

New York. Rome Remembers 9/11

Francesca Giuliani (October 12, 2011)



The Consulate of Italy in New York hosted a conference for the presentation of the book “Roma ricorda l’11 settembre,” a work narrating the story of the memorial monument , consisting of two marble columns representing the Twin Towers, that the City of Rome erected in the historical Piazza di Porta Capena two years ago.

Ten years and one month have passed since 9/11, and the memory of the terroristic attacks that shocked the world is more vivid now than ever.

On October 11th, the [Consulate of Italy](#) [2] in New York hosted a conference for the presentation of the book “Roma ricorda l’11 settembre” (Rome remembers 9/11), a work narrating the story of the memorial monument that the [City of Rome](#) [3] erected in Piazza di Porta Capena two years ago.

The monument, consisting of two marble columns representing the Twin Towers, “was placed in an extremely significant location of the Eternal City,” as Jonathan Della Rocca, counselor of the mayor



of Rome Gianni Alemanno, explained. In fact, Porta Capena is the historical access door to the city, and it sits within walking distance from the Colosseum, universal symbol of Rome's historical magnificence, and the headquarters of the [Food and Agriculture Organization \(FAO\)](#) [4], representing the contemporary commitment of Rome to have a primary role in tackling the most urgent issues for the sake of global peace and stability. The location of the monument at a crossroad between past and present, meaningfully summarizes the very spirit and nature of the city of Rome.

"Memory needs a space," Della Rocca declared, as "the oral tradition of events is not sufficient." In the words of George Santayana, Spanish-American philosopher who died in Rome in 1952, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." This is the sentence that was engraved at the base of the two marble columns in Rome, remarking Rome's condemnation of all kinds of terrorism and threats to peace.

Consul General Natalia Quintavalle chose Santayana's sentence to conclude her welcome address, stressing the importance of the bond that ties New York and Rome, and the American and the Italian people, a bond movingly testified by the memorial plaque laid in the consular building, which lists the names of the many Italian-American victims of 9/11. Cavalier Giulio Picolli, who personally carried out the research and compiled the list of the Italian and Italian-American victims of 9/11, and whose initiative and determination the Consulate owes its memorial monument, was present at the conference.

Picolli remembered the agitated days after the attack that he spent looking incessantly for his 32-years old grandson all over Manhattan, to then be notified about his death. Behind his strong determination to list the names of all the Italian and Italian-American victims, was the will to pay homage to them and to leave a testimony of the great impact of the Italian and Italian-American community to the greatness of the United States. Picolli arrived in this country in 1966, motivated to always honor his heritage. "We gave a lot to this country, and we will continue to do so," he stated.

The conference, moderated by journalist [Maurizio Molinari](#) [5], was primarily the occasion to analyze the strong ties between Italy and the United States through the lens of the Italian-American identity. Chief Nigro, representing the heroes of the [FDNY](#) [6], many of which were of Italian descent, stressed how heartfelt these ties actually are in the daily life of Italian-Americans, who have a very inclusive idea of family. "Cousins are often not blood-related, but the kinship is extended to all of those who have something in common with each other, including the provenance of ancestors from the same Italian town," Nigro said. The "paisà" (fellow countryman) is an acquired relative. It's not surprising, therefore, how Americans and Italians share the same pain when remembering 9/11, and value the memory of their victims above all things.

Lucio Caputo, an Italian survivor of the attacks, intervened in the panel with a message full of energy and hope. When Molinari asked him about his life as a survivor, he said that he spent the ten years after 9/11 "never wanting to give up." He survived, he said, "as the free world did." "The World Trade Center was a symbol, a vertical city full of color, life, activity. Now it's the symbol of reconstruction. It's the reaction of the free world. We the people of the free world survived 9/11, and we will never give up. When the towers collapsed, life restarted. And we're building an even more beautiful World Trade Center for the future."

A future to look forward to.

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