



## Joint Civic Committee of Italian Americans

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### Chicago's Italian American community remembers 130-year-old mass lynching

In this time of great social examination, history continues to be discussed, challenged, and underscored. Chicago's Italian American community will remember the victims of the country's largest mass lynching by vigilantes 130 years ago this Sunday, March 14 at 2pm. The solemn and informative event will take place at the foot of the fountain where a statue of Christopher Columbus once stood at Arrigo Park, 801 South Loomis Street in Chicago.

In 1891, when a viable murder suspect of New Orleans' prominent police chief was not determined, the Mayor ordered the arrest of over two hundred "Dagoes," a contemptuous term for someone of Italian extraction. Of them, 19 were indicted, nine were tried and all were acquitted. Unfortunately, anti-immigrant sentiment and horrendous mistreatment of Italian dockworkers prevailed as 3000-8000 vigilantes stormed the prison on March 14, 1891 and proceeded to kill 11 Sicilian men, shooting, and lynching them in the public square.

"This horrific event is another example of anti-immigrant oppression many European ethnics, especially Italians, suffered during America's formative years," said Ron Onesti, President of The Joint Civic Committee of Italian Americans and coordinator of the event. "It is our intention to bring to light some of these occurrences as social healing remains at the forefront of our society."

In April of 2019, New Orleans Mayor LaToya Cantrell issued an official Proclamation of Apology to the Italian American community stating: "What happened to those 11 Italians, it was wrong, and the city owes them and their descendants a formal apology," Cantrell said in her address. "This attack was an act of anti-immigrant violence."

130 years later in Chicago's Columbus Plaza at Arrigo Park, members of various ethnic communities, along with Frank Maselli, Honorary Consul of Italy in New Orleans, and Chairman of the Italian American Cultural Center in New Orleans, will gather to remember these 11 Sicilians. In 2019, Maselli hosted the Apology Proclamation ceremony in New Orleans and will attend Sunday's event in Chicago. This solemn remembrance ceremony notes the deep wounds of anti-immigrant suffering as well as the importance of acknowledging this history as a source of healing toward a more peaceful and inclusive society.

Those in attendance at Sunday's remembrance will adhere to CDC guidelines and protocols while the ceremony will also be streamed on [JCCIA's Facebook page](#).