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**Bleeding Green, White, and Red: The Relationship Between Separation and Assimilation,
Trends in Italian American Political Radicalism, 1927-1969**

An honors thesis presented to the
Department of History,
University at Albany, State University of New York
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for graduation with Honors in History

Andrew V. Nicolella

Research Mentor: Carl Bon Tempo, Ph.D.
Research Advisor: Michitake Aso, Ph.D.

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Abstract:

This thesis explores the experiences of Italian American political radicals from 1927 to 1969, a time when Italians moved from the shadows and into the mainstream of American society. Through an analysis of the lives and actions of Italian American political radicals, I argue that these individuals included in this study utilized their sense of Italian heritage to varying extents in shaping the character of their radicalism. This thesis focuses on historical contexts that shaped their political radicalism. The individuals addressed actively engaged in political movements, participated in the labor force, ran for public office, and fought to protect their rights as citizens. During the 1920s and 1930s, these Italian American political radicals were mainly political refugees from Italy and predominantly worked as political organizers. By the 1940s and 1950s these political radicals were professional politicians and intellectuals. Finally, in the 1960s, intellectuals and student radicals of Italian American dissent came to the forefront of Italian American political radicalism. The paper also demonstrates that Italian American political dissent during the mid-twentieth century was not a threat to American society. Rather, during the period under consideration, Italian American political radicals aimed to both preserve and transform numerous aspects of American society that are considered to be fundamental and are widely accepted in the modern day. This thesis relies on a variety of sources ranging from oral history interviews from the Oral History of the American Left at Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives in New York, NY, dialog from the Congressional Record, personal manuscript collections, and historical newspaper articles.

Acknowledgments:

Many people have aided me through the monumental task of writing my first thesis. First, I would like to express my gratitude to my research seminar professor, Michitake Aso, and my research mentor, Carl Bon Tempo for their indispensable support and guidance throughout my research journey. Their unwavering encouragement, insightful feedback, and patience have been instrumental in shaping my academic and personal growth. Without their expert knowledge and dedication to their craft, this work would not have been possible. The knowledge and experience that I have gained from working with them will certainly be crucial for success in my future endeavors.

Secondly, I would like to express thanks to my colleagues in our seminar class, whose unwavering support and camaraderie have been a source of motivation and encouragement throughout the research and writing process. Their presence has transformed what initially seemed like a solitary project into a truly collaborative journey. Their unwavering support, guidance, and contributions have been instrumental in shaping the outcome of this project. Together, we have overcome challenges and achieved milestones that would have been impossible to accomplish alone.

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to EmmaLee Morgan for her dedication to our shared interests in history and the long hours that we have spent in the library working and studying for this project. Her willingness to share insights and provide feedback on my work have been incredibly valuable in shaping the outcome of this project. I would also like to thank Deina Carbonara for always being there to listen when I needed to vent about the challenges of the project. Her empathy and support have helped to keep me level-headed and motivated to complete this project. Brianna Collora's unwavering commitment to giving her best has also been a constant source of inspiration. Brianna's insights and feedback on my work continually challenge me to strive for excellence. I am also grateful to Devin Lamb for his aptitude in providing and receiving constructive criticism on our papers. His feedback has been instrumental in refining my ideas and arguments. Galilea Estrella's calming presence and sense of humor have been such a large help as well, especially during the most stressful periods of this project. Finally, I would like to thank Alexander Needham for entrusting me with his work and valuing my opinion. His trust and willingness to collaborate have allowed me to grow and learn how to give criticism in a way that is useful to all parties involved. As we part ways, I wish my colleagues only the best in their future endeavors and am confident that their hard work, dedication, and talents will lead them to excel in whatever life paths they choose.

This work is dedicated to my grandparents, Albert V. Nicolella and Sophia J. Nicolella. I strive to make them proud in everything I do, and this project is a testament to their enduring influence on my life.

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This is what I say: I would not wish to a dog or to a snake, to the most low and misfortune creature on earth- I would not wish to any of them what I have had to suffer for things that I am not guilty of. But my conviction is that I have suffered because I am a radical and indeed I am a radical; I have suffered because I was Italian, and indeed I am an Italian; I have suffered more for my family and for my beloved than for myself; but I am so convinced to be right that if you could execute me two times, and if I could be reborn two other times, I would live again to do what I have already done.

- Bartolomeo Vanzetti,

Pre execution statement, 1927

Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti both immigrated to the United States from Italy in 1908. Neither of the men led lives of crime in their new country. Rather, they were two hard-working immigrants who aligned themselves with an unpopular political ideology—*anarchism*—during the First Red Scare. After being arrested, the two men were charged with, and later convicted of, a robbery and murder that occurred at the Slater and Morrill shoe factory in South Braintree, Massachusetts on April 15, 1920. The two anarchists were convicted rather quickly after their arrest in a trial that many observers consider a sham. Even now, there is still no consensus about whether they committed the crimes of which they were accused of. Sentenced to die by the electric chair, they spent six years on death row. During that time, Sacco and Vanzetti’s case grew into an unprecedented political and legal scandal, especially when the state executed them on August 23, 1927. To this day, some observers still consider their trial to have been a sham and their execution to have been a political murder.¹

¹ For more on the Sacco & Vanzetti trial and its impacts please consult: Mary Anne Trasciatti, “Framing

Vanzetti's pre-execution statement at the beginning of the paper is a telling example of how he and other Italian immigrants of the 1920s felt marginalized by American society. He explicitly says that he was being persecuted for a crime that he did not commit purely because of his unpopular political affiliations and because he was an Italian immigrant in an unwelcoming country. It is no secret that in the United States it is difficult for ethnic populations to be accepted by those who have already established themselves as Americans. Yet the reasons and nature of those ethnic Americans who dissented from established American norms can be quite puzzling. It is especially puzzling when the ethnic populations that these dissenters belonged to were on the verge of becoming assimilated and accepted into mainstream American life.

This thesis explores how Italian American political radicals integrated into American society during the mid-twentieth century, a period in which scholars have demonstrated the ability of Italian immigrants to transition from the periphery of American society to its mainstream. Additionally, I argue that over time, Italian American radicalism underwent notable transformations as a result of differing interpretations regarding the role of their Italian heritage in their political activism. While early Italian American radicals embraced their heritage as a way to connect with the struggles of the working class, later generations moved away from this perspective and focused on broader social justice issues that harmed people outside of their ethnic group. This shift occurred because they downplayed the importance of their Italian heritage in their political activism. They recognized the need to fight for reform and challenge American mainstream norms that negatively impacted people outside of their own ethnic group.

the Sacco-Vanzetti Executions in the Italian American Press," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 20, no. 4 (2003): 408.; Moshik Temkin, *The Sacco-Vanzetti Affair: America on Trial* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009).

To support these findings, this thesis takes a close look at certain Italian Americans who themselves challenged mainstream American political values from 1927 to 1969.

Important changes bookend the forty-year time period that this thesis explores. The year 1927 was when Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti were unfairly executed due to their anarchist political affiliation and their Italian ethnicity. It can be seen as one of the more obvious instances of Italian American marginalization. In 1969, Mario Puzo's *The Godfather* was published, marking a moment when Italian culture became much more acceptable to the American mainstream. This too was a significant event in what historians call the "ethnic revival" in which white ethnics began celebrating, rather than hiding their ethnicity. During the time in between these two monumental events in Italian American history there were numerous attempts by Italian reformers to cleanse the image of their ethnic group among people who were native to the United States. Specifically, they sought out immigration reform. Ultimately the changes that reformers were fighting for would not come to fruition until the majority of Italian Americans adopted so-called mainstream American values and embraced American institutions. However, this thesis places emphasis on those Italian Americans who dissented from American norms and did not go on to fully embrace the institutions that are deemed crucial to the American way of life during the same timeframe in which their compatriots were fighting to become accepted into the mainstream.

To understand why most ethnic Americans would find it in their best interest to adapt ideas considered integral to mainstream visions of American identity, this thesis first examines what formulations of that mainstream identity looked like and why Italian Americans aimed to adopt them. Mainstream American identity can be seen as something that is quite fluid and historically contingent. During the twentieth century it can generally be defined as a culturally

dominant identity that was primarily influenced by white, middle-class values and norms. The experiences of the first wave of Italian immigrants who came to the United States in the twentieth century were filled with instances of discrimination, negative stereotyping, and suspicion.

As an ethnic group Italian Americans made numerous economic contributions to the American economy by working in a plethora of American industries. They voted in elections, and served in the military, yet they were still deemed as being incapable of becoming good Americans by those of “old” immigrant groups.² Yet, over time Italians discovered that their culture and ethnicity would become more widely accepted by the same groups of Americans who had previously believed that they could not fit the ideal of what it meant to be a “good American.” In other words, the perception of Italians as outsiders changed as they became more integrated into American society. Ultimately, the history of Italian immigrants in America shows how some American immigrant groups can be perceived as being valuable in some senses, but not others.

From 1924 to 1965 the United States’ immigration system was based on the national origins quota system, meaning that there was a strict number of immigrants from specific countries and regions in the eastern hemisphere who were allowed to legally immigrate to the United States. Provisions of anti-immigrant legislation, such as the Immigration Act of 1924, were used to make it more difficult for the populations of southern Europe to be allowed into the United States. These provisions were especially detrimental to the self-esteem of Italian

² When referring to “old immigrants” I am referring to early immigrant groups who came to the United States in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, like the Irish, German, and English who created many of the societal norms that are prevalent in the United States; Maddalena Marinari, *Unwanted: Italian and Jewish Mobilization Against Restrictive Immigration Laws 1882-1965* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2020), 7.

Americans as the restrictive nature of the national origins system made it almost impossible for them to reconnect with their family members from Italy. The weariness that was placed among these immigrant groups from the eastern hemisphere by those who were native to the United States is what ultimately motivated many Italian American reformers to advocate for more inclusive immigration legislation.³

In effort to prompt immigration reform for Italian migrants, reformers made numerous attempts to get American legislators to recognize them as the type of immigrants who could make for good Americans. Therefore, in the process of trying to appeal to upper-class Americans, Italian immigration reformers realized that they needed to appeal to mainstream American values so that their grievances could be heard. By embracing core American values such as democracy, economic prosperity, and loyalty, Italian reformers were ultimately able to shift the ethnic group from the margins of American society and into its mainstream. For example, Italian Americans would often write home to their families in Italy. In their correspondences with one another, Italian Americans would place much emphasis on the concepts of American material prosperity and abundance of resources in order to get their family and friends in Italy to either find the motivation to immigrate to America themselves or to vote for particular governmental candidates who were backed by the United States.⁴ Actions like

³ For more information concerning twentieth century immigration restriction please consult: Maddalena Marinari, *Unwanted: Italian and Jewish Mobilization Against Restrictive Immigration Laws 1882-1965* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2020); Wendy Wall, "Are we a Nation?," In *Inventing the "American Way" The Politics of Consensus from the New Deal to the Civil Rights Movement* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2008), 15-34.

⁴ Sources that include information on the 1947 Italian letter writing campaign: Stefano Luconi, "Anticommunism, Americanization, and Ethnic Identity: Italian Americans and the 1948 Parliamentary Elections in Italy," *The Historian* 62, no. 2 (1999): 285-302; Ronald L. Filippelli, *American Labor and Postwar Italy, 1943-1953* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1989).

these proved that Italians could make for good Americans, and one's who were worthy of having their desires attended to.

One of the most monumental moments that highlights this shift in thought regarding the desirability of Italian immigrants would come in 1965 when Lyndon B. Johnson would sign the 1965 Immigration Act into law.⁵ The act would ultimately rid United States immigration policy of the national origins quota system and replace it with a system much more favorable to Italian American reformers. The newer system put into place by the 1965 Act favored immigrants based on their economic value, skillsets, and familial relations rather than simply giving preference based on what country one was immigrating from. While the 1965 Immigration Act did not completely get rid of the skeptical feelings towards all American immigrant groups, it clearly marks a point in which Italian Americans were deemed as desirable potential citizens.

Altogether, Italian Americans were ultimately able to appeal to the fluid nature of mainstream American identity and have their voices heard by those who held power during the twentieth century. They would even go on to spread these core American ideals by continuing to do things like, boast American superiority through military service, international campaigns, and correspondence with people in their former country. However, while it is somewhat clear to see how immigration policy and opinions of Italian culture changed over this period, it can be difficult to find these distinctions when looking at the ways in which Italian American political radicals have been treated. It is apparent that leftism or the political views of those on the left-wing of the political spectrum has, for the most part, always been outside the confines of American identity. However, the rate at which it has been deemed acceptable in American society fluctuates a lot during the forty-year time frame.

⁵ Maddalena Marinari, *Unwanted: Italian and Jewish Mobilization Against Restrictive Immigration Laws 1882-1965* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2020). 173-174.

The dramatic changes in how Americans viewed leftist political stances are most clearly marked by periods of American panic and distress. This thesis will be taking a look at political radicalism among Italian Americans during these separate periods and it will be broken up into three different parts. The first part of the thesis will focus on the late 1920s and the 1930s where there is a considerably greater amount of acceptance concerning leftism and its political ideologies. During the late 1920s and into the 1930s Italian American political radicals, such as Albina Delfino and Egidio Clemente claimed that their leftist views were crucial in the efforts of provoking legislation that would protect semi-skilled labor industries and the Italian Americans who worked in them. The efforts of the Italian American political radicals from the 1920s and 1930s yielded some positive results, notably with the enactment of the Wagner Act in 1935. This piece of legislation was significant as it marked the first time that labor unions were recognized as legitimate representatives in labor politics.⁶ The growing acceptability for leftism during the 1930s most likely stemmed from the impact that the Great Depression had on the American working class and the youth. Such impacts included the pro-labor laws that developed as a result of the New Deal.⁷

Conversely, the second part of this thesis will concern itself with the 1940s and the beginnings of the Cold War in the 1950s. During this point in American history the acceptability for leftism would dramatically dwindle. The decreasing acceptability for left-wing political thought during the years after World War II and into the 1950s can mostly be attributed to the shift from fascism being America's number one enemy to communism and other left-wing

⁶ Nelson Lichtenstein, *State of the Union: A Century of American Labor* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), 15.

⁷ Robert Cohen, *When the Old Left was Young: Student Radicals and America's First Mass Student Movement, 1929-1941* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1993).; Maurice Isserman, *If I Had a Hammer... The Death of the Old Left and the Birth of the New Left* (New York, NY: Basic Books Inc., Publishers, 1987).

schools of thought taking over the role.⁸ Finally, the third part of the thesis will cover radicalism in the 1960s and how even with the counterculture movements of the decade, American mainstream identity would continue to shift further away from accepting leftist ideologies, and the people who held these beliefs.

⁸ Information concerning the upsurge in American anticommunism can be found in: Gary Gerstle, *American Crucible: Race and Nation in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017); Ellen Schrecker, *Many Are the Crimes: McCarthyism in America* (New York, NY: Little, Brown and Company, 1998).; Michael J. Hogan, *A Cross of Iron: Harry S. Truman and the Origins of the National Security State, 1945-1954* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

Historiography:

Since beginning my research on the topic, I have consulted with the literature of historians who cover different aspects of twentieth century America. First, I have consulted literature that concerns itself with the history of American radicalism and dissent during the twentieth century. Second, I have reviewed the literature of prominent historians of Italian America, like Maddalena Marinari, Danielle Battisti, and Thomas Guglielmo. Third, I have referred to the small number of secondary sources that have to do with twentieth century radicalism among the Italian American community.

First, when looking back on how other historians have covered American radicalism and dissent during the mid-twentieth century there are a few themes that are integral to the reasons in which they feel that ethnic Americans adopted the mainstream American ways of life. One of those themes being American leftist culture and how it has developed and changed over time during the twentieth century. Historians who study the American left, such as Landon Storrs, Gerald Meyer, and Robert Cohen, tend to focus on much of their work around specific individuals who were publicly accused of having communist sympathies. Or they focus on large leftist organizations whose leaders were Socialists or Communist Party members, but whose lower-level followers were more or less just progressive minded people who were not aligned much outside of the center on the political spectrum. In addition, the current historical literature concerning dissenters during the war years of the 1940s and Cold War years of the 1950s correctly characterizes the dissenters of the Cold War consensus as victims to a climate that was embedded with mass hysteria.⁹ However, there is little scholarship that addresses the

⁹ For more on dissenters from the Cold War Consensus please consult: Robert Cohen, *When the Old Left was Young: Student Radicals and America's First Mass Student Movement, 1929-1941* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1993); Nelson Lichtenstein, *State of the Union: A Century of American Labor* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton

commonalities and differences among dissenters from American identity who share Italian heritage. Therefore, this thesis looks to address and add insights to the importance that ethnic heritage played in dissenters from mainstream American identity during the mid-twentieth century by focusing on the nature of dissent among Americans of Italian ancestry.

Second, when referring to sources that concern themselves with the history of Italian America, they typically focus on aspects that distinguish ethnic American history from that of other areas of the subject. Aspects of American life regarding things like, immigration, labor, race relations, and loyalty are of most importance when looking at how historians have interpreted the lives of twentieth century Italian Americans. Historians of Italian American labor and immigration during the twentieth century, such as Danielle Battisti and Maddalena Marinari, typically attribute the adaptation of mainstream American identity among the Italian American community to motivations concerning political progress and social advancement. These historians dispute which motives were more important to Italian Americans that were living during the mid-twentieth century. Both Danielle Battisti and Maddalena Marinari have been able to agree that the ethnic group was more apt to conform to mainstream American political identity because they had been advocating for greater immigration reform for southern and eastern Europeans since they had started to settle in the United States.¹⁰ This makes sense considering

University Press, 2002); Gerald Meyer, *Vito Marcantonio: Radical Politician 1902-1954* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1989).

¹⁰ Works that include reasons behind why Italian Americans would be more apt to assimilating to American life are: Danielle Battisti, “The American Committee on Italian Migration, Anti-Communism, and Immigration Reform,” *Journal of American Ethnic History* 31, no. 2 (2012): 11-40; Danielle Battisti, *Whom we Shall Welcome: Italian Americans and Immigration Reform, 1945-1965* (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2019), 17-48; Lawrence DiStasi, *Una Storia Segreta: The Secret History of Italian American Evacuation and Internment During World War II* (Berkeley, CA: Heyday, 2001); Thomas A. Guglielmo, *White on Arrival: Italians, Race, Color, and Power in Chicago, 1890-1945* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2003); Maddalena Marinari, *Unwanted: Italian and Jewish Mobilization Against Restrictive Immigration Laws 1882-1965* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2020); Mary Anne

that a majority of immigrant groups did indeed seek to assimilate in order to experience the same freedoms and advantages that American society provided to its white upper classes.

In addition, these ethnic Americans saw periods of panic, like the Second Red Scare and the Cold War as times in which they could overcome the shameful stigmas that had been put on them by America's "old" immigrant populations.¹¹ Even so, Danielle Battisti focuses on Italian American conformity by highlighting how the ethnic group adopted the position that the foreign policy of the United States should also be considered the world's policy. In her book, *Whom We Shall Welcome: Italian Americans and Immigration Reform*, Battisti claims that Italian Americans portrayed their immigrant relatives who were still in Italy as desperate people in need of American material abundance to deter them from radical thought. A problem that could have been solved with more American aid to Italy, and less immigration restrictions that prohibited immigrants from southern and eastern Europe from settling in the United States.¹²

On the other hand, Marinari also claims that immigration reform was at the forefront of the motives for ethnic Americans to go along with mainstream American identity. However, in her book, *Unwanted: Italian American and Jewish Mobilization Against Restrictive Immigration Laws 1882-1965*, she writes that reformers of Italian dissent were not worried as much about the

Trasciatti, "Framing the Sacco-Vanzetti Executions in the Italian American Press," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 20, no. 4 (2003): 407-430.

¹¹ Catholic and Jewish ethnic groups were the quickest to grasp and embrace anticommunism: Gary Gerstle, *American Crucible: Race and Nation in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017), 247; Danielle Battisti, *Whom we Shall Welcome: Italian Americans and Immigration Reform, 1945-1965* (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2019), 17-48; Maddalena Marinari, *Unwanted: Italian and Jewish Mobilization Against Restrictive Immigration Laws 1882-1965* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2020).

¹² Works that contain information on the ways in which Italian Americans tried to provoke reform policy include: Danielle Battisti, *Whom we Shall Welcome: Italian Americans and Immigration Reform, 1945-1965* (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2019), 17-48; Danielle Battisti, "The American Committee on Italian Migration, Anti-Communism, and Immigration Reform," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 31, no. 2 (2012): 11-40.

state of Italy and its peoples, but rather they were more concerned with their own image among other Americans, specifically those who belonged to the “old” immigrant populations.¹³ Marinari believes that loyalty concerns in America played an important role in how Italian Americans worked for immigration reform.¹⁴ Furthermore, many other historians do not consider immigration reform to be the motivation for Italian Americans to adopt mainstream American political identity. Rather these historians see concerns about Italian American loyalty and social standing within the United States as the sole driving force behind why they were more apt to adapt to American identity.

For many who concern their work with that of ethnic America, the topic of immigration reform does not hold as much significance. Rather, concerns about ethnic American loyalty to The United States is of their main concern. Gary Gerstle, writes in his book, *American Crucible: Race and Nation in the Twentieth Century*, that by diverting from the nation’s values, like democracy, unity, abundance, and supreme foreign policy, it ultimately put ethnic Americans at risk of being labeled disloyal. Disloyal stigmas associated with leftist political affiliations were especially strong during the years after World War II during the Cold War. As a result, ethnic Americans distanced themselves from their old country’s political norms and aligned with American civic nationalism due to fear of harm to their social standing in their respective communities.¹⁵

¹³ During the 1940s and 1950s Italian Americans were able to effectively use the skepticism produced by higher ranking Americans concerning the ethnic group’s loyalty to American values. By conforming with the American mainstream, Italian Americans were able to squash most concerns about their loyalty, ultimately providing proof that their compatriots from Italy were worthy of being accepted into the United States. Maddalena Marinari, *Unwanted: Italian and Jewish Mobilization Against Restrictive Immigration Laws 1882-1965* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2020), 100.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 123-124.

¹⁵ Gary Gerstle, *American Crucible: Race and Nation in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017), 246.

Since Italians had started migrating to the United States, there were concerns about where their allegiances laid; however, these concerns would hit their peak during World War II, when Italy and the Axis Powers, and the United States and the Allied Powers were at war with one another. After becoming more informed about the hardships faced by ethnic Americans within the United States during the war, it becomes much clearer why the Italian American community would find it more advantageous to conform with mainstream American political identity. In Lawrence DiStasi's book, *Una Storia Segreta: The Secret History of Italian American Evacuation and Internment During World War II* on the internment and relocation of Italian Americans in the decade prior to the Cold War, fascism was the number one public enemy in the United States, this in turn did not make leftism more acceptable in the American mainstream, but it did provide somewhat of a platform for leftists to have their voices heard as they also saw fascism as their top enemy. DiStasi's book makes it very clear why Italian Americans would not find it to be in their best interest to deviate from mainstream American identity on anything political, as it would put them at risk of being labeled disloyal and put into detention camps. In addition, DiStasi effectively shows how any Italian Americans who were considered overly patriotic towards their homeland could also be deemed as dissenters and be punished because of this.¹⁶

Third, when it concerns the sources about Italian American dissent, the historiography concerning the nature of dissent among the ethnic group is quite lacking outside of the coverage of certain landmark events and the few Italian leftists who were active in national politics during

¹⁶ For information on the internment and relocation of Italian Americans and other immigrant groups during World War II please consult: John Christgau, *"Enemies": World War II Alien Internment* (Ames, IA: Iowa State University Press, 1985); Lawrence DiStasi, *Una Storia Segreta: The Secret History of Italian American Evacuation and Internment during World War II* (Berkeley, CA: Heyday, 2001).

the twentieth century. Most of these sources on twentieth century Italian American dissent come in the form of biographies in which historians focus on the importance of specific individuals and the social impacts that these individuals contributed to. Trasciatti's book on the trial of Sacco and Vanzetti is a piece that provides an example of the kind of work that focuses on the impact of historical injustices on the Italian American left community in the United States. Similarly, Gerald Meyer's book, *Vito Marcantonio: Radical Politician, 1902-1954*, is one of the few sources that addresses the role of Italian heritage in the development of the ethnic group's political radicalism. However, Meyer's book primarily examines the impact of Marcantonio's activism and does not explore the connections between his dissent and that of other Italian American political radicals who were active during the mid-twentieth century.

In this thesis, I examine both well-known and lesser-known Italian Americans who were accused of being dissenters because of their radical political views during the mid-twentieth century. In future sections I explore the reasons why political radicalism was appealing to Italian American party affiliates, even if they were not widely recognized outside of their radical movements. The purpose of this is to show the differences between Italian Americans who conformed with mainstream American identity and those who dissented, and to show the changing dynamics of Italian American dissent over the course of the forty-year time frame.

Italian American Radicalism, 1927-1941:

When looking at the history of Italian immigration and its impacts, the 1920s and 1930s can be considered a period in which Italian Americans were considered both desirable in some contexts, and undesirable in others. The trial and execution of Sacco and Vanzetti can be seen as one of the more obvious moments that Italian immigrants were seen as an undesirable part of the American nation and society. In one of the most disheartening moments in Italian American history, the two Italian American anarchists were executed based off the discriminatory and anti-leftist climate that loomed over the United States during the mid-twentieth century. In addition, restrictive immigration legislation was another barrier that was put between Italian Americans and full integration into American society. Since restrictive legislation like, the Immigration Act of 1924 placed severe quotas on how many migrants outside of western and northern Europe could come into the United States, those quotas stigmatized Italian Americans. Restrictive immigration legislation would also pose as a great challenge to those Italian Americans attempting to seek political asylum in order to protect them from the forces of Mussolini and the fascist party.¹⁷

However, in many ways the need for immigration reform among the Italian American community can be seen as a reason in which the ethnic group was able to have its voice more readily heard than many other ethnic groups during the 1920s and 1930s. These concerns led Italian Americans to civically participate in American institutions, ultimately making them a desirable target group of voters for American politicians. Historians like, Thomas Guglielmo explain how the Italian American population in certain urban centers, such as Chicago, were more likely to have their voices heard and lumped in with mainstream American politics than

¹⁷ Maddalena Marinari, *Unwanted: Italian and Jewish Mobilization Against Restrictive Immigration Laws 1882-1965* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2020).

that of other marginalized populations because of the ethnic group's proximity to the American notion of whiteness.¹⁸ These notions of increased acceptance for the ethnic group contributed to greater civic participation on the part of Italian Americans and ultimately led them to align themselves, in most cases, with mainstream American political identity.

The people that are highlighted in this part of the thesis are those Italian American political radicals who were active at the same time as the Sacco and Vanzetti executions and through the Great Depression years of the 1930s. The majority of people in this part of the thesis were Italian refugees who fled Italy because of Mussolini's persecution of rival political parties. They are also those who are closest to semi-skilled industries that were dominated by Italian immigrants, as they worked as barbers, bakers, textile workers, and print operators. The degree in which their Italian heritage impacts their radicalism comes in various forms, some placing more importance on heritage than others. Nonetheless those who make up this section are notable because of the value that they put on their Italian heritage and their proximity to the typical working-class immigrant way of life that.

This section covers the radical life of five different Italian Americans who were active in the 1920s and 1930s. First, I will highlight the commonalities among the origins of their radicalism and the occupations that they held. Then I will go more into depth concerning their individual political worldviews and how the value that they placed on their Italian identity impacted their individual worldviews. Finally, this section aims to provide information that connects Italian American radicalism to the broader trends of Italian American reformers during the mid-twentieth century.¹⁹

¹⁸ Thomas A. Guglielmo, "Riot and Relations," in *White on Arrival: Italians, Race, Color, and Power in Chicago, 1890-1945* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2003), 39-58.

¹⁹ Sources being referred to in this part of the thesis are from: Oral History of the American Left; OH

One aspect that should be noticed about most people in this section is that they share similar immigration stories, as four of the five were political refugees who came to the United States in the 1920s in order to escape political persecution in fascist Italy. For instance, there is Albina Delfino who was born around 1901. Growing up, Delfino lived in the northern Piedmont region of Italy. She talks fondly of how political parties in her town coexisted peacefully and respectfully before Mussolini came to power in 1922. She mentions how her parents were socialist party members and how she was never exposed to anything but socialist literature growing up. Delfino knew that she was a leftist when she was thirteen and claims that although her mother did not participate in movements like her father did, she still approved of Albina's activity in movements as a teen. She credits her education to working with leftist movements rather than things she learned in formal schooling. Yet, after Mussolini's rise to power Delfino would witness socialist friends of her father be killed by fascists. She would also witness members of any opposing political parties be beaten in her town. This would ultimately motivate her to leave Italy and come to the United States in 1922 to live with her relatives when she was twenty-one.²⁰

Egidio Clemente who was from the Italian province of Trieste, also located in northern Italy, shared a story similar to Delfino's. Clemente was born in 1899 and immigrated to the United States in 1920 when he was twenty-one years old. In his oral history interview, Clemente was not too open concerning how he was introduced to radicalism; however, it can be inferred that he was most likely a member of the Italian Socialist Party while still in Italy, as he quickly

002; Tamiment Library /Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York University, New York, NY.

²⁰ Albina Delfino, interview by Ruth Prago, January 8, 1981, Box 14, CD: Delfino 1-2, audio, Oral History of the American Left Collection, Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York, NY.

joined the Italian Socialist Federation in the United States after he immigrated. Clemente's new life in the United States had humble beginnings as he started his career as a print operator and worked his way up to being a publisher.²¹

Additionally, the married couple Alex and Faye Gardener also attributed their radical origins to their early family experiences. While Faye's origins are not very clear, she did claim to come from a radical family. In a reflective statement, she described how she became drawn to radicalism and what initially sparked her interest. Faye claimed that her father was an early union organizer, and that her entire family kept progressive beliefs saying, "our background was completely left-wing from the day we were born."²² On the other hand, her husband, Alex Gardner was an Italian immigrant who faced blatant political persecution during his time in the Italian Army during World War I. He was sent to an Italian concentration camp for distributing Communist Party literature that was deemed to be indoctrinating propaganda to other soldiers during the war.²³ Although the two radicals did not marry until after 1948, when Faye's first husband was killed fighting for an independent Jewish State in Jerusalem, they were both active organizers in New York City in their respective industries.

Finally, Joseph Giganti's radical nature can also be attributed to the experiences that he had during his youth despite not being an Italian immigrant. Although Giganti was a first-generation Italian American, born in Franklin County, Illinois, born to immigrant parents in 1903, his father was said to be apolitical. It can be inferred that the harsh working conditions that

²¹ Egidio Clemente, interview by Eugene Miller, May 11, 1981, Box 7, Folder: 16, transcript, Oral Histories of the American Left Collection, Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York, NY.

²² Alex and Faye Gardner, Abe Kantor, and Hyman Hodes, interview by Paul Buhle, March 15, 1983, Box: 16, CD: Gardners, Kantor & Hodes 1-2, audio, Oral History of the American Left Collection, Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York, NY.

²³ Ibid.

Giganti observed his father go through had a great impact on his attraction to radicalism. In addition, he claimed that his interest in political radicalism sparked at the age of fourteen when his cousin showed him a comic strip about the Russian Revolution. In his teen and early adult years, Giganti speaks on how he started to read communist publications such as, *The Voice of Labor* and how he worked as a circulation manager for *The Daily Worker* in Chicago, and as a music critic for the Italian communist daily paper, *Il Lavoratore* before becoming a career barber.²⁴

In sum the origins in these people's political radicalism in the United States can be credited to witnessed persecution of opposing political parties in fascist controlled Italy during the 1920s, and their familial influences. The radical nature of the individuals highlighted in this section: Delfino, the Gardners, and Clemente can be traced back to their formative years and early life experiences. These experiences were shared by them all in various ways, including parental and familial influences, as well as membership in far-left political parties and the subsequent persecution they faced while in Italy. These factors played a significant role in shaping their perspectives and ideologies, ultimately contributing greatly to their actions as radicals in the United States.

The worldviews of each Italian American political radical covered in this section of the thesis can be seen in the occupations that they held as well as the organizational efforts that they undertook while they actively participated in radical movements. For instance, the people covered in this section concerning Italian American political radicalism held semi-skilled labor positions that were typically fulfilled by immigrants in the United States—many of these

²⁴ Joseph Giganti, interview by Paul Buhle, July 26, 1983, Box 16, CD: Giganti 1-2, audio, Oral History of the American Left Collection, Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York, NY.

occupations were also known to be dominated among Italian immigrants specifically. This ultimately placed them near the workplace difficulties that they aimed to improve. In turn, this led them to have a greater understanding for the struggles of their fellow workers, which was a large reason why union organization was important to America's working-class during the 1920s and 1930s as there was a large gap between management and the workforce during this period.²⁵

Once these political radicals arrived in the United States, they found labor that was typically undertaken by immigrants. In addition to influences in their early lives, the Italian American political radicals highlighted in this section were drawn towards leftist ideologies partly because these ideologies placed greater importance on recognizing labor unions as legitimate sources of power in labor politics, which was significant considering the semi-skilled labor that they were engaged in. Both Giganti and Clemente would work in the publishing industry and would both hold somewhat menial roles before being promoted to work as writers or publishers. Giganti worked to circulate *Daily Worker* publications around Chicago, and Clemente's first job in the United States was as a linotype operator.²⁶ On the other hand, Delfino, Alex Gardner, and Giganti—in the latter part of the 1920s and 1930s—would work in industries that were known to be dominated by Italian immigrants.²⁷ Delfino worked on sewing machines

²⁵ For more information on the disconnect between workers and management in American industries during the 1920s and 1930s please see: Nelson Lichtenstein, "Reconstructing the 1930s" in *The State of the Union: A Century of American Labor* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), 20-54.

²⁶ A linotype operator works on a machine that casts lines of words or symbols from extremely hot metal and assembles them into lines of text for printing. They use a keyboard to select the desired characters and operate the linotype machine to produce the type: Egidio Clemente, interview by Eugene Miller, May 11, 1981, Box 7, Folder: 16, transcript, Oral Histories of the American Left Collection, Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York, NY. 4.; Joseph Giganti, interview by Paul Buhle, July 26, 1983, Box 16, CD: Giganti 1-2, audio, Oral History of the American Left Collection, Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York, NY.

²⁷ Thomas A. Guglielmo, *White on Arrival: Italians, Race, Color, and Power in Chicago, 1890-1945* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2003), 133.

in various textile factories throughout the northeast region of the United States, Alex Gardner was a baker in New York City, and Giganti was a career barber in Chicago whose barber shop was praised by many for being a safe space where people could freely voice their unpopular political opinions without fear that they would be ridiculed for them.²⁸ Faye Gardner is the outlier in the group as she was a career psychologist and social worker.

Their work in immigrant, and Italian dominated industries is significant because it ultimately is what shaped their radical activity. It can also be seen as a source of their complications with the respective leftist political parties that they found themselves in. For example, all of them work to unionize among their respective industries. Delfino specifically worked to organize among Italian American textile workers, Giganti worked in both Chicago and Brooklyn to organize barbers, Clemente worked to organize publishing industry workers, and both Gardner's worked to organize among bakers and mental health professionals. However, their organizational efforts would look somewhat different when we take a closer look at how they went about actually organizing among those in their respective industries.

Faye Gardner faced challenges in organizing among mental health workers because many of them did not think that their professions were a part of an industry that was worthy of unionization efforts. She showed her commitment to the wellbeing and organization of mental health professionals and social workers by providing them “dental care, medical care, and

²⁸ Albina Delfino, interview by Ruth Prago, January 8, 1981, Box 14, CD: Delfino 1-2, audio, Oral History of the American Left Collection, Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York, NY.; Alex and Faye Gardner, Abe Kantor, and Hyman Hodes, interview by Paul Buhle, March 15, 1983, Box: 16, CD: Gardners, Kantor & Hodes 1-2, audio, Oral History of the American Left Collection, Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York, NY.; Joseph Giganti, interview by Paul Buhle, July 26, 1983, Box 16, CD: Giganti 1-2, audio, Oral History of the American Left Collection, Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York, NY.; Personal documents, 1940-1986, Box: 3, Folder: 50, Joseph Giganti Papers, Newberry Library, Chicago, IL.

whatever they needed.”²⁹ Her husband, Alex, would also give support to workers and other radicals who were bakers by providing them with the financial assistance that many of them needed. He even claimed that he gave anarchists in New York City “twenty-dollar [or] more a week.”³⁰

While the Gardner’s worked to organize by providing financial and medical assistance to those who they shared occupations with, Delfino would do the same by organizing those who worked in the textile industry. However, her organizing efforts can be attributed to her advocacy for labor reform and for the acknowledgment of unions as legitimate forms of power in labor politics. She specifically worked for improved working conditions within the textile industry. Delfino talks much about how compensation for textile workers was based on piecework rather than on a fixed hourly wage, which served as a driving force behind her dedication to organizing and picketing for the Communist Party. In the 1930s Delfino would find herself bouncing around between many different cities in the northeast, working as an organizer for Italian Americans to join the Party, and participate in labor reform protests. Come 1931, when Delfino worked as a textile union organizer for the National Textile Workers Union (NTWU) in Patterson, NJ, many of America’s industries were cutting workers’ hours, and reassigning workers to more tasking jobs while keeping their pay minimal.³¹ As an organizer, Delfino and others were able to organize an 800 person walk-out in Patterson[factory unnamed]. However, she says that the strike did not go well and that they failed to get more textile workers in other towns involved

²⁹ Alex and Faye Gardner, Abe Kantor, and Hyman Hodes, interview by Paul Buhle, March 15, 1983, Box: 16, CD: Gardners, Kantor & Hodes 1-2, audio, Oral History of the American Left Collection, Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York, NY

³⁰ Alex and Faye Gardner, Abe Kantor, and Hyman Hodes, interview by Paul Buhle, March 15, 1983, Box: 16, CD: Gardners, Kantor & Hodes 1-2, audio, Oral History of the American Left Collection, Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York, NY.

³¹ Nelson Lichtenstein, *State of the Union: A Century of American Labor* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), 23.

“because the workers were not ready for it.”³² This meant that the workers were not ready for the backlash that they would face from authorities and shop management.

Clemente’s views on unionization and radicalism were also shaped in part by the occupations that he held in the printing industry. His socialist attitudes come out when he speaks about his time working as a linotype operator and publisher for different Italian American newspapers. Clemente took on the position that businesses, like the publishing companies that he once worked for, needed a sense of collective ownership and that workers ought to have a say in the means of production and distribution of the publications that they worked for.³³ While Clemente was somewhat more stubborn about cooperation efforts with other leftist political parties, he shared the common belief with those who were workers needed their voices to be more readily heard as they were the ones who possessed “intimate, internal knowledge of business conditions.”³⁴ In addition, Clemente, along with other Italians in Chicago, aimed to introduce Italian American workers to the Socialist Party in the United States. Rather than advocating to Italians in Chicago to become directly active in the Socialist Party, he advocated for them to join smaller-scale movements that emphasized both political orientation and ethnic heritage, which were closely connected to larger political groups like the Socialist Party. Clemente specifically focused his efforts on organizing for the Italian Socialist Federation in order to bring more Italians into the larger movement.³⁵

³² Albina Delfino, interview by Ruth Prago, January 8, 1981, Box 14, CD: Delfino 1-2, audio, Oral History of the American Left Collection, Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York, NY.; *New York Times*, “800 Silk Workers Strike in Patterson,” July 23, 1931.

³³ Egidio Clemente, interview by Eugene Miller, May 11, 1981, Box 7, Folder: 16, transcript, Oral Histories of the American Left Collection, Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York, NY.

³⁴ Nelson Lichtenstein, *State of the Union: A Century of American Labor* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), 25.

³⁵ Thomas A. Guglielmo, *White on Arrival: Italians, Race, Color, and Power in Chicago, 1890-1945*

However, while it is clear that Clemente was in favor of Italian heritage playing a role in his radical politics as he boasted in his interview about how he was able to organize his own branch of 200 ISF members in Elmwood Park, Illinois, complications concerning the role that Italian heritage should have played in political radicalism is an aspect that varies greatly among those active in the 1920s and 1930s. The largest difference can be seen when comparing the worldviews of Delfino and Giganti as the two had differing opinions on the importance of their Italian heritage and the role that it ought to play in their radical politics. These differences can be attributed to things like gender discrimination or stereotyping and lack thereof during their times organizing.

At the start of Giganti's time in the CPUSA, he was what he called a "Fosterite," meaning that he was a follower of William Z. Foster. Foster had created the Trade Union Educational League (TUEL) in 1920 to unite various unions for a common plan of revolutionary action. Giganti claimed that most Chicago Italians were also Fosterites because of the TUEL and its advocacy for independent working-class political action in order to establish a worker's republic. He also claimed that Foster's ideals were more aligned with that of Italian Americans because he did not want to discount the importance that ethnic heritage played in their political action, like that of other factions in the Communist Party at the time. However, after the trial of Sacco and Vanzetti, Giganti found himself conflicted in where he stood in the CPUSA. On one hand he valued his Italian heritage and the role that it ought to have played in his politics as it was a vital aspect of both his identity and occupation. On the other, he felt that the trial of Sacco

(New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2003), 131.; Egidio Clemente, interview by Eugene Miller, May 11, 1981, Box 7, Folder: 16, transcript, Oral Histories of the American Left Collection, Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York, NY.

and Vanzetti could have had a different outcome had leftists appealed to Jay Lovestone's emphasis on cooperation and a United Front.³⁶

Unlike Giganti, Delfino, was a follower of Jay Lovestone, or a "Lovestoneite." She believed that there needed to be less emphasis on heritage and more emphasis on the importance of cooperation among leftist political parties in the United States in order to promote the idea that unions were a legitimate source of power in politics. Her skepticism concerning the role that heritage ought to have played in radicalism can be credited to the numerous instances of gender discrimination and stereotyping that she faced while trying to organize among Italian Americans in the textile industry. In her efforts to organize among Italian Americans in various cities throughout the northeast, she encountered challenges due to longstanding prejudices between northern and southern Italians that stemmed back to Italy itself. She claimed that it was difficult to get women in Boston to trust her because most of them were southern Italians who she claimed, "don't trust the one's from the north" because "they think that the northern people superiority but in the shop usually they think they do discriminate... northern Italians used to think they were above."³⁷ Therefore, Delfino found herself having to leave Boston because the women there would not trust her. Similar instances would occur for Delfino in Lawrence, Massachusetts where Italian men would not give her their trust or respect because she was both a woman and from northern Italy.

In addition, both Giganti and Delfino ran for electoral positions as members of the CPUSA. Giganti would run for a smaller-scale position for Chicago Barber's Union treasurer in

³⁶ Joseph Giganti, interview by Paul Buhle, July 26, 1983, Box 16, CD: Giganti 1-2, audio, Oral History of the American Left Collection, Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York, NY.

³⁷ Albina Delfino, interview by Ruth Prago, January 8, 1981, Box 14, CD: Delfino 1-2, audio, Oral History of the American Left Collection, Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York, NY

1929, a time in which all AFL affiliated unions were purging communist members in order to try to keep his membership in the union secured. However, he would ultimately fail to secure the position as the election was claimed to be rigged.³⁸ Delfino also ran for an electoral position as a CPUSA member, but her was on a much larger scale than Giganti's. While in Providence, Rhode Island, Delfino would run in the 1934 mayoral elections, yet she was also unsuccessful as she did not really have a chance of winning without running on the line of a main party. After their tries at electoral positions, both would find their activism slowing down, but for different reasons. Giganti was disillusioned with the way that Party leadership was headed, and while socialism grew to become attractive to him, he could not do away with the revolutionary aspect that was integral to his political identity, therefore he held his radical beliefs into his later life but did not participate in anymore large-scale radical movements. On the other hand, Delfino worked the last of her days as a radical as a receptionist in New York City before having her first child in 1940.³⁹

Altogether, this section provides information on Italian American radicals who were most active in radicalism during the 1920s and 1930s. Many of them came to the United States in order to escape political persecution in fascist controlled Italy. In addition to the political persecution that they faced while in Italy, their familial influences, membership in far-left political parties, and occupations that they held are all indicators of their radical thought and

³⁸ Joseph Giganti, interview by Paul Buhle, July 26, 1983, Box 16, CD: Giganti 1-2, audio, Oral History of the American Left Collection, Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York, NY.

³⁹ Albina Delfino, interview by Ruth Prago, January 8, 1981, Box 14, CD: Delfino 1-2, audio, Oral History of the American Left Collection, Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York, NY.; Joseph Giganti, interview by Paul Buhle, July 26, 1983, Box 16, CD: Giganti 1-2, audio, Oral History of the American Left Collection, Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York, NY.

actions. Their worldviews and ideologies were especially shaped by the workplace difficulties that they experienced first-hand as they worked in semi-skilled industries that were typically dominated by immigrant labor. This work drew them towards leftist ideologies that placed greater importance on recognizing labor unions as legitimate sources of power in labor politics as there was a great disconnect between workers and managements in the years before the Wagner Act was passed in 1935. Their politics were centered around protecting the average worker so that their economic rights and security were valued as evidenced in Delfino's protests for the right to strike.

Ultimately much of their radical activity would come to a halt in the latter part of the 1930s and early part of the 1940s do much in part to another upsurge in anticommunist sentiment in America in the years leading up the Second World War, and the war itself. The upsurge in anticommunism and pressure to assimilate to mainstream American values would persist into future decades and influence radicals in the 1940s through the 1960s to distance their political stances from their Italian heritage. There would also be personal factors that put an end to some of their radical actions as Delfino became a mother in 1940, and Giganti could not find a political party that addressed his core views after he left the CPUSA.

Italian American Political and Intellectual Radicals, 1940-1954:

During World War II and the early Cold War era, most Italian Americans found themselves at the center of a political and social storm. Fears of disloyalty, due to their ties to their Italian heritage in the years leading up to the war, surged in Italian American communities. Some Italian Americans, specifically those living in America's coastal cities, even found themselves being forced to relocate or even interned during the early years of the war.⁴⁰ Even with these shameful stigmas attached to being an Italian living in the United States, over 400,000 Italian Americans served in the military during World War II, making them the largest ethnic group in the military.⁴¹ Later, their service in the military during the war ultimately boosted the image of Italian Americans, helping them become seen as a more assimilable and acceptable immigrant group among the masses.

Yet, Italian Americans would continue to find themselves in a bind during the early years of the Cold War era. During the years of the early Cold War, Italian Americans were once again confronted with the predicament of having to reaffirm their political loyalty. In these years Italian Americans faced the challenge of proving that their loyalty now aligned with American anticommunist sentiments instead of antifascist beliefs as in World War II.⁴² This section of the paper will delve into the experiences of Italian American radical politicians and intellectuals during this transitional period of World War II and the Cold War. In it I explore the nature of

⁴⁰ Italian Americans who lived in communities that were also restricted military zones were forced to relocate and were not allowed to return to their homes until Columbus Day, 1942. Even after attorney general, Francis Biddle, released a statement that Italian Americans could return to their original homes after being forced to relocate, 257 Italian Americans remained detained in internment camps until the end of 1943 under Executive Order 9066: Lawrence DiStasi, *Una Storia Segreta: The Secret History of Italian American Evacuation and Internment During World War II* (Berkeley, CA: Heyday, 2001), 21.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, 271.

⁴² Danielle Battisti, "The American Committee on Italian Migration, Anti-Communism, and Immigration Reform," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 31, no. 2 (2012): 11-12.

their dissent and the reasons behind it. From the popular, prominent figures who were targeted by the government, like Carl Aldo Marzani and Vito Marcantonio, to the lesser-known left-wing party affiliates who also sought out positions of public office in order to maintain and expand upon liberal reform that came about from New Deal legislation of the 1930s, like Vito Magli. The hope is that this examination will provide a comprehensive look at the diversity of Italian American political radicalism during World War II and into the Cold War and how it compares to the political radicalism seen in the 1920s and 1930s.

This section dives into the lives of three different Italian American political radicals who were active in the 1940s and 1950s. It is broken up into parts concerning the origins, goals, and effects of their radicalism to give a greater understanding of their worldviews and how they compare to the Italian American radicals that were active before them. The people who are integral to this section of the thesis are politicians, Vito Marcantonio and Vito Magli, and the intellectual, Carl Aldo Marzani. Much like that of those who were active in the 1920s and 1930s these radicals share similar origins concerning their radical ideas. However, the extent to which they were disconnected from the lifestyle that was typical of the political radicals covered in the first section is crucial in differentiating the issues that these individuals believed were important to address.

In contrast to the Italian American political radicals of the 1920s and 1930s, who attributed their radical beliefs to their involvement in radical movements and harsh working conditions, the individuals in this section largely owe their radicalism to their formal education in prestigious schools located in cities such as New York and Oxford. In addition to their formal schooling's role in developing their radicalism, the early occupations that they held also indicate a disconnect between them and those who were active in the 1920s and 1930s as they found

themselves being somewhat removed from the injustices that were experienced in Italian dominated working class industries as they were members of the professional class. Nonetheless, the individuals mentioned in this section aimed to tackle issues that were significant among Italian Americans; however, their focus was not solely on resolving the immediate challenges related to industrial work. Instead, they worked to preserve the reforms that political radicals in the 1920s and 1930s worked for, and address more extensive issues that affected not only the Italian working-class population, but also other segments of American society.

Origins of their political Radicalism, 1940-1954:

Carl Marzani, an Italian immigrant who fled political persecution, dedicated his life's work to harmonizing his socialist principles with his love for American democracy, which he saw as inseparable, and his education played a significant role in shaping these beliefs. Marzani was born in Rome in 1912 and immigrated with his family to the United States in 1924. His belief in allowing citizens to express themselves politically stemmed from both his experience of having to flee fascist Italy, and his formal schooling. Although his family was of the working-class once they settled in the United States, Marzani would excel in the classroom and go on to study at some of the world's great academic institutions, including Williams College and Oxford. He credits much of his early appreciation for both American and socialist ideals to a retired physician from Scranton, Doctor Woodcock, who made the young Marzani aware of the oppressive tendencies of the United States' political and economic elite, as well as the country's equitable and progressive principles that had provided it with documents like the Emancipation Proclamation.⁴³ Marzani dedicated his life's work to bridging the gap between these two contrasting aspects of American culture.

⁴³ Frank Rosengarten, "Carl Marzani: A Radical American Life," Review of *The Education of a Reluctant Radical*, by Carl Marzani, *Science & Society* 61, no. 3 (Fall 1997): 398.

His work as an intellectual began when he was granted a scholarship to Williams College and served as an editor for the school's literary magazine. After his time at Williams, he would receive a scholarship to study at Oxford, where he would study and travel from 1936 to 1939. While studying in England he became a member of the English Communist Party, and even went on to briefly join Communist forces who fought against Franco in the Spanish Civil War.⁴⁴ Once Marzani returned to the United States in 1940 he would become a member in the CPUSA, and teach economics at New York University under the pseudonym, Tony Wales.⁴⁵ In future sections I discuss the problems that arose for Marzani concerning his political affiliations and how those impacted his intellectual work and the aspects of political radicalism that he felt were important.

In addition, there is the radical Congressman, Vito Marcantonio. Like Marzani, he was also influenced by his formal education and the influential people that he met when he was a young adult. Marcantonio was a second-generation Italian American born in 1902 to parents who were said to be apolitical. Growing up in East Harlem, Marcantonio witnessed first-hand the struggles of poverty, and discriminatory housing and working conditions that were common of other Italian Americans in his community. Yet, Marcantonio would be somewhat removed from these hardships as his father was said to have been "been among the upper ten percent of Italian Harlemites in occupational status and probably in income,"⁴⁶ working as a skilled carpenter. Compared to other Italian American children who grew up in East Harlem at the same time as him, Marcantonio enjoyed a more privileged life that afforded him the opportunity to concentrate on his academic pursuits, community organizing, and charitable endeavors, free from the burden of having to work to provide for his family. Though his grandfather was said to have marched

⁴⁴ Carl Marzani, *We Can be Friends* (New York, NY: Garland Publishing Inc., 1971). 5.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, 7.

⁴⁶ Gerald Meyer, *Vito Marcantonio: Radical Politician 1902-1954* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1989), 8.

alongside the Italian revolutionary, Giuseppe Garibaldi, the origins of his radicalism are found outside of his family.⁴⁷

Much of Marcantonio's radical thought can be attributed to his early experiences with the progressive educator, Leonard Covello, and the Italian American politician, Fiorello LaGuardia. While a student at De Witt Clinton High School in New York City, Marcantonio was a member of Covello's Italian language class. His relationship with Covello can be seen as the reason why he was so invested in providing for his constituents once he was elected to Congress in the latter part of his life. Covello wanted his Italian American students to become leaders in their respective communities and change negative stereotypes about Italians through community service initiatives with the goal of moving the ethnic group out of the shadows and into the mainstream of American society. He credits Marcantonio with being his most successful student. Alongside Covello, Marcantonio organized meetings, circulated petitions, and advocated for progressive reform related to housing and tenant rights in East Harlem during his teenage years in the 1920s.⁴⁸ Covello is also credited with introducing Marcantonio to his political mentor, Fiorello LaGuardia.

After losing support of the Republican Party in the late 1920s, LaGuardia formed the "Fiorello LaGuardia Political Association" in which he hired the young Marcantonio to help organize.⁴⁹ Marcantonio would spend his time during the 1920s and 1930s as a student at New York University Law School, and as LaGuardia's protégé in which he learned how to maintain nominal affiliation with America's powerful political parties, while still controlling an

⁴⁷ Gerald Meyer, *Vito Marcantonio: Radical Politician 1902-1954* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1989), 9.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 12.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 17.

independent political organization.⁵⁰ Marcantonio would go on to mimic these political techniques that he learned from LaGuardia when he ran for public office on his own come the late 1930s. Additionally, Marcantonio would go on to run for office on a political platform that was similar to LaGuardia's in the 1920s and 1930s. Although during his childhood, he was somewhat removed from the typical struggles of Italian Americans, the platform that Marcantonio would run on specifically appealed to socialist principles that were important to the Italian American community that he would go on to serve in the 1940s. The issues that Marcantonio looked to address concerned themselves with things like, immigration reform, old-age pensions, municipally owned housing, rent control, tax exemptions for the poor, and a federal minimum wage;⁵¹ however, he was not immediately focused on organizing among workers or the hardships faced by semi-skilled laborers on the shop floors.

Finally, there is Vito Magli. He was also an Italian American political radical who was active during the 1940s and 1950s, and Marcantonio's hand-picked successor for his seat in Congress. He was a liberal reformer and grass-roots activist who supported poverty-combatting initiatives, worked to build political networks, and advanced social and economic equality.⁵² Born in Italy in 1923, Magli and his family also had to flee political persecution in Italy as his father was a Socialist Party member during Mussolini's reign. Magli's settled in the largest Italian ethnic community in the United States, East Harlem, New York, in 1935 when Magli was twelve. Magli and his family differentiated themselves from many other Italians who resided in New York City in terms of their religious beliefs. Unlike the majority of Italian Americans, Magli claimed that he had been raised without any sort of influence from the Catholic Church.

⁵⁰ Ibid, 17.

⁵¹ Vito Marcantonio, *Vito Marcantonio: Debates, Speeches and Writings 1935-1950*, ed. Annette T. Rubinstein and Associates (Clifton, NJ: Augustus M. Kelley Publishers, 1973), 32.

⁵² Vito Magli, letter to the editor, *New York Times*, October 24, 1952.

This divergence from the norms of their community caused Magli to feel separated from the Italian American community that was around him. Yet, during Magli's preteen and teenage years, he still thought of himself more as an Italian than as a political radical.⁵³

Although Magli was exposed to progressive political thought from a young age as his father was an Italian Socialist, it was not until Magli started attending Benjamin Franklin High School—one of New York City's most diverse and prestigious public schools—that progressive thought became more attractive to him. While at Benjamin Franklin High School, Magli would also find himself befriending the school's progressive minded principle and famous Italian American educator, Leonard Covello, whom he referred to as "pop."⁵⁴ Magli claimed that his time learning from Covello greatly influenced his future progressive contributions to wartime relief campaigns, housing projects, and support for progressive minded politicians like Vito Marcantonio.

Altogether, the roots of political radicalism by Marzani, Marcantonio, and Magli can be attributed less to their family background and more to their formal education, as well as the guidance of influential mentors that they met in school who instilled in them a strong sense of progressivism. Specifically, individuals such as Leonard Covello and Fiorello LaGuardia played instrumental roles in shaping their ideologies. In contrast to the Italian American political radicals of the 1920s and 1930s, Marzani, Marcantonio, and Magli came from relatively privileged backgrounds and were not directly subjected to the harsh working conditions that many Italian American immigrants faced, as they were focused on excelling in school and

⁵³ Vito Magli, interview by Paul Buhle, May 15, 1983, Box 19, CD: V. Magli 1-2, audio, Oral History of the American Left, Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Archives, New York, NY.

⁵⁴ By the time Magli went to high school, Covello left his position as an Italian language teacher at De Witt Clinton High School to become a principal at Benjamin Franklin High School; Vito Magli, interview by Paul Buhle, May 15, 1983, Box 19, CD: V. Magli 1-2, audio, Oral History of the American Left, Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Archives, New York, NY.

learning from their mentors. Furthermore, the issues that each sought to address in the 1940s and 1950s transcended the specific problems faced by Italian American workers. While they continued to speak out against challengers to the New Deal, they also tried to tackle wider social problems of the 1940s and 1950s. In the next section I will address the core issues that Marzani, Marcantonio, and Magli looked to address during this critical period of American history, which had implications much beyond labor reform.

Nature of radicalism 1940-1954:

During this period of their political radicalism, these Italian Americans seemed to have adopted typical American stances on how they ought to go about provoking the political changes that they felt were most important. During World War II and the early Cold War years the people mentioned above all sought to mobilize leftists to make for a stronger political force in their communities and American politics at large. Vito Marcantonio and Vito Magli both ran for one of the highest levels of public office during this period. While Magli was unsuccessful in his campaign, Marcantonio held his seat in the House for a decade, from 1939 to 1950. Both of their goals were revealed in their criticisms of their opponents, and their speeches to the public and on the floors of Congress. Despite the fact that Marzani spent close to three years during this time period imprisoned for fraudulent claims concerning his Communist Party membership, his goals are revealed when looking at his intellectual work, whether that be his filmmaking or literary endeavors.

The things that the Italian American political radicals in the late 1940s and 1950s found to be important somewhat differ from that of the Italian American radicals from the 1930s and 1940s. This is due to their distance from semi-skilled industries that were categorical to those active in the 1920s and 1930s and their formal education. Nonetheless, those active in the 1940s

and 1950s still fought to maintain the reforms that came about from the 1920s and 1930s, such as a forty-hour work week, the right to unionize, and a minimum wage. The Italian American political radicals referred to in this section also valued things that were important to those outside of the working-class as well. During the 1940s and 1950s, they sought to preserve the inalienable rights of all Americans, particularly the freedom of speech, despite government attempts to silence them. Additionally, they opposed America's emergence as an imperial military power and sought to maintain social safety nets that were established during the New Deal.

As a member of the American Labor Party (ALP), Marcantonio tried to adhere to the political stances that were typical of the Party. The ALP is said to have been a political party that supported America's working-class and fought for "a sufficient planned utilization of the natural economy so that... natural resources that belong to the American people of this and future generations shall be protected from predatory interests."⁵⁵ During Marcantonio's time in Congress during the 1940s there were multiple attempts by other legislators to undo much of the progress that Italian Americans like Albina Delfino and Joseph Giganti fought for during the 1920s and 1930s. In the years during and after World War II, American conservatives would make an "anticommunist attack on the New Deal."⁵⁶

Many legislators thought that union activism would stifle and place barriers on wartime production initiatives, so they proposed antilabor legislation that would rid the American working-class of things like the forty-hour work week and their right to unionize.⁵⁷ Despite his separation from the semi-skilled labor that was typical of Italian Americans during his youth,

⁵⁵ Gerald Meyer, *Vito Marcantonio: Radical Politician 1902-1954* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1989), 26.

⁵⁶ Landon Storrs, *The Second Red Scare and the Unmaking of the New Deal Left* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013), 52.

⁵⁷ Nelson Lichtenstein, *The State of the Union: A Century of American Labor* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), 65.

Marcantonio was an outspoken critic of this conservative stance while he was in Congress. In 1942 conservatives in Congress would propose antilabor legislation that would rid Americans of the forty-hour work week known as the Smith-Vinson Bill. Marcantonio delivered a radio address to Congress saying that such a bill would not only have been “dangerous for labor, but it is also most subversive in our victory effect... to launch a mighty victory offensive which will speedily win this war, we must defend American labor.”⁵⁸ After the war, attacks on American labor would grow even more hostile as seen with the passing of legislation like Taft-Hartley, which undid many of the provisions that the Italian American political radicals in the first section fought for.

Taft-Hartley’s “main function was to roll back gains organized labor had made since the New Deal,” and to purge all communists who were active in organized unions.⁵⁹ Not only was Marcantonio against the bill because of it undoing the progress that was made by previous labor reformers, but he also saw the bill as an attack on the rights of Americans who he believed were free to participate in all facets of life regardless of their political affiliations. On April 15, 1947, Marcantonio spoke on the floors of Congress regarding the proposal of Taft-Hartley:

The history of labor is a story of struggle by the American worker to achieve equality through unionization and that whatever equality he has been able to obtain in his relationship with industry has been obtained only after years of struggle, struggle of the most excruciating kind. Labor has been subjected to the worst kind of exploitation. The only way the workers could protect themselves in some measure against it was to organize and form unions. That is, unions free from company control. In the beginning it was craft unions. Then, to achieve more effective unity, industrial unionization was attempted and carried out by the CIO. Now... This legislation wipes out whatever strength organized labor acquired to bring about equality and bargaining... It wipes out completely any semblance of equality on the part of Labor in bargaining with industry. It destroys completely the bargaining power of organized labor to sit down at the table with the

⁵⁸ These remarks were given in a radio address by Marcantonio to the House of Representatives on April 21st, 1942. They have been omitted from the Official Congressional record but can be found in an edited volume of Marcantonio’s debates and speeches: Vito Marcantonio, *Vito Marcantonio: Debates, Speeches and Writings 1935-1950*, ed. Annette T. Rubinstein and Associates (Clifton, NJ: Augustus M. Kelley Publishers, 1973), 159-161.

⁵⁹ Ellen Schrecker, *Many Are the Crimes: McCarthyism in America* (New York, NY: Little, Brown and Company, 1998), 336.

employers and to seek redress against exploitation... Labor cannot have power except through unionization.⁶⁰

In addition, Marcantonio expressed deep concern over the restrictions placed on individuals' freedom of speech during the early years of the Cold War era, particularly in the context of the government's antilabor and anticommunist stance. On February 21, 1949, Marcantonio once again spoke on how Congress was infringing on the rights of unions when they passed an antilabor law that gave the House Labor Committee the right to subpoena labor leaders concerning their union activities. He went on record saying:

The power to subpoena is the power to destroy... The Committee on Labor during the last 2 years used this power of subpoena to do what?... We have seen leaders of labor unions yanked down here to Washington under subpoena in the middle of a strike for the purpose of crippling that strike, for the purpose of crippling the legitimate activities of a union.⁶¹

The quotes above ultimately show that Marcantonio's worldview aligned with that of Italian American radicals who were active in the 1920s and 1930s. He sought to protect the idea that unions were a legitimate voice in politics, and one that should not be ignored. However, his stances on certain aspects of American life also resonated with the broader population. Through his support of labor rights, Marcantonio not only championed the cause of workers but also asserted himself as a defender of civil liberties and supporter of New Deal initiatives. These stances would also come to fruition when taking a closer look at the radical nature of Marcantonio's protégé, Vito Magli.

In the Congressional elections of 1950—the last time that Marcantonio would officially run for Congress—the Democratic candidate, James G. Donovan, running on three different party lines had only beaten Marcantonio (running on only one-party line) by a little over 13,000

⁶⁰ U.S. Congress. *Congressional Record*. 80th Cong., 1st sess., 1947. Vol. 93, pt. 3. *Congressional Record (Bound Edition)*. 1947-1948. Washington, DC. H 3419. April 15, 1947.

⁶¹ U.S. Congress. *Congressional Record*. 81st Cong., 1st sess., 1949. Vol. 95, pt. 2. *Congressional Record (Bound Edition)*. 1949-1950. Washington, DC. H 4078. February 21, 1949.

votes. After this, Marcantonio would make a bid for the position of New York City mayor. Marcantonio's handpicked successor for his congressional seat was Vito Magli. Unlike Marcantonio, Magli was not as enthusiastically received by American Labor Party members and non-members alike. This shows in the results of the 1952 Congressional election results for the 18th district of New York.⁶² Nonetheless, Magli's willingness to run for office is a telling sign that he also sought out policy that preserved union rights and expanded social safety-nets that came about from the New Deal. Although Magli was defeated in his attempt for public office, he continued to distribute leftist literature and try to mobilize Italian American communities through leftist political operations.⁶³

Magli's political stances were almost synonymous with that of Marcantonio's given their similar interests and upbringings. This can be seen in his criticisms of his political opponents. It is clear from his criticisms of the Democratic Party candidate—James Donovan—that Magli was not in favor of the direction that liberalism was headed among American political elite. In a letter to *The New York Times*, Magli criticizes the paper's coverage of his opponent saying:

You have given Mr. Donovan's record, but you did not give his full record. It is significant that you purposely omitted the following: Donovan voted for universal military training... voted to cut appropriations for the Labor Department and Social Security... voted to eliminate every public power project from the Interior Department... was absent on vote to give Korean veterans G.I. Bill of Rights... The New York Times has a perfect right to support or oppose any candidate, but it owes it to its readers to inform them of the voting record of a candidate it supports on important matters. This you fail to do in the case of my opponent, Mr. Donovan.⁶⁴

⁶² Magli was overwhelmingly defeated by Democratic candidate, James G. Donovan, in the 1952 Congressional election for the 18th district of New York. He polled fewer than 7000 votes, while Donovan received roughly 88,000 votes: *New York Times*, "A.L.P. Takes A Beating," November 5, 1952.

⁶³ Vito Magli, interview by Paul Buhle, May 15, 1983, Box 19, CD: V. Magli 1-2, audio, Oral History of the American Left, Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Archives, New York, NY.

⁶⁴ Vito Magli, letter to the editor, *New York Times*, October 24, 1952.

It is apparent that Magli ran for public office in order to support and propose progressive legislation that liberals and conservatives alike were withdrawing their support from during the 1950s. His goals seem to have been centered around providing protections for consumers, tenants, military veterans, and public works projects. These types of goals do not seem far from the nature of the goals that have been important to all the people who have been discussed in the thesis thus far. While there is not much information on Magli, since he was a member of the ALP and Marcantonio's hand-picked successor, we can infer that his stances on most things would have aligned with Marcantonio had he been successful in his campaign for a seat in the House. However, there are many sources still left that express Marcantonio's progressive opinions concerning the things that Magli brought to light in his letter to the *New York Times*. Before his untimely death from a heart attack in 1954, Marcantonio expressed his views publicly on various issues, such as his opposition to universal military training and his support for stronger social safety-nets, and consumer protections.

For example, on June 29th, 1935, Marcantonio made remarks in Congress about how the American government should aid public utilities companies in towns that wanted to have ownership over their own resources. He sought to expand New Deal programs, like the Tennessee Valley Authority, to make for more equitable resource allocations for Americans and to give consumers more power over the resources that were controlled by private companies. When S. 2796, a bill that would expand such provisions came under attack by conservatives who thought that it would be a death-sentence for public utilities companies, Marcantonio responded on the floors of Congress saying:

We are always accused of radicalism when we advance an idea for the benefit of American consumers. Let me say this in answer... if it be radicalism to believe that our national resources should be used for the benefit of all of the American people and not for the purpose of enriching just a few... then, ladies and gentlemen of this House... I am a radical... I believe the proposition

of the Federal government aiding municipally owned enterprises which operate and own their public utilities, so that the people will get the benefit of that which belongs to the people.⁶⁵

Additionally, Marcantonio would also voice another progressive stance that Magli would have agreed with concerning universal military training on June 15th, 1948. In the late 1940s and 1950s, the impacts of World War II were still fresh in the minds of Americans. Left-wing politicians, like Magli and Marcantonio, were worried about the impacts the impacts that the escalation of military power after the war would have on the American economy and its people. In essence they were against the United States becoming a permanent wartime state.

Marcantonio went on record and spoke out against universal conscription saying:

I for one would support such a program if such a program were in the interest of the defense of the American people and the best interests of the common people of this Nation. It is definitely not... we are not in danger of attack... This legislation, therefore, is merely an implementation of a program of... Wall Street capital... [that] is taking over the economy and destroying the liberties of all the people of the world... Conscription, not for defense, but for Wall Street profit is the proposition before us. For me, the blood of Americans comes before the profits of the big trusts.⁶⁶

These sorts of stances would also come to light in the intellectual work of other Italian American political radicals who were active during the 1940s and 1950s, specifically Carl Marzani. He, like Marcantonio and Magli, also adopted a firm stance against certain postwar policies, like universal conscription, as seen in his book *We Can Be Friends*. It is worth mentioning how the title of the book demonstrates Marzani's outlook on the foreign relations between the United States and the Soviet Union. In the book, Marzani makes his opposition clear concerning the misguided notion of a potential post-war Soviet attack on the United States, and mandatory conscription. Like Marcantonio, he believed that such policies were influenced solely by Wall Street interests and aimed to promote American imperialism.⁶⁷ Marzani's critiques of

⁶⁵ U.S. Congress. *Congressional Record*. 74th Cong., 1st sess., 1935. Vol. 79, pt. 10. *Congressional Record (Bound Edition)*. 1934-1935. Washington, DC. H 10435. JUNE 29, 1935.

⁶⁶ U.S. Congress. *Congressional Record*. 80th Cong., 2nd sess., 1948. Vol. 94, pt. 7. *Congressional Record (Bound Edition)*. 1947-1948. Washington DC. H. 8343-8344. JUNE 15, 1948.

⁶⁷ Carl Marzani, *We Can be Friends* (New York, NY: Garland Publishing Inc., 1971), 337.

such policies were grounded in his commitment to promoting peaceful relations between the United States and the war-torn nations of the world and for social justice in the United States itself.

Once back in the United States after his time traveling and studying in Europe, Marzani would become a member of the CPUSA for a short period. From 1940 to 1942, Marzani saw the CPUSA as a legitimate vehicle for collective action as he was drawn to the Party's emphasis on working-class empowerment and antifascist sentiment. However, in June 1941 when the Nazi's invaded the Soviet Union—breaking the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact—Marzani would grow skeptical of the Party's leadership in the United States. After the Pact was breached, Marzani would go on to circulate leaflets that criticized the US military's lack of response to the violation. This ultimately resulted with him being blacklisted and dismissed from the Party by its leaders as they feared that Marzani's personal opinions would be incorrectly interpreted as Party doctrine.⁶⁸

After his dismissal from the Party, Marzani would spend the remaining years of the war working for the Office of Strategic Services and briefly the State Department without disclosing his past Communist Party affiliations. Come 1946, his failure to disclose his past Party affiliations would come back to haunt him as America's primary adversary shifted from fascism to communism.⁶⁹ He would become one of the first victims of Truman's loyalty screenings that purged government institutions of people who held communist sympathies. By 1947 American loyalty programs had become formalized, and Truman required five-million federal workers to undergo loyalty screenings. Those whose profiles were screened were usually leftists who shared

⁶⁸ Carl Marzani, *We Can be Friends* (New York, NY: Garland Publishing Inc., 1971), 8.

⁶⁹ Gary Gerstle, *American Crucible: Race and Nation in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017), 239.

a “commitment to building a welfare state that blended central planning with grassroots democracy.”⁷⁰ As a result of these loyalty screenings in January of 1947, Marzani would be indicted, and in May of the same year he would be convicted for violating section 80 of title 18 of the federal code for having falsely denied being a member of the Communist Party while working for the government.

His defense against the charges was that his time spent in the CPUSA was past the statute of limitations date and that he was not questioned under oath with a witness present. Later in his life he would claim that lying seemed like the only effective legal device that he could use. He would go on to serve 32 months in prison from 1947 to 1949. Other liberals were deeply troubled by the event and labeled it a political witch-hunt.⁷¹ With limited resources in prison, Marzani would start drafting a book called *We Can Be Friends*. The book is said to be the first volume length history written from a left-wing perspective concerning the origins of the Cold War and it blames the Cold War on the United States.⁷²

We Can Be Friends makes it clear that Marzani was deeply skeptical of American foreign policy during the Cold War, particularly Truman’s aggressive stance against the Soviet Union. Marzani credits the “immediate reason for the war scares was to undermine the goodwill and friendship of the American people towards the Soviet Union” that was fostered by FDR before and during World War II.⁷³ Unlike other ethnic Americans in the mid-twentieth century, Marzani believed in promoting friendly relationships between the United States and other countries rather

⁷⁰ Landon Storrs, *The Second Red Scare and The Unmaking of the New Deal Left* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press 2013), 2.

⁷¹ Correspondence, 1947-1948, Box: 4, Folder: 7, Carl Aldo Marzani Papers, Tamiment Library/ Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York University, New York, NY.

⁷² Carl Marzani, *We Can be Friends* (New York, NY: Garland Publishing Inc., 1971), 17.

⁷³ *Ibid*, 29-30.

than supporting initiatives that made tensions between the two countries greater. Something that many Italian Americans did in order to prove their loyalty to the causes of the United States.⁷⁴

Similarly, to Marcantonio's remarks made on June 15th, 1948, Marzani also claimed that American politicians had worked to make up a sense of threat to justify expanding the military and exhorting American influence and the interests of Wall Street around the globe. In addition, Marzani also saw things like the Truman Doctrine and Marshall Plan as forms of American imperialism as they were tools designed to take control of European markets and impose American dominance on the rest of the world. He claims that these early Cold War policies were counterproductive as they did not truly address issues that were faced by Americans at home.⁷⁵ Similarly to radicals who were active in the 1920s and 1930s, Marzani also wanted to bring the disconnect between American business interests and the conditions working-class to people's attention. His skepticism concerning mainstream American culture is seen how he characterized what he believed to be the "bigger picture" of the Cold War. He saw the Cold War as a hint to a much larger problem, in which the interests of Wall Street and big business were placed above that of the working-class American public.⁷⁶

Even with these criticisms, Marzani remained committed to the ideals of democracy and free speech. His book displays him as a person who was a vocal opponent of censorship, and someone believed that to achieve real change there must be uncensored debate concerning the remonstrances of the working-class with American businesses. In addition, Marzani was a proponent of increased transparency between the government and the American people, something that is apparent in his later intellectual work referred to in the next section.

⁷⁴ Ronald L. Filippelli, *American Labor and Postwar Italy, 1943-1953* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1989).

⁷⁵ Carl Marzani, *We Can be Friends* (New York, NY: Garland Publishing Inc., 1971), 28.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, 34.

Italian American Dissent, 1955-1969:

The transformation concerning how Italian Americans were seen by mainstream American society would continue to shift into the 1960s. The 1960s can be seen as the point in Italian American history in which the ethnic group was seen as desirable and assimilable to American identity for numerous reasons such as their service in the military and participation in international campaigns that boasted American supremacy. Ultimately, Italian Americans began to place less emphasis on preserving their ethnic heritage and instead aligned themselves more closely with mainstream American values. This shift allowed their concerns to be more readily understood and supported by the broader American community as exemplified in the passage of the 1965 Immigration Act. The immigration reform that came about from the 1965 Immigration Act was the replacement of the National Origins Quota System with a system that would favor immigrants based on their skillsets, and familial ties to the United States, something that Italian American immigration reformers had advocated for since the beginning of the twentieth century.⁷⁷

In the years prior to the 1960s we have seen that individuals' Italian backgrounds in relation to their radical beliefs varied. Some of the individuals discussed in previous sections felt that their Italian heritage played significant role in influencing the nature of their radicalism, while others did not feel that it was relevant or that it was even a hinderance to their goals for political reform. In this section I will take give an overview of the nature of Italian American political radicalism in the 1960s by looking into the lives of Carl Marzani—the intellectual covered in the previous section—and Mario Savio, the student radical and Free Speech Movement leader.

⁷⁷ Maddalena Marinari, *Unwanted: Italian and Jewish Mobilization Against Restrictive Immigration Laws 1882-1965* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2020), 160.

The origins of Savio and Marzani's political radicalism seem to be quite different from one another. As discussed in previous sections, Marzani's political radicalism originated from his early life experiences as political refugee and relationships that he formed with mentors who made him aware of the oppressive tendencies of American politics.⁷⁸ Additionally, Marzani's radical nature was not as impacted by his Italian heritage as those who were active political radicals in the 1920s and 1930s. Instead, he adopted and advocated for America's progressive and equitable ideals and used them as a framework to highlight the issues he believed needed to be addressed in American politics. In essence, Marzani set a benchmark for addressing crucial concerns in American society based on the principles of equality and fairness. This is seen in the book that he wrote while serving time in prison during the late 1940s, *We Can be Friends*, but it is also prevalent in his work as a publisher during the 1960s that will be further addressed in future parts of this section.

In contrast to Marzani, the origins of Savio's radicalism look somewhat different from that of the other political radicals who have been included in this study. Savio was a second-generation Italian American, born in 1942 to Italian immigrant parents, and raised in Queens, New York. Like those who were active in provoking labor reform during the 1920s and 1930s, Savio's father was a working-class immigrant as he was a mechanic. Additionally, Savio's parents were said to be a New Deal Democrats.⁷⁹ His early life fits that of the broader history of Italian Americans as his parents tried their hardest to mold Savio into a person who could be seen by others as coming from an assimilable immigrant family. In a speech that he gave much

⁷⁸ Frank Rosengarten, "Carl Marzani: A Radical American Life," Review of *The Education of a Reluctant Radical*, by Carl Marzani, *Science & Society* 61, no. 3 (Fall 1997): 398.

⁷⁹ Gil Fagiani, "Mario Savio: Resurrecting an Italian American Radical," in *The Lost World of Italian American Radicalism: Politics, Labor, and Culture*, ed. Philip V. Cannistraro, Gerald Meyer (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishing, 2003), 246.

later in his life he said, “my name is Mario Savio, and I’m from a Sicilian-Italian background... you know I never would have said that in the old days.”⁸⁰ The pressure to force Mario to assimilate is most obvious when his parents legally changed his name from Mario Robert Savio to Robert Mario Savio. He would go on with his childhood being referred to as “Bob” and would not change his name back to Mario until his college years at University of California, Berkeley.⁸¹ Although Mario consciously chose to go back to his Italian first name in his most active years, his Italian heritage played a very small role in his radical identity during his time as a Civil Rights Movement ally and Free Speech Movement leader, and it would not be until after his radical activities had slowed down, that Savio would come to be more in touch with his Italian American roots.⁸² Many who have covered Savio discount the importance that his Italian heritage played in influencing his radicalism portraying him as “merely an American homegrown product.”⁸³ Savio’s left-wing political beliefs led to a sense of estrangement from the typically conservative Italian American community.

For these reasons, it is telling why the radical nature of the Italian Americans covered in this section concerning the 1960s did not address the same sorts of issues or shifted their focus on issues that were of concern to the Italian American political radicals during the previous decades. During the 1960s, Savio was notable for his stances on civil rights issues and education reform. Additionally, although Marzani maintained his steadfast beliefs concerning United States foreign policy during the early Cold War period, his role as a publishing company owner

⁸⁰ Gil Fagiani, “Mario Savio: Resurrecting an Italian American Radical,” in *The Lost World of Italian American Radicalism: Politics, Labor, and Culture*, ed. Philip V. Cannistraro, Gerald Meyer (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishing, 2003), 249.

⁸¹ *Ibid*, 246.

⁸² *Ibid*, 248.

⁸³ *Ibid*, 245.

demonstrated his recognition of the significance of the Civil Rights Movement that was not seen as clearly in his earlier radical years.

During the 1960s, Marzani's politically radical nature took on a more subtle form. During the decade he became the co-owner of the Marzani and Munsell publishing company. While the book publishing does not seem as radical as giving powerful speeches or picketing, Marzani and Munsell made sure to maintain their progressive ideology in the books that they published. In an interview Marzani described Marzani and Munsell saying, "we also had a very distinguished list—we had... the first book on FBI informers, the first book on black armed self defense... there wasn't a major issue we didn't put out something on."⁸⁴

Savio's radical nature is said to have started in 1963. He was a proponent of free college education which can be seen in his earliest participation in political demonstrations. While a student at Queens College, Savio and other classmates joined in a protest in Albany, New York against tuitions being imposed on City University of New York colleges.⁸⁵ The following year, Savio left would leave Queens College and enroll in the University at California, Berkeley. It was while he was studying in California, that his left-wing political ideologies become most evident. Savio was active in both nationwide civil rights protests as well as civil rights protests in California's Bay Area.

In the summer of 1964, Savio and some other Berkeley students participated in the Freedom Summer campaign in Mississippi where they tried to raise awareness among disenfranchised African Americans in Mississippi about the importance of their voting rights. It

⁸⁴ Carl Marzani, interview by Gary Crowds and Lenny Rubenstein, *Union Films: An Interview with Carl Marzani*, Cineaste, vol. 7, no. 2 (Spring 1976), 34.

⁸⁵ Gil Fagiani, "Mario Savio: Resurrecting an Italian American Radical," in *The Lost World of Italian American Radicalism: Politics, Labor, and Culture*, ed. Philip V. Cannistraro, Gerald Meyer (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishing, 2003), 246.

was when the group returned to Berkeley after the Freedom Summer campaign that Savio's suspicions of higher education would grow even more than the year prior when he was at Queens College. According to Savio when the group returned, they "were greeted by an order from the Dean of Students' Office that the kind of on-campus political activity which had resulted in our taking part in the Summer Project was to be permitted no longer." Savio could not understand how a university that boasted about its liberal stances could silence its students. He was unfazed by the university's prohibition of student activism by the university's administration and went on to lead another protest against discriminatory hiring practices utilized by businesses in the Bay Area.⁸⁶

Savio claimed that universities and politicians alike cooperated and even embraced demonstrations given by young Democrats and young Republicans because it was harmless, and their advocacy was not consequential. However, he made it clear that this was not the case for radical activists like him and that the university needed to take stances against him since they and the businesses that he claims ran education felt threatened:

The radical student activities, however, are a mean threat to privilege. Because the students were advocating for consequential actions... the changing of hiring practices of particular establishments, the ending of certain forms of discrimination by certain concrete acts—because of these radical acts, the administration's restrictive rulings were necessary.⁸⁷

It is clear that the consequences of Savio's radicalism aimed to address fundamental issues within American society and challenge the foundations upon which they rested.

Additionally, he believed that the excessive influence of business interests on higher education had transformed universities into corporate entities, a significant problem that he brought

⁸⁶ Mario Savio, "Berkeley Fall: The Berkeley Student Rebellion of 1964," in *The Free Speech Movement and the Negro Revolution*, ed. Mario Savio, Eugene Walker, Raya Dunayevskaya (Detroit, Michigan: News & Letters, 1965), 16.

⁸⁷ *Ibid*, 16.

awareness to during his time as a leader of the Free Speech Movement.⁸⁸ Such an opinion can be observed on December 2, 1964, in Savio's most famous speech, "Bodies Upon the Gears." On that day, Savio and other Free Speech Movement organizers formed a deceptively well-organized sit-in at University of California, Berkeley's Sproul Hall in order to protest the administration's restrictions concerning on-campus political activism. About 1,500 people joined in the sit-in and 800 of them, including Savio, were ultimately arrested.⁸⁹ The speech criticizes the universities administration and connects with broader problems faced by the American public during the 1960s saying:

"We were told the following: If President Kerr actually tried to get something more liberal out of the regents... why didn't he make some public statement to that effect? And the answer we received... was the following: 'Would you ever imagine the manager of a firm making a statement publicly in opposition to his board of directors?' That's the answer! Well I ask you to consider: If this is a firm, and the board of regents are the board of directors; and if President Kerr in fact is the manager; then I'll tell you something. The faculty are a bunch of employees, and we're the raw material! But we're a bunch of raw materials that don't mean to be... Don't mean to be made into any product... Don't mean to end up being bought by some clients of the University, be they the government, be they the industry, be they organized labor, be they anyone! We're human beings! There is a time when the operation of the machine becomes so odious, makes you so sick at heart, that you can't take part!... And you've got to put your bodies upon the gears and upon the wheels... you've got to make it stop! And you've got to indicate to the people who run it, to the people who own it, that unless you're free, the machine will be prevented from working at all!"⁹⁰

Despite the fact that Savio took his Italian heritage into little account at the time in which he gave his famous speech, it is clear that he felt like the education system was reflective of the oppressive working conditions that Italian American political radicals of previous section fought to reform. Like those active in the 1920s and 1930s, Savio sought to get at the very foundations

⁸⁸ Mario Savio, "Berkeley Fall: The Berkeley Student Rebellion of 1964," in *The Free Speech Movement and the Negro Revolution*, ed. Mario Savio, Eugene Walker, Raya Dunayevskaya (Detroit, Michigan: News & Letters, 1965), 17.; Mario Savio, "Bodies Upon the Gears," December 2, 1964, Berkeley, CA, audio recording, 0:00-7:27, <https://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/BCYJDPISAO2WM8G>.

⁸⁹ Hal Draper, *Berkeley: The Student Revolt* (Chicago, IL: Haymarket Books, 2010), 115.

⁹⁰ Mario Savio, "Bodies Upon the Gears," December 2, 1964, Berkeley, CA, audio recording, 0:00-7:27, <https://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/BCYJDPISAO2WM8G>.

of the system that oppressed him and other students alike. The disconnect in the student-administration relationship that Savio was trying to bring awareness to is much similar to that of the disconnect that was felt by Italian American political radicals of earlier sections. It is specifically reflective of the disconnect that was felt by Italian American political radicals who were active in the 1920s and 1930s and the disparities that were faced by industrial workers and management. Additionally, it reflects the activism of entities like Marcantonio and Marzani as Savio also maintained a very strong stance concerning what the real meaning of free speech entails.

Ultimately, Savio would be expelled from Berkeley and sentenced to 120 days in jail for his leading role in the demonstrations at Sproul Hall on December 2, 1964.⁹¹ He would not have a reawakening concerning his Italian heritage until the 1970s and 1980s in which Savio was a part of a larger trend of ethnic revival that many Italian Americans took part in once the ethnic group was fully assimilated and accepted as a meaningful part of American identity.

⁹¹ Malcolm Burnstein, "The FSM: A Lawyer's Perspective," in *The Free Speech Movement: Reflections on Berkeley in the 1960s*, ed. Robert Cohen, Reginald E. Zelnik (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002), 443.

Conclusion:

Altogether, Italian American political radicals from 1927 to 1969 demonstrated their assimilation and integration into mainstream American society by actively participating in the labor force, running for public office, and by not only fighting for their own inalienable rights, but also the inalienable rights of other marginalized groups of Americans. By examining the experiences of Italian American individuals who were considered political radicals and dissenters—spanning across various professions ranging from barbers to congressional members—this thesis demonstrates that their actions were motivated by a desire to create meaningful political change. There were many instances in which they pursued political reform by diverging from the conventional approaches that most Italian Americans adopted to assimilate into American society.

Rather the people focused on in this thesis took a left-wing approach to provoking political change, with varying intensities of their ethnic identity playing a role in their decision making. Those active in the 1920s and 1930s were keener to incorporate their sense of Italian heritage into their political activism concerning labor reform because of their closeness to Italian dominated semi-skilled industries. The political radicals referred to who were active in the 1940s and 1950s were less apt to taking their Italian heritage into account in their radical decision making due to their privileged upbringings in which they were able to focus on their education and career endeavors. Finally, the sense of Italian heritage among active political radicals was not seen until well after their most obvious radical moments. To support this argument, I have analyzed oral history interviews, sworn statements, speeches, campaign ads, letters, and historical newspapers that reveal the true intentions of these Italian Americans who challenged dominant American political traditions.

The life experiences of these specific individuals are relevant to the ongoing scholarly work on the assimilation of ethnic minority groups into American society. By highlighting the stories of these often-overlooked individuals, this thesis adds a unique perspective to the ongoing discussions that are centered around the integration of immigrant communities in the United States. This is because this study shows how perceived dissent among a group can also signify a group's assimilation. This thesis contributes to the scholarly conversation by bringing attention to the ways that Italian American political radicals, specifically, engaged with American society and politics. By analyzing the actions and speech of these people, I hope that this thesis has been able to demonstrate a newer way of thinking about the assimilation of minority groups in the United States as their experiences provide important insights into the ways in which minority groups maneuver their way through American society.

The experiences of Italian American political radicals from the likes of Vito Marcantonio, Carl Marzani, and Mario Savio demonstrate that nonconformity can contribute just as much to American society as acts of assimilation. Furthermore, the thesis demonstrates the ongoing debate among ethnic American communities regarding how large of a role their ethnic American heritage ought to play in how they maneuver their way through American society. The varying interpretations and nature of the role that Italian American culture played in how these individuals lived their radical lives demonstrates that embracing cultural heritage is something that can be seen as essential for achieving social and political goals for some people, and not for others. as seen through their advocacy for political participation, labor union protection, and preservation of political rights among the Italian American community.

I hope that this thesis inspires historians to further explore into the lives and experiences of other entities that belong to minority groups whose political stances have been deemed

problematic when compared to mainstream American culture. Additionally, I hope that people look to bring awareness to the varying opinions among ethnic communities concerning how much of their home culture ought to influence how they assimilate to American society. Hopefully by addressing these, future scholars may be able to show how the dissent among ethnic groups other than Italian Americans boasted assimilation and shaped the broader development of American society and ethnic American history.

Overall, this thesis demonstrates the significance of the experiences of Italian American left-wing political radicals during the mid-twentieth century in the historical conversation concerning integration of minority groups in the United States. It challenges traditional views of assimilation and offers new insights into the ways in which minority communities have engaged and contributed to American society.

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