

REMARKS BY JAMES H. QUELLO
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THIS IS THE ETHNIC ERA.

IT IS AN ERA OF SPECIAL BENEFITS AND PREFERENTIAL AFFIRMATIVE ACTION TREATMENT FOR MINORITIES, PARTICULARLY IN TV AND RADIO OWNERSHIP.

TROUBLE IS ITALIAN-AMERICANS--EVEN FIRST GENERATION ONES, NO LONGER QUALIFY AS MINORITIES.

WE ARE VICTIMS OF OUR OWN SUCCESS IN BECOMING AN INTEGRAL PART OF AMERICA. OUR IMAGE MAY HAVE CHANGED TOO MUCH FOR OUR OWN GOOD. WE ARE NO LONGER PERCEIVED AS MINORITIES AND THUS, NOT CONSIDERED ELIGIBLE FOR THE SPECIAL BENEFITS NOW ACCORDED MINORITIES---THE AFFIRMATIVE ACTION BENEFITS THAT ITALIAN-AMERICANS AND MANY OTHER ETHNIC GROUPS NEVER RECEIVED. I BELIEVE IN INTEGRATION AND BECOMING AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE FABRIC OF THIS GREAT NATION. HOWEVER, IT DOESN'T SEEM TO BE THE WAY TO GET THE BIGGEST BANG FROM YOUR ETHNIC BUCK.

IN COMMUNICATIONS, FOR EXAMPLE, ITALIANS DO NOT SHARE IN THE MANY SUBSTANTIAL ECONOMIC BENEFITS ACCORDED GROUPS THAT NOW QUALIFY AS MINORITIES--BLACKS, HISPANICS, INDIANS AND ORIENTALS.

THESE ETHNIC GROUPS ENJOY MANY SPECIAL INDUCEMENTS TO ACQUIRE BROADCAST PROPERTIES. SELLERS TO MINORITIES NOW RECEIVE TAX CERTIFICATES DEFERRING OR ELIMINATING PAYMENT OF CAPITAL GAINS THAT MAY BE APPLIED ON ACQUISITION OF ANOTHER PROPERTY. THERE ARE SPECIAL FINANCIAL FUNDINGS FROM SBA, NAB AND BROADCAST INDUSTRY MESBIGS, DISTRESS SALES WHERE BROADCAST PROPERTIES CAN BE ACQUIRED FOR 75% OF THEIR OFFICIALLY APPRAISED VALUE, EXPEDITED PROCESSING OF MINORITY APPLICATIONS, DEFINITE AUTHORIZED PREFERENCES FOR MINORITIES IN ALL COMPETITIVE COMPARATIVE HEARINGS FOR TV AND RADIO STATIONS, ETC.

THERE ARE MANY NEW EXISTING OPPORTUNITIES FOR BROADCAST OWNERSHIP AS A RESULT OF FCC ACTIONS. NEW RADIO AND LOW POWERED TV STATIONS ARE BECOMING AVAILABLE. I BELIEVE FIRST GENERATION ITALIAN-AMERICANS SHOULD PARTICIPATE IN THE SPECIAL INDUCEMENTS SAME AS OTHER MINORITIES.

I'LL GET BACK TO THIS ESSENTIAL POINT OF PARTICIPATING IN THE FULL BENEFITS ACCORDED MINORITIES---BUT I'D LIKE TO FIRST ADDRESS THE FUNDAMENTAL SUBJECT OF THIS PANEL---THE IMAGE OF ITALIAN-AMERICANS.

THE PRIME QUESTION FOR THIS PANEL MIGHT BE:
"WHAT DO WE WANT THE ITALIAN-AMERICAN IMAGE TO BE?"

THAT, OF COURSE, IS THE FUNDAMENTAL QUESTION. UNLESS AND UNTIL WE HAVE AN ANSWER, WE ARE LIKELY TO CONTINUE TO BE DISSATISFIED, FRUSTRATED AND, AT TIMES, DISMAYED BY WHAT WE SEE AND HEAR ON THE BROADCAST MEDIA---AND, FOR THAT MATTER, IN PRINT, AS WELL. DO WE REALLY KNOW WHO WE ARE? DO WE, IN OUR OWN MINDS, FIND EXPRESSION OF OUR HERITAGE? I'D LIKE TO SUGGEST THAT IT IS ONLY THROUGH A POSITIVE SELF-IMAGE THAT WE ARE LIKELY TO FOSTER A POSITIVE PUBLIC IMAGE.

FOR EXAMPLE, OUR HERITAGE INCLUDES THE POWER AND THE GLORY THAT WAS THE ROMAN EMPIRE. AND YET, I SUSPECT THAT THE PUBLIC IMAGE IS MORE THE EXCESSES AND DEPRAVITY OF THE CALIGUS AND THE NEROS OR THE VIOLENCE AND BETRAYAL OF BRUTUS AND THE MANY OTHER KNIFE-WIELDING ROMAN SENATORS. THESE ARE CONSTANTLY DEPICTED IN THE POPULAR MEDIA.

IN DEVELOPING AN ACTION PLAN FOR THE 1980'S, I BELIEVE WE SHOULD CAREFULLY DEVELOP OUR OWN SENSE OF HISTORY AND OUR RICH HERITAGE AND DEVELOP WAYS TO PRESENT THEM TO THE MEDIA AND THE PUBLIC.

I SUSPECT THAT ONE OF THE REASONS THAT A POSITIVE IMAGE OF THE ITALIAN-AMERICAN HAS OFTEN ESCAPED THE MEDIA IS THAT, FOR MANY, MANY YEARS, ITALIAN-AMERICANS REALLY EMBRACED THE "MELTING POT" THEORY. WE HAVE, OVER THE YEARS, ADOPTED AS OUR OWN THE AMERICAN HERITAGE AND WE HAVE MINIMIZED THE RICH TRADITIONS WHICH OUR PARENTS AND THEIR PARENTS BROUGHT WITH THEM TO THIS COUNTRY. IN A WAY, WE REALLY ARE THE VICTIMS OF OUR OWN SUCCESS IN OVERCOMING PREJUDICE AND DISCRIMINATION BY DETERMINATION AND SHEER HARD WORK. WE HAVE ENTHUSIASTICALLY ENTERED THE "MELTING POT" AND HAVE BECOME VERY MUCH A PART OF THE FABRIC OF THIS GREAT NATION.

NOW, WE ARE TOLD THAT THE "MELTING POT" IDEA IS NOT RELEVANT; THAT "ETHNIC PRIDE" IS NOW PARAMOUNT. WE SEE OTHER GROUPS LAY CLAIM TO SPECIAL BENEFITS FROM THIS SOCIETY BECAUSE THEY ARE "DIFFERENT" OR DISCRIMINATED AGAINST. THE

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT DOESN'T RECOGNIZE ITALIAN-AMERICANS AS A DISTINCT ETHNIC GROUP WHICH HAS BEEN DISCRIMINATED AGAINST OVER THE YEARS. THE MEDIA ALSO LACK THAT PERCEPTION. THE MEDIA PERCEPTION OFTEN SEEMS TO BE DERIVED FROM THE OLD BAD JOKES OF DECADES PAST OR FROM "THE UNTOUCHABLES" OR "THE GODFATHER" OR EVEN OLD PREPOSTEROUS ARTICLES LIKE "LATINS ARE LOUSY LOVERS." I THINK THAT WE CAN CHANGE NEGATIVE IMPRESSIONS BY PROPER EMPHASIS ON THE POSITIVE ASPECTS OF OUR HERITAGE. I WOULD CAUTION AGAINST EXCESSIVE CRITICISM OF THE MEDIA IN GENERAL AND FOCUS, INSTEAD, UPON SOME OF THE MORE EGREGIOUS SPECIFIC LAPSES IN SENSITIVITY IN THE PORTRAYAL OF ITALIAN-AMERICANS. I BELIEVE THAT SOME OF THE EFFORTS--BY OTHER GROUPS--TO SENSITIZE" THE MEDIA TO A PARTICULAR GRIEVANCE OR CAUSE HAVE BEEN GREATLY DIMINISHED BY THEIR STRIDENCY. THE TIMES CALL FOR A MORE POSITIVE APPROACH.

I BELIEVE THAT THE ITALIAN-AMERICAN FOUNDATION REPRESENTS A VERY IMPORTANT STEP IN THE PROCESS OF REEMPHASIZING OUR HERITAGE AND OF REBUILDING THE COHESIVENESS NECESSARY TO MAKE OURSELVES HEARD. WHEN YOU REALIZE THAT THERE ARE OVER 25 MILLION OF US IN THIS COUNTRY--AND THE

POLITICAL POWER THAT NUMBER CAN REPRESENT--IT'S CLEAR THAT IT'S NECESSARY TO REACH OUT TO THOSE WHO ARE NOT AFFILIATED WITH THIS ORGANIZATION AND REKINDLE THEIR INTEREST IN JOINING TOGETHER TO ACHIEVE GOALS OF MUTUAL INTEREST. WHEN INTEGRATING INTO THE MELTING POT WAS THE GOAL, WE SUCCEEDED TO A REMARKABLE DEGREE. IN THIS ERA OF ETHNIC PRIDE, I BELIEVE THAT WE CAN ALSO SUCCEED IN EMPHASIZING OUR OWN PRIDE AND IN ATTRACTING OTHERS WHO SHARE OUR TRADITIONS AND HERITAGE.

HOW DO THE MEDIA FIT INTO ALL OF THIS? I SUGGEST THAT A CONCERTED AND COMPREHENSIVE EFFORT BE MADE TO EDUCATE THE MEDIA--BOTH ON THE NATIONAL AND THE LOCAL LEVELS--ABOUT WHAT WE STAND FOR, WHERE WE CAME FROM, WHAT WE HAVE BROUGHT WITH US AND THE SACRIFICES WE MADE IN GETTING HERE. WE CAN PRESENT TO THE NEWS MEDIA INFORMATION THAT WILL MAKE THEM AWARE OF WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE HAVE ALREADY ACCOMPLISHED. WE CAN CELEBRATE OUR HERITAGE AND INVITE THE PARTICIPATION OF ALL AMERICANS IN THAT CELEBRATION. WE CAN ARTICULATE OUR SENSE OF PRIDE IN A POSITIVE WAY SO THAT THIS NATION OF IMMIGRANTS CAN SHARE IN THAT PRIDE.

WE SHOULD AVOID THE MISTAKE OF CONSIDERING THE MEDIA TO BE MONOLITHIC. THE MEDIA IS MADE UP OF THOUSANDS OF DIVERSE OUTLETS WHO DO NOT CONFORM TO A SPECIFIC MOLD. WE MUST REACH EACH OF THOSE OUTLETS IN OUR EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM AND APPROACH THEM IN A VARIETY OF WAYS. OUR MESSAGE SHOULD BE CONSISTENT BUT THE MEANS OF DELIVERING THAT MESSAGE MUST SHOW THE IMAGINATION OF GARIBALDI AND THE PERSISTENCE AND DETERMINATION OF A CAESAR.

I BELIEVE THAT THE AMERICAN PEOPLE, AS A WHOLE, HAVE HAD ABOUT ENOUGH OF THE BIAS AND DISCRIMINATION OF PAST DECADES; I ALSO BELIEVE THAT THE AMERICAN PEOPLE HAVE HAD ABOUT ENOUGH OF THE SPECIAL PLEADERS WHO ONLY SEEK "FAIR ADVANTAGE" OVER THEIR FELLOW AMERICANS. THE CONSCIENCE OF AMERICA HAS BEEN SEARED DEEPLY AND OFTEN IN RECENT YEARS AND MILITANCY IS BECOMING COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE. IF MY PERCEPTION IS CORRECT, WE MUST PROCEED WITH A POSITIVE, CONSTRUCTIVE APPROACH SO THAT DESERVING ITALIAN-AMERICANS CAN SHARE IN THE FULL BENEFITS OF EQUAL OPPORTUNITY.

EVENTUALLY, WE SHOULD PROGRESS TO THE POINT WHERE SPECIAL FAVORED AFFIRMATIVE ACTION FOR

MINORITIES IS NO LONGER NECESSARY.

WE WILL KNOW WE HAVE FINALLY ARRIVED AS A UNITED AND COMPLETELY FREE NATION WHEN ALL RACIAL AND NATIONALITY ROADBLOCKS HAVE BEEN REMOVED AND EVERYONE CAN COMPETE AND PROGRESS ACCORDING TO HIS OR HER OWN ABILITY AND DEDICATION WITHOUT NEED TO SEEK SPECIAL CONSIDERATION. WE ARE NOT THERE YET--BUT WE HAVE MADE GREAT PROGRESS AND I BELIEVE THE MILLENIUM WILL ARRIVE BEFORE THE TURN OF THE CENTURY.

BECAUSE HERE AND TODAY, AS PROUD AND FASCINATED AS WE MAY BE IN OUR HERITAGE AND OLD ROOTS--THE ROOTS THAT REALLY COUNT ARE THE MUTUAL ONES WE HAVE TODAY DEEP IN AMERICA.

ITALIAN-AMERICANS AND ALMOST ALL OTHER MINORITIES ARE NOW FIRMLY "ROOTED" IN AMERICA.

WE MUST ALL WORK TOGETHER IN UNITY AND DECENCY TO HAVE EVERYONE'S ROOTS NOURISH A GREAT AND BETTER TREE OF LIFE FOR OUR CHILDREN AND GRANDCHILDREN IN A TRULY FREE AMERICA.