

## Palermo Remembers Giovanni Falcone

Gero Salamone (May 29, 2015)



The “No to Mafia” movement passed through the Sicilian capital. Starting with the involvement of schools. Over 40 thousand students out on the streets, some coming from Europe and the United States. Also present was the NIAF (National Italian American Foundation), which, alongside the Fulbright commission and the Falcone Foundation, stipulated an agreement for six scholarships to be assigned to Sicilian students wishing to study in America and American students who would want to go study in Sicily. An ambitious project, involving three important institutions with the common goal of promoting research and scientific depth in the field of criminology, as was specified by the president of NIAF, John Viola.

It was March 23rd 1992, the date of the tragic explosive attack orchestrated by “Cosa Nostra”, whose victims were the anti-mafia magistrate Giovanni Falcone, his wife Francesca Morvillo, and the



three agents from his escort: Vito Schifani, Rocco Dicillo, and Antonio Montinaro.

Giovanni Falcone, a magistrate who dedicated his life to the fight against the Mafia with great courage and a spirit of service, inventing innovative methods of investigation that are still used today at an international level to combat organized crime.

A sad page in the history of our country, which has come to its 23rd anniversary, in the vivid and emotional memory of the victims of that grave tragedy, and this year took on the name of “Palermo chiama Italia” (Palermo calls Italy).

A manifestation, that is, organized by the “Giovanni e Francesca Falcone” Foundation with the precious collaboration of the ministry of instruction’s general management office for student affairs, that took place in the city of Palermo connected to three other Italian squares, packed with students chanting “No to Mafia”.

A country united against the plague of the Mafia, starting from the essential involvement of schools as the natural spaces in which to start cultivating an education to legality and instigating a civic sentiment, just as Giovanni Falcone always preached in his understanding of the Mafia more as a cultural phenomenon than as a purely criminal one.

Over 40 thousand students made it out to the squares, some having come from Europe and the United States, in a true airplane of legality, that landed in that same airport, a short distance from the site of the Capaci Massacre, named after the two anti-mafia magistrates Giovanni Falcone and Paolo Borsellino.

A manifestation with an international reach, so much so as to incite the participation of the NIAF (National Italian American Foundation), one of the most representative Italian American foundation in the United States, based in Washington.

More specifically, through an agreement between the NIAF, the Fulbright Commission, and the Falcone Foundation, six scholarships were instituted, to be assigned to Sicilian students wishing to study in America and to American students who would want to study in Sicily.

The Fulbright commission, in fact, since the early 70’s, supports academic exchanges between Italy and the United States in order to create new learning and teaching opportunities through the assignment of scholarships.

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The institutional ceremony in honor of Giovanni Falcone took place in the high security “bunker” court room of the Ucciardone jail in Palermo, symbolic site where the anti-mafia magistrate managed, a few years before his murder, to institute the “maxitrial” that ended in 19 life sentences of various members of Cosa Nostra; the biggest criminal trial in the world.

During the ceremony it was the President of the Republic Sergio Mattarella who remembered the heroic feats of Giovanni Falcone as reasons for never letting one’s guard down and for renewing day after day the promise of defeating the Mafia, eliminating it from the social structure on the basis of it being incompatible with freedom and civil coexistence.

An invitation for the youth, that of the head of state, not to be afraid of the Mafia, to go forward in the respect of legality without ever forgetting our civil duties, which grow along with the growth of our rights.

The manifestation ended with a parade of citizens, filled with colors and music, extending up to the place where Giovanni Falcone lived, where there now is a majestic tree collecting messages, gifts, and flowers dedicated to the magistrate, now a symbol of legality and hope.



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