



A Grant for Justice: Honoring Judge Giovanni Falcone

Alex Catti (May 23, 2017)



On May 23rd, 1992, the Mafia in Sicily tragically killed Judge Giovanni Falcone, who dedicated his career to fighting organized crime. Now, 25 years later, the Fulbright Commission Italy has joined with the Fondazione Falcone and the National Italian American Foundation (NIAF) to create a grant for students in the field of Criminology.

Italian Judge and prosecuting magistrate Giovanni Falcone spent much of his career combating the Mafia in Sicily. His life parallels that of his close friend Paolo Borsellino. They both spent their early years in the same neighborhood in Palermo. 25 years ago on May 23rd, 1992, Giovanni Falcone, his wife Francesca Morvillo, and their three bodyguards were killed by the Mafia on a highway in Sicily.



In honor of the judge and as a commitment to enriching the education of young Italians and Americans, the [Fulbright Commission Italy](#) [2], the [Fondazione Falcone](#) [3], and the [National Italian American Foundation \(NIAF\)](#) [4] have created a scholarship for students who are pursuing careers in the field of Law and Criminology. Winners of the 2016-2017 grant have shared their experiences, which have been extremely positive and insightful.

The Legacy of Judge Giovanni Falcone

Sicily during the 1980s presented a particularly violent Mafia scene. Judge Falcone became part of the Antimafia Pool, which aimed to strengthen investigations and prosecute perpetrators. The Antimafia Pool's efforts lead to the Maxi Trial, which saw the prosecution of hundreds of mafiosi. However, many mafiosi successfully appealed their verdicts. At the same time as the appeals, Falcone was having political struggles in Palermo, which prompted him to move to Rome and to fight the Mafia through the passing of a new legislation. The Mafia realized Falcone was much more powerful in Rome than he was in Palermo, which caused them to take action resulting in Falcone's eventual assassination.

A Grant for Justice

In honor of the late Judge and in an effort to give young students the best education possible, the Fulbright Commission Italy, the Fondazione Falcone, and NIAF have teamed up to create a grant for individuals who are studying in the field of Criminology and Law. One American student and one Italian student are chosen for the grant each year. The American student will work with the Fondazione Giovanni e Francesca Falcone in Palermo, Sicily, and the Italian student will conduct research at an American University. According to NIAF, "this award aims to promote the exchange of the values of the rule of law and legality among young people and to combat the presence of the Mafia culture in today's society."

The Grant Recipients

Grant recipients from the 2016-2017 program have shared their experiences. American Jennie Sutcliffe was born and raised outside of Ithaca New York, but was working in Chicago prior to embarking for Sicily. While in Chicago, Sutcliffe worked on criminal and juvenile justice reforms regarding access to healthcare. She chose to participate in the program to expand her understanding of juvenile justice policies internationally. While in Palermo, Jennie's research focused on interventions for youth coming from mafia backgrounds. Regarding her time in Sicily, Jennie states "In terms of my career, I see my time in Palermo as an important step towards becoming a more engaged and thoughtful advocate and policy maker. A common theme in my interviews was the absence (or lack of knowledge about) a network, Italian or European, to discuss and share juvenile justice best practices [...]. This is an idea I would like to take with me as I move forward in my career [...]"

Italian Salvatore Orlando was born and raised in Palermo. He's currently finishing a PhD in criminal law. After studying abroad in Europe and spending a significant amount of time in German universities, Orlando wanted to have an experience in America in order to gain clearer insight into American society and to be able to conduct his doctoral research. He also stated that Falcone's "follow the money" investigative methods inspired him to deepen his knowledge and to fight against the Mafia. While in America, Salvatore had the opportunity to work with the [University of Maryland](#) [5] and the [University of Virginia](#) [6], which helped him to gain a more nuanced view of American society and the American education system. Regarding his time in the U.S. Salvatore states, "This experience means a lot for my career. I realized how important it is for mutual understanding and better collaboration between judicial authorities. So, in my capacity as a legal scholar and a lawyer, I will give my contribution in advocating a stronger collaboration between Italy and the U.S. in the fight against organized crime."



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Links

- [1] <http://iitaly.org/files/giovanrifalconejpg-1>
- [2] <http://www.fulbright.it/>
- [3] http://www.fondazionefalcone.it/index.php?id_area=1
- [4] <http://www.niaf.org/>
- [5] <https://www.umd.edu/>
- [6] <http://www.virginia.edu/>