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From Newark's Little Italy to Congress: How the Italian American Values of Family, Pride, and Hard Work Influenced Congressman Peter Rodino's Legislation

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Influenced Congressman Peter Rodino's Legislation**

I. INTRODUCTION

Congressman Peter Rodino is best known today for his involvement in the impeachment of President Richard Nixon. But for many years prior to the impeachment, he represented the people of New Jersey in the 10th District in Congress.¹ Rodino played a prominent role in winning passage of important measures, including an immigration reform act and establishing Columbus Day as a national holiday.² Peter Rodino's Italian American heritage greatly influenced this legislation. In particular, Columbus Day and the Immigration Act of 1986 resulted from his heritage because the Italian American values of family, pride, and hard work are reflected in these policies.

This essay will proceed by explaining why Italians, particularly Southern Italians, migrated to America in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It will then introduce Peter Rodino, his family, and his hometown—Newark, New Jersey—specifically, the First Ward. After that, it will examine how the First Ward personified the values of family, pride, and hard work. Next, this essay will show how Rodino's childhood household embraced these three values and instilled them in him. Further, it will describe the discrimination Italian immigrants endured in America. Next, it will provide background information on Christopher Columbus and the Immigration Act of 1986. Lastly, this essay will analyze each Italian American value and how they are reflected in Rodino's legislation.

II. BACKGROUND

¹ See, e.g., Biography, "Peter Wallace Rodino"; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series I Box 2, Folder 12; Seton Hall University School of Law.

² See, e.g., Biography, "The Real Congressman Rodino"; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series I Box 2, Folder 12; Seton Hall University School of Law.

a. Why Did Italians, Particularly Southern Italians, Migrate to America?

Since this essay has a focus on Italian heritage, it would not be complete without referencing *The Godfather*. The scene of young Don Vito Corleone arriving at Ellis Island in *The Godfather: Part II* accurately portrays the immigrant voyage to America in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; the scene will help visualize Rodino’s family’s experience and the immigrant journey to America.³

The scene opens displaying a large boat full of hopeful immigrants gazing, mesmerized at the Statue of Liberty as they arrive at Ellis Island, “America’s chief receiving station.”⁴ Next, young Corleone goes through the inspection at Ellis Island.⁵ During this process, the officer asks young Corleone, “What is your name?”⁶ At this point, an Italian officer translates the phrase and responds for young Corleone by holding up the name tag around his neck.⁷ Then, the officer changes “Vito Andolini from Corleone” to just “Vito Corleone”—to make it “more American.”⁸

The Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island symbolize the “American dream come true” for many immigrants who came to America to be in a free country, build a family, and work.⁹ America experienced a large wave of southern Italian migration from 1880 to 1910.¹⁰ In the later nineteenth century, Southern Italy was suffering economic setbacks and natural disasters, which led millions to seek a better life overseas, particularly in America.¹¹ Southern Italian immigrants settled in

³ THE GODFATHER: PART II (Paramount Pictures 1974).

⁴ THE GODFATHER: PART II (Paramount Pictures 1974); JERRE MANGIONE & BEN MORREALE, LA STORIA, FIVE CENTURIES OF THE ITALIAN AMERICAN EXPERIENCE 110 (1992).

⁵ THE GODFATHER: PART II (Paramount Pictures 1974); Mangione & Morreale, *supra* note 4, at 111; DANIEL OKRENT, THE GUARDED GATE: BIGOTRY, EUGENICS, AND THE LAW THAT KEPT TWO GENERATIONS OF JEWS, ITALIANS, AND OTHER EUROPEAN IMMIGRANTS OUT OF AMERICA 1 (2019).

⁶ THE GODFATHER: PART II (Paramount Pictures 1974).

⁷ *Id.*

⁸ THE GODFATHER: PART II (Paramount Pictures 1974); Mangione & Morreale, *supra* note 4 at 116—117.

⁹ Italian Tribune Article dated September 23, 1982, “Editorial Symbols of America Italian Tribune”; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series V Box 63, Folder 1; Seton Hall University School of Law; *see also* Okrent, *supra* note 5, at 2.

¹⁰ *See, e.g.*, MICHAEL IMMERSO, NEWARK’S LITTLE ITALY: THE VANISHED FIRST WARD 1—2 (1997); Telephone Interview with Lawrence Spinelli, *Historian* (February 15, 2022); Okrent, *supra* note 5, at 48.

¹¹ *See, e.g.*, Immerso, *supra* note 10, at 1—2; Interview with Lawrence Spinelli, *supra* note 10; *see also* Okrent, *supra* note 5, at 48.

Newark, making it one of the first cities in America outside of New York with a large Italian immigrant community.¹²

Rodino's family, just like young Corleone, migrated from Italy to America in search of the American dream.¹³

b. Peter Rodino and His Family

Rodino was born on June 7, 1909, as Pellegrino Rodino.¹⁴ At school, he changed it to Peter and took Wallace as his middle name to feel part of America, similar to how young Corleone's name was changed by the immigration officer, to make it "more American."¹⁵

Rodino's father, Pellegrino Rodino ("Rodino Sr."), was born in the Campania region of southern Italy in 1883.¹⁶ In 1900, Rodino Sr. migrated to America with a tag around his neck indicating he could not speak English.¹⁷ It was a tag similar to young Corleone's.¹⁸ Rodino Sr. was a manual laborer and worked odd jobs, such as cabinet maker, carpenter, and tool maker.¹⁹

Rodino's biological mother passed away in 1914.²⁰ His father remarried an Italian woman named Gemma, who taught Rodino and his siblings the Italian language.²¹

¹² See, e.g., Immerso, *supra* note 10, at 1.

¹³ "Growing Up Italian"; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series I Box 189, Folder 3; Seton Hall University School of Law; THE GODFATHER: PART II (Paramount Pictures 1974).

¹⁴ Biography, "Peter Wallace Rodino"; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series I Box 2, Folder 12; Seton Hall University School of Law.

¹⁵ Interview with Lawrence Spinelli, *supra* note 10; THE GODFATHER: PART II (Paramount Pictures 1974); Speech on October 5, 1977, "Remarks by Peter W. Rodino, Jr. at the American Folklife Festival in Washington D.C."; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series I Box 67, Folder 4; Seton Hall University School of Law; see also Mangione & Morreale, *supra* note 4, at 221 (acknowledging immigrant children received their American names at school).

¹⁶ Biography, "Personal Biography of Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Anecdotal Information"; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series I Box 2, Folder 12; Seton Hall University School of Law.

¹⁷ *Id.*

¹⁸ THE GODFATHER: PART II (Paramount Pictures 1974).

¹⁹ Biography, "Personal Biography of Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Anecdotal Information"; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series I Box 2, Folder 12; Seton Hall University School of Law.

²⁰ *Id.*

²¹ *Id.*

Rodino's grandparents came to America at a young age, "on the boat," just like young Corleone and the rest of the immigrants in the Ellis Island scene from *The Godfather*.²² Rodino's grandparents lived in a rented tenement and could barely make ends meet.²³

c. The First Ward: Newark's Little Italy

Rodino was born and raised in Newark's First Ward.²⁴ Newark's First Ward was an urban "ethnic enclave."²⁵ For those who grew up there, it was a beloved familial neighborhood, the first home to numerous Italian immigrant families.²⁶ Residents of the First Ward called Angelo Maria Mattina, the founder of the First Ward, Columbo because he was the first to arrive and establish the colony of southern Italians.²⁷

d. The Italian American Values in the First Ward

The First Ward and its citizens personified the Italian American values of family, pride, and hard work, which later influenced Rodino and his legislation.

i. How the First Ward Established the Value of Family

First, the First Ward had a familial ambiance to it particularly because of the way its residents treated one another. Different family businesses occupied almost every building in the First Ward, including family-owned grocery stores, bakeries, and markets.²⁸ The business owners called each of their customers by name to make them feel appreciated and important.²⁹

²² "Growing Up Italian"; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series I Box 189, Folder 3; Seton Hall University School of Law; *THE GODFATHER: PART II* (Paramount Pictures 1974).

²³ "Growing Up Italian"; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series I Box 189, Folder 3; Seton Hall University School of Law.

²⁴ Biography, "Additional Biographical Information on the Congressman"; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series I Box 2, Folder 12; Seton Hall University School of Law.

²⁵ Immerso, *supra* note 10, at xiii.

²⁶ Immerso, *supra* note 10, at xiii; New York Times, *Newark's Slice of Italy That Survives Only in Memory*, NEW YORK TIMES, ProQuest Central (Dec. 15, 1996).

²⁷ Immerso, *supra* note 10, at 5.

²⁸ Immerso, *supra* note 10, at 44; see also Greg Hatala, *Glimpse of History: What's In a Shape? A Family Product Practically Everyone Knows*, NJ.COM, April 6, 2015,

https://www.nj.com/essex/2015/04/glimpse_of_history_whats_in_a_shape_a_family_produ.html; Robert M. Zecker, *We Never Locked Our Doors at Night': Newark on the 'Net, Minus the Mob*, 31 THE JOURNAL OF AMERICAN CULTURE 4, 362; New York Times, *supra* note 25.

²⁹ *Id.*

Moreover, the neighborhood was public to an “extraordinary degree” and the density of life in the neighborhood produced an “extreme degree” of social intimacy.³⁰ For example, almost everyone used nicknames, a southern Italian village custom.³¹ Few secrets were kept, neighbors counted on each other in times of need, and doors were never locked; the neighbors always felt safe.³² Everyone knew each other’s families and felt honored to look out for each other’s family members.³³ Further, the communal spirit promoted a desire to live in harmony. The neighborhood had a “tremendous heart” and no matter where you went, there was love and affection.³⁴

Early in the twentieth century, when Italians were facing discrimination and insecurity in America, they depended on family intimacy for “emotional and material strength.”³⁵

To Rodino, the First Ward was a place “imbued with a feeling almost akin to a family.”³⁶ That feeling gave him strength and reminded him of promoting respect for others.³⁷

ii. How the First Ward Established the Value of Pride

Italian village life was present in daily interactions in the First Ward, displaying immigrant and Italian pride.³⁸ For example, several Italian-language newspapers were published and available to the community.³⁹ The community had Italian operas, concerts, and Italian-language

³⁰ Immerso, *supra* note 10, at 43, 45.

³¹ *Id.* at 44.

³² *See, e.g.*, Immerso, *supra* note 10, at 45; Zecker, *supra* note 27, at 363—64.

³³ *See, e.g.*, Immerso, *supra* note 10, at 117; Zecker, *supra* note 27, at 363.

³⁴ *Id.*

³⁵ Joe Battaglia, *Why Sunday Dinner Became Big for Italians in America*, THE US WORLD HERALD, December 5, 2019, <https://www.usworldherald.com/sunday-dinner-italian-tradition/>; Mangione & Morreale, *supra* note 4, at 221, 182 (recognizing immigrants from the same village helped one another and became like a family).

³⁶ Immerso, *supra* note 10, at 138.

³⁷ *Id.*

³⁸ *Id.* at 44.

³⁹ *Id.* at 32.

films.⁴⁰ Also, the neighborhood held large gatherings for picnics, bands, bocce, and Sunday meals.⁴¹

Sunday is the biggest day of the week in Italian households, particularly because of Sunday dinner.⁴² Sunday dinner is a traditional custom in Italian households; it brings families together.⁴³ The Sunday dinner is a way to celebrate conquering the economic setbacks Italians encountered in Italy, and it was a time to display Italian food, such as pasta, meatballs, and bracciole.⁴⁴ In addition, it was a way for the First Ward's community to showcase its success in America, to feel Italian in another country, and to maintain the community's cultural roots.⁴⁵ The First Ward's Italian community learned to become confident and proud of its heritage.⁴⁶

iii. How the First Ward Established the Value of Hard Work

Although Italian workers living in the First Ward made barely enough money to make ends meet, they were nonetheless hardworking individuals.⁴⁷ One of the reasons Italians came to America was to search for employment; most arrived with empty pockets.⁴⁸ The Italian settlers worked at whatever trade they could—day laborers, ditch diggers, factory hands, and railroad men.⁴⁹ Agents supplied Newark contractors with a “steady pool of cheap Italian labor.”⁵⁰ Among the poorest Italian laborers were the men who worked a ten-hour day for wages of twelve to seventeen cents an hour, sometimes less.⁵¹ Thousands of Italian laborers earned as little as ninety-

⁴⁰ See, e.g., Zecker, *supra* note 27, at 363.

⁴¹ Immerso, *supra* note 10, at 118.

⁴² See, e.g., “Growing Up Italian”; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series I Box 189, Folder 3; Seton Hall University School of Law.

⁴³ See, e.g., Battaglia, *supra* note 34; Mangione & Morreale, *supra* note 4, at 307.

⁴⁴ *Id.*; see also USA Italians, *Joseph Sciorra: Italian Sunday Dinner*, Youtube (Dec. 6, 2019), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=awb4tG-G2tw>.

⁴⁵ *Id.*

⁴⁶ See, e.g., Immerso, *supra* note 10, at 17.

⁴⁷ Okrent, *supra* note 5, at 100 (recognizing some Italian immigrants lived in “pig-stys”).

⁴⁸ See, e.g., Immerso, *supra* note 10, at 5, 15.

⁴⁹ Immerso, *supra* note 10, at 5, 15; see also Mangione & Morreale, *supra* note 4, at 138.

⁵⁰ *Id.*; see also Okrent, *supra* note 5, at 51 (characterizing an Italian immigrant as “pauper labor” in a 1892 cartoon).

⁵¹ Immerso, *supra* note 10, at 17; see also Mangione & Morreale, *supra* note 4, at 138.

five cents for a day's work.⁵² Despite the grueling physical labor, "Italians worked incredibly hard and built up their lives for their families and to serve their neighborhood."⁵³

e. Rodino and His Household Embraced the First Ward's Values of Family, Pride, and Hard Work

As Rodino grew up, he and his household embraced the First Ward's values of family, pride, and hard work. Rodino read, wrote, and spoke the Italian language.⁵⁴ While Rodino was fighting in World War II, he found out he was going to be a father.⁵⁵ Upon learning the news, he wrote a letter to himself in which he reflected on his feelings of family.⁵⁶ Rodino stated that he was fighting for a way of life, the way of life he wanted his child to have.⁵⁷ That way of life was "the life which free men know" in America—"to think as a free man, to speak as a free man, and to worship as a free man" without bitterness or hate.⁵⁸ This letter demonstrates Rodino was determined to make this way of life happen, for his family and for others—no matter the cost.⁵⁹

Rodino's grandfather told stories about how he came to America as a young man, "on the boat."⁶⁰ Although the family could barely make ends meet, Rodino's grandfather worked hard, saved enough money, and bought a house (also known as the "family headquarters").⁶¹ On holidays, all the relatives would gather at the family headquarters, surrounded by food, homemade wine, and music.⁶² Rodino would observe his grandfather sitting in the middle of celebration,

⁵² Immerso, *supra* note 10, at 7.

⁵³ Zecker, *supra* note 27, at 363; *see also* Immerso, *supra* note 10, at 6; Okrent, *supra* note 5, at 99.

⁵⁴ *See, e.g.*, Letter dated June 25, 1946, "Private Papers: Correspondence in Italian dated Roma 25 Giugno 1946"; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series I Box 1, Folder 6; Seton Hall University School of Law; Biography, "Personal Biography of Peter W. Rodino, Jr."; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series I Box 2, Folder 12; Seton Hall University School of Law.

⁵⁵ Letter, "Corporal Peter W. Rodino Jr. Headquarters II Army Corps Jacksonville, Florida"; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series I Box 2, Folder 7; Seton Hall University School of Law.

⁵⁶ *Id.*

⁵⁷ *Id.*

⁵⁸ *Id.*

⁵⁹ *Id.*

⁶⁰ "Growing Up Italian"; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series I Box 189, Folder 3; Seton Hall University School of Law.

⁶¹ *Id.*

⁶² *Id.*

grinning, his “eyes twinkling, surveying his domain,” proud of his family and how far they had come.⁶³

Rodino noted that the “med-e-ganes” (Americans) missed out on good food, while the Italians “lived a romance with food.”⁶⁴ The Americans went to the store for most of their food, rather than gardening tomatoes, peppers, basil, lettuce, etc.⁶⁵ The Americans did not experience the pleasure of waking up every morning to find a “hot, crisp loaf of Italian bread waiting behind the screen door” delivered personally by the bread man himself in the First Ward’s neighborhood.⁶⁶

Sunday was the biggest day of the week for Rodino’s family because of the traditional “sumptuous Italian dinner” consisting of homemade pasta, hot fried meatballs, and a pot of gravy (or sauce) after mass.⁶⁷ Rodino did not see his grandparents only on Sundays or holidays, like the “med-e-ganes” did; rather, he saw them at least once a day.⁶⁸ Rodino’s family, like most Italian American families, lived on the same block or in the same house, demonstrating the importance of family.⁶⁹

There was no animosity or prejudice involved in the distinction between “med-e-ganes” and Italians.⁷⁰ It was just that Italians were sure their way was the better way. Food on Sundays and holidays, along with gardening, truly showcased the Rodino family’s success in America, helped them feel Italian in America, and helped them maintain their cultural roots.⁷¹

f. Past Discrimination Against Italian Immigrants in America

⁶³ *Id.*

⁶⁴ *Id.*

⁶⁵ *Id.*

⁶⁶ *Id.*

⁶⁷ Growing Up Italian”; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series I Box 189, Folder 3; Seton Hall University School of Law; *see also* The New York Times, *A New Task, A New Rodino*, THE NEW YORK TIMES, June 18, 1974, <https://www.nytimes.com/1974/06/18/archives/a-new-task-a-new-rodino-family-life-affected.html>.

⁶⁸ Growing Up Italian”; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series I Box 189, Folder 3; Seton Hall University School of Law.

⁶⁹ *Id.*

⁷⁰ *Id.*

⁷¹ Battaglia, *supra* note 34.

Although the First Ward's ambiance was largely cordial, Italian Americans endured discrimination in America because some viewed them as "gross little aliens" from an "invasive species."⁷² American immigration policy has been at times "open and generous" while also "discriminatory and inhumane."⁷³ Rodino fought for many years to "eradicate the anti-Italian bias" that was engrained into America's immigration system.⁷⁴ In the early twentieth century, immigrants—particularly Italians—experienced animosity in America due to xenophobia.⁷⁵ The Immigration Act of 1924 established a quota system based on national origin; it limited the number of certain immigrants allowed into America.⁷⁶ Immigrants from eastern and southern Europe had tiny quotas and were considered inferior, while immigration from northern European countries was welcomed.⁷⁷ America only welcomed the "whitest people."⁷⁸

The "smug implication" that individuals of one country are better and more welcome in America than individuals of another country was terminated by the Immigration Act of 1965.⁷⁹ Under this Act, for the first time, America accepted immigrants of all nationalities on a "roughly equal basis."⁸⁰ Supporters of the 1965 Act, including Rodino, believed America was proof that

⁷² Okrent, *supra* note 5, at 48, 97; *see also* Mangione & Morreale, *supra* note 4, at 27, 222 (acknowledging many Italians have memories of being called pejorative slurs).

⁷³ Newark Star Ledger article dated April 4, 1986, "Rodino Calls Immigration Reform Necessary for a Just and Human Policy"; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series V Box 63, Folder 2; Seton Hall University School of Law.

⁷⁴ Speech on October 14, 1967, "Columbus Day Celebration Omaha, Nebraska"; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series V Box 1, Folder 17; Seton Hall University School of Law.

⁷⁵ *See, e.g.*, Interview with Lawrence Spinelli, *supra* note 10; Mangione & Morreale, *supra* note 4, at 27, 221 (highlighting there was open hostility, resentment, and despisal toward Italians); Okrent, *supra* note 5, at 48, 97.

⁷⁶ *See, e.g.*, Office of the Historian, Foreign Service Institute, *The Immigration Act of 1924*, OFFICE OF THE HISTORIAN, (last visited April 4, 2022), <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1921-1936/immigration-act#:~:text=The%20Immigration%20Act%20of%201924%20limited%20the%20number%20of%20immigrants,of%20the%201890%20national%20census>; Interview with Lawrence Spinelli, *supra* note 10; Historical Highlights, *The Immigration Act of 1924*, OFFICE OF THE HISTORIAN, April 12, 1924, <https://history.house.gov/Historical-Highlights/1901-1950/The-Immigration-Act-of-1924/>.

⁷⁷ *See, e.g.*, Newark Star Ledger article dated April 22, 1986, "Rodino Pushes Humane Policy on Immigration"; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series V Box 63, Folder 2; Seton Hall University School of Law; Interview with Lawrence Spinelli, *supra* note 10; Okrent, *supra* note 5, at 3, 99.

⁷⁸ *Id.*

⁷⁹ Speech on October 14, 1967, "Columbus Day Celebration Omaha, Nebraska"; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series V Box 1, Folder 17; Seton Hall University School of Law.

⁸⁰ Tom Gjelten, *The Immigration Act that Inadvertently Changed America*, THE ATLANTIC, October 2, 2015, <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/10/immigration-act-1965/408409/>.

there is no “inherent contradiction between unity and diversity.”⁸¹ This Act discarded the “discriminatory and undemocratic” quotas, “increased the number of visas issues each year, prioritized immigration for skilled workers, and instituted a policy of family unification.”⁸² Rather than being prejudiced by what country they were migrating from, immigrants would be welcomed into America based on their skills and family connections in the country.⁸³

g. Christopher Columbus

To escape discrimination and assimilate into America, Italian Americans meticulously used Genoese explorer Christopher Columbus to their advantage. “In 1492, Christopher Columbus sailed the ocean blue” is the popular rhyme used to remember the story of Christopher Columbus.⁸⁴ He was an Italian explorer who sailed for Spain, and captained three ships: the Nina, the Pinta, and the Santa Maria.⁸⁵ He was determined to find a direct water route west from Europe to Asia.⁸⁶ Instead of doing that, he stumbled upon the Americas.⁸⁷ His journeys marked the beginning of the exploration and colonization of North and South America.⁸⁸

Although the holiday Columbus Day is criticized by some today, when this day was first proclaimed a national holiday, the idea was to recognize the greatness of all of America’s people.⁸⁹ In particular, it was a day that was designed to celebrate Native Americans, who were in the

⁸¹ *Id.*

⁸² Anna Diamond, *The 1924 Law That Slammed the Door on Immigrants and the Politicians Who Pushed it Back Open*, SMITHSONIAN MAGAZINE, May 19, 2020, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/1924-law-slammed-door-immigrants-and-politicians-who-pushed-it-back-open-180974910/>; see also Letterhead of 1967 Columbus Day Celebration Committee, “News Release, for Monday, October 9 1967, and After DRAFT Speech Detroit”; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series V Box 1, Folder 16; Seton Hall University School of Law.

⁸³ See, e.g., Interview with Lawrence Spinelli, *supra* note 10.

⁸⁴ See, e.g., CBS Detroit, “In 1492, Columbus Sailed the Ocean Blue,” CBS DETROIT, October 19, 2011, <https://detroit.cbslocal.com/2011/10/19/in-1492-columbus-sailed-the-ocean-blue/>.

⁸⁵ See, e.g., History.com Editors, “Christopher Columbus,” HISTORY.COM, October 4, 2021, <https://www.history.com/topics/exploration/christopher-columbus>; CBA Detroit, *supra* note 81; Mangione & Morreale, *supra* note 4, at 3—6.

⁸⁶ *Id.*

⁸⁷ *Id.*

⁸⁸ *Id.*

⁸⁹ See, e.g., William J. Connell, *What Columbus Day Really Means*, THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR, October 4, 2012, <https://theamericanscholar.org/what-columbus-day-really-means/>.

Americas before Columbus, and immigrants, especially Italian Americans.⁹⁰ Notably, it was a day to celebrate American history—both the history of the land and its people.⁹¹

The Italian immigrants in America embraced Columbus as one of their own and used their association with him as an entrée into being American.⁹² During the great period of immigration that occurred between 1880 and 1910, Italians were treated as less than equal in America.⁹³ Consequently, they looked for ways to fit in and to become part of their new country.⁹⁴ As an attempt to assimilate, Italians used Columbus as a symbol to their advantage.⁹⁵ Back then, Columbus was portrayed as the Italian explorer who discovered the Americas.⁹⁶ So, the Italian immigrants embraced Columbus as one of their own, as a way of highlighting the contributions of Italians to America’s history; thus, furthering their goal of becoming an accepted part of American society.⁹⁷

On Columbus Day every year, most Italian Americans hold parades and celebrations to embrace their heritage, recognize their ancestors’ struggle to overcome poverty, discrimination, and exploitation, and express their gratitude to America—as a land of the opportunity.⁹⁸

Rodino recognized this Columbian entrée and used it to help make Columbus Day a national holiday—a day to celebrate all immigrants, not just Italians.⁹⁹

h. Immigration Act of 1986

⁹⁰ *Id.*; see also Rodino Hails House Approval of Columbus Day as New National Holiday For Release Friday, May 10, 1968 and After; Letterhead of 1967 Columbus Day Celebration Committee, “News Release, for Monday, October 9 1967, and After DRAFT Speech Detroit”; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series V Box 1, Folder 16; Seton Hall University School of Law.

⁹¹ *Id.*

⁹² Interview with Lawrence Spinelli, *supra* note 10.

⁹³ See, e.g., *Id.*

⁹⁴ *Id.*

⁹⁵ *Id.*

⁹⁶ *Id.*

⁹⁷ *Id.*

⁹⁸ See, e.g., *Why Columbus Matters*, UNICO NATIONAL, March 2022.

⁹⁹ Interview with Lawrence Spinelli, *supra* note 10.

In addition to helping establish Columbus Day as a national holiday, Rodino also played a predominate role in the passage of the Immigration Act of 1986. Rodino served as the Chairman of the House Judiciary Committee during the time when the immigration reform bill was debated and passed.¹⁰⁰ He made three substantial changes to the Senate’s bill before the House Judiciary Committee approved it: family reunification, amnesty, and employer sanctions.¹⁰¹ The Immigration Act of 1986 had two key provisions: (1) it set fines and prison terms for employers who knowingly hired undocumented immigrants; and (2) it granted permanent legal status (amnesty) to undocumented immigrants who came to America before 1977.¹⁰² Temporary legal residence would be granted to those who arrived before 1980.¹⁰³ In the 1980s, some Americans had begun to fear that their nation had lost control over its borders because of the flow of illegal immigrants.¹⁰⁴ In the early 1980s, some estimates found that about 500,000 migrants were entering the country illegally each year, joining a growing number of undocumented immigrants—more than six million—who were already in America.¹⁰⁵ Supporters of the Immigration Act of 1986

¹⁰⁰ See, e.g., Newark Vailsburg Leader article dated October 14, 1982, “Rodino Backs House Passage of New Immigration Reform Bill”; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series V Box 63, Folder 1; Seton Hall University School of Law; Newark Italian Tribune News article dated September 30, 1982, “Committee Approves Immigration Bill”; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. papers Series V Box 63, Folder 1; Seton Hall University School of Law; Newark Italian Tribune News article dated September 23, 1982, “Senate Passes Immigration Law Which Changes Future of Immigrants”; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series V Box 63, Folder 1; Seton Hall University School of Law.

¹⁰¹ *Id.*

¹⁰² See, e.g., Newark Star Ledger article dated August 18, 1982, “Senate Clamps Down on Hiring Illegal Aliens August 18, 1982”; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series V Box 63, Folder 1; Seton Hall University School of Law; The New York Times article dated June 14, 1984, “Fines for Hiring Aliens Endorsed in House Vote on Immigration Bill”; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series V Box 63, Folder 2; Seton Hall University School of Law; Reader’s Digest dated January 1983, “Our Immigration Nightmare”; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series V Box 63, Folder 1; Seton Hall University School of Law.

¹⁰³ See, e.g., Newark Star Ledger article dated August 18, 1982, “Senate Clamps down on Hiring Illegal Aliens August 18, 1982”; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series V Box 63, Folder 1; Seton Hall University School of Law; Wall Street Journal article dated August 18, 1982, “Senate Approves Immigration Bill on 81-18 Vote”; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series V Box 63, Folder 1; Seton Hall University School of Law; Washington Post article dated August 13, 1982, “Illegal Aliens’ Amnesty Wins Senate Approval”; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series V Box 63, Folder 1; Seton Hall University School of Law.

¹⁰⁴ See, e.g., The Washington Post article dated March 19, 1982, “The Right Immigration Bill”; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series V Box 63, Folder 1; Seton Hall University School of Law.

¹⁰⁵ *Id.*

realized that people feared these migrants and wanted to propose a solution to take back control of the country's borders, while remaining compassionate to the undocumented immigrants.¹⁰⁶

The question of whether to sanction employers who knowingly hired undocumented immigrants was controversial.¹⁰⁷ Some proponents of employer sanctions believed the sanctions addressed the “crucial issue” of future illegal immigration because most undocumented immigrants came to America for employment.¹⁰⁸ Conversely, opponents believed employer sanctions would lead to widespread discrimination against employees who “look or sound foreign.”¹⁰⁹

Further, the question of whether to give legal status to hundreds of thousands—if not millions—of undocumented immigrants in America was also controversial.¹¹⁰ Proponents believed granting amnesty was the only feasible option because they believed it was “inhumane and impossible” to gather and deport the undocumented immigrants already in America.¹¹¹ Conversely, opponents of amnesty believed the federal government should not be rewarding individuals who were here illegally and who had violated American laws with permanent residency.¹¹² Additionally, opponents feared amnesty would result in a “magnet effect” and draw

¹⁰⁶ *Id.*

¹⁰⁷ *See, e.g.*, Article, “Debate”; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series V Box 63, Folder 2; Seton Hall University School of Law; Philadelphia Inquirer article dated June 18, 1984, “A Battle Over Immigration”; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series V Box 63, Folder 2; Seton Hall University School of Law.

¹⁰⁸ Article, “Debate”; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series V Box 63, Folder 2; Seton Hall University School of Law.

¹⁰⁹ *See, e.g.*, Article, “Debate”; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series V Box 63, Folder 2; Seton Hall University School of Law; Philadelphia Inquirer article dated June 18, 1984, “A Battle Over Immigration”; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series V Box 63, Folder 2; Seton Hall University School of Law; Patterson News article dated June 21, 1984, “Amnesty Endorsed; Four-Year Fight Ends”; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series V Box 63, Folder 2; Seton Hall University School of Law; *see also* Mangione & Morreale, *supra* note 4, at 27 (highlighting that Italian immigrants were targeted if they were “foreign looking”).

¹¹⁰ *See, e.g.*, Philadelphia Inquirer article dated June 18, 1984, “A Battle Over Immigration”; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series V Box 63, Folder 2; Seton Hall University School of Law.

¹¹¹ *See, e.g.*, Philadelphia Inquirer article dated June 18, 1984, “A Battle Over Immigration”; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series V Box 63, Folder 2; Seton Hall University School of Law; The New York Times article dated December 3, 1982, “Why Break the Immigration Clock?”; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series V Box 63, Folder 1; Seton Hall University School of Law.

¹¹² *See, e.g.*, Philadelphia Inquirer article dated June 18, 1984, “A Battle Over Immigration”; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series V Box 63, Folder 2; Seton Hall University School of Law.

millions of undocumented immigrants to America in hope that they too may be given amnesty and access to the “fruits of America without having to wait in line.”¹¹³

III. ANALYSIS

The three Italian American values—family, pride, and hard work—that were instilled in Rodino at a young age, are prevalent in the Immigration Act of 1986 and in the legislation that made Columbus Day a national holiday.

A. Immigration Act of 1986: Rodino’s Efforts to Prevent a Tragic Outcome in US Immigration

First, these values are manifested in Rodino’s contributions toward the Immigration Act of 1986 because he advocated for family reunification, amnesty, and employer sanctions. According to Newark Star Ledger, “no person in America was more closely identified with efforts to reform the immigration laws than Rodino.”¹¹⁴ Rodino was proud of his heritage and proud of participating in reforming America’s immigration system.¹¹⁵ He believed part of what made America great were immigrants’ strength and their contributions, just like the strength and contributions from his family and the citizens of the First Ward.¹¹⁶ The different nationalities in the United States each had something special to contribute to America’s melting pot to maintain their cultural traits, like the Italian Sunday dinner tradition.¹¹⁷ One of the reasons Rodino was a “vigorous legislative force for immigration reform” was because Rodino and his family were stigmatized while growing up

¹¹³ The New York Times article dated September 23, 1982, “House Unit Backs Immigration Bill”; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series V Box 63, Folder 1; Seton Hall University School of Law.

¹¹⁴ Newark Star Ledger article dated April 22, 1986, “Rodino Pushes Humane Policy on Immigration”; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series V Box 63, Folder 2; Seton Hall University School of Law.

¹¹⁵ Interview with Lawrence Spinelli, *supra* note 10.

¹¹⁶ *See, e.g.*, Article, “Debate”; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series V Box 63, Folder 2; Seton Hall University School of Law; *see also* Newark Italian Tribune News article dated September 30, 1982, “Committee Approves Immigration Bill”; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series V, Box 63, Folder 1; Seton Hall University School of Law (Rodino acknowledging the bill finally granted amnesty, or legal status, to the immigrants who had been contributing to America for years).

¹¹⁷ *See, e.g.*, Reader’s Digest dated January 1983, “Our Immigration Nightmare”; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series V Box 63, Folder 1; Seton Hall University School of Law; Battaglia, *supra* note 34.

in the First Ward.¹¹⁸ Although the First Ward helped instill the three important values—family, pride, and hard work— in Peter Rodino himself, it was unfortunately thought by some people to be an Italian ghetto with unfair treatment, signs, and employment discrimination.¹¹⁹ Employers referred to the Italian immigrants as “idiot immigrants.”¹²⁰ Similar to the First Ward’s citizens, undocumented immigrants in America were also stigmatized.

Attempting to help end the “abuse and chaos” happening in America, Rodino advocated for three significant provisions in the Immigration Act of 1986 that were especially important to him: family reunification, amnesty, and employer sanctions.¹²¹ These three concerns balanced two objectives of the immigration policy: compassion and control—an attempt to restore the integrity of American borders while remaining faithful to America’s immigrant tradition.¹²²

Family reunification, Rodino believed, was the “heart” of America’s immigrant tradition and must be preserved.¹²³ He was opposed to any efforts or attempts to erode it.¹²⁴ Rodino referred to the individuals attempting to enter America as “brothers and sisters,” demonstrating he

¹¹⁸ Viewpoint Editorial article dated June 2, 1983, “One More Time”; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series V Box 63, Folder 2; Seton Hall University School of Law; Interview with Lawrence Spinelli, *supra* note 10.

¹¹⁹ Interview with Lawrence Spinelli, *supra* note 10.

¹²⁰ *Id.*

¹²¹ *See, e.g.*, Newark Vailsburg Leader article dated October 14, 1982, “Rodino Backs House Passage of New Immigration Reform Bill”; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series V Box 63, Folder 1; Seton Hall University School of Law; The Sunday Star Ledger article dated August 22, 1982, “Rodino Mapping Reform of Immigration Laws”; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series V Box 63, Folder 1; Seton Hall University School of Law; Reader’s Digest dated January 1983, “Our Immigration Nightmare 1983”; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series V Box 63, Folder 1; Seton Hall University School of Law.

¹²² *See, e.g.*, The Washington Post article dated March 19, 1982, “The Right Immigration Bill”; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series V Box 63, Folder 1; Seton Hall University School of Law; Philadelphia Inquirer article dated July 26, 1985, “Immigration Amnesty Bill Filed in House by Rodino”, Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series V Box 63, Folder 3; Seton Hall University School of Law; Newark Star Ledger article dated July 26, 1985, “Rodino Acts on Amnesty for Most Illegal Aliens”; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series V Box 63, Folder 2; Seton Hall University School of Law.

¹²³ *See, e.g.*, The Sunday Star Ledger article dated August 22, 1982, “Rodino Mapping Reform of Immigration Laws”; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series V Box 63, Folder 1; Seton Hall University School of Law; Italian Tribune News article dated September 30, 1982, “Committee Approves Immigration Bill”; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series V Box 63, Folder 1; Seton Hall University School of Law.

¹²⁴ *See, e.g.*, “Senate Bill to Affect Italian Immigration”; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series V Box 63, Folder 1; Seton Hall University School of Law; Italian Tribune News article dated September 23, 1982, “Senate Passes Immigration Law which Changes Future of Immigrants”; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series V Box 63, Folder 1; Seton Hall University School of Law.

identified and sympathized with immigrants and viewed them as family.¹²⁵ By supporting family reunification in the Immigration Act of 1986, Rodino recognized that everyone is connected in some way like a family because “virtually every American who is not an immigrant is descended from one.”¹²⁶

Further, Rodino’s push for amnesty also demonstrated that he viewed immigrants as family and that he wanted what was best for them.¹²⁷ Granting amnesty and giving undocumented immigrants the chance to become legal residents was the “humane and decent thing to do,” in Rodino’s mind.¹²⁸ Amnesty would help eliminate, what Rodino called, this “shadow society” and give millions of immigrants living in America a chance to become law-abiding citizens.¹²⁹

Rodino referred to undocumented immigrants as the “shadow society,” suggesting most undocumented immigrants lived and worked a life of indignity and insecurity in America.¹³⁰ They feared deportation or arrest by authorities.¹³¹ The First Ward’s Italian immigrant population, in a way, lived in the shadows, too. They faced discrimination, stigmatization, and insecurity.¹³² Nevertheless, the feeling of family intimacy throughout the First Ward kept this “shadow society” emotionally strong.¹³³ This familial value instilled in Rodino when he was a young man inspired him to advocate for family reunification and to promote these values as being at the core of

¹²⁵ Newark Star Ledger Letter to Editor from Rodino dated November 5, 1982, “Rodino Clarifies Immigration Bill”; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series V Box 63, Folder 1; Seton Hall University School of Law.

¹²⁶ Reader’s Digest dated January 1983, “Our Immigration Nightmare”; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series V Box 63, Folder 1; Seton Hall University School of Law.

¹²⁷ See, e.g., Burrelle’s Letter to Brad Holbrook dated June 20, 1984; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series V Box 63, Folder 2; Seton Hall University School of Law.

¹²⁸ *Id.*

¹²⁹ Newark Star Ledger article dated June 21, 1984, “Rodino Ties Backing to Lid on Migrants”; Peter Rodino, Jr. Papers Series 5 Box 63, Folder 2; Seton Hall University School of Law; Philadelphia Inquirer article dated June 18, 1984, “A Battle Over Immigration”; Peter Rodino, Jr. Papers Series V Box 63, Folder 2; Seton Hall University School of Law; The Home News article June 13, 1984, “Aliens Bill Splits NJ Delegation –and Not Just Along Party Lines”; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series V Box 63, Folder 2; Seton Hall University School of Law.

¹³⁰ *Id.*

¹³¹ Interview with Lawrence Spinelli, *supra* note 10.

¹³² Battaglia, *supra* note 34; Interview with Lawrence Spinelli, *supra* note 10; see also Mangione & Morreale, *supra* note 4, at 27 (recognizing most Italian immigrants in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries suffered stigma while attempting to assimilate into America).

¹³³ Battaglia, *supra* note 34; Immerso, *supra* note 10, at 138.

immigration policies and humanitarianism. Although some saw undocumented immigrants as “unfortunate outcasts,” it was vital, in Rodino’s mind, that undocumented immigrants had family to turn to in difficult times, for their own for stability.¹³⁴ Amnesty, Rodino believed, would allow individuals to come up from their shadow society and live a decent life.¹³⁵ A chance to live the American dream— just like his family and their neighbors in the First Ward.¹³⁶

Rodino was committed to the “vulnerable subclass” created by illegal immigration and to America; he did not turn his back on either.¹³⁷ Just like Rodino’s grandfather was determined to give his family a better life, just like Rodino was determined to fight for a better way of life for his own son, Rodino fought for a better way of life for other immigrants as well.¹³⁸ He treated them as family. He treated them with the respect that he learned from the First Ward.¹³⁹

Additionally, Rodino’s commitment to immigrants was also demonstrated by his support for employer sanctions. Rodino wanted to protect undocumented immigrants and their hard work from exploitation.¹⁴⁰ One of the primary reasons immigrants came to America was for employment.¹⁴¹ Undocumented immigrants were exploited for their hard work in the same way that Italian immigrant workers, including Rodino’s father, in the First Ward were exploited.¹⁴²

¹³⁴ The Tribune article dated June 14, 1982, “Are Aliens Taking Away Our Jobs?”; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series V Box 63, Folder 1; Seton Hall University School of Law.

¹³⁵ Shrewsbury, NJ Register article dated June 18, 1984, “Immigration Bill Nearing House Vote”; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series V Box 63, Folder 2; Seton Hall University School of Law.

¹³⁶ Newark Star Ledger article dated June 21, 1984, “Rodino Ties Backing to Lid on Migrants”; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series V Box 63, Folder 2; Seton Hall University School of Law.

¹³⁷ Washington Post Article dated December 17, 1982, “Debate Begins on Immigration”; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series V Box 63, Folder 1; Seton Hall University School of Law; “Rodino Proposes Bill to Revamp”; Peter W. Rodino Papers Series V Box 63, Folder 3; Seton Hall University School of Law.

¹³⁸ Letter, “Corporal Peter W. Rodino Jr. Headquarters II Army Corps Jacksonville, Florida”; Peter W. Rodino Papers Series I Box 2, Folder 7; Seton Hall University School of Law; “Growing Up Italian”; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series I Box 189, Folder 3; Seton Hall University School of Law.

¹³⁹ Immerso, *supra* note 10, at 138.

¹⁴⁰ See, e.g., Italian Tribune News article dated January 13, 1983, “Rodino Speaks on Immigration”; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series V Box 63, Folder 2; Seton Hall University School of Law.

¹⁴¹ See, e.g., Bridgewater Courier News article dated September 7, 1982, “Rodino Plan Best for Illegal Alien Bill”; Peter W. Rodino Papers Series V Box 63, Folder 1; Seton Hall University School of Law; “Growing Up Italian”; Peter W. Rodino Papers Series I Box 189, Folder 3; Seton Hall University School of Law.

¹⁴² See, e.g., The Tribune article dated June 14, 1982, “Are Aliens Taking Away Our Jobs?”; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series V Box 63, Folder 1; Seton Hall University School of Law; Italian Tribune News article dated January

“Unscrupulous employers” hired undocumented immigrants at “subhuman wages” and treated them like “animals.”¹⁴³ These employers were quick to take advantage of the shadow society’s immigration status and they knew that immigrants often feared being turned over to the authorities.¹⁴⁴ The immigrant workers desired to sustain a life for themselves and their families—the American dream similar to that of Rodino’s family’s and the First Ward’s citizens’ dream.¹⁴⁵

While Americans have the right to work, Rodino probably knew that a majority of them would not want to do certain types of work, like strenuous physical labor—the “dirty work.”¹⁴⁶ Undocumented workers, just like the First Ward’s workers, were not stealing jobs or depriving Americans the benefits of the nation.¹⁴⁷ Rather, they were supporting Americans who were not working and doing jobs Americans would not do.¹⁴⁸ Rodino realized “unscrupulous employers” preyed upon immigrants and their hard work, just like employers did in the First Ward, to take advantage of their cheap labor.¹⁴⁹ Importantly, Rodino realized this “modern form of economic slavery” could be abolished by a “just and enforceable” immigration reform bill.¹⁵⁰ Immigrants,

13, 1983, “Rodino Speaks on Immigration”; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series V Box 63, Folder 2; Seton Hall University School of Law.

¹⁴³ *Id.*

¹⁴⁴ Italian Tribune News article dated January 13, 1983, “Rodino Speaks on Immigration”; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series V Box 63, Folder 2; Seton Hall University School of Law; Interview with Lawrence Spinelli, *supra* note 10.

¹⁴⁵ *See, e.g.*, The Tribune article dated June 6, 1982, “Priest Speaks for Fearful Aliens”; Peter W. Rodino Papers Series V Box 63, Folder 1; Seton Hall University School of Law.

¹⁴⁶ *See, e.g.*, The Tribune article dated June 21, 1982, “Social Cost of Cheap Tomatoes”; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series V Box 63, Folder 1; Seton Hall University School of Law; *see also* Mangione & Morreale, *supra* note 4, at 138.

¹⁴⁷ The Tribune article dated June 6, 1982, “Priest Speaks for Fearful Aliens”; Peter W. Rodino Papers Series V Box 63, Folder 1; Seton Hall University School of Law; *see also* Okrent, *supra* note 5, at 51 (depicting a 1892 derogatory cartoon of an Italian immigrant stealing an American’s bread off his table).

¹⁴⁸ The Tribune article dated June 14, 1982, “Are Aliens Taking Away Our Jobs?”; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series V Box 63, Folder 1; Seton Hall University School of Law.

¹⁴⁹ *See, e.g.*, The Tribune article dated June 6, 1982, “Priest Speaks for Fearful Aliens”; Peter W. Rodino Papers Series V Box 63, Folder 1; Seton Hall University School of Law; Philadelphia Inquirer article dated June 18, 1984, “A Battle Over Immigration”; Peter W. Rodino Papers Series V Box 63, Folder 2; Seton Hall University School of Law; *see also* Okrent, *supra* note 5 at 51 (characterizing an Italian immigrant as “pauper labor” in a 1892 cartoon).

¹⁵⁰ The Tribune article dated June 28, 1982, “Border Slavery: Chicano Anger”; Peter W. Rodino Papers Series V Box 63, Folder 1; Seton Hall University School of Law.

Rodino stated, have contributed to America's economic wellbeing, and have become a part of American society; therefore, their hard work should not be exploited.¹⁵¹

Rodino was passionate about immigration reform because he feared that unless Congress acts to address problems, America may be forced to close its door to everyone—"a tragic outcome."¹⁵²

B. Columbus Day: A Day to Celebrate All Immigrants

In addition to the Immigration Act of 1986, the values of family, pride, and hard work are also reflected in Rodino's legislation that made Columbus Day a national holiday.¹⁵³ We know this because of his use of familial imagery, his celebration of immigrant pride, and Rodino personifying the value of hard work.¹⁵⁴ Rodino recognized that the Italian immigrants in America elevated Columbus to hero status and used their association with him as an entrée into being accepted as Americans.¹⁵⁵ This is one of the reasons he pushed to make Columbus Day a national holiday: to help Italians be considered Americans by non-Italians.¹⁵⁶ Nonetheless, Rodino envisioned Columbus Day as a multi-purpose holiday.¹⁵⁷ He believed it was a day to honor Columbus, the explorer "who braved the mysteries of uncharted Atlantic to open the New World

¹⁵¹ Hillside Times article dated August 8, 1985, "Rodino Immigration Bill"; Peter W. Rodino Papers Series V Box 63, Folder 3; Seton Hall University School of Law.

¹⁵² Newark Star Ledger article dated July 25, 1985, "Rodino Leading Drive for Immigration Reform"; Peter W. Rodino Series V Box 63, Folder 2; Seton Hall University School of Law.

¹⁵³ See, e.g., Speech on October 12, 1975, "Columbus Day"; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series V Box 10, Folder 12; Seton Hall University School of Law; Speech on October 5, 1975, "Luzerne County Columbus Day Dinner"; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series V Box 10, Folder 12; Seton Hall University School of Law; Speech on October 14, 1967, "Columbus Day Celebration Omaha, Nebraska"; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series V Box 1, Folder 17; Seton Hall University School of Law.

¹⁵⁴ *Id.*

¹⁵⁵ Interview with Lawrence Spinelli, *supra* note 10.

¹⁵⁶ *Id.*

¹⁵⁷ See, e.g., Press Release for release October 5, 1967 and after, "Rodino Testifies in Congress on Behalf of a National Columbus Day Holiday"; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series II Box 143, Folder 7; Seton Hall University School of Law.

to civilization and settlement,” while equally celebrating all immigrants who came to America and helped build a “strong, vital, and thriving” nation.¹⁵⁸

To promote the multi-purpose national holiday, Rodino used reoccurring familial symbols throughout his Columbus Day speeches.¹⁵⁹ He portrayed Columbus’ crew as a family working together to discover the New World—the Spanish monarch supported Columbus’ venture, the Portuguese map makers guided him, and various Europeans manned his ships.¹⁶⁰ When addressing his audiences, Rodino referred to his listeners as the “sons and daughters” of Columbus.¹⁶¹ Also, Rodino often praised Columbus as the father of all immigrants and immigration.¹⁶² By praising Columbus through these familial images, Rodino wanted Americans to realize that America was a melting pot, a nation of immigrants. It was important to him to acknowledge all of the contributions of immigrants to the building of a strong and prosperous America.¹⁶³

Throughout Rodino’s Columbus Day remarks, he often compared immigrants and Columbus, revealing their similarities, to help immigrants achieve their entrée in America.¹⁶⁴ Rodino believed immigrants had much in common with their “father” Columbus, in that both

¹⁵⁸ See, e.g., Rodino Hails House Approval of Columbus Day as New National Holiday For Release Friday, May 10, 1968 and After; Letterhead of 1967 Columbus Day Celebration Committee, “News Release, for Monday, October 9 1967, and After DRAFT Speech Detroit”; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series V Box 1, Folder 16; Seton Hall University School of Law.

¹⁵⁹ See, e.g., Speech on October 5, 1977, “Remarks by Peter W. Rodino, Jr. at the American Folklife Festival in Washington D.C.”; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series I Box 67, Folder 4; Seton Hall University School of Law.

¹⁶⁰ *Id.*

¹⁶¹ See, e.g., Speech on October 12, 1975, “Columbus Day”; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series V Box 10, Folder 12; Seton Hall University School of Law; Speech on October 5, 1975, “Luzerne County Columbus Day Dinner”; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series V Box 10, Folder 12; Seton Hall University School of Law.

¹⁶² See, e.g., “Italian Officials at Genoa Welcome Italian American Congressional Delegation”; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series IV Box 21, Folder 3; Seton Hall University School of Law; Speech on October 14, 1967, “Columbus Day Celebration Omaha, Nebraska”; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series V Box 1, Folder 17; Seton Hall University School of Law.

¹⁶³ See, e.g., Article dated October 4, 1967 “Peter W. Rodino M.C.—NJ 10th Columbus Day Hearing House Judiciary Subcommittee”; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series I Box 67, Folder 4; Seton Hall University School of Law; Letterhead of 1967 Columbus Day Celebration Committee, “News Release, for Monday, October 9 1967, and After DRAFT Speech Detroit”; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series V Box 1, Folder 16; Seton Hall University School of Law; Speech, “Excerpts from Last Year’s Columbus Day Remarks”; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series I Box 67 Folder 4; Seton Hall University School of Law.

¹⁶⁴ See, e.g., Speech on October 5, 1977, “Remarks by Peter W. Rodino, Jr. at the American Folklife Festival in Washington D.C.”; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series I Box 67, Folder 4; Seton Hall University School of Law.

reaffirmed their faith in the future and expressed their willingness to face the unknown.¹⁶⁵ They both did this by uprooting themselves from their homelands and traveling to the land of opportunity, a land to which many turned for hope and a better life.¹⁶⁶ It was the same land Rodino's family settled. It was the same land where young Corleone and the immigrants around him arrived, greeted by the symbol of hope and opportunity—the Statue of Liberty.¹⁶⁷ Columbus, Rodino's family, the First Ward's citizens, and other immigrants all braved the “hazards and perils from the countryside” across the ocean to the land of “promised opportunity.”¹⁶⁸ They were all members of the unique family, America, and they were all dedicated to the Columbian spirit of determination and perseverance.¹⁶⁹

In addition to familial imagery, Rodino displayed Columbus Day as a day for all Americans to proudly celebrate the spirit of adventure, growth, and ethnic diversity.¹⁷⁰ Rodino used the image of Columbus as a colorful tapestry to describe America and acknowledge it as a melting pot.¹⁷¹ He believed each heritage was a “priceless strand” woven into the fabric of the nation—the tapestry.¹⁷² To be American, Rodino stated, was to appreciate all humanity and strive for peace

¹⁶⁵ See, e.g., Letterhead of 1967 Columbus Day Celebration Committee, “News Release, for Monday, October 9 1967, and After DRAFT Speech Detroit”; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series V Box 1, Folder 16; Seton Hall University School of Law.

¹⁶⁶ Speech on October 5, 1977, “Remarks by Peter W. Rodino, Jr. at the American Folklife Festival in Washington D.C.”; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series I Box 67, Folder 4; Seton Hall University School of Law.

¹⁶⁷ THE GODFATHER: PART II (Paramount Pictures 1974); Italian Tribune Article dated September 23, 1982, “Editorial Symbols of America Italian Tribune September 23, 1982”; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series V Box 63, Folder 1; Seton Hall University School of Law.

¹⁶⁸ Speech on October 14, 1967, “Columbus Day Celebration Omaha, Nebraska”; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series V Box 1, Folder 17; Seton Hall University School of Law.

¹⁶⁹ Speech on October 9, 1967, “Rodino Addresses Columbus Day Celebration in Detroit and After”; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series V Box 1, Folder 16; Seton Hall University School of Law.

¹⁷⁰ See, e.g., Speech on October 12, 1975, “Columbus Day”; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series V Box 10, Folder 12; Seton Hall University School of Law; Speech on October 5, 1975, “Luzerne County Columbus Day Dinner”; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series V Box 10, Folder 12; Seton Hall University School of Law.

¹⁷¹ See, e.g., Speech on October 12, 1975, “Columbus Day”; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series V Box 10, Folder 12; Seton Hall University School of Law; Speech on October 5, 1975, “Luzerne County Columbus Day Dinner”; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series V Box 10, Folder 12; Seton Hall University School of Law; Speech on October 14, 1967, “Columbus Day Celebration Omaha, Nebraska”; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series V Box 1, Folder 17; Seton Hall University School of Law.

¹⁷² *Id.*

within the tapestry that makes America unique.¹⁷³ Columbus Day, Rodino believed, was a time to celebrate all the colors of the American tapestry—all immigrants.

During the period when Rodino's family and young Corleone came to America, many immigrants sought to "shed their old identities" and take new ones, in an effort to make them feel "more American" and fit in with the rest of the individuals in the country.¹⁷⁴ Rodino's name was changed from Pellegrino to Peter, just like the immigration officer changed young Corleone's name to sound "more American."¹⁷⁵ Nevertheless, Rodino acknowledged that time had progressed and individuals were instead searching to find their precious heritages because they were, for the first time in America, proud of themselves and their roots.¹⁷⁶ For Rodino, Columbus Day was a day to celebrate one's ethnic authenticity and heritage without shame.¹⁷⁷ This is exactly what the First Ward's citizens did. For example, they spoke the Italian-language, circulated Italian-language newspapers, attended operas, watched Italian-language films, hosted Columbus Day parades, etc.¹⁷⁸ Notably, the traditional Sunday dinner helped them feel Italian in America because it allowed them to proudly maintain their cultural traits.¹⁷⁹ Rodino promoted Columbus Day as a reminder that America was a place where "all people, regardless of color, creed, origin, could achieve their full potential."¹⁸⁰ He reminded all people, not just Italians, that they had every right to be proud of themselves.¹⁸¹

¹⁷³ Speech on October 5, 1977, "Remarks by Peter W. Rodino, Jr. at the American Folklife Festival in Washington D.C."; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series I Box 67, Folder 4; Seton Hall University School of Law.

¹⁷⁴ *Id.*; THE GODFATHER: PART II (Paramount Pictures 1974).

¹⁷⁵ See, e.g., Interview with Lawrence Spinelli, *supra* note 10; THE GODFATHER: PART II (Paramount Pictures 1974).

¹⁷⁶ Speech on October 5, 1977, "Remarks by Peter W. Rodino, Jr. at the American Folklife Festival in Washington D.C."; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series I Box 67, Folder 4; Seton Hall University School of Law.

¹⁷⁷ *Id.*

¹⁷⁸ Immerso, *supra* note 10, at 32, 118.

¹⁷⁹ Battaglia, *supra* note 34.

¹⁸⁰ Letter from Rodino to Carl Marburger at Dept. of Education dated October 2, 1972, "Columbus Day Correspondence"; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series II Box 143, Folder 7; Seton Hall University School of Law.

¹⁸¹ Speech on October 14, 1967, "Columbus Day Celebration Omaha, Nebraska"; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series V Box 1, Folder 17; Seton Hall University School of Law.

Lastly, Rodino himself personified the value of hard work because he fought for years to have Columbus Day recognized as a national holiday.¹⁸² He, too, like the immigrants that came before him, had a dream. As a young boy, the Columbus Day parades in the First Ward were Rodino's favorite experiences. The "fervor and enthusiasm" he experienced during those parades were "heartwarming."¹⁸³ Rodino exemplified the Columbian spirit of "perseverance, determination, and patience" to promote his dream of making Columbus Day a national holiday into a reality.¹⁸⁴

While building this dream, Rodino often took time to recognize the immigrants who "labored unselfishly" to build the cities, roads, highways, and railways of America.¹⁸⁵ He knew that these immigrants, like the manual laborers of the First Ward, were often exploited for their hard work.¹⁸⁶ Immigrants, Rodino stated, give so much of themselves even though they often receive so little in return.¹⁸⁷ Rodino recognized how many immigrants worked hard to become professionals, such as doctors, lawyers, and businessmen.¹⁸⁸ Rodino was especially proud of the part played by Italian immigrants in American history, and the ongoing contributions made by Italians and Italian Americans.¹⁸⁹ Columbus Day was a day to celebrate the immigrant spirit "to get things done, the will to achieve, and the determination to accomplish."¹⁹⁰

¹⁸² See, e.g., Press Release for release on March 26, 1968 and after, "Rodino Hails Committee Approval of Columbus Day National Holiday Bill"; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series II Box 143, Folder 7; Seton Hall University School of Law.

¹⁸³ Speech on October 14, 1967, "Columbus Day Celebration Omaha, Nebraska"; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series V Box 1, Folder 17; Seton Hall University School of Law.

¹⁸⁴ Speech on October 9, 1967, "Rodino Addresses Columbus Day Celebration in Detroit and After"; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series V Box 1, Folder 16; Seton Hall University School of Law; Peter W. Rodino M.C.--NJ 10th Columbus Day Hearing House Judiciary Subcommittee Oct. 4, 1967

¹⁸⁵ Speech on October 14, 1967, "Columbus Day Celebration Omaha, Nebraska"; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series V Box 1, Folder 17; Seton Hall University School of Law.

¹⁸⁶ Immerso, *supra* note 10, at 7, 17.

¹⁸⁷ Speech on October 14, 1967, "Columbus Day Celebration Omaha, Nebraska"; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series V Box 1, Folder 17; Seton Hall University School of Law.

¹⁸⁸ *Id.*

¹⁸⁹ See, e.g., "Columbus Day Pros and Cons"; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series V Box 1, Folder 17; Seton Hall University School of Law.

¹⁹⁰ Speech on October 14, 1967, "Columbus Day Celebration Omaha, Nebraska"; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series V Box 1, Folder 17; Seton Hall University School of Law.

Rodino saw America as a family and was proud to be an Italian American. He believed by honoring immigrants, Americans not only show gratitude for immigrants' countless contributions, but also "strike a blow" against discrimination.¹⁹¹ He thought it was intolerable to measure a person by the place that he or she comes from without regard for his or her work ethic, loyalty, or other "commendable characteristic[s]."¹⁹² Rodino believed that by working together, Americans could rededicate themselves toward a "voyage of peace, justice, and freedom" for all persons.¹⁹³

IV. CONCLUSION

Throughout Rodino's Columbus Day speeches, he consistently used the Italian word *avanti*, which means "forward," to demonstrate how America personifies the Columbian spirit.¹⁹⁴ Even when America is confronted by "challenges, tensions, and divisions," the nation, bound together as a family, proudly keeps working hard and moves forward together to overcome its obstacles.¹⁹⁵ By embracing the Italian American values of family, pride, and hard work, Rodino believed America would continue moving forward and progressing, not only in immigration reform, but in other areas as well. As Rodino said, "when [the] principles of justice, trust, and honor upon which America was founded are tested, a resurgence of the Columbian spirit, which stirred Columbus onward on his quest for a new world, is a vital need."¹⁹⁶ This spirit will help America overcome "insurmountable odds" and continue adding more color to its tapestry.¹⁹⁷

Avanti!

¹⁹¹ Speech, "Excerpts from Last Year's Columbus Day Remarks"; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series I Box 67 Folder 4; Seton Hall University School of Law.

¹⁹² *Id.*

¹⁹³ *Id.*

¹⁹⁴ *See, e.g.*, Speech on October 14, 1967, "Columbus Day Celebration Omaha, Nebraska"; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series V Box 1, Folder 17; Seton Hall University School of Law; Speech on October 5, 1975, "Luzerne County Columbus Day Dinner"; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series V Box 10, Folder 12; Seton Hall University School of Law; Speech on October 9, 1967, "Rodino Addresses Columbus Day Celebration in Detroit and After"; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series V Box 1, Folder 16; Seton Hall University School of Law.

¹⁹⁵ Speech, "Excerpts from Last Year's Columbus Day Remarks"; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series I Box 67 Folder 4; Seton Hall University School of Law.

¹⁹⁶ *Id.*

¹⁹⁷ Speech, "Excerpts from Last Year's Remarks Columbus Day"; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series I Box 67, Folder 4; Seton Hall University School of Law; Speech on October 12, 1975, "Columbus Day"; Peter W. Rodino, Jr.

Papers Series V Box 10, Folder 12; Seton Hall University School of Law; Letter from Rodino to Carl Marburger at Dept. of Education dated October 2, 1972, "Columbus Day Correspondence"; Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Papers Series II Box 143, Folder 7; Seton Hall University School of Law.