

"Italia, I Was Born Here. In Italy"

Chiara Morucci (October 27, 2012)



Fred Kuwornu, Director of "18 IUS SOLI", hosted at the Italian Cultural Institute of New York and the Calandra Italian American Institute

The Italian Cultural Institute of New York and the Calandra Italian American Institute hosted a very special guest, the talented Italian-Ghanaian writer-director Fred Kuwornu. Fred arrived at the presentations all dressed in blue, the same color of the Italian soccer team "gli azzurri." On the sweatshirt there is motto, it says "Italia, I was born here."

Fred, being the child of a mixed race marriage, believes that it is very important to narrate the issues of many young adults that even if born and raised in Italy are not considered legally Italian because their parents are not Italian citizens. Therefore, he decided to shoot the documentary "18



IUS SOLI" with the intent to spread the news, in Italy and abroad, of the existence of this sad problematic and to try to push for a change in the Italian immigration law. "A country that does not recognize these young adults of foreign origins as Italian citizens, is a country that does not want to go forward in the future" Fred stated. "In Italy almost everything is public, therefore, you need to have the Italian citizenship to have access to many jobs or services, therefore our government should push for some changes in the current immigration law" Fred added.

"18 IUS SOLI" features interviews to common young adults, children of immigrants who were born or even just raised in Italy since a young age, who speak not just Italian but even the dialect of the region they grew up in. They feel fully Italian because in many cases they have never even visited their family's country of origin. Unfortunately the Italian law does not recognize them as Italian citizens and does not give them the same rights of an Italian.

In Italy, in order to get the country's citizenship you must have at least an Italian parent or, if you are born or raised in Italy and have foreign parents you must wait to be 18 to apply for citizenship. The bureaucratic process to obtain it is very complicated and it does not always end with a positive outcome. "The path of no legal recognition is a rough one, it determines these kids' social and economic exclusion and that generates identity confusion... they feel Italian but they are not legally recognized as Italian" Fred said.

The documentary is very interesting and really captured the attention of the audience: some parts give you chills, others make you laugh, and others cry.

"The film is not enough to make a real change but it is an attempt to raise awareness on the topic and help the cause. Now the issue is on the agenda of discussions at the Parliament. Nothing has really happened yet but still something is happening and affecting Italians on a cultural level. The story of Balotelli, the Italian champion, can be seen as an example. It shows that people who are born and raised in Italy and who have foreign parents are indeed fully Italian."

The presentations of the documentary both at the Italian Cultural Institute and at the Calandra Institute were followed by interesting panels. At the Cultural Institute the guests were the law professor Marina Santilli and the Italian boxer Floriano Pagliara. The discussion was very interesting and centered on the hopes and dreams of all these young people coming from different parts of world who live in Italy and want to become legally Italian. It also tackled the general issue of citizenship and the difficulty to become legal citizens in other countries, such as here in the US.

At the Calandra Institute the panelists were Robin Harper, professor of Political Science at York College, Peter Vellon, professor of history at Queens College and Anahi' Viladrich, Director of the upcoming Center on Immigration Studies. The discussion was based mostly on the problematic of these children of immigrants who are suffering because they are not legally accepted in a country they consider their own.

The issue of where a person was born or raised should not be problematic especially now, an age where people move from country to country. As the President of the Italian Republic, Giorgio Napolitano stated "It is an absurdity that Italian citizenship is negated to children born to foreign immigrants in Italy or to those raised in the Italian country since a young age."

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