



The 'Sardine' Movement Crosses the Ocean. Meet the 'Atlantic Sardines'

Laura Pace (December 09, 2019)



One of them makes gelato, one is a researcher, another is a chemist, one a pizzaiolo, and another still a musician. These are the stories of the 'Atlantic Sardines.' Their lives united by a call on social media. A call that brought them to step out into the streets, also in New York.

It's true how they say age doesn't dictate ideas, as demonstrated by Michela, Carmen, Martina, Alberto, Ilaria, Arianna, Sofia, Annalisa, and Simona: the team who started the 'Atlantic Sardines.' A heterogeneous group of strangers that came together by chance. Among them we find gelato makers, students, musicians, some are 80 years old, or even born in America, but still fighting for their homeland from afar.

Ten strangers with nothing in common, except for one thing: being Italians abroad. Through a call launched on Facebook, they got to work, and within three days marched in New York's Washington



Square Park to protest. Another 200 people, who shared the same ideals and love for their country, answered that call.

A protest during which these “sardines” handed down the microphone, each sharing their stories:

“My name is Simona and I’m 36 years-old. I’m a scientist and a mom, and starting this week I’m also a transatlantic Sardine. I’m out in the streets today with my family and my two children, who by the way are American citizens thanks to ‘ius soli’(ed. birthright citizenship)”

“My name is Michela, I’m 24 years old and I’m a student. I’m an immigrant and as such I am part of a widespread social phenomenon that is taking place in our country: a new wave of mass emigration...”

The Sardine phenomenon, a non-aligned protest movement that is spreading across Italy, made it all the way to New York. Obviously not attracting the same numbers as Bologna, (ed. where the movement started) but significant enough to leave a mark even in this part of the world. In a frenetic city such as New York, it can be hard to build a community. However, it’s not impossible. On Sunday November, 24, the Italian community, Italian Americans, and those who support Italy, came out to protest.

Starting from the 6000 Sardines who showed up in Bologna, the movement became a media phenomenon and is slowly making its way around the country and the world, saying: NO to fascism, NO to racism, NO to xenophobia, NO to a government fueled by hate. All important yet very simple themes, pertaining to the most essential human rights.

They chose to come out in a square, a “piazza,” a space that has always been at the center of Italian city life: the place for exchanging opinions. They call themselves the ‘Atlantic Sardines’ and they are born in solidarity with the Sardines back in Italy. They want to represent Italian expats, create a niche within the movement, and add their perspective to it.

Michela, one of the Sardines, tells us: “We aren’t afraid of our anonymity, it’s actually our biggest strength. It’s what makes us a mass movement, composed of citizens who are reclaiming their right to a more serious political class, one who addresses their problems. We are all unknown faces after all. But within the group, what we try to do is to get to know each other, to create a dialog.”

Carmen, a 32-year-old researcher from Foggia, explains: “Many movements like ours are blossoming across the world. They’re writing to us from Canada, from Brazil, and that gives us the strength we need. It means we are really creating a network of people. A network of Italians who want to support Italy even though they live on the other side of the planet, who want to revive activism, civic duty, and get involved in the country’s political life. Not just passive voters, but active ones.”



"The internet is key, particularly social media. Thanks to these tools we learned about Sergio Ricciuto Conte, who designed our poster. He provided great support from Brazil to help us take flight."

Sergio Ricciuto Conte, an artist from Foggia now living in Brazil, crafted the movement's powerful poster: a clenched fist representing resistance and protest, made up of many little sardines. Sergio posted it on his Facebook profile to show support for the Italian Sardines, and it became the symbol of the Atlantic Sardines.

In the wake of their first gathering, the Atlantic Sardines claim that "what happened today is certainly doubly if not triply important for us, it gives us the hope and strength we needed."

Many were the stories shared in the square, and the paper sardines on which messages were written. Messages that will be brought to their friends in Bologna. And in the meantime, the call keeps resonating outward. This is certainly the right way to use social media: to create a network through which to spread ideas and then take it a step forward by meeting in real life.

To keep up with the Atlantic Sardines and their future initiatives, follow their [Facebook](#) [2], [Twitter](#) [3] and [Instagram](#) [4] profiles or contact them at: sardineatlantiche@gmail.com

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