gone a little too far. The uncouth, loud-mouthed *guys* and the gum chewing, brassy *girls*, wearing low cut sexy outfits, big jewelry and hair-do’s, are supposed to represent the Italian American community living on Staten Island, New York, perpetrating the conception that Italian Americans are uncouth buffoons. We asked NBC to remove this skit from the program.
- **New York Law School** - In December 2009 – A student at New York Law School complained that an instructor, Professor Peter Kostant, during the final exam in “Contracts,” introduced a fact pattern, which involved a person named “Guido” buying products for his macaroni company. These Italian American students felt that this was totally inappropriate and disrespectful and they did understand that this is definitely not a way of thinking shared by students and professors at New York Law School. We addressed the Dean at the Law School concerning this incident.
- **Jersey Shore – MTV** – This show, featuring “Guido’s and Guidette’s” has taken on a life of its own, despite numerous protests from many Italian American Organizations and other organizations, who find the show to be totally objectionable. We have contacted MTV producer, Tony DiSanto, the Daily News, Newsday and other media, to no avail. The Daily News even featured a quarter

page devoted to “Jersey Shore’s 10 Top Quotes,” which only confirmed their aimless and useless way of life, while boasting of their Italian heritage. Most disturbing is the fact that this ‘new reality show’ is watched by young and impressionable teens. While several sponsors have dropped their support, the show continues to appear every night on MTV.

The Calandra Institute sponsored a colloquium, whereby Professor Donald Tricarico, a sociologist at Queensborough College, spoke about his essay, “Guido: Fashioning an Italian American Youth Style,” in which he looked at New York City’s subculture of the 1980’s as a dynamic, adaptive expression of non-traditional ethnicity. The description of this program stated, “The debut of MTV’s reality show “Jersey Shore” and he subsequent anti-defamation charges by national ethnic organizations such as National Italian American Foundation, the Order Sons of Italy in America and UNICO National, illustrate how little is understood about this contemporary form of Italian American youth culture. As Prof. Tricarico has observed, ‘Italian American intellectual and political elites cannot pretend that Guido is the figment of the media imaginary.’ The main purpose of this colloquium to inform the public at large of this other facet of Italian Americana.”

This colloquium initiated emails from members and other organizations, most of whom felt that our understanding of the “Guido” label does not mean that we have to accept this terminology as a description of young Italian American men.

As an outcome of “Jersey Shore,” it has become apparent that Italian American organizations must galvanize in a united effort to protest programs of this nature. A one-half page article in Newsday this week, re-enforces the increased popularity of this program. They stated, “The show focuses on the escapades of eight 20-somethings thrown together at a summer shore home. The stars are mostly **Italian Americans.**” These *stars* are now so confident of their success that they are now asking for \$10,000. for each *star* per episode.

The bottom line at this point in time is - **DO NOT WATCH THE SHOW “JERSEY SHORE.” ENCOURAGE TEENS TO SEEK OTHER ENTERTAINMENT.**

IV. 50 Italians (A Holocaust Documentary)

On the positive side, the premier film Screening of “50 Italiani” was held at the CUNY Graduate Center in NYC on January 20th. This film was directed by Flaminia Lubin and produced by Francesco Pamphili (Italian with English subtitles). The New York State CSJ was among the sponsors of this documentary. Flaminia Lubin was a recipient of our Lehman Laguardia Award at the 2009 CSJ-B’Nai B’Rith Solidarity Breakfast.

Enrico Annichiarico, CSJ Vice President and Camille Annichiarico attended this event and reported as follows:

“50 Italiani” a feature-length, WWII documentary (120 min. approx.) was about 50 high ranking Italian diplomats and generals chosen by Mussolini to represent his regime, which was wholly committed to Germany’s cause and ambitions. These men were stationed in territories occupied by Italy in Croatia, Yugoslavia, the South of France, and Greece. The film follows events that took place from 1940 until the armistice between the US and Italy was proclaimed on September 8, 1943. It crisscrosses through those parts of Southern Europe where the 50 Italians were stationed, and where they used all the means in their power to avoid handing over the Jews – Italian and non-Italian – to the Germans for deportation to death camps. Rejecting Mussolini’s pro-German policies regarding the deportation of Jews, these 50 men made a different choice. For reasons that are clear for some analysts and mysterious for others, they were guided by personal decision to do what was right to save human lives. “They were protagonists of a revolt against a cruel and horrific power – a revolt which also illustrates the unique personality of the

Italians: **chaotic, courageous, rebellious, creative, and even comic...but at the core, reflecting a deep sense of humanity.**”

Flaminia hopes to have this film translated into English. This documentary will also be shown on RAI channels on January 27th.

V. NYS CSJ Annual Fundraisers

NYS CSJ's 30th ANNIVERSARY DINNER DANCE – FEBRUARY 21, 2010

On Sunday, February 21, 2010, at our 30th Annual CSJ Dinner-Dance, the CSJ will honor two committed individuals – Anthony J. Izzo, Chief, Organized Crime Control Bureau, New York City Police Department and Giada Valenti, International Singer, known as “Italy’s Voice of Love.” 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 NINTH BREAKFAST OF SOLIDARITY - MAY 23, 2010.

We plan to celebrate our 29th **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. Congressional Medal of Honor Program

In November 2009, the Mario Lanza Lodge # 2491 hosted a Medal of Honor program at their lodge in Queens, NY. This very impressive program, chaired by CSJ Vice President Josephine Truglio, included a color guard of comprised of lodge members who were army veterans. Military officers and local legislators attended and addressed the Lodge members and guests. John Dabbene and Stella Grillo represented CSJ.

We also were contacted by Michael Valente’s grandson, who is a member of the Valente Lodge in Long Beach. We are arranging for the Medal of Honor program to be presented at the Long Beach Library in September.

This program is available for presentation as a lodge event. CSJ will work with the lodge to create an effective presentation.

We are continuing our efforts to promote and distribute the Medal of Honor video documentary 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.

VII. Video Tape Library

Our videotape 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.

VIII. Speakers Bureau

CSJ has been asked to provide speakers at lodge meetings and other group meetings to talk about the CSJ or to create a program with some of our positive image material, such as "Italian Americans in the Military," or "Italian Americans in Law Enforcement." We have also addressed school groups. Please contact us if you wish to have a CSJ representative speak at your lodge, or any other group.

IX Positive Image Material

The CSJ is continually developing and distributing our positive image material to teachers, filial lodges and members. 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.

X Calendar of Events – New York State CSJ

Sunday, February 21, 2010 CSJ Dinner Dance, Russo's On The Bay, Howard Beach, New York, honorees – Anthony J. Izzo and Giada Valenti. Contact Josephine Cohen – (631) 345-6586 for more information.

NYS (CSJ) – B'nai B'rith Breakfast - Twenty-Ninth Breakfast of Solidarity – May 23, 2010