



Beyond the “Basciument”

Fred Gardaphè (October 02, 2007)



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When Niccolo Machiavelli penned his masterpiece, *The Prince*, Italy was a land divided and besieged by many foreign forces. ...

... In his last chapter, “An Exhortation to free Italy from the Hands of the Barbarians,” he calls for new weapons and formations to be used in warding off intruders and to prepare for new leadership of Italy. In many ways, the current state of Italian/American culture is in similar straights. We need new tools and new alliances to bring a sense of unification to our culture.

For many years, Italian/American culture has been preserved in our homes, and over the years, more likely than not, in the basement , or “basciument,” where nonno made wine, where nonna had a second kitchen, and where many of us now store our material legacies and memories. Now is the time to move beyond the basements of yesterday and out into the streets of today. The romance and tragedy of early 20th century immigration can no longer serve as models for identity. The key to creating a meaningful sense of Italian/American culture that means something to today’s youth is to first insure that they have access to histories, of their families and of their communities, then we must provide them with historical and contemporary models in the areas of arts, business, and education, that they can study, emulate and transcend.

The future of Italian American culture very much depends on how we organize our communications right now. Now that we can no longer depend on the geography of Little Italys to sustain our sense of culture, we must look for other ways.

This web-based, multimedia, open access portal provides us with the key for an ongoing development of Italian American culture. Too often books come out by writers who are not aware of what the others are doing and end up writing books that never reach their potential in terms of audience and cultural impact. Now i-Italy would change this, providing an open forum for communities of writers, artists and cultural advocates everywhere in the U.S., in Italy, and the world.

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