



**CALANDRA  
ITALIAN  
AMERICAN  
INSTITUTE**

# *il Bollettino*

*dedicated to the history and culture of Italians in America*

**VOLUME 4 • ISSUE 1 • WINTER 2011**

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## LETTER FROM THE DEAN

Welcome to the seventh issue of the Calandra Institute's *il Bollettino*! We are pleased to announce a number of firsts in the pages that follow!

In September, we organized a national symposium of Distinguished Professors of Italian-American Studies. (p. 3), the initial meeting of a planned series. In October, we held the first national conference on Italian-American Mental Health and Wellness (p. 4), which gathered pioneers alongside more recent scholars in the field. In November, an entire day was dedicated to yet another form of "alterity" within the Italian-American community, "Hybrid Moments: Independent Music in Italian America." These three activities are part of a much wider range of subject matter that we, as a community, need to tackle. Indeed, as we move forward with our regular programming, we shall also investigate those areas that, for reasons not always obvious, have fallen off the proverbial radar screen.

2011 marks the 100th anniversary of the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire (p. 7). In February *Italics* will bring you an interview with the organizers of the event that will commemorate the tragedy ([www.livestream.com/italics](http://www.livestream.com/italics)). Of course, this year is also the 10th anniversary of the attacks on the Twin Towers; we will surely have more information about activities in this regard in our next issue.

As the Institute moves forward, we are also looking back to recuperate or update previous projects. Scholars are invited to participate in the database of Italian American Scholars (p. 3). Also forthcoming is the previously announced collection of sociopsychological studies by former Institute faculty fellows, edited by Nancy Zeihler.

We also honor in this issue one of our "senior" citizens, Mary Sansone (p. 11), civil rights activist who, like Mario Savio (p. 8), created a new paradigm for public advocacy. Both individuals depended on a legacy of activism that was alive and well in early twentieth century Italian America.

We continue to enjoy great support from colleagues and friends within CUNY, and many in the Italian-American community continue to be encouraging. As I have stated before, we continue to benefit from the unyielding support from both Chancellor Matthew Goldstein's Office of CUNY and President James Muysken's Office of Queens College. They and their staff have cleared many a path throughout these four and one-half years.

*Buon'estate a tutti!*

Anthony Julian Tamburri, Dean

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COVER ART: Detail of *Recollection . . . yellow (1)* by Elisa D'Arrigo,  
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the bottom of the page to add your name to our mailing list.

## CUNY CHANCELLOR MATTHEW GOLDSTEIN VISITS CALANDRA INSTITUTE



This past November, the Institute was especially honored to receive at our midtown offices CUNY Chancellor Matthew Goldstein, accompanied by Jay Hershenson, Senior Vice Chancellor for University Relations, and Frederick Schaffer, Senior Vice Chancellor for Legal Affairs and General Counsel. The visit provided a unique opportunity for chief CUNY administrators to tour the facilities and view the Institute's impressive library collection, *galleria*, and newly reconstructed conference room. As importantly, the meeting provided Dean Anthony Tamburri and staff the occasion to report on the array of Institute programs and services available to students and the larger community. We are grateful to have the demonstrated support of Chancellor Goldstein and his executive team.

## UPCOMING EXHIBITION



Franc Palaia's color digital prints from his SX-70 Polaroid series depict architecture, landscapes, and urban spaces from several regions of Italy. Palaia manipulates and hand colors the 3"x3" Polaroids, which heightens the color and texture of the images, making them look like small oil paintings.

FRANC PALAIA  
Digital Polaroids of Italy: 1986–2010

January 20–April 1, 2011

ARTIST'S RECEPTION: JANUARY 20, 6-8 PM. RSVP: 212-642-2094.

## RE-THINKING ITALIAN AMERICAN STUDIES: A NATIONAL SYMPOSIUM

*Fred L. Gardaphé, Anthony Julian Tamburri*

On September 10–11, 2010, the Calandra Institute organized the symposium “Re-thinking Italian American Studies,” the first gathering of its kind that brought together eight of the dozen professors nationwide who dedicate their teaching and research to Italian-American history and culture. Queens College President James Muyskens offered opening remarks and underscored the value and timeliness of such discussion as a springboard for national dialogue on Italian American Studies and its relevance to twenty-first century ethnic studies.

Symposium co-sponsors included the National Italian American Foundation; ILICA: Italian Language Inter-Cultural Alliance; Order Sons of Italy in America; Italian Cultural Center of St. John’s University; and National Organization of Italian American Women.

The panel was moderated by Jerome Krase, Brooklyn College, and Anthony Julian Tamburri, Calandra Institute. Participating scholars included Richard Alba, Distinguished Professor at CUNY Graduate Center; Peter Carravetta, D’Amato Chair in Italian and Italian American Studies at Stony Brook University; William Connell, La Motta Chair in Italian Studies at Seton Hall University; Teresa Fiore, incoming Inserra Chair in Italian and Italian American Studies at Montclair State University; Fred Gardaphé, Distinguished Professor of English and Italian American Studies at Queens College; Paolo Giordano, Neil Euliano Chair in Italian Studies at the University of Central Florida; Stanislao Pugliese,

Queensboro Unico Foundation Distinguished Professor of Italian and Italian American Studies at Hofstra University; and Robert Viscusi, Broeklundian Professor at Brooklyn College.

This inaugural symposium commenced with a press conference followed by vibrant roundtable discussion where each participant presented an overview of his or her research, teaching interests, and scholarly production. Presenters spoke to a capacity crowd on both days. The interaction focused on the definition of Italian American Studies; historic development of the field; new methodologies for examining the articulation of cultural expression; the correlation between Italian Studies and Italian American Studies; sharing resources to facilitate scholarly analysis of Italian America; bridging of gaps, such as the proverbial town and gown dichotomy, by bringing the academy to the people; and the relationship between cultural brokers, such as artists, filmmakers, professors, scholars, and writers, and elected officials.

The general consensus of those present confirmed that additional voices are necessary in order to create a broader and more diverse examination and dialogue of these topics as well as others borne from this event and other conversations.

Calandra Institute colleagues who assisted in organizing the symposium include Carmine Pizzirusso, Joseph Sciorra, and Rosaria Musco Talone. The staff of *Italics*, Lucia Grillo, Eric Pilotti, and William Schempp, filmed and edited the proceedings. The entire program was webcast and can be viewed online at [www.livestream.com/italicsconference](http://www.livestream.com/italicsconference).

## DATABASE OF ITALIAN AMERICAN SCHOLARS AND PROFESSIONALS CONTINUES TO EXPAND

*Vincenzo Milione*

The Scholars and Professionals Research Project was originally developed by the Institute in 1989, to establish the longitudinal maintenance of a repository profiling the careers of Italian American scholars and professionals employed in civil service and business sectors nationally. This database includes the demographic, educational, and occupational history, as well as research activities, of respondents. Data are made available to institutions and individuals interested in identifying and locating prospective candidates for employment, and graduate and doctoral students seeking guidance or mentoring for their proposed research endeavors.

During the initial implementation phase, 70,000 questionnaires were mailed to personnel employed in colleges, universities, government, and civil service in the northeastern United States. Additional questionnaires were later mailed or made available at academic conferences and organizational meetings in order to expand the existing database.

In 1991, the directory *Italian American Scholars and Professionals in Universities and Colleges* was published and distributed to higher educational institutions, government agencies, and civic organizations. In addition, the directory then served as a key resource to CUNY’s affirmative action officers in their efforts to promote employment opportunities for Italian Americans who have been designated as an affirmative action category at the university. As a result, several outstanding Italian Americans have joined the ranks of the professoriate and others are serving in leadership roles.

Italian-American scholars and professionals are invited to participate in the project. Interested individuals can submit their profile online at <http://qcpages.qc.cuny.edu/calandra/research/formsurv.htm>. Those who previously submitted information can update their profile by email: [qc\\_calweb@qc.edu](mailto:qc_calweb@qc.edu). For further information call Dr. Vincenzo Milione at 212-642-2091, or email [vincenzo.milione@qc.cuny.edu](mailto:vincenzo.milione@qc.cuny.edu).

# ITALIAN AMERICAN MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS CONFERENCE

*Dominick Carielli*

The Calandra Institute held its first mental health and wellness conference, October 7–9, 2010, dedicated to the counseling profession and psychological issues in the Italian American community.

The conference opened with a reception on Thursday evening. Dean Anthony Julian Tamburri welcomed attendees and introduced James Stellar, Provost of Queens College. Provost Stellar delivered greetings on behalf of Queens College President James Muyskens, and emphasized the critical importance of the mental health field and its significance to the Italian American community, greater community, and students at Queens College and CUNY.



*Calandra Institute counselors and conference organizers Maria La Russo, Nancy Ziebler, Dominick Carielli, Pierre Tribaudi, and Joseph Grosso.*

Dominick Carielli, Calandra Institute counselor and conference chairperson, commented on the unique history and culture of Italian Americans, and their absence from the multicultural movement in psychology. He emphasized the need to further study Italian Americans and other white ethnic groups and expressed the hope that the conference will foster the continued development of Italian American psychological methodology and praxis.

The evening's keynote speaker, Richard Gambino, Professor Emeritus of Queens College, presented his lecture "Cultural Authenticity and Personality Development: The Italian American Example." Dr. Gambino asserted the value of knowing oneself, and the influence of culture, ethnicity, and race on individual development. He noted the negative identity created for Italian Americans by the larger society, and the challenge of growing up in conflict between ethnic stereotypes and one's true culture.

Conference sessions began on Friday with a panel of distinguished pioneers in the field of Italian American psychology and sociology that included Joseph Giordano, Jerome Krase, James Perrone, and Aileen Riotto Sirey. Presenters related their experiences researching or administering therapeutic work with Italian Americans at a time when the field of psychology was moving away from the melting pot theory toward ethnic identity and multiculturalism. The

panelists recalled the early struggles and resistances they encountered as active participants in this paradigm shift.

Subsequent panels involved significant personal disclosure and sharing by the presenters. During one session, three Italian Americans recounted their experiences with psychiatry, psychology, and substance abuse treatment. In a special workshop, Dr. Sirey presented an edited version of videotaped recordings of an ethnotherapy group she conducted with Italian American men and women nearly three decades ago. Over the course of several weeks, the eleven participants struggled with conflicts and stereotypes as they searched for a positive ethnic identity.

A later panel presented statistical data representing Italian-American professionals in the mental health field. NYS Senator Diane Savino (D-Staten Island/Brooklyn) attended the conference and addressed participants, noting the unique Italian American responses to the mental health system, and the pervasive stigma of mental illness. The day concluded with a presentation by Distinguished Professor Fred Gardaphé, who described, through a comedic lens, the notion of *bella figura* and the Italian American inability to laugh at oneself and fear of being ridiculed.

Saturday's first panel discussed poetry as a means to foster identity in Italian American women. Following panels explored ethnic identity development in Italian American youth; identity and belonging in post World War II Italian immigrants; domestic violence in Italian American families; and the use of metaphor to cope with grief and loss in Italian American culture.

The conference concluded with a screening of the film *Canvas* by director Joseph Greco. The story chronicles an Italian-American family and the relationship between a young boy and his father as the boy's mother struggles with schizophrenia. Calandra Institute counselors were present to lead a post-screening discussion.

The success of the conference provides a framework for future conferences on mental health and well-being in the Italian American community.



*Conference attendees and presenters in audience. In foreground, Dr. Richard Gambino and Dr. Aileen Sirey.*

# ITALICS: THE ITALIAN-AMERICAN TV MAGAZINE EDUCATES AND INFORMS VIEWERS

William Schempp

During the fall season, the *Italics* team continued to inform audiences with cultural and academic programs and biographical portraits chronicling the career achievements of several outstanding Italian Americans including: former Queens Congresswoman and member of the US House of Representatives Geraldine Ferraro on her 75th birthday; *Cake Boss* Buddy Valastro of reality television fame; civic leader Joseph Grano and his plans to develop an Italian American Museum at Battery Park; Mark Rotella, author of *Amore: The Story of Italian American Song*; Fulbright recipient Dr. Fred Gardaphé; and legendary music icon Frank Zappa.

In October, *Italics* documented the special programs offered throughout CUNY and New York City in celebration of Italian Heritage and Culture Month (IHCM). Cav. Joseph Sciamè, chairman of the IHCM committee, invited viewers to participate in events honoring renowned educator and physician Dr. Maria Montessori and the contributions women of Italian ancestry have made to America.

The production team was on hand to broadcast the Institute's national symposium "Re-Thinking Italian American Studies," as well as the Italian Welfare League's 90th anniversary celebration. Also featured was an innovative

faculty exchange program between the Institute and the Università per Stranieri di Perugia, including university officials from both sides of the Atlantic.

Special reportage provided by Anthony Julian Tamburri discussed the changing nature of Italian language studies (grades K-12) and the recent College Board decision to retain the Advanced Placement exam in Italian. The exam provides high school students the opportunity to earn college credit.

*Italics* production formats have significantly expanded to include a Livestream portal, resulting in increased national and international viewership. The development of *Italics TU*, in Italian, and *Nota Bene*, hosted by Professor Fred Gardaphé, provides a much needed Italian American news and information network available to viewers on demand.

Be sure to join us in March for coverage of Women's History Month. On March 25th *Italics* will be present for the 100th anniversary of the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire at the historic Brown building in Greenwich Village.

*Italics* premieres the last Wednesday of every month at 10 am, 3 pm, and 11 pm, and repeats Saturday at 8 pm and Sunday at 10 am on CUNY-TV, cable channel 75 in the New York City area. Stay tuned!

## STAFF NEWS

JOSEPH SCIORRA was invited to present his paper "Vernacular Exegesis of the Gentrifying Gaze: Saints, Hipsters, and Public Space in Williamsburg, Brooklyn" at the symposium "Embodied Placemaking" at the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, which he subsequently presented at the annual American Folklore Society conference in Nashville. In October, he presented "'Why a Man Makes the Shoes?': Italian-American Art and Philosophy in Sabato Rodia's Watts Towers" at the conference "Watts Towers Common Ground: Art, Migration, Development" in Los Angeles. Sciorra spoke at St. Peter's College in Jersey City in conjunction with the display of the Calandra Institute's traveling exhibition "'Evviva La Madonna Nera!': Italian American Devotion to the Black Madonna." He also lectured on Italian and Italian-American rap music in the New York University class "Race, White Identity and Diaspora: The Italian-American Connection." His edited book *Italian Folk: Vernacular Culture in Italian-American Lives* was published by Fordham University Press.

ANTHONY JULIAN TAMBURRI was awarded the Cavaliere dell'Ordine al Merito della Repubblica Italiana, conferred *motu proprio* by Giorgio Napolitano, President of Italy. Dean Tamburri was also recognized by the Garibaldi-Meucci Museum of Staten Island, NY, for "special service to the community." He and his wife, Maria Tamburri, Executive Director of the National Organization of Italian American Women, in turn, were each honored with the Amici della Cultura Italiana Award by the Snug Harbor Cultural Center and Botanical Garden, Staten Island, NY. Dean Tamburri received the Frank Stella Person of the Year Award, presented annually by the Italian Language Inter-Cultural Alliance (ILICA). The American Association of Teachers of Italian (AATI) also presented him with a Recognition of Service to the Profession award. Recent intellectual work includes his article, "Frank Sinatra and Notions of 'Tolerance': The House I Live In," that appeared in the collection *Anti-Italianism: Essays on a Prejudice*, edited by William J. Connell and Fred Gardaphé (Palgrave 2010). The new book series, *Americana*, is directed by Tamburri and produced by the Florentine publishing house Franco Cesati Editore.



The Calandra Institute's traveling exhibition "EVVIVA LA MADONNA NERA!: ITALIAN AMERICAN DEVOTION TO THE BLACK MADONNA" recently traveled to St. Peter's College in Jersey City. Curated by Joseph Sciorra and designed by visual artist B. Amore, the exhibit consists of three triptychs examining the centuries-old devotion and contemporary Italian American women's reclamation of the Black Madonna. This exhibit is available to community organizations upon request. For more information, call (212) 642-2094 or email [calandra@qc.edu](mailto:calandra@qc.edu).

# THE ROLE OF THE ITALIAN AMERICAN FACULTY STAFF ADVISORY COUNCIL

Donna Chirico

Last fall, when *The New York Times* published an article about Italian Americans as an unlikely affirmative action group at CUNY, the online posts in response served as a reminder that negative attitudes toward the Italian American community persist. Here are two examples: “How about hiring and promoting based on merit, rather than ethnicity? That’d be a spicy meatball,” and, “I would love to know what our favorite paisans on the Supreme Court, Scalia [sic] and Alito, make of this.” The notion that Italian Americans may be underrepresented at a major university system that has a substantial Italian American population does seem odd, yet this circumstance continues at CUNY as the university has made efforts to recruit other groups who lacked representation, often overlooking Italian Americans. Affirmative action status was granted to Italian Americans in the mid-1970s when the numbers among faculty and staff were well below the available labor pools. It was also a time when Italian American students had the third highest dropout rate from New York City high schools. Despite gains in economic status, Italian Americans continue to lag behind other European ethnic groups when it comes to employment in the higher education sector.

A number of CUNY faculty and staff collaborate with the university’s leadership to ensure the proper place of Italian Americans and their concerns within the multicultural population of CUNY. The Italian American Faculty and Staff

Advisory Council (IAFSAC) began taking shape in 1976 with then Chancellor Kibbee’s directive to amend the low numbers of Italian Americans at CUNY. The IAFSAC’s objectives are to advise the college presidents and Chancellor, through the work of the Institute and its Dean, on matters affecting the university’s Italian American community, and to safeguard accountability for Italian American personnel within the university. The IAFSAC includes representatives from CUNY campuses who are working with the leadership of CUNY to foster the vision of the late Senator John D. Calandra to address the historical, sociological, political, and cultural issues affecting Italian Americans today. It is the goal of the IAFSAC to continue this work and, by extension, protect the place of all ethnic groups within the university. The experience of Italian Americans is a painful reminder that discrimination comes in many guises, and the low number of Italian Americans at CUNY indicates that vigilance in the workplace continues to be essential.

The role of the campus delegate is to articulate the needs of students, faculty, and staff at individual campuses, and deliberate ways in which the Institute can address them. Delegates work to extend the Institute’s support to campuses by arranging activities at the local level. To learn more about the IAFSAC, or if you are interested in becoming a campus delegate, contact chairperson Dr. Donna Chirico by telephone, 718-262-2687, or email, [DChirico@york.cuny.edu](mailto:DChirico@york.cuny.edu).

## FROM THE ARCHIVES



*This photograph dated 1936 is of my father Benjamin La Russo and his young cugino. Dressed in his “Sunday” clothes, the snapshot was taken in Elizabeth, New Jersey, where he and his parents Antonio and Maria Grazia settled after emigrating from Altamura, in the province of Bari, Italy. At that time, the city of Elizabeth was predominately an ethnic enclave occupied by newly immigrated Italians and home to produce stands, meat markets, fresh fish, poultry stores, and the famous Singer sewing machine manufacturing factory. When this picture was taken my father was seventeen years old, seemingly carefree and with a world of opportunity before him. Sadly, this would not be the case. At this young age my father worked long hours delivering ice to the local immigrant Italian homemakers and shopkeepers. I recall hearing stories of his “ice man” duties carrying huge blocks on his shoulder up the numerous steps of tenement houses. I have often wondered what career dreams he secretly possessed, but had little opportunity to express given his expected economic responsibility as the oldest child to his family. He would be proud to know that his twenty-four year old grandson, named for him, will graduate from medical school this year, fulfilling his career dream.*

— MARIA LA RUSSO, Counselor, Calandra Institute

## AD MEMORIAM

John Dabbene passed away at the age of 72, on October 18, 2010. Mr. Dabbene was chairman of the Garibaldi-Meucci Museum from 2001 to 2009. He also served as president of the Staten Island chapter of Arba-Sicula, representative of the New York State Commission for Social Justice (CSJ) to the National Conference of Christians and Jews, and board member of the National Italian-American Media Foundation. He was president of the Wm. C. LaMorte Order Sons of Italy in America (OSIA) lodge, and a founding member of the New York Commission for Social Justice (CSJ) where he served as president from 1993 to 1999. In August 2005, Mr. Dabbene was appointed president emeritus of CSJ, and in 2009 was awarded the Bene Emeritus Award by OSIA—its highest award for service to the Italian-American community. Heartfelt condolences go out to his wife Marcy and family.



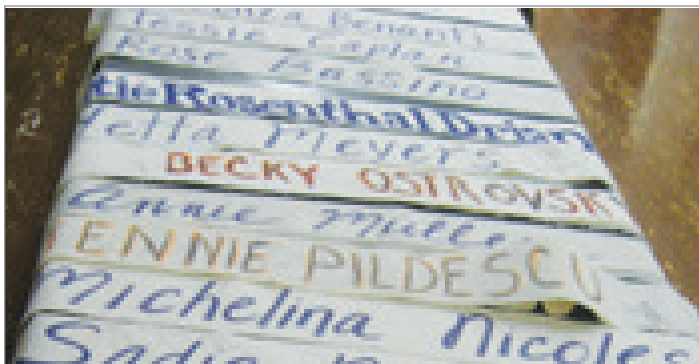
*Ruth Sergel and Mary Anne Trasciatti*

March 25, 2011, is the 100th anniversary of the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire. The infamous fire claimed the lives of 146 garment workers, mostly young Italian and Jewish women, and called attention to the inhumane and dangerous conditions that immigrants typically endured as they toiled in the garment industry. In the aftermath of the fire, workers and others who shared their concerns joined together to demand better treatment and a safer work environment for all. Their cry for justice spawned a host of safety measures and galvanized the movement for social and labor reform.



*Coalition participants march with shirtwaists on poles in the 2010 Labor Day Parade.*

The Remember the Triangle Fire Coalition is sponsoring a nationwide commemoration in honor of the centennial of the fire. The coalition was launched in March 2009 with a public event at Judson Memorial Church, and marched in the Labor Day Parade floating 146 shirtwaists up Fifth Avenue. In the spirit of collective empowerment and collaboration that drew women of different backgrounds together in unions, the coalition works with organizations and individuals across the city, state, and country to create a living memorial, to remember not only the people who died but the powerful social conscience and action that their deaths inspired.



*Sashes inscribed with the names of the 146 victims of the Triangle Factory Fire.*

The coalition aims to support participatory activities that build active social engagement, nurture collaborations between

communities, and establish a permanent public memorial to inspire continued action for social justice.

The memorial is a collaborative effort among members of the community, including the FDNY, Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation, Kheel Center, New York University, Workers United, family members of the victims, community leaders, historians, and anyone concerned about social justice. At meetings in New York, California, and elsewhere, people have spoken eloquently about their visions for the memorial, and in so doing, contribute to its formation.

Another important aspect of building community and shared understanding involves the creation of a memory map, a community portal for collected materials related to the fire. People are talking with relatives, digging through public archives and private homes, and finding related documents and photographs that have not been in the public domain. The centennial provides a unique opportunity to collect these items and share them with the wider community.



*A FDNY truck carrying commemorative shirtwaists processes in the parade.*

The memory map will provide an online tool for uploading text, images and videos related to the fire. All items will be categorized so they can be searched and viewed by the public. NYU and the Fashion Institute of Technology are both planning supplemental exhibits and have generously agreed to host open hours with technical staff to assist people in digitizing their materials. The collected items will be donated and archived by the Kheel Center, which hosts the preminent website on the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire.

The story of Triangle belongs to all of us. The coalition invites all interested parties to attend open meetings, held on the third Thursday of every month. Individuals or groups who wish to sign on as sponsors and make a financial contribution to help support the commemorative events are encouraged.

The Triangle fire was a seminal moment in the fight for social justice. The coalition welcomes the participation of all groups as we remember the individuals who perished and honor the ongoing fight for a better world for all. For more information, visit [www.rememberthetrianglefire.org](http://www.rememberthetrianglefire.org).

Joseph Sciorra



The Calandra Institute will host its fourth annual conference on April 29-30, 2011. This year's theme is "The 3Fs in Italian Cultures: Critical Approaches to Food, Fashion, and Film." These three cultural *fora* have become critical arenas where the notion of an Italian style is formulated, marketed, and consumed as an articulation of identity at local, national, and global levels. The prestige accorded the "3 Fs"

influenced the re-evaluation of Italian-American identity as a positive construct, while Italian-American political, economic, and cultural standing have been instrumental in the marketing and consumption of Italian products in the United States and abroad. Food, fashion, and film are key points of encounter in the symbiotic circuitry between Italy and its diaspora.

We are currently organizing the final program, and offer at this time some of the paper titles that have been accepted:

- Looking at Italian Food-Places in Brussels through the New York City Lens from 1880 to 1914
- Michael Corleone's Tie: Francis Ford Coppola's *The Godfather* and the Rhetoric of Antinomy
- Sliced Thin: Anorexia in an Italian-American Adolescence
- The *Commedia all'Italiana* as a Subverted Morality Play
- Deconstructing Emma: Food and Fashion in Luca Guadagnino's *Io sono l'Amore*
- Whose Family Values?: The Cinema of Ferzan Ozpetek
- Size Matters: Italian American Masculinity in *Fatso*
- Cooking for a Mob: An Italian-American Restaurateur's Life as a Master Chef among Mafia Chieftains
- Eating in Fashion: Food in the Luxury Italian Fashion Industry
- Father, Son, and Wine: An Approach to *The Wine Cellar*, by Edward Bonetti
- Conspicuous by their Absence: Italian Americans in Hollywood World War II Films

Food, fashion, and film have contributed to the construction of identity within geo-political and economic spheres. This conference offers a venue for the exploration of such identity markers and how they have shaped general perceptions of Italians around the world.

PERSONAGGI

MARIO SAVIO (1942-1996)

Gil Fagiani



The linkages between Mario Savio's radicalism and his Italian-American background have largely gone unacknowledged, though traces can be found in his strongly held spiritual beliefs and identification with the Italian Left. A fiery orator, Savio emerged in the 1960s as the nation's most prominent student leader. He grew up in Floral Park, Queens, in a working class immigrant family and from an early age demonstrated academic promise. Savio finished first in his class at Martin Van Buren High School where, in spite of his pronounced stutter, he was elected class president and delivered the valedictorian speech. He attended Queens College, CUNY, and the University of California at Berkeley.

Savio joined the Freedom Summer campaign in Mississippi in 1964 where he helped African Americans register to vote. At the outset of the project three participants—James Chaney, Andrew Goodman (who attended Queens College), and Michael Schwerner—were murdered. This event shocked the nation and radicalized Savio, who then planned on raising money for the Civil Rights Movement upon return to his Berkeley campus. When the university banned all political activity and fundraising, massive student protests erupted that became known as the Berkeley Free Speech Movement. During these protests, Savio delivered one of the seminal speeches of the era. It began, "There's a time, when the operation of the machine becomes so odious—makes you so sick at heart—that you've got to put your bodies upon the gears . . ."

The events at Berkeley created the paradigm for a worldwide student movement against the war in Vietnam. Savio paid a price for his convictions, suffering suspension from school, arrest, and FBI harassment. In later years he fought against US military intervention in Central America and the denial of immigrant rights, and was working to save affirmative action on state campuses when he passed away at age fifty-three.

AUDIENCE PROFILE



YUKAKO OKUDAIRA

Rosangela Briscese

Yukako Okudaira immigrated to the US from Japan in 1962. An artist with diverse interests, she first picked up a Calandra Institute brochure at Casa Italiana of New York University. In 1993, Yukako began taking Italian language lessons and traveled to Italy for the first time. She was struck by the differences between Italian and Japanese culture and appreciated Italians' warmth and expressiveness in music, movies, and everyday life. She finds that events at the Calandra Institute prepare her for travel by providing insight on Italian culture that no tourist guide can. For example, when she visits Sicily, she'll reflect on Franco La Cecla's film *In Altro Mare* (screened October 18, 2010). Yukako relates to the experience of leaving one's home country to look for something better, a venture that can be complicated, painful, and exciting. But, as she says, "my scenario was not written."



# “PUNK AS ANTI-GUIDO:” REFLECTIONS FROM THE HYBRID MOMENTS SYMPOSIUM

Rosangela Briscese

On November 5, 2010, the symposium “Hybrid Moments: Independent Music in Italian America” brought together scholars and artists to explore the Italian-American presence in various types of alternative, independent, and underground music. Ethnic identity has not typically been the defining feature of such musicians’ creativity. Musical styles and their subcultures, especially punk and metal, are cherished in part because of their non-ethnic affiliations, an erasing of familial and local references considered provincial or restrictive. Yet, *italianità*—sometimes veiled, sometimes overt—is articulated through surname retention, lyrics, cultivated persona, and performance style.

The panel “East Coast Metal” moderated by Joseph Sciorra, featured artist manager Howie Abrams, Rob Caggiano (Anthrax), and Nicholas Sciorra (Sciorra Media Group). Participants discussed the significant cultural differences between California and New York and the impact of location on the emergence of heavy metal music. Abrams described going to the rock club L’amour in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn, where a walk to the nearby pizzeria often meant clashing with neighborhood youths who viewed the metal aficionados as enemies in a rock vs. disco divide.

Gerry LaFemina (Frostburg State University) moderated the “Anima e Hardcore” panel, with Carl Porcaro (Killing Time) and Vinnie Stigma (Agnostic Front). Stigma, who grew up on Mott Street near CBGB, recalled punk musicians joining his family for Sunday dinners: “We would play at CB’s with our bellies full!”

Antonino D’Ambrosio (La Lutta NMC) led a discussion with KAVES (The Lordz), Martín Perna (Antibalas), and Vic Ruggiero (The Slackers) focusing on the challenges of identity

and the alternatives available to Italian-American young men. When KAVES was young, his father told him his choices were to be either “a gangster or a cop.” Ruggiero remarked that his family did not understand his decision to pursue music; even after establishing a career, his father only seemed to respect him after he demonstrated he could expertly back up a trailer.

Gerry LaFemina’s closing remarks discussed punk identity as an alternative to Guido youth style and made a connection between the punks of the 1980s and the greasers of the 1950s—a subculture also associated with Italian Americans.

One of the purposes of this event is to engender scholarship where none or little exists, as the Calandra Institute did in 2002 with its conferences on women’s needlework and historic preservation. The Institute would like to thank the symposium participants and attendees for their interest and support. We look forward with enthusiasm to the continued exploration of this topic.



Carl Porcaro (Killing Time), Gerry LaFemina (Frostburg State University), and Vinnie Stigma (Agnostic Front)

## The S. Eugene Scalia Memorial Library at the Center for Italian American Studies, Brooklyn College

Dominick Carielli



The Center for Italian American Studies at Brooklyn College, CUNY, houses the S. Eugene Scalia Memorial Library, a vast collection of Italian literature books that belonged to the late Professor of Italian, S. Eugene Scalia. Professor Scalia’s son is The Honorable Antonin Scalia, Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States. Lenora Panaro, the sister-in-law of Professor Scalia, initially donated a collection of books to the Center in 1989. She later contacted Dominick Carielli, the Center’s director and Calandra Institute counselor, to offer additional publications. In the fall 2009 issue of *Sotto Voce*, the Center’s newsletter, Dr. Carielli featured an item about his visit to Ms. Panaro’s home and her donation of books. The article also mentioned the need to catalog and preserve the volumes in the collection, and that efforts were underway to secure a grant for this purpose. At Ms. Panaro’s request, a letter and copy of the newsletter was sent to Justice Scalia, who graciously replied expressing his pleasure that the library dedicated to his father continues to be maintained. He was also impressed with the Center’s many activities and wished it continuing success.

## AMERICANA BOOK SERIES LAUNCHED

The Florentine publishing house, Franco Cesati Editore ([www.francocesatieditore.com](http://www.francocesatieditore.com)), has announced a new book series entitled *Americana*. The name and cover design hark back to the historical series founded and edited by Elio Vittorini, for the Turin-based publishing house Einaudi. The series seeks to foster greater dialogue between American and Italian scholars. All books are published in Italian. Directed by Anthony Julian Tamburri, *Americana* is dedicated to the relationship between Italy and the United States, with emphasis on the cultural and historical experiences of Italians in America. Subject matter is gleaned from the fields of anthropology, film, history, literature, and social sciences. The inaugural publications are:



***Nel nome del padre, del figlio, e dell'umorismo: i romanzi di John Fante*  
Emanuele Pettener**

In *Nel nome del padre, del figlio, e dell'umorismo*, Emanuele Pettener examines John Fante's novel through humor and satire. The author keenly demonstrates Fante's self-reflective style whose humor, at times pungent, has been overlooked. In so doing, Pettener also questions the range and scope of what has been traditionally considered autobiographical fiction, as Fante's novels counter straight-forward fictional autobiography.



***Una semiotica dell'etnicità: nuove segnalature per la scrittura italiano/americana*  
Anthony Julian Tamburri**

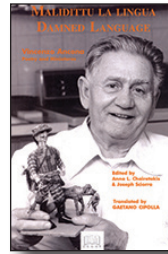
In *Una semiotica dell'etnicità*, Anthony Julian Tamburri offers a range of ideas on how one could re-examine the cultural products of many different Italian-American writers, especially today when cultural barriers of all kinds have been crossed in a multitude of ways. This volume offers a broader theoretical framework of the central point of Tamburri's previous writings in English, which now enter into dialogue with the American Studies *literati* in Italy.

## NEWLY PUBLISHED



***Italian Folk: Vernacular Culture in Italian American Lives*  
(Critical Studies in Italian America Series,  
Fordham University Press, 2011)  
Edited by Joseph Sciorra**

Sunday dinners, basement kitchens, and backyard gardens are everyday cultural entities long associated with Italian Americans, yet the general perception of them remains superficial and stereotypical at best. For many people, these scenarios trigger assumptions about individuals' beliefs, politics, aesthetics, values, and behaviors that leave little room for nuance and elaboration. This collection of essays explores local knowledge and aesthetic practices, often marked as "folklore," as sources for creativity and meaning in Italian-American lives. As the contributors demonstrate, folklore provides contemporary scholars with occasions for observing and interpreting behaviors and objects as part of lived experiences. Its study provides new ways of understanding how individuals and groups reproduce and contest identities and ideologies through expressive means.



***Malidittu la lingua/Damned Language*  
Vincenzo Ancona  
(Legas, 2010)  
Edited by Anna L. Chairetakis and Joseph  
Sciorra, translated by Gaetano Cipolla**

During much of his lifetime, Vincenzo Ancona (1914-2000) was the poetic voice of New York's Sicilian immigrant community. Born in the town of Castellammare del Golfo in western Sicily, Ancona worked as a farmer and a fisherman. Immigrating to the United States in 1956, he labored in factories for 24 years. Ancona was heir to the fecund Sicilian tradition of poetic composition and recitation in *ottava rima*, in which he composed comic anecdotes, imaginative tales, and poetic debates on the heartaches and absurdities of the immigrant experience. His works were important in reconciling the past and present among Sicilian American audiences. This reprint of the 1990 bilingual edition of his selected works includes a CD of Ancona reciting his poetry, because oral recitation is at the heart of Sicilian verse.

**CONGRATULATIONS!** Dr. Fred Gardaphé, Distinguished Professor of Italian and English, has received a Fulbright Scholar teaching fellowship to lecture in American Cultural Studies at the Università degli Studi di Salerno during the 2011 spring semester. Dr. Gardaphé will teach one undergraduate and one graduate course that will explore how the humor expressed in major US cultural works by artists as diverse as Mark Twain and Chris Rock reflects the nation and its people across a significant period of historical development. "I want Italian students to understand the changes large and small wrought upon the American identity, and I want them to understand the role humor plays in American media arts," he says. The multidisciplinary and multicultural classes will expose students to a wide variety of American print and electronic media. "My goal," observes Gardaphé, "is to work with students to facilitate a transatlantic understanding of how European cultures have contributed to the creation of American culture, and how Americans developed different kinds of humor based on the interaction of these cultures."

# MARY SANSONE: ACTIVIST AND ADVOCATE FOR CIVIL RIGHTS

*Maria La Russo*

Socrates once said “it is not living that matters, it is living rightly.” There is no better example of living rightly than Mary Sansone, activist and advocate for nearly a century. Sansone’s story is a pre-feminist Italian-American narrative of what one individual can accomplish when one possesses a keen sense of integrity and compassion. Her early efforts as a sweatshop organizer, helping young Jewish and Italian workers secretly reporting “physical and sexual abuse by their bosses,” provides an invaluable lesson for each of us and for anyone who strives to make a difference in their community or country.

Activism is a family legacy for Sansone. Mary was born and raised in Brooklyn. In early childhood she accompanied her father, Rocco Crisalli, a Socialist and follower of Norman Thomas, and President of the Junior Wobblies (International Workers of the World), as he made speeches in Union Square. Enlivened by her father’s conviction and the inspiration of her older brother, Sansone was busy at age fourteen organizing factories prior to earning a certificate in social work from the Rand School of Social Science. During World War II she continued her advocacy efforts as a caseworker for the American Red Cross and, after the war, served as Executive Secretary of the American Relief for Italy. In that role, as a diplomat to Italy, she traveled extensively for the United Nations Appeal for Children, raising funds for the orphans of Europe. In later decades the American Civil Rights Movement became one of the nation’s most important political and social causes in recent history. It was a time of tremendous upheaval and societal change, and Sansone understood that she needed to change with it. She worked vigorously with President Lyndon Johnson and his team to secure acceptance and passage of his anti-poverty programs.

In a 1968 *New York Times* article about Sansone’s ability to foster intergroup relations with the late Civil Rights activist Bayard Rustin, reporter Francis X. Clines writes: “Rustin sat on the brick stoop of Sansone’s attached house in Borough Park, Brooklyn, a black man who felt welcome in the all-white neighborhood.” Rustin and Sansone collaborated to form the first coalition of African Americans, Latinos, and Italians in New York City. Their shared goal was to address concerns in education, street crime, and unemployment, and create racial harmony. In 1970 Sansone developed the Congress of Italian American Organizations (CIAO) to provide services in housing, education, unemployment, and day care. This small grassroots effort in Brooklyn quickly grew to incorporate a larger agenda. Many people, disadvantaged by language difficulties and limited resources, were in desperate need of help. Among them were new immigrants from Italy, Italian-American high school dropouts, elderly shut-ins, and drug addicts. Sansone lobbied Washington, Albany, and New York City to garner resources and, as a result, implemented twenty-

two social service programs geared towards helping individuals and families regardless of race or national origin.

Under Sansone’s leadership, CIAO responded to the needs of Brooklyn students and the City University of New York by helping Brooklyn College, home to an increasing enrollment of Italian American students, establish the Center for Italian American Studies with a grant from the Manpower and Career Development Agency in 1972. The Center was unique in encouraging research related to the historical, sociological, and political activities of Italian-American life, and continues to thrive on campus with an array of programs.

In 1976 Sansone helped organize a group of concerned individuals to urge former Massachusetts Governor Michael Dukakis to review the Sacco and Vanzetti case. In response to the group’s insistence, a proclamation was issued “reminding all civilized people of the need to guard against our susceptibility to prejudice.” At the same time, keenly aware of rising racial and ethnic tensions in New York, Sansone founded the organization CURE (Community Understanding for Racial and Ethnic Equality) to reduce conflict while promoting respect and tolerance among diverse groups.

Sansone has been the recipient of numerous awards, and deservedly so. One such award is of particular significance to her and worthy of mention: Mary was personally asked by Nobel Prize winning author Toni Morrison to grant permission for her name to be inscribed on the Wall of Tolerance in Montgomery, Alabama, at the site of the Civil Rights Memorial. The wall recognizes those individuals who stand for justice and tolerance in their daily lives.



*President Barack Obama and Mary Sansone on Wall Street, September 21, 2010.*

Last year, when President Barack Obama was visiting New York City, he took the opportunity to meet the woman he learned had been unwavering in her contributions to her Italian American community and beyond. Upon greeting the president, Mary stated: “I’ve waited ninety-three years to meet you.” Mary Sansone’s perseverance and life-long advocacy work is a powerful example of leadership at its best.



## ITALIAN AMERICAN REVIEW

In January 2011, the Calandra Institute will re-launch its bi-annual journal the *Italian American Review (IAR)*, featuring scholarly articles about Italian American history and culture, as well as other aspects of the Italian diaspora. The journal embraces a wide range of professional concerns and theoretical orientations in the social sciences and cultural studies. Volume 1, Number 1 features the essays “Bellas and Fellas in Cyberspace: Mobilizing Italian Ethnicity for Online Youth Culture” by Donald Tricarico; “‘I Just Want to Sing Your Name’: Woody Guthrie’s Struggles with Ballads of Sacco & Vanzetti” by Joseph P. Cosco; and “Artist on Loan: Tommaso Juglaris and the Italian Immigrant Experience in America’s Late Gilded Age” by Geoffrey G. Drutchas. The *IAR* publishes book, film, and digital media reviews, and is currently accepting article submissions. For more information see <http://www.qc.edu/calandra/italrev>.

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## MONTHLY SERIES CALENDAR

### PHILIP V. CANNISTRARO SEMINAR SERIES IN ITALIAN AMERICAN STUDIES

Thursday, February 10, 2011 at 6 p.m.  
Ironies of Citizenship in Contemporary Italy  
ROBERT GAROT, John Jay College

Wednesday, March 9, 2011 at 6 p.m.  
The Neapolitan Instrument Makers of New York  
JAYSON KERR DOBNEY, Metropolitan Museum of Art

Thursday, April 7, 2011 at 6 p.m.  
New York Longshoremen: Class and Power  
on the Docks  
WILLIAM MELLO, Indiana University

Thursday, May 5, 2011 at 6 p.m.  
The Hellhound of Wall Street: Ferdinand Pecora and  
the Investigation of the Great Crash  
MICHAEL PERINO, St. John’s University

### WRITERS READ SERIES

Thursday, February 3, 2011 at 6 p.m.  
PAULA BUTTURINI reads from *Keeping the Feast:  
One Couple’s Story of Love, Food, and Healing in Italy*  
(Riverhead, 2010)

Wednesday, March 30, 2011 at 6 p.m.  
JOANNA CLAPPS HERMAN reads from *The Anarchist  
Bastard: Growing Up Italian in America* (SUNY  
Press, 2011)

Thursday, April 14, 2011 at 6 p.m.  
PAULINE SPATAFORA reads from *Dear Sister: Letters  
Home to Sicily from Wartime America* (Reed & Quill  
Press, 2009)

Tuesday, May 17, 2011 at 6 p.m.  
ANTHONY DI RENZO reads from *Bitter Greens: Essays  
on Food, Politics, and Ethnicity from the Imperial  
Kitchen* (SUNY Press, 2010)

### DOCUMENTED ITALIANS

Wednesday, February 23, 2011 at 6 p.m.  
*My American Family* (2004), 70 min.  
JERZY SLADKOWSKI, dir.

Tuesday, March 22, 2011 at 6 p.m.  
*Cricket Cup* (2006), 49 min.  
DIEGO LIGUORI and MASSIMILIANO PACIFICO, dirs.

Tuesday, April 19, 2011 at 6 p.m.  
*Ferlinghetti* (2009), 82 min.  
CHRISTOPHER FELVER, dir.

Thursday, May 12, 2011 at 6 p.m.  
*Terra Sogna Terra* (2011), 50 min.  
LUCIA GRILLO, dir.

> All SEMINARS, READINGS, and FILMS take place at the John D. Calandra Italian American Institute, 25 West 43rd Street, 17th floor, Manhattan  
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