

Like Obama, “Bernie” ends in a Vowel

Jerry Krase (April 22, 2016)



Today’s Italian American voters are as likely to vote for Bernie Sanders as they were to vote for their semi-co-ethnic Bill De Blasio; or for Barack Obama whose name also ended in a vowel. Here I will try to explain Bernie’s place in Presidential preference polls among more or less likely Italian American voters. You might think that among Italian American voters, Bernie’s major opponent is Hillary Clinton, but it’s really “The Donald” Trump.

I’ve been off of the political commentary merry-go-round during the fall and winter seasons because I didn’t want to add to the growing mountain of pseudo-journalistic effluence that has inundated American mass media. In the past I only complained in writing about the likes of the “Fair and



Balanced" Fox News and the "News doesn't have to be boring to be news," New York Post, but since the U.S. Presidential campaign season began in earnest I've added "Lean Forward" MSNBC and "All the news that's fit to print" The New York Times to my list of unreliable sources.

They all seem not to like my favorite candidate, Vermont Socialist Bernie Sanders, Even The New York Times columnist Paul Krugman felt the need to campaign for Hillary in a few recent columns; demonstrating that just because you win a Nobel Prize for Pro-New-Keynesian Economics doesn't mean your opinion on matters electoral politics should matter. After all, didn't Milton Friedman win the same prize for being Anti-New-Keynesian. However, I am not here to bury Brooklyn-born Bernie's misguided opponents but to praise Him, albeit indirectly.

I am also here to try to explain his place in Presidential preference polls among more or less likely Italian American voters. You might think that among Italian American voters, Bernie's major opponent is Hillary Clinton, but it's really "The Donald" Trump. Italian Americans have been moving over into the Republican and Conservative ranks as registered voters for some time, and even when registered as Democrats (DINOs) or simply "independent" they list starboardly. Today's Italian American voters are as likely to vote for Bernie Sanders as they were to vote for their semi-co-ethnic Bill De Blasio; or for Barack Obama whose name also ended in a vowel, but who many Italian Americans I have had the pleasure (?) to meet continue to believe is a Kenyan-born Muslim.

To the best of my knowledge, where Staten Island (Richmond County) goes, so does the Italian vote. With about a half a million residents, Staten Island is the most conservative borough in New York City. As evidence, La Bella Isola has been trying, unsuccessfully, to secede from the "too liberal" Gotham City since the 1970s. In 1993 65 percent of its voters said, "yes, we can (leave)" in a 1993 referendum. According to [normal">Politico](#) [2] in Staten Island: "The mostly white, middle- and working-class Republican voters here have embraced the brash, Queens-born mogul as a hometown hero. So have some of the top GOP officials on the island, including Councilman Joe Borelli, who's become a go-to Trump surrogate on national television..." As to Borough or Countywide elected officials I think only one is a Democrat and he, ex-Congressman Michael McMahon, also tilts much of the time to the right.

Who then are the most prominent New York Italian Americans supporters of The Donald? Googling on The Web I found, among many others, Ex-America's Mayor and failed 2008 Presidential candidate Mayor Rudy Giuliani; real estate mogul and failed New York State Gubernatorial candidate Carl Paladino; as well as current New Jersey Governor and failed Republican Presidential candidate Chris Christie. Trump also has local support in the form of Republican Party Chairmen Arnaldo Ferraro (Kings County --- AKA Brooklyn), John LaValle (Suffolk County --- AKA White-Landia), Joseph Mondello (Nassau County --- AKA White-Landia) and Nassau County Executive Ed Mangano. Slightly farther afield are Pennsylvania State Senator Lou Bartletta who previously endorsed Rick Santorum and Florida Attorney General Pam Bondi who switched to Trump after Jeb Bush surrendered to The Donald.

Among entertainment luminaries is Scott Baio, AKA "Chachi (Ciacci) Arcola." The most controversial public figure is probably Joe Arpaio, "America's Toughest" Sheriff of Maricopa County, Arizona who, according to [RealClear Politics](#) [3], re-endorsed Trump at a Las Vegas rally in February mumbling in part: "What I like about him, he tells it like it is, most politicians, they are very politically correct, have you noticed? Nobody says anything, I can never understand. I can understand when he talks, some may not like it but that's tough..." As for international supporters of Donald Trump are fellow anti-immigrant know Nothings: Matteo Salvini, leader of the Italian secessionist Lega Nord; Frenchman Jean-Marie Le Pen founder and former leader of the neo-fascist Front National; and Geert Wilders, the Dutch politician who single-headedly changed the perception of Holland as a leading nation of tolerance.

The problem for Bernie Sanders among many Italian American voters is that he fits the mold of people who you might find in Gerald Meyer's *The Lost World of Italian American Radicalism: Politics, Labor, and Culture* (Greenwood 2003) According to [Meyer](#) [4] "Radicalism had a powerful but largely unacknowledged influence in the Italian-American community." His book tried to "restore to



Italian-American history the radical experience that has long remained suppressed, but that nevertheless helped shape both the Italian-American community and the American left." Chief among Italian American leftist heroes was Harlem Congressman Vito Marcantonio (1935 -37, 1939-1945). Ironically, Vito ran first as a Republican when it was a "progressive" party, and later with the Social Party splinter --- the American Labor Party. Note: Fiorello LaGuardia also was supported by the ALP. Current Trumpers, NYC Council Members Vincent Ignizio and Joe Borelli, provide a sharp contrast to Peter Cacchione, a Brooklyn Communist Party City Councilman, who Meyer wrote "... strengthened the presence of the left within New York City's Italian American communities." Cacchione was very popular among Italian Brooklynites and was elected to three consecutive terms (1941 - 1947).

Although I believe most of the full and partial Italian Americans in my immediate family will vote for him, even though "Bernie" ends in a vowel, I predict he will get practically bupkis (niente di niente) when it comes to Italian American voters in tomorrow's New York State Presidential Primary Election. Stay tuned for my post-election analysis. I should note that Bernie stopped for a visit with one of my neighbors on Ninth Street in hyper-gentrified Park Slope, Brooklyn yesterday on his way to a huge rally and concert in Prospect Park that was steps away from my house. I didn't get to the rally but did manage to get a "FUTURE TO BELIEVE IN" (UN FUTURO IN CUI CREDERE) sign for my front window.

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