New Jersey’s Sicilians Welcome their President

L. A. (January 30, 2020)

The visit of Nello Musumeci, President of the region of Sicily, is a cause of celebration for New Jersey’s Sicilian community. It’s the occasion to reactivate the measures that have in the past kept alive the ties between Sicilian communities and their region of origin.

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Garfield, New Jersey, speaks Sicilian today, with love and passion from those who for decades have been keeping Sicily in their heart from across the ocean.

And with the passion of the younger generations who grew up hearing their parents and grandparents talking about the smells, flavors and colors of faraway lands. Together, they speak Sicilian with great joy and a sense of hospitality.

Today there is cause for celebration, the President of Sicily, Nello (what a beautifully Sicilian name!) Musumeci. It doesn’t matter which party he belongs to, Italian politics has nothing to do with this, it’s a matter of the heart.

Representatives of the United State’s Sicilian community, local authorities and Italian Institutions have gathered in Garfield’s Venetian Catering - the place reserved for New Jersey’s most important professional and personal life events.

And it’s a woman, Sarah Salomone, the newly elected President of New Jersey’s Sicilian Federation, who welcomes the guests from the stage. She does it with all the assertiveness her role entails, but also with the warmth of Sicilian hospitality.

A man in a red tie and yellow clutch - a clear homage to the Sicilian flag - stands beside her. He is the Governor of New Jersey, Phil Murphy. From the stage, he enthusiastically professes his love for Sicily and for Italy. He is of Irish descent but claims he feels Italian, Sicilian on this occasion.

Introduced by Consul General Francesco Genuardi, President Musumeci tackles concrete themes in his speach, and does so touching the Sicilian hearts pulsing inside the guests sitting at the tables.

“We must rebuild the bridge between regional institutions and representation abroad so that we can all feel part of the same community,” Musumeci says, “Sicily is like a mother who needs you, today more than ever. But,” he reassures them, “Sicily has everything needed to carry out cultural and economic exchanges. Help me to get entrepreneurs to invest in it and we as a government will support them.”

His is an attentive call for support from Sicilians abroad. He’s asking for help to turn Sicily into a strong global actor.

There is great attention, a mix of emotion and sense of responsibility, around the festively adorned room. Many tearful eyes and faces that have seen many obstacles but also great successes.

New Jersey's Sicily welcomes its President, immediately receives his message, and starts drafting concrete plans, discussing possibile actions mere minutes after his speach.

Numerous representatives of important companies but also figures from New Jersey’s cultural world say they are ready.

Perhaps the most famous among them, Cav. Tony Di Piazza, is present. He recently invested in the acquisition of Palermo’s soccer team of which he is now the Vice President. His eyes light up with emotion as he tells us about it.

According to him, Italy still needs to understand that Italian Americans are no longer those who came here with cardboard suitcases. They constructed a special journey, one that is recognized in America, of personal success. Everyone needs to realize that.

Other prestigious figures address the public, including Congressman Bill Pascrell, Italian Deputee On. Fucsia Nissoli, Vice Secretary of CGIE Doc. Silvana Mangione, U.S. Representative for New Jersey's 5th congressional district Josh Gottheimer, Bergen County Executive James Tedesco, Sheriff Frank Schillari, and Mayors Scott Luna, Richard Rigoglioso, and James Anzaldi.

President Sarah Salamone closes by welcoming the representatives of the Federation’s administrative and executive board, who provide President Musumeci with something to remember the day by, hoping that his government will succeed in reactivating the measures which have in the past kept alive the ties between the Sicilian communities across the world.

And like any respectable party, the event culminates in a final cheers and the cutting of a special cake that reads “Benvenuto Presidente Musumeci.”

In attendance were: Sicilian Citizens Club of Bayonne, Societa San Ciro, Ieri Oggi Domani, Società Unita, Ribera Italian Cultural Center, S.Giuseppe/S.Croce Camerina Society, Scoglitti Society, Italian American Forum of Lodi, San Giuseppe Society Lodi, NJ Association of Cavalieri OMRI, Italian Cultural Association NY, Società di Polizzi Generosa Middle Village NY, NJ Italian American Police Association, Comites NY, NJ and CT, CSNA Confederazione Siciliana Nord America, and the Honorary Consul of Connecticut.

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