



How Many Identities?

Stefano Vaccara (September 30, 2007)



[1317](#) [2]

When I arrived in the United States, my identity was relatively clear. It was the identity of an Italian who lived in America. For a few years, this identity, more or less, remained intact.

Once in a while it would expand to European, and every now and then, it would revert to its "Sicilitudine," but it wasn't American. I can remember my shock in the summer of '98, when I heard the then leader of the Italian opposition, Silvio Berlusconi, on live TV. He was angry about my interview with the magistrates in Milan, which had been published in *America Oggi*. He declared that he would sue that magistrate and that "American journalist." Me, American? Oh, grazie! It seemed a compliment, at least in the field of journalism. Then, as time passed, something changed.

After ten years as a permanent resident, the day came for me to be sworn in as an American citizen. From that moment on, at least on my passport, I was American. Did I feel American? I certainly loved this country, but in terms of ethnic identity, what was I in America?

I gained some clarity through my children. One day, on the way home from school, my son turned to me, "Papà, I'm an Italian American, right?" "Of course, Louis, you're an Italian American." My daughter Siena was Italian American as well, in spite of her name, or should I say, given her name. It had to be. They were born in New York to an Italian American mother from Boston. I was Italian. How incredible! Would I be different from them? In the fabric of their identity, do they feel something different from what I feel? Is this the way it is? Isn't it possible for an Italian who lives in America to be considered, or to feel at the same time, Italian American? Can't an Italian American in the United States feel, at some point in time, just Italian?

This is *i-Italy*, which will be a forum for debate about everything. I hope that it will also become an instrument for confronting the identity/ies of Italian America. Since there is not one Italian identity, but rather a mosaic of regional identities, why should crossing the ocean change this? Whether in a 19th-century steamship or in a 21st-century jet, isn't it possible that this truth of multiplicity endure on this side of the ocean as well?

Executive Editor *Oggi*

Source URL: <http://newsite.iitaly.org/magazine/focus/op-eds/article/how-many-identities>



Links

[1] <http://newsite.iitaly.org/files/1317>

[2] http://newsite.iitaly.org/sites/default/files/slideshow_pro/1317_