

Giorno della Memoria: May We Never Forget

Joelle Grosso (January 27, 2017)



January 27th is the Giorno della Memoria, or International Holocaust Remembrance Day, which pays tribute to the victims who tragically lost their lives during the Nazi-Fascist persecution more than 80 years ago.

Every year on the [Giorno della Memoria](#) [2] the [Consulate General of Italy in New York](#) [3] organizes a daylong event where the names of over nine thousand Jewish people who were deported from Italy and territories under Italian control during the Holocaust are read aloud. The Consulate is joined by the [Italian Cultural Institute](#) [4], [Centro Primo Levi](#) [5], the [Italian Academy at Columbia University](#) [6], [CUNY's John D. Calandra Italian American Institute](#) [7] and the [NYU Casa Italiana Zerilli-Marimò](#) [8] to commemorate the victims of the Shoah. This year, many diplomatic representatives took part in the reading of the names as a sign of solidarity and as a way to demonstrate shared values not



only on a European level but on a global level.

Consul General of Italy, Francesco Genuardi, feels that it is his duty to host this event and honor those who had their lives taken away from them. He hopes that the day also serves as “an expression of gratitude to this city who opened their doors so graciously to Jewish people, to Italian people, to foreigners from all over the world.”

[Giorgio van Straten](#) [9], writer and director of the Italian Cultural Institute, feels honored to be a part of the commemoration and believes that “to remember is fundamental.” He adds that “behind every name, there’s a story, there’s a life so to read the names one by one leaves a mark of the existence of these people.” It is not enough to just know the numbers and have a general idea of what happened during the Holocaust so many years ago.

Dr. Natalia Indrimi of the Primo Levi Center remarks that “today it is difficult not to acknowledge that the past is resurfacing in the present.” Given the turbulent political situation in many countries at the moment, she says that it is crucial to look at the past as a lesson and to be very mindful of the things we allow to happen.

Students from the [Scuola d'Italia](#) [10], the only accredited Italian bilingual and multicultural school in North America, also partook in the reading of the names. Regarding her students, Principal Maria Palandra thinks that this is “the closest experience they could get, they could see families who were affected directly and they can also see how the entire country of Italy is acknowledging a very important part of history that we can not forget.”

Reading the names of the deported is always a very emotional experience as Joseph A. Guagliardo - Vice President/ C.O.O. of New York 10-13 Association Brooklyn/Staten Island - said "it was very touching and emotional, I've never read the names before and apparently I read an entire family, it's a very dark period in history and is very important that we remember it so that we don't allow it to happen again. It's also very important for the Italian-American community, because we've left Italy doesn't mean that we should forget about it, it is part of our culture, our heritage and of who we are, and we should remember it to pass it down to our family and children."

Perhaps that most touching moment of that day was when [Stella Levi](#) [11], an Auschwitz survivor, poetically expressed that “a name means a person exists so this ritual of the reading of the names is a very important thing because it gives life to the dead. This way, they will always remain alive in our memory.” It is precisely for this reason that the most prominent Italian institutions in New York are making sure that they continue to remember the names, year after year after year.

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