

An Italian-American Antidote to Fascism on Both Sides of the Atlantic

Cristogianni Borsella (September 07, 2009)



Followers of Mussolini still exist in both Italy and the U.S., and some of them are Italian Americans. I am left to ask: Which path will Italian-American youth follow in the years ahead? We need a call to resurrect the legacies of those Italian-American labor leaders and politicians of the past—hardworking immigrants and their offspring who frequently clashed in the streets with the fascisti. Coming from one of the earth's most abused ethnic and class backgrounds, they were deeply entrenched in their own immigrant community, but also in the communities of other oppressed Americans. They understood that an affront to one group's rights was an unacceptable affront to all.



Thought the bond linking followers of Mussolini in both Italy and the U.S. was broken? This Italian-American is here to say: Think Again!

Two years ago, I authored a book entitled, [Fascist Italy: A Concise Historical Narrative](#) [2]. It was published by Branden Books in May 2007. My publisher, Mr. Adolfo Caso, lived in Naples under Mussolini's totalitarian regime as a child. His memories of Fascist tyranny are still quite vivid, as he relates his family's suffering and the sacrifices imposed on them by the State in the Introduction of my book. These early childhood memories helped shape Adolfo's future political ideals and his love for the United States--a country, a republican democracy, to which he later immigrated.

While I was still conducting my research, prior to publication, I found numerous references to Fascist Youth organizations in both Italy and the United States, linking the broader worldwide "Movement." I naturally became interested in knowing whether any of these groups (mainly from the 20s and 30s) still exist or perhaps operate under different names. To my astonishment, I found out that at least one does.

Although there are a number of competing fascist or "neo-fascist" groups operating in Italy today (as there are in Spain, Portugal and other countries throughout the Mediterranean and Europe), one group which has a following firmly planted on both sides of the Atlantic is: Movimento Fascismo e Liberta (the Fascism and Liberty Movement) or MFL. The group's American counterpart is aptly named the "American Friends of Movimento Fascismo e Liberta."

As I extracted more information on the MFL off the internet, both in Italian and English, I saw just how committed this group is to restoring what it calls "true Mussolinian Fascism." This means: the specific ideological principles of Benito Mussolini himself, which, they maintain, have no link whatsoever to the "racist" extreme-right groups who cherish and adore Adolf Hitler. Instead of basing their platform on the "volkish," racist beliefs of the Nazis, Fascist groups like the MFL are faithful to the "statist" political vision of Mussolini, to which one can adhere (allegedly) no matter what their racial, ethnic, sexual or religious background might be. Their only prerequisite is that their fellow Fascist recognizes the State as supreme. I soon became curious to see if this was actually true, and so as I read more I convinced myself to take the next step: infiltration.

Around the time my manuscript was ready to be sent off to Adolfo, I emailed the MFL explaining, as an Italian-American, how much I sympathized with their cause. I was then promptly directed to email the MFL's American chapter, whereupon I would be given further information. In no time at all (probably because they are so desperate for new, young members) I was sent an information packet of the American Friends of the MFL, a registration card, a certificate and all. It was as if I had been a thirty-year card carrying Fascist all along!

What I found out in this "American" group's information packet truly sickened me. First, they pledged allegiance to a "Comrade Carlo Gariglio," who was apparently their international leader. In their Bulletin the words were written, "Viva Gariglio! Viva MFL!" As for the political ideas presented in the information packet, the group indeed professes to adhere to Mussolini's core tenets, such as: "The enemy of Fascismo is your enemy"; "Discipline is the sunshine of armies"; and of course the famous, "Mussolini is always right."



The group's mission was stated thus: "...to render material, spiritual and fraternal support to Italian Fascism, and to spread the ideals of MFL in the United States of America."

But what most disturbed me, perhaps selfishly, was that many members of the group were apparently Italian-Americans. Now, of course every ethnic group has its extremists, and this particular sub-group of Italian-Americans was very small. Okay. BUT, just how much is too small? Isn't even a handful of these un-democratic societal pests too much? (After all, it only took a handful of right-wing Neoconservatives to hijack and derail our republic eight long years ago.)

As I grew frustrated reading the Fascist literature, I was reminded of the great Italian-American labor leaders and politicians of the past--hardworking immigrants and their offspring who frequently clashed in the streets with the fascisti, risking all and sustaining great injuries; those who came from one of the earth's most abused ethnic and class backgrounds; those who were deeply entrenched in their own immigrant community, but also in the communities of other oppressed Americans; those who had experienced tyranny up close and personal, and who understood that an affront to one group's rights was an unacceptable affront to all. These are the Italian-American leaders of the past, whose names I will always revere: Arturo Giovannitti, Joe Ettore, Vito Marcantonio, Carlo Tresca, Salvatore Ninno, Fiorello LaGuardia, and all the unsung heroes who have long since died in obscure and impoverished surroundings.

So I am left to ask: Where is the call, on the part of the Italian-American community, to resurrect the legacies of those leaders and their missions? Instead, we have high-priced spaghetti dinners honoring Justices Scalia and Alito (two of the most right-wing members of the Court). We shower countless public accolades on a former New York mayor who, abandoning his own working-class roots, went after hot-dog men and taxi drivers like some kind of rabid animal. We have prominent immigrant bashers like former Representative Tom Tancredo and Arizona Sheriff Joe Arpaio making all the headlines these days. And then there are those thousands of other clueless, misguided paesani marching every Columbus Day in disgraceful processions dishonoring our nation's Indigenous peoples--paesani who would be better served marching under the banner of "Italian Pride," and who will hopefully come to learn that their Southern Italian ancestors also suffered, alongside Indigenous peoples, under the oppressive rule of the Spanish Crown.

I am left to ask: Which path will Italian-American youth follow in the years ahead--the nation's narrowing, yet politically radicalized, extreme-right, or will they take a more progressive path? Either way, one thing is certain: the American Friends of Movimento Fascismo e Liberta is no path at all.

(This article was published on Broowaha.com as "[Fascism Alive And Well On Both Sides Of The Atlantic](#) [3]." Reprinted with permission of the author.)



Source URL: <http://newsite.ility.org/magazine/focus/op-eds/article/italian-american-antidote-fascism-both-sides-atlantic>

Links

[1] <http://newsite.ility.org/files/szyk-der1252348447jpg>

[2] http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0828321558/ref=pd_lpo_k2_dp_sr_1?pf_rd_p=486539851&pf_rd_s=lpo-top-stripe-1&pf_rd_t=201&pf_rd_i=0415102316&pf_rd_m=ATVPDKIKX0DER&pf_rd_r=1T1ZJH7Q0ZDQ6JWACFTG

[3] <http://newyork.broowaha.com/article.php?id=4973>