



Fiorello LaGuardia By Lexington Kahler

Fiorello Henry La Guardia was an Italian American, who served his city, country, and heritage with much acclaim and integrity. Italian culture fosters loyalty to one's family and community. It was these intrinsic qualities, that allowed him to succeed in politics, above rampant cronyism in politics. He was responsible for the arrest of the Italian mobster, Lucky Luciano. He loathed the negative stereotypes that organized crime brought on the Italian community. Truly, he ranks highly, as of the most famous Italian politicians of all time.

LaGuardia, was able to bring together many groups, in order to serve their shared community. Being of Jewish descent also, he was able to work with Jewish communities, German Americans, and many other groups, to do what was best for New York City, and the country, as a whole. Whether it was as a congressman, a soldier, or the mayor of New York City, he always attacked organized crime, improved infrastructure, fought government corruption, and improved the image of Italian Americans.

His version of "Fireside Chats", was a direct dialogue with his constituents as he routinely was on the radio. In fact, he even read comic books over the radio to appeal to the entire family. This showed that he was a family man, as well. In fact, on his mother's side, he had Jewish relatives that had been killed in Europe during the Holocaust. He knew human suffering on a personal level, which allowed him to understand the plight of so many of his constituents.

In the early 1930s, he was one of the first politicians to bring light to the atrocities of the Nazis in Europe. His loyalty to family, allowed him to realize the trouble that his family faced in Europe. In fact, one of his relatives, is one of the few American citizens to be killed in a concentration camp. As early as 1933, as an Italian American, he stood along side the American Jewish Congress, in condemning the Nazis. while most Americans were immersed in the Great Depression.

He was an ally of Franklin D. Roosevelt and was able to use his knowledge of infrastructure to improve our country. Many, New Deal jobs, employed Italian Americans in areas of pavement and masonry. In fact, back on Long island, there are many New Deal projects, that my ancestors worked on, including the building of fire houses, and public schools. My great grandfather, Natale Fusaro, was a mason who took tremendous pride in his work on New Deal projects.

Being Italian, made LaGuardia a strong leader, with his strong sense of community and family. He wanted to make his home, the best it could be. New York City and Long Island, where my family is from, is stamped with his legacy. Beaches, roads, bridges, and other legacies have been left behind to remind us of Fiorello Henry LaGuardia. In fact, just a few months ago, I flew in, and out, of the world famous, LaGuardia Airport in New York City.