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ITALIAN AMERICANS

IN A

MULTICULTURAL SOCIETY

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AN ITALIAN AMERICAN ON THE LEFT: DRUGS, REVOLUTION, AND ETHNICITY IN THE 1970s

The prevailing political image of Italian Americans remains one of almost universal conservatism. Few Italian Americans are aware of their rich tradition of dissent, protest, and radical politics; and those who are active in progressive causes often experience a conflict of loyalties between their beliefs and what they see as their Italian-American heritage. Over the last twenty-five years scholars, many of them associated with the American Italian Historical Association, have begun to challenge assumptions that Italian-American immigrants were too driven by material motives, too crippled by an atavistic culture, too passive, patriotic and grateful to America's "bounty," to respect picket lines, join unions, and support political movements and organizations that the United States government may have considered subversive.[1] Their work has made the term "Italian American" consistent with the term "progressive."

Historians have researched the Italian-American anarchist movement, which had some of the most committed and militant revolutionaries leaders in our country's history[2], between 1870 and 1940 they published nearly 100 newspapers and journals—more than any other ethnic group.[3] They remind us of Barre, Vermont, Quincy, Massachusetts and Paterson, New Jersey where Italian radicals took command earlier in the century.[4] They speak of the militant Sicilian community in Tampa, Florida that allied with Cuban socialists and held fast during several general strikes.[5] They have resurrected such figures as Joe Ettor, Arturo Giovannitti,[6] and Carlo Tresca[7] (organizers of the Industrial Workers of the World and leaders of the famous 1912 "Bread and Roses" textile strike in Lawrence, Massachusetts). While a vast literature has accumulated about Sacco and Vanzetti, a new book by Paul Avrich, the dean of American anarchism, examines the essential but neglected dimension of their relationship to the anarchist movement.[8] In addition, a recent study has recognized seven-term Congressman Vito Marcantonio as the most electorally successful radical politician of the twentieth century.[9] But after Marcantonio's

Congressional defeat in 1950 and the decimation of the Left during the McCarthy period, an organized Italian-American Left ceased to exist. To some, it seemed as though Italian-American radicalism had vanished forever.

The following discussion of my life and political experiences with a revolutionary organization (White Lightning, 1971-1975) founded by ex-addicts who organized in white ethnic neighborhoods of the Bronx, is presented here as a small contribution to the task of documenting the continuation of efforts by Italian Americans to blend their ethnic background with a commitment to leftist politics.[10] While much has been written about the Black Panther Party,[11] and something about the Young Lords Party,[12] there has been virtually nothing published about such predominately white radical groups as White Lightning that, unlike SDS[13] for example, did not arise from a middle-class student milieu. These groups developed an ideology and style distinct from SDS and sought to organize and recruit white working-class people.

It is only in recent years that I have come to understand how my background and upbringing opened the way to the radical changes that I first experienced in the 1960s. My mother, Benedettina Fiocco Fagiani, was born in the seacoast town of Capo D'Orlando in Sicily and grew up in Greenwich Village and the Italian working class neighborhood of Villa Avenue in the North Bronx. The daughter of a carpenter who switched his vote from Republican to Democrat after losing his job during the Depression, she voted for the Socialist Party candidate, Norman Thomas, in the 1940 Presidential election, and later became a strong supporter of the Civil Rights Movement.

My paternal grandfather, Comincio Fagiani, emigrated from the town of Lanciano, in Abruzzi, to Mulberry Street where my father, Mario Fagiani, was born. A successful clothing designer, my grandfather's work included the fur coat that President Harding's wife wore on his Inauguration Day. Surviving relatives report that my father's family always supported the Republican Party.

Raised in the Bronx, my father followed the traditions of his family and became the director of purchasing for a textile firm. His political views, when he chose to express them, were much more conservative than my mother's. In political matters, I grew up

thinking of my parents as polar opposites. My Sicilian mother was the warm, caring liberal; while my father remained the cold, business-minded conservative.

I lived the first five years of my life in a four-room apartment a block away from Villa Avenue. Warm and friendly, the neighborhood seemed like an extension of my mother's family, and in later years I would think of it as a Garden of Eden. In 1950, my father took advantage of a VA loan and bought a house in a new suburban development in Springdale, Connecticut. Long-standing Yankee residents, mostly of English and German ancestry, as well as Irish, Poles, and Italians, inhabited the lean rows of Cape Cod and saltbox dwellings. Although no black people lived in Springdale, the kids there seemed obsessed with race. I remember how common racist taunts were, and that the supreme put-down and frequent precipitant to fist fights was the allegation that someone's mother was a "nigger."

Within walking distance from where I lived was a patchwork of streets that made up what some people called "Guinea Village." The Italians who lived there worked in the building trades. Although unable to conceptualize it at the time, I thought of the inhabitants of "Guinea Village" as a stigmatized population because they made their living with their hands in an area that was fast being taken over by white-collar workers, many of whom commuted to New York City as did my father. In addition, the "Villagers" ranked among the worst students in school—"non-college material," as teachers routinely called slow learners in the 50s. Finally, they were looked down upon not just because of class and education, but because of their skin color.

Italians, the darkest people in a place beset by "status-anxiety," developed a sensitivity about their tenuous position. I remember one occasion when a shirtless Italian construction worker in "Guinea Village" jumped off his bulldozer: "Driving all day in the sun," he said disgustedly, "has made me black as a nigger." And indeed his skin was a dark shade of brown that, combined with his tight, curly hair, made him look darker than many Cubans and Puerto Ricans I would meet later in life. While my close friends tended to be Italian, I was repelled by the crudeness of the "Villagers," associating them with the *cafoni* from whom my mother had

warned me to stay away. I also held them responsible for the unfavorable opinions some of my neighbors had of Italians.

In high school I came to share my mother's views on the Civil Rights Movement and I recall having ferocious arguments with my friends because I rejected the idea — still widespread at the time—that black people were innately inferior.

From 1963 to 1967 I attended Pennsylvania Military College (P.M.C.) with the hope that the military regime would force me to do better in school and think about a career. In time, however, my liberal views clashed with the conservative military establishment. In my junior year I opposed the Vietnam War and turned down the opportunity to become an officer in the United States Army.

In the spring of 1966 I witnessed a mob of cadets, including a close Italian friend from Toronto, beat a lone student who had traveled from Swarthmore College to protest a national meeting of high ranking ROTC officers at P.M.C. The incident left me feeling angry and guilty because I hadn't done anything to rescue the anti-war protester.

When I finished my final exams, I decided to test my idealism and accepted an invitation from my cousin Don Cavellini to join him as a member of a summer-long, student project in El Barrio, East Harlem's Puerto Rican community, sponsored by Cornell University and the East Harlem Tenants Council.[14] A few weeks before my twenty-first birthday, I moved into a tenement on East 104th Street between Lexington Avenue and the Park Avenue El, a block known locally as "Junkies' Paradise."[15] Along with three other students, I worked as a volunteer in a summer day camp for sixty children.

My three-month stay in East Harlem became my "Road to Damascus." It led to my living in El Barrio for almost three years, to a career in social work, and onto a political trajectory that would take me from radical pacifism and social democracy, to Trotskyism and Maoism; a political path traveled by many members of the "New Left." Living in East Harlem gave me a close-up view of the human suffering that belied the smugness and hypocrisy of so many hucksters of the American dream. What I saw was the American nightmare, and it fueled a rage within me that was impatient with reasonable discourse and piecemeal reforms.

East Harlem is also where I established many close relationships and met my first wife, a local Puerto Rican woman who became the mother of my two sons, Matthew and Mario. This is where I learned to speak Spanish and developed my life-long love of Puerto Rico.

From the beginning of my stay in East Harlem, I formed a negative impression of the small Italian community that remained along Pleasant Avenue. Some Italians opposed the organizing efforts of the East Harlem Tenants Council. This opposition included shooting out the windows of storefront offices that encroached on "their" territory. In addition, having seen firsthand the pain and sadness of parents with drug-addicted children, it disgusted me to witness the massive heroin wholesaling operation that emanated from Pleasant Avenue. Ignored by the police, the drug trafficking flourished until a spectacular series of arrests in 1971.[16] No doubt some of the harshness I felt for the East Harlem's Italian residents stemmed from the middle-class snobbery implicit in my mother's denunciation of *cafoni*.[17] But on a deeper level, it reflected my own self-estrangement. Beyond seeing myself as part of an amorphous movement for social change, I lacked a firm sense of identity and couldn't deal with a group of people likely to stir up all the hurt and anger I felt towards my family, upbringing, and ethnic background.

This was also a time when I felt complete revulsion towards elected Italian-American officials. In the late 60s and early 70s a succession of conservative Italian-American politicians came forward as candidates for the New York City mayoralty.

Everywhere I looked, it seemed that Italian Americans were fighting on the wrong side of the barricades. My resentment towards them knew no bounds and I tried to discard my ethnic identity as I would a useless article of clothing.

I paid a heavy price for renouncing my ethnic background and severing almost all family ties. As I became more isolated in East Harlem and more overwhelmed by the enormity of the problems facing people living there, I lost my moorings and turned my anger and frustration inwards. By the time I went to Chicago to protest against the Vietnam War at the 1968 Democratic Convention, I realized that I had a serious drug problem. In 1969 my life became so unmanageable that with the help of my cousin Don—the

one family member with whom I had stayed in touch —I joined Logos, a new residential drug treatment program in the Bronx.

Logos consisted of about twelve, mostly black and Puerto Rican addicts housed in a ramshackle tenement on 137th Street between Cypress and St. Ann's Avenue, a section of the South Bronx often referred to in the media as "Fort Apache."[18] Affiliated with Lincoln Hospital, the program was staffed by ex-residents of such therapeutic communities as Synanon, Daytop Village, and Phoenix House.[19] The clinical director was Lou Zinzi, a former heroin addict who came from the Bronx Italian-American community along Allerton Avenue. His vision of Logos included a strong commitment to serve the residents of the South Bronx and its participation in a broad political coalition of social agencies and community groups united against such social ills as poverty, unemployment, failing schools, and inadequate heath services.

Because Logos was new, the dozen or so original residents played a big role in the expansion of Logos from one facility in the fall of 1969 to four facilities serving over a hundred clients at the beginning of 1971. Following the staff's advice, I initially put my radical politics on a shelf and concentrated on my personal rehabilitation and the hard work that went into the rapid expansion of Logos' facilities. However, I was upset by the ever-growing destruction of the South Bronx, including a massive wave of arson-related fires.[20]

Lincoln Hospital served about 400,000 mostly Puerto Rican and black residents in the South Bronx . The health picture was bleak. The infant mortality rate was 30 per 1,000 live births—twice the national average. Heroin overdose was the leading cause of death among adolescents and young men, and tuberculosis ran three times the national rate.

Lincoln, which logged more emergency visits than any New York City Hospital, was the fourth busiest emergency facility in the nation. It became known throughout the Bronx as "the butcher shop." Lincoln had been a focus of radical political activity by such groups as the Black Panther Party; the Young Lords Party; the Think Lincoln Committee, a coalition of white, professional and non-professional hospital workers dedicated to improving conditions at Lincoln Hospital; and the Health Revolutionary Unity Movement, a city-wide organization of black and Puerto Rican

health workers, many of whom had formerly been active with the Think Lincoln Committee.[21] Beginning in 1969 there was a series of militant actions, including hospital takeovers to force the hospital administration and city government to do something about the lack of adequate medical care.[22]

In the summer of 1970, Carmen Rodriguez, a friend and fellow resident at Logos, died at Lincoln due to gross malpractice during an abortion.[23] Mike Smith, an activist psychiatrist, whom I befriended and who did voluntary work at Logos, made Carmen's hospital chart public and sparked another hospital takeover. Soon afterwards, I accepted Mike's invitation to join the Think Lincoln Committee.

As a member of a select residential leadership group known as the Oracles, I helped lead a rebellion that resulted in about half the residents leaving and establishing a rival program. True to the original vision of Logos as a non-authoritarian, therapeutic community that prepared residents to deal with the realities of the mainstream society, we called ourselves the Spirit of Logos (S.O.L.). In a leaflet signed by eighteen of the earliest Logos residents, we demanded that Logos stop blacklisting ex-residents for jobs, welfare, and parole; that residents who remained in Logos have a controlling part in all policy-making; and that the S.O.L. have independent control of the Logos facility on Cypress Avenue.[24]

After losing our appeals to the Addiction Services Agency and the Board of Estimate for funding as the legitimate representative of Logos, the S.O.L. drew closer to the community struggles at Lincoln Hospital.

Not coincidentally, the S.O.L.'s first office was in the same three-story building at 352 Willis Avenue that served as headquarters for the Health Revolutionary Unity Movement and the Young Lords Party. Having seized a floor at Lincoln Hospital, which resulted in fifteen arrests, a coalition of community groups set up a detoxification program and, with the help of volunteers from the S.O.L., kept the program operating. When salaried positions became available, S.O.L. members were among the first to be hired. The program became known as "Lincoln Detox"; in addition to detoxifying addicts with methadone and providing services, it offered political education classes that de-emphasized individual pathology

and focused on the economic and political causes of drug addiction.[25]

Supporting the trend towards independent political action and leadership among people of color, the S O L followed the practice of much of the Left and split into separate Third World and white sections.[26] Not long afterwards, the Third World section disbanded, and many of its members joined Lincoln Detox. At the suggestion of an Italian woman who had grown up in Biaggi's Congressional District, we called the white section White Lightning. This name was meant to underscore our commitment to fight substance abuse and to draw attention to what we hoped would be our base: poor and working class white people. In January 1972 we rented a small store front at 109 East 183rd Street as our headquarters.[27] The period when the S.O.L./White Lightning and Lincoln Detox worked together represented perhaps the most serious and sustained effort the U.S. Left has ever undertaken to specifically deal with the issue of drug addiction.[28] During the early 70s, White Lightning differed greatly from the Left, which either glorified drugs as "weapons of liberation," ignored their destructive consequences, or expelled substance abusers from their ranks.

Strongly influenced by the Black Panther Party's analysis of drug addiction, summed up in their slogan, "Capitalism + Dope = Genocide,"[29] the S.O.L./White Lightning created a ten-point revolutionary platform and program on the drug plague, which placed responsibility on the capitalist system and posited socialism as the solution.[30] Our second point, "We Want All Narcotics Profiteers Out of Our Communities," emphasized: "The addict-pusher doesn't profit from drug sales, but suffers from substance abuse. The real profiteers are drug companies who overproduce for the illegal market, doctors and druggists who sell narcotics, and organized crime and their friends in the police, courts, and government." In response to reports by Police Commissioner Patrick Murphy concerning the "loss" of over 400 pounds of heroin and cocaine worth $73 million from police property rooms, we printed 10,000 "Cops Push Dope" leaflets. We computed the loss of this amount of drugs in human suffering and death and reminded people that for years before the Commissioner's announcement we had been saying that police were involved in drug traffic. While young people were generally receptive to our leaflet, we experienced some hostility from people in the

community who had relatives who were police officers.[31] We did pioneering work in regard to our sixth point: "We Want the Elimination of Legal Addictive Drugs Such as Methadone and Heroin Maintenance." Our numerous articles (including an entire issue of our newspaper),[32] leaflets, posters, and contributions to other publications,[33] as well as speaking engagements and protest actions, alerted people and organizations to the dangers of what we viewed as a horrific new form of government control that we labeled "chemical fascism."

The tenth point underscored the radical perspective of White Lightning: "We Want Working People to Control This Society. Only a society based on profit makes money from the suffering and death of working people through narcotics sales. When working people control this country, we will be able to end the narcotics problem by eliminating bad living conditions and providing for the needs of the people. This system of people's power is called socialism."

In the first issue of our newspaper, *White Lightning*, published in November 1971, we prominently displayed the platform and program, as we did in many subsequent issues. The lead article "Our Bag! Your Bag?" written by Willie Everich, the son of a second generation Ukrainian-American truck driver, began

> The story of our group and how it came into being is a very recent one. The history and the roots, however, are as old as that of our grandmothers and grandfathers. We are what is known as "white trash" to the ruling pigs of the nation. We are the wops, micks, polacks, kikes, and poor filth. The myth of the American dream became the same nightmare that our grandfathers experienced in Europe.[34]

Besides producing newspapers, pamphlets, posters, leaflets, and internal papers, we made arrangements for addicts to detoxify and assisted them with such survival needs as food, clothing, and shelter. We organized drug seminars in hospitals and schools and established a prison communication network. We also mounted public campaigns against such pharmaceutical giants as Eli Lilly & Co., which made seconal, tuinal, and methadone, the biggest selling street drugs at the time.[35] We attacked police corruption and helped

lead demonstrations and actions to obtain decent drug treatment services for veterans and ex-offenders. One of the highlights of White Lightning's early period was the leadership role it played in putting together a city-wide coalition called United Parents Who Care, which fought against the passage of Draconian drug laws like the "Rockefeller Law" and the closing down of drug-free therapeutic communities in favor of methadone maintenance programs.[36] White Lightning also supported the liberation struggles of people of color. We joined picket lines organized by the (mostly Mexican-American) United Farm Workers Union, as well as demonstrations against the massacre at Attica State Prison,[37] and the political repression directed at the Black Panther Party, Young Lords Party and, the American Indian Movement.[38] An official sponsor of the "National Day of Solidarity with Puerto Rico" rally at Madison Square Garden on 27 October 1974,[39] White Lightning joined 20,000 people of virtually every ethnic group and left-of-center political tendency in expressing support for Puerto Rican independence.

Our membership represented a variety of ethnic backgrounds: Danish, Irish, Italian, Norwegian, Jewish, Polish, and Ukrainian, and unlike other white groups, the majority of members were working class.[40] We were disenchanted with much of the white Left, which we believed was dominated by middle-class leaders whose style and agenda effectively excluded poor and working-class recruits.

Inspired by the examples of black and Latino organizations, which used the histories of their people's resistance to oppression as vehicles to refashion new and positive identities, we began to read and study the histories of various immigrant groups of European ancestry. We learned that the Irish, Italian, Polish, and Eastern European Jewish immigrants faced discrimination and often mob attacks upon their arrival to the "Land of the Free," such as the lynching in 1891 of eleven Sicilians by a mob led by the district attorney of New Orleans.[41]

We also learned that the history of European immigrant groups wasn't just one of passive resignation in the face of discrimination and exploitation. Members of these groups participated in the great battles for union recognition and social movements that led to the New Deal. White ethnics made up a large percentage of the membership of radical political organizations, including the Industrial Workers of the World (Wobblies), various progressive, farmer-labor, socialist, and communist parties.[42]

We tried at first to show white ethnic groups in the communities we sought to organize, including the Italian neighborhoods of Arthur Avenue and Morris Park Avenue, that by and large their history paralleled the history of poor and working people. In addition, we related to them how ethnic divisions, like present-day racial divisions, had destroyed political unity and discouraged social change.

While White Lightning succeeded in involving community people in a broad range of political activities, including antidrug protests, rent strikes, health fairs, outdoor concerts, antiwar rallies, and women's groups, few of our community contacts chose to become organizational members.

It was in the early 70s that I wrote an article attempting to show that the political persecution of Nicola Sacco and Bartolemo Vanzetti paralleled the trial of Black Panther Party Chairman Bobby Seale and Ericka Huggins in New Haven.[43] I also discovered Carlo Tresca, an anarchist, labor leader, and crusading anti-Fascist whose assassination on the streets of Lower Manhattan in 1943 is still officially unsolved.

Back in 1967 I had met Italian leftists at a Columbia University-hosted international conference on revolutionary youth who later formed *Collettivi di Comunicazione Rivoluzionaria* (Revolutionary Communication Collectives) in Turin, Rome, and Milan. Beginning in 1971 they published EACS (Europe America Communication Service), a biweekly newsletter that they hoped would serve as a distribution outlet in the United States for information and documents on revolutionary struggles in Europe. In practice, EACS news coverage was mostly limited to Italy and I met and corresponded regularly with members of the *Collettivi*, exchanging political literature and analyses with them.[44] During this period I read about Italy's radical traditions and tried to distill meaning from the fact that Italy had the largest Communist party of any non-Communist state in Europe. I read the influential Marxist theoretician, Antonio Gramsci, and Italy's celebrated anarchist, Enrico Malatesta. The more familiar I became with Italy's powerful

leftist tradition, the more distant I felt from Italian-American leaders whom I regarded, with rare exceptions, as reactionaries.

Following a leadership retreat in June 1972, White Lightning decided to make a sharp break with the past and move beyond its identification as a single-issue organization.[45] We sought to broaden our political appeal by relating to other community problems besides drug addiction. Coinciding with this change, we drew closer to Rising Up Angry (R.U.A.), a revolutionary organization in Chicago that had begun by politicizing white street gangs and had built an impressive base of support among white working class youth.[46] White Lightning joined R.U.A. in forming the nucleus of a national organization with the provisional name of the People's Revolutionary Organization (P.R.O.).[47] P.R.O. never progressed much beyond newspaper exchanges, telephone calls, and a few visits, but R.U.A.'s style and organizing methods that emphasized newspaper sales, free concerts, and free legal and medical services greatly influenced White Lightning's attempts at community outreach.

In the middle of White Lightning's third year, a mixture of personal and political reasons led me to resign from the leadership group and ask for a leave of absence.[48] Subsisting largely on occasional part time jobs and one form or another of organizational stipend, I lived those four years like a monk bound to his vow of poverty. Reacting to the need for more money and security after the birth of my son Matthew, I took a State job as a psychiatric aide on a dangerous back ward at Bronx Psychiatric Center.[49] My personal crisis worsened when long festering conflicts with my wife flared into the open.

My personal reasons for withdrawing from active political work were, however, tied up with stated and unstated political objections. For a long time I had felt that the leadership group of White Lightning, based on the military command model of the Black Panther Party and the Young Lord's Party, was stultifying and didn't reflect the reality of power and decision-making in the organization. This structure prevented the airing out of major differences among group members and resulted in an institutionalized stalemate that crippled White Lightning until a final factional brawl tore the organization apart in 1975.[50] In addition, as an organization that required the full-time commitment of its

membership, there wasn't the time or inclination to plan for family or financial needs that might have allowed people to work with White Lightning on a long-term basis. We were very much caught up in the apocalyptic and moralistic atmosphere of the New Left era. This fostered frenzied activity inevitably followed by political burn-out. Finally, we failed to adequately build on the successes of our earlier antidrug work and followed too uncritically the organizing methods of Rising Up Angry. This deprived us of a clear organizational identity and focus to our community outreach. The sharp break with our origins as a group of ex-addicts fighting against drug addiction had unintended consequences. Heavy pot smoking and alcohol became a permanent part of the subculture of White Lightning. This contributed to many organizational weaknesses, such as passivity, insularity, and a lack of forthright criticism. Now I can see that White Lightning's pulling back from another earlier organizational priority also hurt me: the use of ethnic consciousness raising to deepen our self-knowledge and political identity as a way to cultivate a sense of working-class solidarity among our Bronx constituents. Peace of mind and political maturity would only come to me years later when I learned to reconcile my Italian-American background with my progressive politics and to abstain from intoxicating substances.

White Lightning was an important and creative attempt to implement radical politics in the early 1970s. It provided former drug addicts with a supportive organization that lead the struggle against the economic and political causes of substance abuse. Through its innovative and extensive antidrug work, it influenced people throughout the country. White Lightning fought against the white ethnic bashing that was so prevalent on the Left at the time. For the better part of four years we printed five thousand copies of a monthly, sixteen-page newspaper that gave a voice to politically alienated, white, working-class people who were isolated from the main currents of progressive politics. Aware of how many white students from working-class families attended Catholic schools, we distributed each issue of our newspaper to nearly every Catholic high school in the Bronx. Unlike other radical groups that depended on subsidies from a few patrons, we supported ourselves in part by newspaper sales to community people. We demonstrated that respecting the culture of Americans of European ancestry and

organizing them in accordance with their concrete needs need not serve right-wing political interests. We also showed that ethnic history can be used as a way to point out common experiences between white ethnics and people of color and lead to more empathy and understanding between them.

Progressive forces continue to neglect the history and culture of Italian Americans as well as other white ethnics and, in turn, they are resented by them. For example, the current attempts at implementing a multicultural curriculum ignore the distinctiveness and resilience of ethnic feelings among descendants of European immigrants. This leaves the impression that only people of color have a stake in multiculturalism and reinforces the Right's contention that gains by people of color can only be made at the expense of whites.

Over the years I have attempted to blend my progressive politics with my Italian-American heritage. In November 1991, I helped organize a conference on Vito Marcantonio. In January 1992 I co-founded Italian Americans for a Multicultural U.S. (IAMUS) and helped draft a signed statement that criticized the Quincentennial Celebration of the European conquest of the Americas and sought alternative Italian-American heroes and heroines to the singular glorification of Columbus. The emergence of collectives of Italian Americans who share similar views raises the possibility that a national political tendency may be developing among some Italian Americans that seeks to counter the dominant influence of the political right and recover the forgotten traditions of Italian-American radicalism.

Gil Fagiani

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[6] Wallace P. Sillanapoa, "The Poetry and Politics of Arturo Giovannitti." *The Melting Pot and Beyond: Italian Americans in the Year 2000*, ed., Jerome Krase and William Egelman (New York: AIHA., 1987) 175-89.

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[11] See: Earl Anthony, *Picking Up the Gun* (New York: Pyramid Books, 1970); Elaine Brown, *A Taste of Power: A Black Woman's Story* (New York: Pantheon, 1993); David Hillard and Lewis Cole, *This Side of Glory: The Autobiography of David Hillard and the Story of the Black Panther Party* (New York: Little, Brown, 1993).

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[13] Kirkpatrick Sales, *SDS* (New York: Vantage Books, 1973).

[14] Paul Gibbons, East Harlem Project Director, "The 1966 Cornell East Harlem Project: Report and Evaluation," (Ithaca: Cornell United Religious Work—United Campus Ministry, Cornell University, 1966). For a critical view of Paul Gibbons and social activism at Cornell see: Nathan Tarcov, "The Last Four Years at Cornell" *Public Interest* 13: 122-38.

[15] For good descriptions of El Barrio during this period see: Patricia Cayo Sexton, *Spanish Harlem: Anatomy of Poverty* (New York: Harper Colphon Books, 1965); Piri Thomas, *Down These Mean Streets* (New York: Signet Books, 1967); and Dan Wakefield, *Island in the Sun: Puerto Ricans in New York*, (New York: Corinth Books, 1957).

[16] David Durk, Arlene Durk, and Ira Silverman, *The Pleasant Avenue Connection* (New York: Harper Row, Publishers, 1976).

[17] For a provocative study of Italian Harlemite's views on race, see: Robert Orsi, "The Religious Boundaries of an In between People: Street Feste and the Problem of the Dark-Skinned Other in Italian Harlem, 1920-1990," *American Quarterly* 44 (1992): 313-47.

[18] New York City police officers popularized the term "Fort Apache." See: Tom Walker, *Fort Apache* (New York: Avon Books, 1976). William Gage, *The Compound* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1977).

[19] Mike Smith, "Spilling the Beans," *White Lightning*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1972: 3.

[20] See: Dennis Smith, *Report from Engine Co. 82* (New York: Pocket Books, 1972); Jill Jones, *We're Still Here: The Rise, Fall, and Resurrection of the South Bronx* (Boston: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1985).

[21] For one activist's doctor's views of the political groups at Lincoln see: Fitzhugh Mullan, MD., *White Coat, Clinched Fist: The Political Education of an American Physician* (New York: MacMillan Publishing Co., 1976).

[22] Susan Riverby, "Bronx," *Health PAC Bulletin*, October 1970: 1-3.

[23] Susan Riverby and Marsha Handelman, "Emancipation of Lincoln" *Health PAC Bulletin*, 37 (January 1972): 2-15.

[24] See: "The Spirit of Logos," *Health Liberation News* (New York Chapter—Medical Committee for Human Rights) (March 1971): 3-7; "The Spirit of Logos" (leaflet), *Spirit of Logos*, 1971.

[25] Constance Bloomfield, "De Tox: Clearing Their Heads," *Health PAC Bulletin*, 37 (January 1972): 8-9.

[26] See: *Health Liberation News*, Vol. 1, No. 1, (February 1972): 10-11, titled, "White Lightning—S.O.L."

[27] Before White Lightning rented the storefront at 109 East 183rd Street it served as the office of the Bronx Coalition, a radical, community-based organization that published the newspaper Cross-Bronx Express.

[28] Lincoln Detox itself included a host of revolutionary and militant nationalist organizations such as the Young Lords Party, the Health Revolutionary Movement, and the Republic of New Africa.

[29] Michael "Cetewayo" Tabor, *The Plague: Capitalism + Dope Genocide*, New York: The Committee to Defend the Panther 21, 1970.

[30] See: "Drug Plague: A Revolutionary Solution, What We Want and Believe" *White Lightning* No. 15 (April 1973) 6

[31] "Cops Push Dope," (leaflet), *White Lightning*, 1972.

[32] *White Lightning*, Vol. 1, No. 3, 1972.

[33] "White Lightning: Radical Ex-Addicts Get It Together," *Long Island Free Press*, Vol. 1, No. 3, (June 1972): 10-11.

[34] *White Lightning*, Vol. 1, No. 1, Nov. 1971

[35] In the early 70s methadone deaths came to outnumber heroin deaths by about five to one. "On Chemical Genocide" (New York : White Lightning, circa 1974) 2.

[36] See: "United Citizens Who Care," Fact Sheet, Brooklyn, NY: United Citizens Who Care, January 1972, 3-4; "Shock the Rock" (leaflet), Bronx, NY: White Lightning, February 1972.

[37] White Lightning was the only white group to march through Harlem with blacks and Puerto Ricans in memory of Attica. "White Lightning—One Year of Struggle," *White Lightning*, Vol. 1, No. 10, November, 1972: 8-9.

[38] White Lightning was under police surveillance and its attendance at a conference where the Young Lords changed their name to the Puerto Rican Revolutionary Worker's Organization was recorded by the United States government. United States Senate, Subcommittee to Investigate the Administration of the Internal Security Act and Other Security Laws, The Puerto Rican Revolutionary Worker's Organization (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1976) 43.

[39] Puerto Rican Solidarity Day Committee, "National Day of Solidarity With Puerto Rico" (program pamphlet), 27 October 1974.

[40] See: Studs Terkel, "John Duffy," *The Great Divide: Second Thoughts on the American Dream* (New York: Avon Books, 1988) 295-97

[41] Richard Gambino, *Vendetta* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Co., 1970).

[42] Paul Buhle, *Marxism in the United States* (London: Verso, 1991) 19-57.

[43] Gil Fagiani, "Sacco and Vanzetti, the Italian Ancestors of Bobby Seale and Ericka Huggins" (New York: 1971) 1-7. I circulated this article among White Lightning members and supporters, but was convinced that the broader Left would condemn my positive treatment of Italian American ethnicity, and therefore, never sought to have it published in the left press.

[44] "The Collettivi CR and What Is Revolutionary Communication?" EACS/ Europe American Communication Service, No. 7, 30 July 1971 : 5-8.

[45] "The Primary Task of White Lightning and the Five Points of Interest" (internal paper), *White Lightning*, June 1972: 1-8.

[46] "Rising Up Angry," White Lightning, Vol. 1., No. 11 : 4.

[47] "An Outline of the Historical Errors of the White Lightning Leadership" (internal paper), White Lightning, October, 1972: 1-10.

[48] Gil Fagiani, "Revolutionizing White Lightning" (internal paper), written in early 1973: 1-5.

[49] Gil Fagiani, "The Floater," Cataylst, Vol. 6, No. 1, 1987 58-65.

[50] See: "Lightning Strikes Against Death Drugs" (internal paper), 4 July 1975 : 1-5; "What is White Lightning?" (internal paper) 1975. 1-11; "The Struggle for White Lightning's Ideology" (internal paper) 1975 : 1-13