

A Private Affair

by Anthony Julian Tamburri

In his ground-breaking essay, "Breaking the Silence: Strategic Imperatives for Italian American Culture," Robert Viscusi championed an articulation of history that includes a collective purpose. While much progress has been made on numerous issues, many Italian American associations seem to work in a vacuum, moving forward alone on issues whereas, within groups working in unison, the community at large would benefit, thus encountering greater success in bringing forth a variety of projects that would contribute to an Italian/American agenda.

What is – or, what should be – that rallying point around which the greater Italian/American community might find some sense of commonality? Indeed, both African Americans and Jewish Americans have their one issue, as tragic as it may be, that coheres the group. I have in mind, of course, slavery and its dreadful sister of outright discrimination that has resulted from it, for the former; two millennia of *diasporic* existence and the more recent horrific holocaust, for the latter. What then can we identify as that cohesive force for Italian Americans? Can we look to something as immigration, that time-span 1880 to 1924, those forty-four years that have now become an historical marker for contemporary Italian Americans? There may indeed be specific tragedies that come to mind: the 1891 New Orleans lynching, for which we hold the dubious distinction of having been victims of the largest group lynching. One might even underscore historical discrimination, dating back to the nineteenth century and culminating, to date, in something like *The Sopranos*.

Though valid points of discussion, these last two examples do not constitute, in an encompassing manner, that one issue that can unite the Italian/American community in the same way in which other groups cohere. We might thus ponder what is that all-encompassing issue that unites, for instance, Hispanic Americans. In addition to a strong sense of belonging they may have with regard to their culture(s), it may very well be the migratory experience, a sense of not belonging to the host country, that coheres Hispanics. Surely, I do not want to be naïve in thinking that Hispanics from any and all Latin countries have an equal sense of allegiance to the "old country." Nor do I want to imply that all Hispanics have an automatic sense of belonging to that group comprised of Hispanics/Latinos, as categorized in the United States. Nevertheless, we would not err in perceiving a certain sense of commonality that has its origins in the migratory experience insofar as they perceive themselves as outsiders, and, as such, hold on to their culture of origins. This combination of difference and cultural specificity – based in part on the migratory experience – surely figures as a cohering agent.

A similar formula might prove valid for Italian Americans. Immigration can figure as that cohesive agent, however tenuous. A strong sense of commonality is that necessary ingredient for the community to progress, for the study of all things Italian/American to become part and parcel of the dominant culture, as it is for other United States hyphenated groups.

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Italian American Blogging The First Wave

di Patrizio Di Nicola

E.USIC / i-Italy

Giunti a fine di un percorso durato 15 mesi, viene da chiedersi cosa si è fatto, cosa si poteva fare di più e a cosa è servito tanto lavoro. Il progetto E.USIC doveva, oltre che garantire una idonea formazione a 12 giovani, anche – forse soprattutto – favorire lo sviluppo e il rafforzamento delle comunità degli Italiani residenti nell'area di New York e del New Jersey, aumentandone il senso di appartenenza e creando un più forte collegamento con l'Italia tramite una community online. Operazione titanica, se si pensa che secondo le statistiche elaborate dall'U.S. Census Bureau un americano su dieci è in qualche modo "imparentato" con l'Italia, che circa 16 milioni di persone si dichiarano italoamericani, e quasi 13 milioni di cittadini americani individuano nell'Italia la loro discendenza. E' evidente, quindi, che esiste una ampia "sensazione" di essere parte di una comunità, quella degli Americani di origine italiana. Lo confermano i dati dell'Osservatorio sulla stampa italiana all'estero, una iniziativa del Ministero degli esteri e dell'Ordine dei Giornalisti, che lo scorso giugno ha censito ben 810 testate italiane nel mondo, molte delle quali, le più antiche e diffuse, negli Usa e in particolare a New York.

Eppure la Comunità Italiana a NY aveva pochi strumenti online che permettessero di "fare rete", strumenti certo non adeguati all'altissimo livello della cultura che essa esprime. E.USIC, quindi, si è assunto il compito di fornire alla Comunità gli strumenti "di Community": un insieme di blog che interagiscono con una redazione online, la quale a propria volta collabora con le redazioni offline di testate partner (prima fra tutte la storica America Oggi) e con un importante parterre di intellettuali che si sono avvicinati al progetto. Su questo fenomeno vorrei richiamare l'attenzione: solitamente coinvolgere le intelligenze locali su un progetto che viene da fuori è estremamente difficile. Nel caso di E.USIC, invece, nelle nostre tematiche si è riconosciuto un gruppo di ricercatori e docenti che ruota attorno al prestigioso John D. Calandra Italian American Institute della CUNY, consigliandoci e in molti modi costringendoci a farlo migliore. Per questo, al di là dei ringraziamenti dovuti a tutti coloro che hanno partecipato a E.USIC sin dall'inizio, la nostra gratitudine va proprio a coloro che si sono aggiunti strada facendo: la loro partecipazione è la misura del nostro successo.

Media Synergy for a Global Community

This special issue presents just a few of the dozens of blog posts, articles, and opinions that have appeared on www.i-Italy.org to date. It is, so to speak, an experiment in "reverse publishing": it goes from Internet to printed paper, rather than the other way around.

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Bloggers are not killing newspapers and the Internet is not killing radio or television. Rather, what is taking place is a global media revolution which works at its best when synergy is the catch-word. This is why i-Italy tries to ride the wave of media interaction and intends to be on the Web, on paper, on TV and radio "at the same time".

That this is attempted by a group of Italian/American journalists and "public intellectuals" seems particularly significant, for Italian America – large as it is in numbers and cultural energies – has not had, until now, a firmly established presence in the media world.

At least three prestigious exceptions stand out, as far as the United States is concerned: "America Oggi", the largest Italian-language daily printed in the U.S.; "ICN Radio", broadcasting in the Tri-State area; and the TV Magazine "Italics", produced by the John D. Calandra Italian American Institute, Queens College, CUNY, and broadcasted bi-weekly by CUNY TV. No wonder that i-Italy – the first web-based editorial and social network for Italian America – has developed partnership relations with all three of these important actors in the media world.

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Photographs in this issue by
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