



# Italian Historical Society of America Newsletter

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BY JANICE THERESE MANCUSO

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## **Tutto Italiano** **Benvenuto a Tutto Italiano**

What would Venice be without water? From its early settlers – the city was founded at the beginning of the fifth century – to today, water defines the ancient municipality with more than [100 islands rooted into the Venetian Lagoon](#). Last November, Venice experienced its highest flood levels since 1966, with water rising to just over six feet. Flooding is a natural occurrence in Venice, and [acqua alta](#), high water, is part of a Venetian's life.

Regarded as one of the most beautiful cities in the world, Venice is clogged with tourists and the victim of massive cruise ships sailing precariously close to its fragile shorelines. Its year-round population continues to decline, housing is expensive, and buildings are crumbling. Still, Venice lures visitors to stay more than several hours, its permanent residents are loyal, and numerous organizations and individuals are working to preserve its beauty and sustainability.

One person, [JoAnn Locktov](#), spends much of her time advocating for Venice. On her first visit, over 20 years ago, she fell in love with the city, motivating her to get involved in its conservation. After starting her own public relations firm, JoAnn published three books, the "Dream of Venice" series (see below) – each with original photographs depicting the Venice of today, but without the tourists – and a portion of the proceeds from each book is donated to help preserve the city.

JoAnn contacted me about the decision of *Vogue Italia* to produce a more viable January issue by eliminating photo shoots and using illustrations. (Article here: [The Guardian](#).) She wrote, "A really wonderful part of the story is that they are donating all the money that they saved by not doing photo shoots to Fondazione Querini Stampalia, which suffered extensive flood damage." [Fondazione Querini Stampalia](#) was the home of Count Giovanni Querini Stampalia, who gave the family palazzo to the city. The museum-house has been open to the public since 1869; in the 1960s, the ground floor was renovated by the acclaimed architect [Carlo Scarpa](#). ([Read JoAnn's article about the flood damage](#).)

Through the years and her many visits to Venice, JoAnn has met various artisans and business owners who create specialty products: hand-carved oars, capes and masks, chocolate, and gold-lined ceramics are just a few. For those visiting Venice, a photographer offers photo tours and a studio in Murano holds glass bead workshops. JoAnn has compiled a [Venice Gift Guide](#), with direct links to each business. To assist them during recovery after the flood, she writes, "One of the ways to really help the Venetian artisans is to support them through on-line orders ... I'm hoping that people refer to it throughout the year."

Although all are beautiful, my favorite is [La Venessiana](#), offering e-books and online courses. The instructors are family members Iris and Lina, and their passion for Venice is illustrated through the exquisite photographs and articles about life in Venice posted on their website. With an introduction by JoAnn, last month I had a transatlantic chat with Iris and asked, "How is Venice preparing for Carnevale after the flood?" (This year Carnevale is from February 8th to the 25th.)

She wrote, "Between 12-17 November 2019, Venice was hit by the second most

serious flood in history. [[Interview: My Hope for Venice. The City After the Floods.](#)] Yet, the city recovered less than a week later, when most hotels and restaurants were back to work as usual. Cleaning up private homes sometimes took a bit longer as many people had lost furniture and electric appliances on the first floor. In late December, the acqua bassa season set in, when the tides in the Lagoon are below average and many canals in Venice even dry up! [[When Canals in Venice are Drying Up: Explaining Acqua Bassa e Fanghi Inerti](#)]

With the flow of tourists ebbing in the city as soon as the New Year celebrations are over, an accurate assessment of long-term flood damage is currently being done by architects and hydraulic engineers: Long-term effects don't show immediately, as salt water slowly permeates the marble facades, floors and columns of churches and palazzi. Repairing, and in some cases, replacing marble will be one of the tasks ahead in 2020.

For tourists, 'life is back to normal' because at first sight, the city hasn't changed. Outside on the streets, you would never guess there has been a tremendous flood. You'd have to look much closer. Inside, there are still a number of issues to resolve, such as restoring gardens, replacing furniture, preventing the facades from crumble, etc. It will take 2-3 years in some cases, or longer.

The preparations for Carnival begun behind the scenes, as they always do in January: [[The Real Origins of Carnival in Venice](#)] In 2020, Carnival in Venice lasts from 8-25 February, starting with La Festa sull'acqua, a colorful spectacle on Rio di Cannaregio. Since 6 January (Epiphany Day), the Venetian bakeries have been 'test-baking' frittelles, so these delicious treats based on ancient recipes brighten up our days right now! And since 2015, more Venetians have become involved and reconciled with their own Carnival, which develops into an opportunity for us to learn about and recover our traditions, history, food and fashion, and share them with the world."

*Thank you, JoAnn and Iris, for sharing your expert views on Venice.*

[Carnevale di Venezia](#)

[Venice Carnival 2020](#)

[Children in Venice speak out about climate change](#) (Video, BBC; February 4, 2020)

[The cost of Venice's worst floods since 1966](#) (The Art Newspaper; February 4, 2020)

[Why Venice is actually a textbook case for flood prevention](#) (Phys.Org; January 28, 2020)

[Venice canals almost dry, two months after severe floods](#) (BBC; January 13, 2020)

[Photographer Documents Venice's Worst Floods in More Than 50 Years](#) (Fstoppers; January 7, 2020)

[Governing body of St Mark's basilica wants to build a Perspex anti-flood wall](#) (The Art Newspaper; January 3, 2020)

[Venice's Acqua Alta: A Survival Guide](#) (Walks of Italy; November 16, 2012)

[Acqua Alta: High Tides and Flooding in Venice, Italy](#)

[The renovation of the Fondazione Querini Stampalia by Carlo Scarpa](#) (ARCHIVIBE; June 15, 2018)

*In Italian*

[San Marco at Risk] [San Marco a rischio, la Procuratoria stringe i tempi: due progetti per difendere la Basilica dalle acque alte](#) (Gente Veneta; December 13, 2019)

[Basilica of San Marco devastated by high water] [Venezia, Basilica di San Marco devastata dall'acqua alta: la pavimentazione è tutta da rifare](#) (Il Gazzettino; January 16, 2020)

### **From the Italian American Press**

The Italian American Press offers a great selection of books – childrens, memoirs, art, history, food, the supernatural, the natural beauty of Italy, and more – for every interest. Help preserve Italian American heritage and history. Support authors of Italian heritage who write about Italian American and Italian culture and let them know you found their books on the Italian American Press.

[Read my review of \*Not for Self: A Sicilian Life and Death in Marion\*, on \*La Gazzetta Italiana\*.](#)

Whether you've been to Venice, plan to visit, or are somewhere in between, the books in the trilogy series, "[Dream of Venice](#)" will delightfully transport you to the city built on water. Each book is composed of a selection of photographs that capture the esoteric beauty of the city, some paired with the fond recollections of those who adore Venice. Read my review (written before the third book was published) posted on [La Gazzetta Italiana](#).

[Lou Del Bianco](#), author of *Out of Rushmore's Shadow: The Luigi Del Bianco Story*, offers a 45-minute presentation "for the entire family." Portraying his grandfather, Luigi Del Bianco, Lou uses original photographs and historical documents to tell the story of the chief carver of Mount Rushmore. [Contact Lou for more information](#).

### **Italian American Heritage Project**

Cultural appropriation and exploitation. What do you think about when you hear these words? Do you think about the minority ethnic groups that are routinely offended and then commonly defended through social media? What about Italian Americans who are routinely offended?

According to varying sources, cultural appropriation can happen at different levels (fashion, hairstyles, food, religion, general actions, to note a few), but – for the most part – it is misrepresenting the significance of an item by commercializing it for personal gain. It is not the same as cultural assimilation and cultural exchange; the difference being the lack of respect associated with cultural appropriation. Exploitation is taking advantage of a particular situation for personal or commercial gain.

Another difference normally associated with cultural appropriation and exploitation is the tendency to regulate these terms to actions taken upon minority ethnic groups or to people who may have a disadvantage, making them subservient to a dominant cultural group or a powerful person.

Where are Italian Americans in this quagmire?

A recent uproar over a book – made popular by a clever marketing campaign including an enormous advance to the author – that tells the journey of a Mexican migrant escaping to America, brought claims that it exploits the migration experience, because the author is not a Mexican immigrant ... and profit seems to be the objective. Do Italian American producers, directors, and actors, who generate movies about mobsters of Italian heritage, exploit the culture of Italians and Italian Americans? Or is that okay because Italian Americans are denigrating members of their own ethnic group?

Not going into the [long detailed history of the Mafia](#) – that started in Sicily when landowners hired private citizens to protect their property after Italian Unification – these organizations are still quite active in Italy, and not for the betterment of the Italian people. The movies and television shows have glamorized Mafioso misdeeds

and, in the name of entertainment, have profited at a cost to Italian American culture. Cultural appropriation or exploitation?

*The Adventures of Pinocchio* is the second most translated book in the world – although some report it is tied with *The Little Prince* – the first is the Bible. The book by Carlo Collodi (born Carlo Lorenzini) tells the tale of a man who wishes for a child, and the challenges the puppet he creates must go through on his way to fulfilling that wish. (Three movies about Pinocchio are currently at different stages of production.) In Italy, Pinocchio is a cultural icon. In America, an insurance commercial has turned him into a lying fool (with a jab at parking in Italy.) Cultural appropriation or exploitation?

Where is the attention to the indignity of living in America that brought so much adversity to our Italian ancestors? They suffered through the hardship of a country that openly discriminated against them, dealt with the media's magnification of the Italian mobster, and endured the misfortune of being born in a country that sided with America's enemies. Even so, the 1950s through the 60s brought prosperity, but in 1972 a movie premiered that shattered box office expectations, and also started the implosion of Italian American culture. Since then, the proliferation of mob movies and television shows has cast a net of negative stereotypes over the nationwide Italian American community.

Take almost any article about the mistreatment of an ethnic minority group and replace their nationality with Italian American. Keeping it in perspective, fair treatment should be afforded to all, so where is the respect for Italian Americans?

[Stereotype This: Debunking Hollywood's Italian Stereotypes and Myths](#)

[Growing Up Italian](#) (YouTube Video) *Thank you, John.*

Make a difference in preserving your Italian heritage. Read a book – see the wonderful selection on the [Italian American Press](#). Share a family story. Become a member of a local Italian American organization. In Albany, New York, the [American Italian Heritage Association and Museum](#) welcomes members from throughout the United States. An upcoming event in April is a bus trip to the Stormville Flea Market – made popular by the television series, "Flea Market Flip." [Contact the AIHA for more information.](#)

### **Save Columbus Day**

The groups opposing Columbus Day have an organized agenda to eliminate it from America. Italian Americans need a nationwide program to battle the campaign to abolish Columbus Day or it will be lost; even though Indigenous People already have a designated day, and Native Americans have a day and a month to celebrate their culture.

Indigenous Peoples Day – August 9

Native American Month – November

Native American Heritage Day – The day after Thanksgiving

Visit the [IAHP website](#) to read my articles, learn about the lesson plans, see the resources I've used, and support my work. Donate for a cause – preserving Italian heritage and Italian American history and culture through education. [All donations are tax-deductible.](#)

### **On The Radio**

West Coast Italian Radio (WCIR), based near Seattle, is hosted by Tony La Stella and Marzia Caputo, and every Monday broadcasts an hour of "all things Italian and Italian-American" throughout the United States. In my [interview on January 6th](#), we talked about updated news on the Mother Cabrini statue in New York City, upcoming Italian art exhibits in America, and [Italian women scientists](#).

[Listen to the show every Monday from 4:00 to 5:00pm PST.](#)

