

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE 5/4/16

Saluti ai Miei Fratelli e Sorelle!

Your CSJ kept a pretty heady pace this past quarter. Much was happening from so many directions! The quarter began with our 36th annual Brunch/Dinner fundraiser at Russo's-On-The-Bay in Howard Beach. Over 200 attended, and we made a handsome profit to help our missions. The climax of the event was proudly honoring Past Presidents Joe Rondinelli and Thom Lupo, resolute supporters of CSJ, and GMM Professor Lou Leonini, a devotee of the instruction of Italian language, culture, and history. As far as Italian culture and history is concerned you know that we face fierce challenges, particularly relative to Columbus Day.

Last quarter multiple challenges erupted. Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island, dumped Columbus Day in February and instead substituted "Indigenous Peoples Day." In March the city school district of Philadelphia dropped Columbus Day, and that day is now a regular day of class instruction. In this same month the Los Angeles city council voted for a two-month study to launch an investigation of a paid day-off for city workers for Indigenous Peoples Day but with options: a separate holiday, a substitute for Columbus Day, or no Indigenous Peoples Day at all. That study's results are due in May. However, on the other side of the coin there have been some positive developments for us about this issue.

The Utah State Senators in a 15-10 vote defeated legislation to change Columbus Day to Indigenous Peoples Day and put pressure on the University of Utah to do the same. In Colorado it was dramatic. In a 7-2 vote in the State and Military Affairs Committee of the Colorado House of Representatives the legislation was also defeated after passionate arguments on both sides of the issue lasted for four hours. The Colorado CSJ Chairman thanked us for our efforts in making this defeat possible, and I want to thank so graciously our Board members and lodge liaisons for their effective participation! We could not turn our attention too much to help these other locales because we had our own fight in Southampton. Community forums have been organized to discuss the matter but participants are deadlocked. An administrative shakeup evolved in the meantime and a new Superintendent has taken over. He personally told me that the matter will now be postponed until after the school budget votes in mid-May, which fortunately now gives us more time to organize Southampton residents to defeat the proposal. Meetings have occurred between CSJ and these residents to plan and strategize. To bolster our efforts we now have "Save Columbus Day" T-shirts for you to purchase and bring attention to the public. Contact Joe Vallone, our Treasurer. The shirts are \$10. Besides Columbus Day we have another score to settle.

On March 7th the Osgood File program on WCBS Radio 880 AM commemorated the anniversary of Alexander Graham Bell's patent for the telephone. Thanks to the sharp ears of Tony Conetta from the JMM Lodge he texted me about what he heard. Immediately I e-mailed the station and provided them the true story of Antonio Meucci and the telephone and demanded equal time on their station to set the record straight. The News Director Tim Scheld and his staff were so fond of the story that arrangements are now being made to do the Meucci story on the station on the grounds of the museum! How delightful!

Another delight is CSJ and the Committee to Preserve Our Lady of Loreto Church is moving closer to landmarking and preservation. On May 2 Mario Toglia and I traveled to Brooklyn to meet with area Assemb. Latrice Walker to urge her to speak to the the owner of OLL, Our Lady of the Presentation, and her colleagues to urge them to come on board for the effort since she has mentioned she is in full support of the preservation of OLL. She agreed, and while in Brooklyn we visited other community groups to encourage them too. We now have added East

New York in Motion, an Afro-Caribbean dance troupe, and the Italian American Civil Rights League, a non-profit community services group in Brownsville, which makes for four community groups on board now. Including the owner and community groups on board moves us closer to city and state approval for landmarking. I will also send out letters to other elected officials in the area to make it easier for Walker to convince them.

Furthermore, we're thinking ahead to October Culture and Heritage Month 2016. Board members Liz Rizzo and Jean Gagliardo have been charged with contacting the public libraries in the state to coax them in preparing programs and events now for that Month. Hopefully, we'll have a full array throughout the state to be proud of. After all, such an effort on our part coincides beautifully with direction suggested by a one Mr. Pat Morelli from upstate Loudonville.

Thanks to Liz Rizzo's reading of Primo magazine she noticed an article he wrote about his experience and capabilities in fighting bias and bigotry with effective tactics for fifty years. When contacted, we rendezvoused with him in Manhattan on March 26th and were enthralled with a two-hour presentation about the nature of mass media and how to channel one's passion and energy in using effective tactics to counteract such pervasive media. One idea that resonated was that one has to create POSITIVE PRODUCT—pamphlets, books, billboards, posters, t-shirts, films, et al, into wide circulation. Therefore, we're asking public libraries in the state to do just that. Since his program is developmental, we will be meeting with Pat for further instruction along the way, and thankfully we will be more proficient in our missions.

On the subject of bias and bigotry we had our usual share of rankling developments. The WD food truck lost in court again! The judge basically said that the state was acting as a property manager when it launched the Empire State Summer Lunch Program, and according to the state's contract for the program vendors had to be "family-friendly." The term "WD" is not, so the state had every right to banish the truck from the program. WD is appealing. The NYC Transit Authority's time sheet had a 'WOP" code on it for those union leaders working on Transit Authority time ("Without Papers") and had to be paid by the union instead. Thanks to our pressure the TA will change the code. If all of you have been following our Facebook posts and e-mails, you know that Sen. Ted Cruz and Fox News Live Commentator Neil Cavuto have hurled insults at Italian people, and your CSJ has literally bombarded them with all modes of communication with vitriolic content. So far, no responses yet. Finally, if any of you are invited on Facebook to Mob Central, Mob Daily, or Hardcore Italians groups, protest vehemently and take yourself out of these groups.! They portray us as criminals and buffoons. I have already noticed that the creators have disallowed comments or posts in the groups. So, we're making headway here.

One final note— I want to introduce you to our new, talented Financial Secretary, Joanne Grove from the Sellaro Lodge. Gina Ferrara has accepted the same position in her own Cellini Lodge. So thanks for everything Gina and good luck! Welcome Joanne!

Fraternally,

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