

Historical Agreement Between the Calandra Institute and University of Calabria

Mila Tenaglia (October 09, 2014)



On Monday, October 6, the John D. Calandra Italian American Institute hosted the symposium between the university institutions of Queens College (CUNY) and University of Calabria. An agreement of great significance was signed to promote of an educational program on Italian American studies at the Calabrian university. "We don't want to assimilate the two cultures, but rather integrate them"

It was a special occasion and the atmosphere was filled with excitement. The eager public gathered enthusiastically, keen to witness a cultural event they had been long waiting for.

Symposium and Signing Ceremony with the [University of Calabria](#) [2]. "A friendly meeting that marks the history of our Institute", these the introductory words of the [John D. Calandra Institute](#) [3] Dean [Anthony Tamburri](#) [4] who opened the ceremony. "A decisive moment that seals the great achievement of the two university institutions". "It's the first time that an Italian University specifically offers an Italian American course of studies. It's a historical event".



The agreement will promote a unique collaboration in the field of Italian American studies, an intercultural exchange between University of Calabria and the [Queens College \(CUNY\)](#) [5]. With the inclusion of Italian American studies at Calabria University the students will have the opportunity to further their studies in America and vice versa.

The Symposium speakers were: the University of Calabria Dean [Gino Mirocle Crisci](#) [6] Queens College Professor [Felix Matos Rodriguez](#) [7]; University of Calabria professors [Margherita Ganeri](#) [8] and [Marta Petrusiewicz](#) [9]; Professors [Fred Gardaphe](#) [10] and [Joseph Sciorra](#) [11] from Calandra Institute; and Professor [Donna Chirico](#) [12] from York College, CUNY.

The Calandra Institute room was packed with professors, journalists, intellectuals and many community representatives, all aware of the importance of this agreement.

We met, among the others, the writer [Amara Lakhous](#) [13], who has been living in Rome since 1995, mostly known for his book *Clash of Civilizations Over an Elevator in Piazza Vittorio*, which recounts the experience of today's migrants living in the Italian capital.

A not to be missed event for the New York Consul General, [Natalia Quintavalle](#) [14] : "I've had other opportunities to speak with Dean Crisci previously, but this is it" she says smiling. "Being here today to witness the birth of this collaboration between the two universities is very important to me, and I intend to visit the University of Calabria as soon as feasible"

During the presentation Crisci illustrated the history of the young University first established in 1968 and operative since 1972. " This institution needs to open up to the world, to be known. We have many international students from Asia and South America, Doctoral Degree programs, Erasmus programs for Europe and Engineering and Science courses. Now the time has come to build a bridge with America".

"The Campus includes two theaters, two cinemas and three libraries. We don't want to stop here, we want to embrace America and today's agreement makes history" proudly stated the Dean.

The new president of Queens College, Felix Matos Rodriguez, who had also taken part to the study on diaspora, sealed the deal with Crisci and highlighted the similarities between the two universities.

The event finally saw the valuable contributions of intellectuals and academics like Fred Gardaphe' and Joseph Sciorra from Calandra Insitute, Donna Chirico from York college, Margherita Ganeri and Marta Petrusiewicz from University of Calabria.

Donna Chirico emphasized the desire to show the Italian Americans in a different light and the unique opportunities to take the program outside the campuses.

The same concept was then expanded by Professor Margherita Ganeri who brought up the conservative attitude of Italian Universities: " Italian American Literature is extremely relevant in the US but in our Department of Italian Studies it's not included in the program".

"Italian students are interested in this literary field, but many of them don't even know what Diaspora is. In order to transmit the knowledge of Italian-American studies we need to deepen and consolidate the research. After all our region, Calabria, has seen a very big part of its population emigrating" Ganeri added excited.

"Thanks to the studies on diaspora we have managed to find the connections lost by those Italian migrants who, once on the other side of the Ocean, ended up losing their cultural baggage" concluded Marta Petrusiewicz.

Joseph Sciorra, Director for Academic and Cultural Programs at the Calandra Institute, drew the event to a close. As a folklorist and researcher on Italian American identity he seized the opportunity to present the book : [Embroidered Stories: Interpreting Women's Domestic Needlework from the Italian Diaspora](#) [15]. A multidisciplinary anthology that analyses people's behavior through the products of intellect like art, music and history.



" For example interpreting women's domestic needlework from the [Italian Diaspora](#) [16]. The interesting outcome is not only what women did in this manufacturing field, but the legacy given to their children and grandchildren and how it changed over time."

Finally, special thanks for the successful ceremony that marks a crucial moment in the history of these two universities were given to the 'columns' of the Calandra Institute: [John Migliori](#) [17] and Fred Gardaphe.

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