



## Italian Americans at CUNY and the Calandra Institute. Why The New York Times Got It Wrong

William D. Schempp (September 25, 2010)



On September 14 The New York Times published an article by Lisa W. Foderaro entitled “Unlikely Group Charges Bias at University.” The article’s abstract read “Vincenzo Milione, a researcher at the Calandra Italian American Institute at the City University of New York, is suing CUNY and the institute’s director, saying he was retaliated against for criticizing what he considers the university’s poor record on recruiting Italian-American employees.” Many employees of the Institute—which gives i-Italy free hospitality—feel that Ms. Foderaro’s account of the story was biased and incorrect. Here is the open letter that Mr. William D. Schempp, Senior Producer/Director of ‘Italics’ (the Institute’s monthly TV program broadcast on CUNY TV) sent to the New York Times a few days ago, and was never published. Below watch the recent episode of ‘Italics’ where Mr. Schempp discusses



the issue with professors Fred Gardaphe and Donna Chirico.

Dear Ms. Foderaro,

Please excuse me when I say that [your story](#) [2] is horribly wrong and factually incorrect.

I'm sure you want, as a professional reporter, to tell the right story, as close to the truth as possible, and not report spin. You are not only reporting spin but also prevarications.

Dr. Vincenzo 'Enzo' Milione, whom I have worked alongside of at the Calandra Institute for more than 20 years, does not REPRESENT Italian Americans, or The Institute. Milione simply represents himself, Dr. Joseph Scelsa, Ms. Maria Fosco, and the Italian American Museum, who all have personal and financial interest in the outcome of this case.

Dr Scelsa wishes his/the Italian American Museum to be part of the Calandra Institute and the CUNY. CUNY, and The Calandra Institute, does not wish to have Dr. Scelsa, or the Museum he has organized and OWNS under its/their aegis. Virtually the entire Calandra Institute Staff, barring Milione, agrees and sanctions this separation from Scelsa and the IAM et al. Dr. Scelsa, as a 'community leader' is using the retaliation and discrimination case/card and mixing it with the Italian American affirmative action 'inaction' at CUNY, to force CUNY into settling with him. In this Scelsa plan/machination Fosco, a close personal Scelsa associate, is to be IAM liaison to Calandra and CUNY. Milione believes (solely) that he should then be named as Calandra's Executive Director and not answer to Tamburri, who was appointed under a proper University job search, and because he was 'promised' by Scelsa, who has no appointed community or university power to do so.

While Tamburri is barred or advised by University attorneys from public comment on the depending case, and has been heeding such advise, Scelsa has been using the Milione and Fosco case on Internet blogs etc and orchestrating the "discrimination" case to further his and their own personal causes. Dr Scelsa recently retired from CUNY in 2007-8, after a three-year administrative leave (with Fosco) to develop the Italian American Museum (on CUNY property). His, Fosco's and the IAM's separation and severance is still the PRIMARY root of contention within The University and Queens College and the cause of this entire situation with Calandra and CUNY, and not the status of Italian Americans, which is CUNY's sad legacy and dirty little ethnic secret.

I testified in front of Justice Constance Baker Motley in federal court against CUNY and alongside Dr. Scelsa during the landmark trial you quote. I also testified in defense of Dr Scelsa and CUNY when he, Scelsa, then Calandra Institute Director was charged with retaliation suits by a number of Calandra Institute/CUNY employees, most famously, the Aleandri/Salerno v CUNY and Scelsa case in federal court 2004.

To my knowledge to the current day I was the only person fired (retrenched due to financial exigences) from CUNY/the Calandra Institute in the 1992 Scelsa v CUNY fiasco that made Italian Americans a protected class at CUNY. I did not regain fulltime employment status at CUNY until 1995. I earned my MFA in TV Production from Brooklyn College/CUNY in 1986. I have been employed by and working at CUNY since 1984. I have produced and directed the Calandra Institute's monthly cable television program 'ITALICS, the Italian American Magazine', seen on CUNY TV cable channel 75 throughout the 5 Boroughs of NYC, since its inception in 1986/87. To this day 'ITALICS' is the Nation's only regularly scheduled Italian American news and public affairs Program.

I worked day to day with Dr. Scelsa from 1986-2006 and continue to do so with Dr. Tamburri now,



working with both in their roles as host and executive producers of ITALICS.

I support Dr. Anthony J. Tamburri completely and without reserve. I trust his vision, intellect and person. I believe he works for the community, and not for what the community can provide him. I can say I never felt this of Dr. Scelsa. I supported him, but with reserve, and certainly not on every issue.

Dr. Tamburri has worked extremely hard to redirect the Institute and its staff back into a more positive position, regaining our recognized role as the leading research Institute on the Italian American Experience in America, and the world.

I read the NY Times as a 'reference', a paper of 'facts' and beyond common repute, as do most educated people around the world. I must now admit my deep horror to not only know how wrong you got the story but how little reportage you actually have done on us, the Calandra Institute. FYI, Calandra is the largest Ethnic Studies Research Institute at CUNY. Still to be such an integral, yet completely forgotten and unvoiced part of a story that is so grossly wrong, misstated, misplaced and wrongly directed will lead me to cease to trust the veracity of anything else I might ever read here in the NY Times.

Ms. Foderaro, I personally feel a great disappointment, and think that your report has committed a great disservice not only to the staff of the Calandra Institute, but also to Dr. Tamburri and the whole Italian American Community at large. Most of the public comments that followed on the NY Times after your story only sadly elucidates for me the true need for ethnic studies here in this country of slaves, immigrants, Blue-bloods and short memories. As for the veracity of my story or version of things, well of course you can always check it out. Ask someone, anyone who works at the Institute other than Enzo Milione. I'm happy to talk to most people.

I cordially invite you to appear on either Calandra's Internet (NOTA BENE) or CUNY Cable TV program (ITALICS) to discuss the issue, might I say the 'complete' story with our Distinguished Professor and Fulbright Fellow Fred Gardaphe. Since you've made us news, we will of course be reporting on the story about us.

Respectfully,

William D. Schempp

Senior Producer/Director 'ITALICS'

Calandra Inst./Queens College/CUNY

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Watch [live streaming video](#) [3] from [italics](#) [4] at [livestream.com](http://livestream.com)



**Source URL:** <http://www.iitaly.org/magazine/focus/facts-stories/article/italian-americans-cuny-and-calandra-institute-why-new-york>

## Links

[1] <http://www.iitaly.org/files/clandra1285401653.jpg>

[2] [http://On%20September%202014%20the%20New%20York%20Times%20published%20an%20article%20by%20Lisa%20W.%20Foderaro%20entitled%20%E2%80%9CUnlikely%20Group%20Charges%20Bias%20at%20University.%E2%80%9D%20The%20article%E2%80%99s%20abstract%20read%20%E2%80%9CVincenzo%20Milione,%20a%20researcher%20at%20the%20Calandra%20Italian%20American%20Institute%20at%20the%20City%20University%20of%20New%20York,%20is%20suing%20CUNY%20and%20the%20institute%E2%80%99s%20director,%20saying%20he%20was%20retaliated%20against%20for%20criticizing%20what%20he%20considers%20the%20university%E2%80%99s%20poor%20record%20on%20recruiting%20Italian-American%20employees.%E2%80%9D%20Many%20employees%20of%20the%20Institute%E2%80%94Italy%20free%20hospitality%E2%80%94feel%20that%20Ms.%20Foderaro%E2%80%99s%20account%20of%20the%20story%20was%20biased%20and%20incorrect.%20Here%20is%20the%20letter%20that%20Mr.%20William%20D.%20Schempp,%20Senior%20Producer/Director%20%E2%80%9CItalics%E2%80%99%20\(the%20Institute%20monthly%20TV%20program%20broadcasted%20on%20CUNY%20TV\)%20sent%20to%20the%20New%20York%20Times%20a%20few%20days%20ago.%20It%20was%20never%20published.](http://On%20September%202014%20the%20New%20York%20Times%20published%20an%20article%20by%20Lisa%20W.%20Foderaro%20entitled%20%E2%80%9CUnlikely%20Group%20Charges%20Bias%20at%20University.%E2%80%9D%20The%20article%E2%80%99s%20abstract%20read%20%E2%80%9CVincenzo%20Milione,%20a%20researcher%20at%20the%20Calandra%20Italian%20American%20Institute%20at%20the%20City%20University%20of%20New%20York,%20is%20suing%20CUNY%20and%20the%20institute%E2%80%99s%20director,%20saying%20he%20was%20retaliated%20against%20for%20criticizing%20what%20he%20considers%20the%20university%E2%80%99s%20poor%20record%20on%20recruiting%20Italian-American%20employees.%E2%80%9D%20Many%20employees%20of%20the%20Institute%E2%80%94Italy%20free%20hospitality%E2%80%94feel%20that%20Ms.%20Foderaro%E2%80%99s%20account%20of%20the%20story%20was%20biased%20and%20incorrect.%20Here%20is%20the%20letter%20that%20Mr.%20William%20D.%20Schempp,%20Senior%20Producer/Director%20%E2%80%9CItalics%E2%80%99%20(the%20Institute%20monthly%20TV%20program%20broadcasted%20on%20CUNY%20TV)%20sent%20to%20the%20New%20York%20Times%20a%20few%20days%20ago.%20It%20was%20never%20published.)

[3] [http://www.livestream.com/?utm\\_source=lsplayer&utm\\_medium=embed&utm\\_campaign=footerlinks](http://www.livestream.com/?utm_source=lsplayer&utm_medium=embed&utm_campaign=footerlinks)

[4] [http://www.livestream.com/italics?utm\\_source=lsplayer&utm\\_medium=embed&utm\\_campaign=footerlinks](http://www.livestream.com/italics?utm_source=lsplayer&utm_medium=embed&utm_campaign=footerlinks)