

A Past That's Not Even Past

Letizia Airos (June 25, 2016)



Our cover story is about “Grandparents and Grandchildren in Italian America,” a series of conversations available this summer on TV and online at www.i-Italy.org.

Why Grandparents and Grandchildren?

Why focus on grandparents and their special rapport with grandchildren? Because in our sped up, digitally warped, all too often superficial world with its illusion of occupying an “eternal present,” what constitutes a real transmission of identity is our relationship with our grandparents, with the past that’s not even past, as William Faulkner famously put it. If our identity is not founded on the past, we can neither face the present nor plan for the future responsibly.



Especially if we happen to possess a history of immigration. As Italian Americans do. Or, for that matter, most Americans. The master narrative that our grandparents convey can broaden horizons and break down cultural divides, something we all need today.

Those are the reasons behind the project we kicked off on Italian National Day at the Consulate General of Italy in New York—a series of videotaped conversations between grandparents and grandchildren produced by i-Italy in collaboration with ABFE (the National Italian Association of Emigrant Families) and with the support of Italy's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The first video - previewed in this issue and available to watch on TV (Sundays at 1 PM on NYC Life Channel 25) and online - features New York's first Italian grandmother, Matilda Cuomo, mother of current Governor Andrew Cuomo and wife of former governor Mario. Matilda chats with Amanda Cole, one of her 13 grandchildren.

Given our plan to grow this project into a major collective journey through the Italian soul of America, we'd like you to come along for the ride. Here you'll find instructions on how you can get involved. We're counting on ALL of you!

A New Breed of Italians

We also have our eye on how the present is shaping the future, thanks to an exclusive conversation with the new Italian Ambassador to the United States, Armando Varricchio, who talks about his current projects, including his ambition to bring together the traditional immigrant community, American Italophiles, and the growing number of people who split their time between the US and Italy—Amb. Varricchio calls them “Italians of a New Italy.” Read the article and watch the original video on your smartphone by scanning the QR code.

Ambassador Varricchio's ideas serendipitously overlap with the thrust of another new series launched in this issue, “Italian Citizens of the World,” which showcases young Italians living in America, young Americans living in Italy and young Italian-Americans caught between both countries, no longer just culturally but also physically. Technically speaking, these new Italians are neither emigrants nor expats. Instead they're “frequent flyers” who shuttle between the two countries, always carrying a return ticket in their back pocket. Our first story features New York graphic designer Claudia Palmira Acunto and her husband, the photographer Mauro Benedetti.

Eating Italian

And there's so much more in our summer issue. For many, summer spells vacations, picnics, and lighter fare. That's why we're bringing



you the best Italian panini in New York. We'll also tell you what Italians are dishing out at New York's Summer Fancy Food Show in our interview with ICE Director Maurizio Forte. The show is geared toward traders and producers rather than the general public, but it's the perfect place to catch a glimpse of what's on its way to American dinner tables. So stay tuned for more as the i-ItalyTV crew gets there to report at the end of June.

Other foodie events this summer include a pasta cook-off organized by the association of Italian chefs in New York. Try not to salivate over Luciano Pignataro's description of the event nor over our interview with Nicola Farinetti, who gives us the scoop on the imminent opening of Eataly NYC's second location.

Italian Reads

Summer also means more time to read. Aside from our usual roundup of offerings in English, we're featuring a review of two fantastic reads still only available in Italian: Giorgio Van Straten's curious study of lost books and Antonio Monda's novel about a tortured priest, set during Muhammad Ali and George Foreman's famous showdown. Let's hope both books are translated soon!

Gargano Quartet

My editor's note usually begins with a poem. Not this time, alas. But you can flip to page 73. At the end of our Tourism Special about Gargano you'll find four short poems by the famous "Poet of Two Lands" Joseph Tusiani, a New Yorker of Pugliese descent, who describes his homeland in rare, never before published verses in English, Italian, Pugliese dialect and Latin.

*** * ***

In conclusion I'd like to thank everyone following us on the web (www.i-italy.org), on TV (NYC Life) and in print (hint: you're holding it in your hands!). Our readership is growing by the day. We now have almost 200,000 followers on Facebook alone! Americans love Italy. It stands to reason they'd love i-Italy, too. (letizia.airos@i-Italy.org)

Source URL: <http://newsite.iitaly.org/magazine/focus/op-eds/article/past-thats-not-even-past>

Links

[1] <http://newsite.iitaly.org/files/nonninipoti1466871438png>