

MULTIMEDIA. Italians and Immigration: Solidarity, Rejection, Memory

(November 11, 2007)



Are Italians racist? Is this “nation of immigrants” turning its back to its own past? A contribution to a better understanding of a complex issue, based on user-created videos.

This program is a work in progress: send us your links to YouTube videos and we’ll examine them for inclusion (editors@i-italy.org).

[TO WATCH THE PROGRAM click here](#)

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The program is made of three parts:

1. SOLIDARITY

The first part contains four videos. Two of them (Africa's Grand Hotel in Milan and Squatting in the Fashion City) describe immigrant life in Milan, the 'Fashion City' also dubbed sometimes Italy's Moral Capital. Both videos show the situation of illegal African immigrants living in a former military establishment in Viale Forlanini. Both videos are produced by La Svolta Umanista, a social organization that manages a "neighborhood TV" netcasted via YouTube.

The third video (From Eritrea to Lampedusa: A Tragic Journey) was shot by Italy's Eritinet TV Eritrea in August 2006, when dozens of illegal immigrants – mostly Eritrean – reached the tiny Sicilian island of Lampedusa. Several were reported missing. Many of them were Eritrean people.

The last video in this section features life in an immigrants' camp near Gliugliano, a town on the outskirts of Naples. The camp is a modern, sunny inferno for Slavs, Romanians, Gypsies, Africans... A reportage by Nicola Angrisano, founder of the independent web-television insu^TV.

2. REJECTION

Here three videos have been selected. Rome as Calcutta: Let's Free Ourselves of These People..., was shot by the Circolo Roma Liberale, a grassroots organization affiliated with Berlusconi's right-wing party Forza Italia. It features a seriously handicapped Asian beggar whose disturbing appearance disrupts a quiet, sunny day in Rome's historic center. One comment on the YouTube page for this video demands punishment for "those who bring these poveracci in our city."

In the following video (They Invade Rome and Terrorize Our Neighborhood at Night) an exasperated young father denounces Romanian gypsies who "park themselves under these bridges, undisturbed, and during the night come and steal from my store..."

Finally comes Basta! Italy Belongs to Italians – a collection of anti-immigrant posters, leaflets and pictures used by Italy's political movement Lega Nord and other minor right-wing organizations to demand the expulsion of 'zingari' (gypsies) – who are associated with theft and rape...

3. MEMORY

The last part has three videos by American or Italian American YouTube users. The Struggle of Boston's Italian Immigration is a National History Day Documentary about the many hardships faced by Boston's Italian immigrants at the turn of last century. Created by three young people (Daniel Masciari, Nick Frigo and Seamus Rushe), it is based on archive material and interviews.

No Italians Wanted features excerpts from a one-man show by San Francisco performer Tommi Avicolti Mecca. "Contrary to popular belief, no immigrants were ever welcomed to America," he says. "Like the Irish and Eastern Europeans, Italians weren't considered white. The best way I know how to deal with all this is through satire."

Questo paese è "stranzo"! is a project by Alyssa Shea for her high school Italian class. It illustrates



the adventures and misfortunes of an Italian family emigrating to the U.S. in the 1920s. Despite its somehow unsure Italian, this project captures the difficulty of settling down in a culturally different and even hostile environment.

Last comes a clip we extracted from *Pane e cioccolata* (1973), where the popular actor Nino Manfredi plays an illegal Italian immigrant in Switzerland who is questioned by the police and confronts not only stereotypes and prejudices, but a clash between different cultures and habits... When the police commissioner “accuses” him of being Italian, Manfredi ironically answers, “Nobody’s perfect!”. In another scene Manfredi is accused by the same commissioner to have committed obscene acts in public. He had actually relieved himself in a street, against a wall. But the poor guy doesn’t get it – “Why, is it forbidden?”, he answers bewildered. As a result, he gets fired from his job as a waiter and another illegal immigrant, a Turk, gets his post.

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Links

[1] <http://www.iitaly.org/files/hughestown31194838346jpg>

[2] <http://www.i-italy.org/taxonomyorder/term/10/111/446/447>