



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Many thanks for the sentiments expressed in Tom McMamee's column regarding the Rotolo Middle School play. But I think he missed the big problem. The columnist's solution to the problem is through, "debate and ridicule."

Hey Tom! From your laptop to God's ears!!!!

Let me bring you and your readers up to date. For the last four generations, the Italian American community has met, implored, debated, and attempted to educate the news media, the motion picture industry, the television industry, the radio stations, and the advertising industry (along with those companies that employ them) about the effect of the constant use of negative stereotyping Italian Americans. Our community has presented documentation and studies about its overuse. We've cited comparisons regarding the receptive attitudes to pleas and examples of abuse and those of the other ethnic groups. And collectively, therein lies the rub.

Our community is left with these feeble responses... Where's your sense of humor?.. Its only entertainment.... Some of my best friends are Italian.. We meant no harm, but were not changing a thing.. And last but not least,... Surely, you don't deny that people like this exist.

The fact of the matter are these (subliminal as they are to most). Because America's media embraced programs and characters akin to the sopranos, the following are just a few of the things spawned from its acceptance: a local suburban police department saw no harm in naming one of it's police canines "Dago", Steven Spielberg produced a full length animated feature for children called Shark Tales in which all of the villains had Italian sounding names, and companies such as Burger King thought nothing of becoming corporate sponsors and used the characters in their advertising. Neither Spielberg nor Burger King would acknowledge our phone calls. The Wrigley Co., Coca Cola and Budweiser all managed to incorporate negative stereotypical Italian American Images into their ad campaigns. And now this, a school teacher in a middle school in images into their ad campaigns. And now this, a school teacher in a middle school in suburban America, one who has enlisted to help mold the minds of our young, has chosen to further enhance these images in the name of (no longer entertainment) EDUCATION!

Using that thought process, let us hypothesize. In time to come, should another educator apply blackface to his students and produce a minstrel show, the African American community would be hard pressed to complain since the reason for the production is "Cosmetology 101"

I am compelled to emphasize the following in my closing remarks, the Italian American community is not looking for censorship, we simply asking for parity. We'd love for those folks in corporate America and in those creative departments of ad agencies, the script ritters for television and movie industries and now our educators to be as sensitive to our concerns as they are to any other ethnic group or race in this great country of ours.

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