



Fiorello La Guardia By Alexandria Cerini

During his lifetime, Fiorello La Guardia took action to help improve the lives of many Americans. His Italian heritage helped him acquire the means to become as successful as he became, through allowing him a unique perspective on many common issues within his home of New York City and helping him find a starting ground for his career.

He got his start in politics working at U.S. consulates in Europe, an opportunity he found because he was living in Italy at the time. From there he was able to get a job as a translator in 1906, at Ellis Island, since there were so many Italians immigrating to America during the early 1900s. While working there he got into NYU and became a lawyer by 1910. He was then elected to the House of Representatives in 1916, representing the Italian East Harlem. During this time, he got the Norris-La Guardia Act of 1932 passed, which restricted the court's power to restrain or ban non-violent protests by trade unions.

Afterwards in 1933, he was elected as the mayor of New York, where he was well known for supporting nonpartisan reform and civic improvement, while also fighting against corrupt politicians and organized crime. As an Italian American, he had faced prejudicial stereotypes stemming from the Italian organized crime groups of New York, causing him to gain a deep loathing for them, saying that they brought shame to the Italian community. His first act as mayor was to have the mob boss Lucky Luciano arrested on any charge they could find. He also set up a program to search-and-destroy all of Frank Costello's slot machines, crippling parts of the New York mob and reforming part of the image of Italian Americans. He also improved New York City's emergency services and social welfare services. As mayor he continued to support immigrants, like his family, by funding low-income housing and creating merit-based civil service employment opportunities that were open for anyone to apply for.

After being reelected for two more terms as mayor, he retired from running for mayor and instead was appointed the Director of the U.S. Office of Civilian Defense and the director general of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration. As the general director of the UNRRA, he was responsible for providing services to the millions of Europeans that had been displaced because of WWII. He helped provide these people with food, clothing, and shelter. Throughout his life he used his platform to speak on European issues that he found important as well, especially the Nazi Party. He spoke on behalf of many Italians and Jews, since his mother was of Jewish decent, as a critic of Hitler and the "complete annihilation of the Jews in Germany."

Fiorello's life was one of public service, not just to the American people, but to Italians and all immigrants as well. He continues to serve as an example of what immigrants can achieve if given the proper resources and support.