

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 Complaint Directory Issues:

- **San Genaro Feast – Little Italy** – Paramount Pictures attained a booth at the Feast featuring a special tribute celebrating the release of Paramount Home Entertainment’s 35th Anniversary *Godfather* DVD Box featuring re-mastered versions of the three *Godfather* movies and other special materials. The event was hosted by actor/singer Gianni Russo, who starred as Carlo, Marlon Brando’s wife-beating son-in-law, in the first *Godfather* film. Letter was written to Joseph Mattone, President, Figli di San Gennaro, Inc., which is quoted in pertinent part:

”Mr. Mattone, to quote your own words on the San Gennaro web site, ‘Each year the beloved Feast of San Gennaro brings the world to Little Italy, and Little Italy to the world. The Feast is a time for remembrance and reconciliation, and a time for celebration. The excellent food, the free musical entertainment and the excitement will all be there again this year, bigger and better than ever. On behalf of Figli di San Gennaro, I invite people of all backgrounds and ethnicities to join us in September in New York City’s Little Italy to help celebrate Italian culture and heritage.’”

“Whatever would make you or the members of your Board of Directors think that Italian Americans would be impressed with Paramount’s offer of “Godfather” movies. Since the advent of “The Godfather” movies and “The Soprano’s,” criminal activities have become synonymous with all Italians and Italian/Americans. Most Americans actually believe that ALL Italian Americans are mobsters. This feast, which is actually a religious event, should offer no venue for any references to Italian American stereotyping.”

We were contacted by Mr. Mattone’s attorney several times, concerning this matter. Because of monies expended by Paramount, they would not take down the booth, but they advised that they would not promote the *Godfather movie series*, and promoted Italian actors, Al Pacino and Robert DiNiro. Further, because of our complaint, they reviewed the other vendor’s booths and found that other material, such as t-shirts were sold promoting mafia symbols. The fall out of this situation is that at next year’s feast, none of this material will be sold.
- **Mob Museum in Schenectady, NY** – Letter sent to Barbara Blanchard, Schenectady City Council concerning a Mob Museum. This idea was conceived by Beth Petta, a Channel 16 Public Access Board Member, who contacted Blanchard with this idea in order to showcase Schenectady’s past as an illegal gambling-racketeering hub. This museum would be “praising the hundreds who worked in the city’s illegal gambling industry, which included politicians and crooked cops.” In our letter, we informed her that Italian American law-abiding citizens have resided in the Schenectady area for many, many years, many of whom worked for General Electric, others were restaurateurs and entrepreneurs. We asked her, whatever would make anyone think that a museum praising illegal activities would correctly represent her present and past constituents? We have not as yet had a response to our letter.

- **Virginia State Assemblyman, Salvatore Iaquinto** recently held a fund raiser with a horrific Godfather theme, listing donor levels at *Godfather* - \$2,000; *Don* - \$1,500; *Consiglieri* - \$1,000 and so forth. The flyer for this event featured Iaquinto in a *Godfather* pose. We contacted the CSJ President in Virginia. They had already actively pursued this travesty. Iaquinto actually brought this flyer to a Sons Of Italy Lodge meeting, where he was severely criticized. He was actually surprised that Italian Americans were incensed at his insensitivity.

III NYS CSJ Annual Fundraisers

Fundraiser “Day at the Races” at Belmont Park - Sat., Sept. 13, 2008

On Saturday, Sept. 13th, 2008, Districts I, II and III held a "Day At The Races" at Belmont Park. With a spirit of cooperation, the three districts again co-sponsored this event, which serves as a fundraiser for their individual CSJ districts. Thanks to **Anthony Corsello**, CSJ Executive Board member, for chairing this event for us again. There was special seating on the upper level and a delicious buffet, which added to the festivities – and a great time was had by all!

IV Hofstra University Italian Festival – Sun., Sept. 21, 2008

CSJ – AATI Conference at Hofstra University– 9:30AM-12 Noon

The NYS CSJ (Districts I, II and III) hosted an annual AATI (American Association of Teachers of Italian) Annual Breakfast Conference, on Sunday, September held their annual breakfast conference at Hofstra. Over 60 teachers, students and many members of OSIA attended this very successful CSJ/Teacher event. Garibaldi/Meucci Museum President John Dabbene attended, as well as the New York OSIA First Vice-President Salvatore Lanzilotta, and members of the CSJ Executive Board. Also attending were members of the AATI Board, as well as several organizations representing Language Teachers, such as LILT -(Long Island Language Teachers). Marjorie Moschella, NYSCSJ Vice President for Education and Chairperson for this event, welcomed the group. Greetings and remarks were given by Stella Grillo, President of New York CSJ; Isabel Cosentino, President of AATI; Salvatore Lanzilotta, NY OSIA First Vice-President, speaking for the President, Nancy Quinn, who was unable to attend.

Josephine Maietta, AATI Past President, introduced Louisa Callio, Program Director of the Poets' and Writers' Piazza (taking place outside at the Festival). Josephine and Louisa read an original poem, first in English (Louisa) and then in Italian (Josephine), and encouraged everyone to visit the Writers' Piazza. Louisa distributed packets of information about the organization.

Dr. Margaret I. Cuomo, President of the ITALIAN LANGUAGE FOUNDATION, INC., a dedicated advocate of the teaching of the Italian language, addressed the audience primarily about the Italian language, the teaching of which is vitally important to the preservation and promotion of our Italian heritage. Dr. Cuomo and her mother, Mrs. Matilda Raffa Cuomo, along with several Italian organizations (including OSIA and the AATI), greatly encouraged the establishment of the College Boards Advanced Placement Program in Italian and is working diligently to retain the AP in Italian Program. Dr. Cuomo stressed the importance of getting Italian into the schools that don't have it, and expanding the Program in those that do. This can only be done by directly contacting the schools. To this end, Dr. Cuomo broke the audience into “workshop” groups, which made it easier to hone in on specific school districts and how to contact them. Each group selected a “point leader” to coordinate its efforts. Dr. Cuomo will coordinate the entire movement. She urged all present to contact the website of the ITALIAN LANGUAGE FOUNDATION, INC. to get further information and/or make a donation see www.italianlanguagefoundation.org. To secure the success of the AP, courses we must encourage more students to enroll, and we must help to fund them.

CSJ Table at Hofstra

The CSJ Table at Hofstra University featured CSJ positive image materials on display and for sale. We were afforded an opportunity to speak with many people, who attended the festival, to tell them what we are all about. We were able to interest several people in the CSJ and OSIA and encourage them to fill out membership applications. Many thanks **Tony Corsello**, who chaired the table committee along with District II CSJ Chairperson, **Lee Cerullo and Maria Kobylarz**

V Italian Language Foundation

Dr. Margaret Cuomo discussed the newly formed Italian Language Foundation at the CSJ-AATI Teachers Conference at Hofstra on September 21st. It was created to give American high school students the opportunity to learn the Italian language and to study the magnificent history and culture of Italy. The Advanced Placement Program allows students to pursue college level studies while they attend high school.

The Italian Language Foundation will provide funding for the AP Italian Exam, while growing large enough to sustain itself. The CSJ Executive Board voted to contribute to the funding of this program with an initial donation in the amount of \$500.

VI Congressional Medal of Honor Program

On October 16th, Stella Grillo presented a program entitled, *Italian American War Heroes*, to the Italian American Labor Council at their annual meeting, held at DC 37 headquarters in Manhattan. The program commenced with a partial showing of the Congressional Medal of Honor documentary film. A presentation was made of the military involvement of Italian Americans commencing with the Revolutionary War, the Mexican American conflict, the battle at Little Big Horn, the rescue of the prisoners of war at Bataan by Col. Henry Mucci to the recent appointment of General Raymond Odierno in Iraq. Congressional Medal of Honor posters, pamphlets and bookmarks were displayed, distributed, and welcomed. Most of the audience was unaware of the Italian American involvement in the military history of America.

VII 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. 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.

VIII Video Tape Library

Marino Amoruso has donated *Pride and Passion* to our library and we hope to obtain more of his films, to update our 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.

IX New York City Council -Italian America Caucus

The New York City Italian American Caucus annual event was held on Thursday, October 23rd. It is usually held in the NYC Council chambers, but due to the special meeting of the City Council to extend term limits of NYC elected officials, the meeting was changed to the Emigrant Bank Building on Chambers Street. Tony Avella, City Councilman and member of the Italian Tradition Marcus Aurelius Lodge # 2321, has chaired this Caucus for the past six years. At this ceremony, the Italian American legislators present awards to an outstanding Italian American in their district. On this occasion, presentations were made to two groups that performed outstanding community service in their community, The National Council of Columbia Associations in Civil Service and the Italian American Citizens of Howard Beach. Opening remarks were made by the Consul General of Italy in New York, Hon. Francesco Maria Talo. A presentation of a Palladio poster to the Italian American Caucus was made by Joseph Sciame, Chairman, Italian Heritage and Culture Committee, NY and past National OSIA President .

X District CSJ's

District I – Chairman Rick Annichiarico reports that the District actively discussed the teaching of the Italian Language in schools and continuation of the Italian AP program.

District II – Chairman, Lee Cerullo and the District II Liaisons are planning fund raising activities.

District III –District Chairperson, Josephine Truglio and District III liaisons meeting to be scheduled.

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 is planning activities for the district.

District VII – We are still 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.

Letter have been 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.

XI Positive Image Material

The CSJ is continually developing and distributing our positive image material to teachers, filial lodges and members. Our latest poster features Italian American – Sports Hall of Famers – which was prepared by Anthony Corsello and Sal Moschella was presented at our June Convention. We now also have bookmarks featuring the sports figures cited on the new poster. District I Liaisons are working on a poster featuring Italian American Entertainers.

XII Calendar of Events – New York State CSJ

Sunday, February 22, 2009 - CSJ Dinner Dance, 12 Noon to 5 PM -Russo's On The Bay, Howard Beach, New York. Contact Josephine Cohen – (631) 345-6586 for more information.

October 25, 2008

Dear NYS OSIA President Nancy DiFiori Quinn, 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 Antonio Meucci Lodge # 213. 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 Fraternally,

Stella Grillo
NYS CSJ President

