

United We Stand. The New Italy

Christopher Thomas Lambright (June 28, 2012)



i-Italy receives and publishes an article by Chris Lambright, a 37-years old Italian-American and African-American man whose experience as mixed ethnicity kid in the 1980s had him struggle for acceptance from both sides. The article was inspired by the hurtful memories stirred up by the discriminatory treatment reserved to Mario Balotelli, the Italian soccer player, who was thrown bananas at by Croatian supporters during Euro 2012.

Fans have filled the seats to support their team and country during the European Cup 2012 with great pride and passion. They paint their faces and wave their national flag while singing traditional songs. Though the ugly clash between Polish and Russian fans, which apparently goes back to the Cold War, and the throwing of bananas at some of the black players are just of some reminders of how we can still improve our racial and ethnic relations.



Born to an African-American father and an Italian mother from Calabria, I learned quickly from both sides that I was a bit different. While most children have the luxury or curse of not having to venture into the opposite race's neighborhood my older brother and I spent countless holidays and Sunday dinners in Italian neighborhoods.

In the 1980s racial tensions were extremely high between Blacks and Italians because of the isolated incidents of Howard Beach and Bensonhurst, where two Black men were killed by an Italian men. It was a struggle for some of my Italian family members to accept us for a while. I feel like being from an ethnic group that was looked down upon and fought for their piece of their American pie they might have felt to be taking a step back by integrating with a race some feel to be lower on the social ladder.

My relatives on the African-American side were slightly more accepting, but they were also quick to laugh at my Italian influenced accent and to remind me that I was not exactly like them.

It is my great anthropological question: "What makes the abused become the abuser?"

When I see the treatment of Mario Balotelli it stirs up old memories. It is hurtful to be treated unjustly by anyone, but when it comes from people you are trying to identify with it shakes your core and damages your spirit irreversibly. I relate to the confusion he must encounter trying to find his identity and where he fits in. I recall my hard exterior trying to act like the mean and the sarcastic comments did not bother me but inside I was screaming for acceptance.

It takes tremendous resolution to stand up to the masses, whether you are being discriminated by race, religion, gender, etcetera.

The world has come too far to be held back by the few still wrestling with their inner demons. Take care of your spirit and help heal the world.

Source URL: <http://www.iitaly.org/magazine/focus/op-eds/article/united-we-stand-new-italy>

Links

[1] <http://www.iitaly.org/files/chris1340911179jpg>