



Italian Historical Society of America Newsletter

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

A new strain of a pathogen, that easily spreads between people and can be fatal, makes its way from China to Italy. Increased trade and a flourishing economy have led to an influx of people, who – unknowingly – spread the pathogen. A lack of medical knowledge in treating the pathogen also contributes to its spread. Villages are closed off, people are quarantined, and the general mood is panic.

The [Black Death](#), or Bubonic Plague, or The Plague, among other terms, moved rapidly from Sicily in late 1347, north to England by the middle of 1348. Compared to how the newest strain of the coronavirus, [COVID-19](#), has travelled from China around the world within several months, the pathogen responsible for plague was a slow mover, but its only options were by foot, horse, or boat.

It wasn't the first time the Italian peninsula was the epicenter of a pandemic in Europe. In 541, during the reign of the Byzantine Emperor Justinian (527 to 565), the same pathogen that would cause the Black Death a little over 800 years later, wrecked havoc on the population. [Justinian's Plague](#), or the Plague of Justinian, arrived through the trade of goods and the men in his numerous armies. Hoping to restore Rome to its days of glory, Justinian fought for all the land surrounding the Mediterranean Sea. The loss of farmers caused shortages of food; the loss of soldiers forced Justinian to recruit barbarians for his armies.

The [news headlines about Italy](#) have not been good. COVID-19, sharing its [coronavirus category](#) with SARS and MERS (infectious viral diseases also include the common cold and the flu), has [radiated from Italy](#) to other parts of Europe and beyond. Officials in Italy have stated they have been overcautious in testing (people without symptoms) for the virus and that is why so many more cases have been discovered. Additionally, all [fatalities have been over 60](#) years old, with other serious medical issues.

The earliest reports of COVID-19 in Italy caused [Venice to cancel the last two days of Carnevale](#) and other activities. Venice, still in recovery mode from the floods in November, is now experiencing a dramatic decline in tourism. While the number of tourists and the enormous cruise ships gliding past Piazza San Marco have caused concern, the city – as does all of Italy – depends on visitors to not only take in the beauty of the country, but also add to its economy. In 2019, tourism accounted for 13.3 percent of its gross domestic product. According to a report on March 4th, Italy is estimating approximately 31 million tourists will not visit from March to May, for a [loss of 7.4 billion Euros](#).

To date, the region of Lombardy has the most cases tested positive for COVID-19 and [hospitals are overwhelmed](#). After pinpointing the location of the first outbreak, ten towns southeast of Milan – Italy's business hub – have been placed under confinement, and Milan is also feeling the effects. Many businesses are closed or have cut back production. [Throughout Italy](#), schools and universities are closed until March 15th, and public events have been banned.

With the rapid decline in tourism, the Federazione Italiana Esercenti Pubblici e

Turistici (Italian Federation of Public and Tourist Operators) has asked for suspended payments of taxes and other fees for businesses throughout Italy. The government is planning to provide 7.5 million Euros in tax breaks and other financial relief. Additionally, it has established a [website specifically to provide information about COVID-19](#); and the National Tourism Agency has also posted [Italy: A Safe Country](#).

Italy has survived multiple nationwide tragedies, as have other countries; but in Italy the Black Plague was followed by the Renaissance.

[Italia: Travel Ideas](#)

[Italy Prepares Deficit Hike to Help Economy Cope With Coronavirus](#) (U.S. News; March 1, 2020)

[America: Rome is Safe and Open for Business](#) (EINNews; February 29, 2020)

In the States, Dr. Anthony Fauci is one of the nation's leading public health officials. He has been the Director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases since 1982. In a recent news interview Dr. Fauci acknowledged that the coronavirus is "reaching pandemic proportions," and a vaccine will take some time to develop.

He is extremely respected for his knowledge and his forthright advice on matters concerning American health and safety. For more about Dr. Fauci, read his [biography on Thirty-One Days of Italians](#) and check out the additional resources posted.

[Anthony Fauci: Public-Health Hero](#) (Business Insider; February 28 2020)

[Coronavirus: Last Week Tonight with John Oliver](#) (YouTube Video; March 1, 2020)

From the Italian American Press

The Italian American Press offers a great selection of books – children, 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 *Coal War in the Mahoning Valley* by Joe Tucciarone and Ben Lariccia at [La Gazzetta Italiana](#).

Italian American Movies and Italian American Life

When you think of Italian American movies, what titles spring to mind? Where are the movies that are a more accurate representation of Italian American history, culture, and heritage? According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 2017 [American Community Survey](#), approximately 16,550,000 (includes a -100, 000 margin of error) reported their ancestry as Italian, for a total of about five percent of the U.S. population. This figure does not include those who listed Italian ancestry as their third selection (Example: if English, French, and Italian were listed, the Census Bureau drops the third identifier.)

[According to the FBI](#), under the category Italian Organized Crime/Mafia, "there are several Mafia groups operating in the United States" and it "estimates the group has more than 3,000 members and associates ..." While that number is vague – after all, one million is more than 3,000 – an adjustment of 50 percent is added to bring the total to 4,500 "members and associates." Keep in mind that all "members and associates" of Mafia groups operating in the United States may not be of Italian ancestry, but in this case, all have Italian ancestry, either as a first or second identifier.

Within an estimated population of 16,550,000 Americans of Italian heritage, around 4,500 may be in some type of Italian-related crime syndicate. In calculating, this represents a little less than .000273 percent of the Italian American population; a comparison of about 27 cents out of \$1,000.00.

So, where are the Italian American movies that offer a true representation of Italian American culture?

Books for Italian American Movies

Almost any book listed on the Italian American Press would make a wonderful movie. Here are nine from IAP featured authors (including me) and potential genres. To read a synopsis and for more information, go to [Make Italian American Movies](#) on the IAP. If you are on Twitter, Instagram, or other social media, please share. Reach out to actors, filmmakers, directors, and producers. Make It A Movie.

War, Historical, Documentary, Epic

A Camp Without Walls by Dr. Maria Lombardo

Science Fiction, Mystery

Royanna: An Extraterrestrial Affair by Raphael Ferraro

Mystery, Historical

The Ghosts of the Garfagnana: Seven Strange Stories from Haunted Tuscany by Paul Salsini

Historical, Drama, Documentary, Epic

Out of Rushmore's Shadow: The Luigi Del Bianco Story by Lou Del Bianco

Drama, Historical, Epic

Coal War in the Mahoning Valley by Joe Tucciarone and Ben Lariccia

Drama, Historical, Epic

Not for Self: A Sicilian Life and Death in Marion by Joseph L. Cacibauda

Comedy-Drama, Historical Memoir

Vina, A Brooklyn Memoir by Joseph C. Polacco

Children/Family, Fantasy, Action, Adventure

The Seven Golden Apples by Robert Cirillo

Romance, Historical, Mystery, Food

Con Amore by Janice Therese Mancuso

Italian American Heritage Project

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.

Native American Month – November

Native American Heritage Day – The day after Thanksgiving

Indigenous Peoples Day – August 9

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.](#)

Italian American News

[Racism and Columbus Day](#) (The Gazette [Colorado]; February 29, 2020)

[Resolution to remove Columbus statue from Discovery Park heads to Chula Vista City Council](#) (CBS News; February 27, 2020)

