

## Mujeres Migrantes Italianas

Laura E. Ruberto (July 21, 2008)



An exhibit in Argentina highlights the role Italian immigrant women in Buenos Aires played in the development of Argentina's past and present.

The exhibit "[Miradas de luz](#) [2]" (a poetic translation might be "Expressions of Light")—culled from testimonials, photographs, and other ephemera—recently closed in Buenos Aires. The show documents the story of Italian women immigrants in Argentina.

Over the course of the first half of the twentieth century, roughly 2.5 million Italians arrived in Argentina, over half a million of whom were women. This exhibit looks at their lives and the role they



had on the nation generally. The show highlights Italian-Argentine women's activism in labor unions, in the push to change child labor laws, and in other major movements, such as the 1907 "huelga de las escobas" (literally, the "broom strike"), which protested the high rents and squalid living conditions of many poor immigrants.

An Argentine friend recently forwarded me [a review](#) [3] about the exhibit; it was published in an Argentine daily, the center-left newspaper Pagina 12 (in its "Las 12," the paper's women-focused supplement).

I was taken by the previously untold stories of the women recorded in the exhibit and described in the review, women whose lives were generally overshadowed by the machismo pervading both their native and adopted countries. But I was particularly interested in the description of how the show ends in the contemporary moment, showing today's heterogeneous and multicultural porteños: even with an economic downturn that has pushed thousands of Argentines (back) to countries like Italy and Spain, new immigrants, mainly from other Latin American countries, continue to seek work in Buenos Aires.

Alicia Bernasconi of the [Centro de Estudios Migratorios Latinoamericanos \(Cemla\)](#)— [4]an academic center connected to Scalabrini Migration institutes worldwide—is quoted in the review, commenting on the connections between historical and contemporary moments of migration. She hopes for projects on the history of Italian emigration that would be organized in Italy itself,

para que la sociedad italiana sea capaz de revivir su pasado como inmigrante para tener una actitud más positiva hacia los inmigrantes de hoy

(so that the Italian society is able to re-live its past as immigrants so that they can develop a more positive perspective on the immigrants of today).

As I've suggested in other posts, seeing these links made—especially in light of the EU's changes in immigration laws, the U.S.'s failure with respect to immigrant rights—makes me hopeful.

**Related Links:** <http://www.iceimercosur.org.ar/eventos/eventos03.asp> [2]  
<http://81.174.35.51/lombardinemondo/portal/nazioni/argurug/articoli/storiaemigr...> [5]  
<http://www.pagina12.com.ar/diario/suplementos/las12/13-4236-2008-07-11.html> [3]

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### Links

- [1] <http://iitaly.org/files/mujeres1216688851.jpg>
- [2] <http://www.iceimercosur.org.ar/eventos/eventos03.asp>
- [3] <http://www.pagina12.com.ar/diario/suplementos/las12/13-4236-2008-07-11.html>
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