A Statement on the Tragic Death of Kobe Bryant



The National Italian American Foundation (NIAF) released a statement on the passing of basketball legend Kobe Bryant, in honor of his special relationship to Italy.

Washington, D.C. – January 28, 2020 The National Italian American Foundation (NIAF) sends its condolences to the family and friends of basketball legend Kobe Bryant, 41, and his daughter Gianna, 13, along with the seven other victims who perished in a helicopter crash two days ago in Calabasas, Calif. Orange Coast College (OCC) baseball coach John Altobelli, his wife, Keri, and daughter, Alyssa; Christina Mauser, an assistant girls basketball coach at a K-8 private school in Orange County; the pilot Ara Zobayan; Sarah Chester and her daughter, Payton, also died in the crash.

“The nation was stunned to hear about the death of Kobe Bryant and his beautiful daughter. Kobe Bryant had a special affinity for Italy and the Italian people which was reciprocated. We mourn his loss,” said NIAF Chair Patricia de Stacy Harrison.

When Bryant was six years old, his father Joe Bryant moved the family from Philadelphia to Rieti, Italy, to continue playing professional basketball. There, Kobe learned to speak fluent Italian and the family moved to Reggio Calabria, Pistoia, and then to Reggio Emilia. Bryant became particularly fond of Reggio Emilia, regarding it as a loving place where his best childhood memories were made.

He carried his love for Italy the rest of his life. After Kobe moved back to the United States, he continued to speak Italian; he and his wife, Vanessa, gave their four daughters Italian names: Natalia Diamante, Gianna Maria-Onore, Bianka Bella and Capri.

During his basketball career, Kobe won five NBA championships and was an 18-time All-Star, 15-time member of the All-NBA Team, 12-time member of the All-Defensive Team, and the 2008 NBA Most Valuable Player (MVP). Widely regarded as one of the greatest basketball players of all time, he led the NBA in scoring during two seasons, ranks fourth on the league's all-time regular season scoring, and ranks fourth on the all-time postseason scoring list.

Kobe and Gianna Bryant are survived by Kobe’s wife, Vanessa, and their daughters Natalia, Bianka and Capri.

The National Italian American Foundation (NIAF) is a non-profit, non-partisan organization dedicated to preserving, promoting and protecting the Italian American heritage and culture. To learn more about the Foundation and become a member, please visit www.niaf.org [2].

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