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INFLUENCES OF ITALIAN COLONIAL MEDIA ON PERCEPTIONS OF IMMIGRANTS
TODAY

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ABSTRACT

Italy is a unique country due to its regional cultures stemming from various countries occupying land prior to its unification in 1871. In addition, it has become a popular destination for many immigrants as the peninsula is situated close to Africa as well as many other European countries. However, these immigrants are not always treated as though they are Italian, even if they are born in Italy, but instead many face discrimination, prejudice and hate simply for being of a different race and culture. With Matteo Salvini becoming an important figure in Italian politics since the election in March 2018, many ideas dating back to the fascist regime are beginning to reemerge as well, especially the concept of racial differences that led to well established laws that were strongly enforced during this time. During the fascist regime, Italy also colonized and maintained control over what was known at the time as Italian East Africa. While interactions and attempted colonization of three main African nations; Ethiopia, Libya and Eritrea, began prior to the rise of fascism, the fascist regime had a great impact and control over the colonies. Throughout this time, various media sources were the only way most Italians could learn about Africa and the African people, but in many cases this portrayal was heavily skewed from the true reality. The media gave the false impression that the Italian people were doing the African people a good favor and the Africans were grateful, when in fact it was just the opposite. They were treated harshly and the Italians tried their best to strip them of their culture and turn the people of the colonies into Italians. However, based on what the media portrayed the public never saw the truth and were likely led to believe that the Italians were superior in providing a service to the Africans. As similar ideas and treatment of people from different cultures has begun to emerge again in recent years, it is clear that these actions can be traced back to the

sentiments towards immigrants that took root during the colonial period. By examining colonial media representations of the African people and the sentiments that drove these inaccurate portrayals, along with the current political and social climate surrounding immigrants in Italy today, these links are made obvious. These ideals that drove the actions of Italians during colonial time are resurfacing in Italy today and are influencing the Italians' perceptions of immigrants.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Macerata: a smaller Italian town situated about 20 miles from the Adriatic Coast, known for its Renaissance history and opera festival, unique yet embodying Italian culture as one would expect from any Italian city. Nothing out of the ordinary typically occurred here, but that all changed a little over a year ago when tragedy ensued on February 3, 2018. Prior to this point, Macerata was not only known for their unique regional culture, but for their welcoming attitude and openness to migrants coming to Italy. In 2013, the city won recognition for their efforts to help integrate migrants into Italian society and the former bishop even described the town as having a “welcoming spirit” (Horowitz, “This Italian Town Once Welcomed Migrants...”). However, in the years since then that spirit has slowly been extinguishing and this change was made apparent on February 3rd, 2018.

What began as a day like any other ended in tragedy, a tragedy fueled by hate with underlying racial motives. A man by the name of Luca Traini went about his day until he heard news on the radio about the prior killing of Ms. Mastropietro. Ms. Mastropietro was killed by a group of immigrants, a story that Matteo Salvini and his right-wing supporters did not hesitate to make public immediately. This information triggered him to go retrieve his gun and unleash a series of horrific events soon after. Traini first fired at men unknown to him sitting outside of a bar, likely enjoying their afternoon caffè. Then he proceeded to fire shots into the local offices of the Democratic Party and later fired more shots into a pub called H7, where Traini used to be

employed (Horowitz, “This Italian Town Once Welcomed Migrants. Now, It's a Symbol for Right-Wing Politics”).

When it was all said and done, six individuals fell victim to this hate crime, all of whom were black. All of the victims had immigrated to Italy from various countries in sub-Saharan Africa including Mali, Ghana, Nigeria and Gambia. In addition, they were all between the ages of 20 and 32, younger individuals coming to Italy in the hopes of finding a better life for themselves (Sclaunich). This was the one thing all of the victims had in common, they were not all in the same place when they were shot and they were not known to Traini either, but they simply were all black, making this event an obvious crime against race. Fortunately, everyone was able to recover from their injuries and no one was fatally wounded as a result of this event, but many are not so lucky.

Not only was this crime one of hate, but it has more recently been defined as a terroristic attack, something that is being fueled by underlying links with ideals and motives dating back to fascist reign in Italy. Traini was representing the ideals and values that those of the far-right party possess during the current time, he was even a candidate for the local government running for the Lega (Horowitz, “This Italian Town Once Welcomed Migrants...”; Tebano). More recently, those in the Lega have been looking to create policies and spread a platform with ideals rooted in same underlying racial divisions that the fascist platform was built on as well. Most notably, in its rhetoric and policies, the Lega demonstrates a strong sense of discrepancy between races with the necessity to defend the “razza bianca” or white race (Horowitz, “This Italian Town Once Welcomed Migrants...”). This is the idea that those of the far right political parties; they believe that the white race, in other words the Italians, are superior to those of other races and likely another one of the main motives that fueled the crime of Traini. Rula Jebreal, an Italian

journalist originating from Palestine, described this event as a way in which Italians are practically and literally applying the “razza bianca” idea seen in the political campaigns of many right-wing politicians (Tebano). These sentiments are beginning to incite violence and hate against not only immigrants, but those Italians of foreign origins who are not fully recognized as “being Italian” because they do not fit the racial ideal set in place over a hundred years ago (Tebano).

Does this idea remind you of a time under fascism? Where Italians were portrayed as being far superior to the Africans that they were colonizing at the time. It makes one wonder, if the representation of Africans during the period of colonization has withstood time and is still being believed by some Italians today as there are many themes and ideas that are resurfacing today, in 2019, that were seen over a hundred years ago.

Chapter 2

The Colonial Period

Italian colonization began later than most countries as the peninsula did not become a unified country until 1861, therefore it was not until after this date that Italy began to look to form colonies in Africa as other European nations had already done. Officially, the period of colonization for Italy spans from 1890, when it created its first colony, until 1941, when it lost the empire of Italian East Africa during the second world war. Italy occupied the land of present day Ethiopia, Eritrea, Libya and Somalia. However, contacts and expansion into Africa actually began about 20 years prior when Lazarist missionary, Giuseppe Sapeto, purchased the port of Assab in 1869 (De Marco xii). Sapeto and his company were interested in this port because they believed this entry into the Red Sea would be the “key” to controlling the Mediterranean (De Marco xii). It was not until after the port had opened in 1882 that the Italian government became increasingly more interested in getting involved in Africa, hoping to expand Italy’s influence overseas. During this time, Italy conquered a diverse group of people and attempted to establish their own laws and ideas on the African people.

Eritrea

Eritrea was the first colony founded in 1890, by Italy during their period of expansion and colonization in Africa. The founding of Eritrea was done so in a way similar to most European countries, what begun as land bought by a company was then taken over and run by the state government. This was the case in Eritrea as the main goal was to expropriate the cultivated land and promote the settlement of poor Italian peasants who had no land in Italy. The

colony spanned along the Red Sea in the direction of the Suez Canal, making it a valuable location for trade. The population was made up almost entirely of indigenous Eritreans who greatly outnumbered the Italians (Palumbo). The Italians maintained control of Eritrea until 1941 when the British won the Battle of Keren and expelled the Italians from the country.

Somaliland

Somaliland, what is now present day Somalia, was the second country to be taken over by Italian conquest during their period of expansion. Unlike the other countries that Italy colonized, Somaliland was also occupied in parts by France and Britain as well, therefore, Italian Somaliland was only a part of present day Somalia, they did not gain control over entire area. Italy gained control of Italian Somaliland in 1905 which was matched with some resistance from certain Somali tribes, but this resistance did not amount to much in terms of reducing the Italian control. Starting in 1906, the Italian government began to put their policies in place to help increase prestige in Italian Somaliland, something that was not occurring in British Somaliland at all (Mertz *Somalia: A Country Study* 14). In 1940, after Italy had gained control of Ethiopia, they seized control over British Somaliland, uniting the country for one year until 1941, something that had not occurred in decades. This action by the Italian government, led to continued conflict with Britain over control of the land, eventually resulting in Britain regaining control over their area of Somalia and the Italians maintained control in Italian Somaliland until its independence in 1960 (Mertz *Somalia: A Country Study*).

Libya

The conquest of Libya proved to be another long and oppressive experience as was seen through the other colonies as well. In September 1911, Italian forces declared war on the Turks who maintained control of part of Libya, capturing Tripoli on October 3 and continuing on to occupy other parts as well (Mertz *Libya: A Country Study* 24). In 1912, Italy signed a peace treaty with the Turks, which simultaneously granted independence to Tripolitania¹ and Cyrenaica², while formally acknowledging the annexation of these areas by Italy (Mertz *Libya: A Country Study* 24). While Italy was able to gain control of these two regions, a third region of Fezzan, located below Tripolitania, presented a great deal of resistance to the possibility of Italian control, that was led by the Sanusi³ in all three regions of Libya. The Sanusi resistance led to a series of battles and two Italo-Sanusi wars, the first becoming part of World War I and the second starting in the early months of 1923 (Mertz *Libya: A Country Study* 29). Throughout this war, over 100,000 Libyans were sent to concentration camps and beginning in 1928, the Italians started using poisonous gas, despite having signed the protocol at the Geneva Convention in 1925 to not so, but then did three years later as a “cleansing” (“Africa: Italian Colonies”). In 1931, Mukhtar⁴ was captured and killed, leading to the fall of the Sanusi resistance. With fall of the Sanusi resistance, the greatest pushback Italy faced in Libya, Libya, better known during the colonial period as Italy’s Fourth Shore, was pacified by Italy (Mertz *Libya: A Country Study* 29). Italians remained in control of Libya until 1947.

¹ Part of present day Libya, bordered the Mediterranean Sea with Tunisia to the northwest.

² Part of present day Libya, extended along the Mediterranean Sea and bordered Egypt to the West.

³ Arab Libyans, named after one of the Muslim brothers (Mertz *Libya: A Country Study*).

⁴ Sanusi leader during the Italian resistance period (Mertz *Libya: A Country Study*).

Ethiopia

Ethiopia was the area in which Italy spent most of their efforts trying to take over the land, as it was the most established area prior to the colonial period. Ethiopia already had an established central government as well as many established cities, two characteristics that many African countries did not have at this time. Since the colonization of Eritrea, Italy had their sights set on gaining the area of Ethiopia and began attempting to invade in 1895 when they invaded Tigray⁵. However, this invasion was met with a large amount of resistance by Menelik⁶ whose army was able to reroute the Italian troops before they reached Italy, resulting in a great win for the Ethiopian people, saving them from Italian control (Ofcansky et al. 32). This victory resulted in the recognition of independence for Ethiopia by the Italians, but it also allowed Italy to maintain their colony of Eritrea. In 1928, a twenty-year treaty of friendship was signed by Italy and Ethiopia, allowing Ethiopia to have access to the trade area at Aseb located in Eritrea. However, on October 3, 1935, Italy attacked Ethiopia coming from both Eritrea and Somalia. This turned into a war that lasted over seven months, but the Ethiopian army was nowhere the size of the Italian army, especially one that used chemical weapons and air forces as well. By May 5th, 1936, the Italians had taken control of the capital Addis Ababa, announcing their annexation of the country (Ofcansky et al. 37). The violence did not end here. On January 19, 1937, after someone attempted to take the life of Rodolfo Graziani, over 30,000 innocent Ethiopian citizens were killed by the Italian government, including over half of the well-

⁵ Northernmost region of the nine historical regions in Ethiopia. Located along the border of Eritrea. The city of Adwa was the capital of the Tigray region during this time. (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. "Tigray." *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, www.britannica.com/place/Tigray-historical-region-Ethiopia.)

⁶ Ruler of Ethiopia from 1889-1913. (Ofcansky et al.)

educated, younger generation, a tragic event known as the Graziani massacre. Just as conflicts had been arising prior to Italy gaining control over Ethiopia, they continued for the following years after annexation until Ethiopia regained its independence from Italy in 1947 (Ofcansky et al. 38).

Chapter 3

Racial Laws during the Colonial Period

Race has been used in the Italian government dating back as far as 3000 years, as a way to classify people as well as composed policy and justify actions throughout time. Prior to the fascist's rise to power, racial laws and sentiments towards certain races were understood, but not strictly captured in law. During the reign of the fascist party, these ideas about race were manifested in a written document that was used to govern both Italy and its colonies. Racial laws were the driving force in many of the actions that were taken and policies that were put in place throughout the colonies, creating a divide between the Italians and African people.

Under the Liberal Period

The Liberal period in Italian history is the period in which liberal ideas governed the country from unification in 1861, until the fascist regime came to power in 1922. While there was some racial segregation in the colonies, according to Italo-Eritrean, Maria, born in Asmara in 1917, the segregation was to a much lesser degree during the liberal period than it was during fascism (Palumbo 82). Based on the composition and ratio of Italian settlers to Eritreans, with the Eritreans completely dominating the population in the colony, everyone was forced to interact with each other because it was the only way in which businesses could run. It was an "economic necessity" to intermingle with the Eritreans, something that was not seen in any other colony (Palumbo 85). In addition, being that there were so few Italians living in Eritrea, they needed Eritreans to serve as members of the military for Italy as well as work as wagers, giving people a stable income and food source (Palumbo 84-85).

The racial policies during this time were established in 1897, but they were nowhere near as serious or strictly enforced as those that were to come under fascism. These policies merely focused on emphasizing the role that Italians were there to “protect the natives” against any European that was going to attempt to harm them. The other policy stresses that in all occasions “European superiority” was stressed above all else, but other than these vague statements, the application of these policies was up to the discretion of the governor. Therefore, there were no strict rules that needed to be followed, but as long as these policies were met, there was no law stating that the Italians and Eritreans could not interact, as seen by their various interactions to promote economic success within the colony.

There were certain laws and ideas enacted to create this superiority of the Italians. One way governors separated the people racially was through dividing towns into residential zones; some for the Italians and some for the Eritreans, however sometimes there was a third area in which both races were allowed to live (Palumbo 90).

Under Fascism

Under Fascist reign, the racial constructs that had been understood by Italians for hundreds of years prior became a written doctrine that was strictly enforced to demonstrate just how important the concept and distinguishing of races was to the fascist party. These laws were established in “I Fondamenti della Dottrina Fascista della Razza”, a book written in 1940 by Giacomo Acerbo (b. 1888 – d. 1969), at a conference in Florence outlining how people were defined and what was to become of them based on their race, held about twenty years after the Fascist party rose to power in 1922 under Mussolini. In this document, the concept of race is

broken down into four main concepts; “di razza comune, storiche, naturalistico e integrale” or the difference between the common, historical, naturalistic and comprehensive concepts of race (Acerbo). The “comune” concept of race was based on the idea that there are certain characteristics that determine different groups of people. In this doctrine, the characteristics that are of concern are the linguistic and cultural properties that differed between groups of people (Acerbo 15). The second concept of race documented in this book was the “storiche” concept of race which is based on the definition of French sociologist Gustave Le Bon (1841-1931). According to this book, historical concepts of race focus on how races were created as lands were conquered, people immigrated and the government changed, causing new languages and traditions to be (Acerbo 16). The “naturalistico” concept of race, unlike the first two, deals with one’s biology and physical anatomy rather than language. Based on the “naturalistico” concept of race, different races have different skull structures as well as different hair, eye and skin colors that are common of the particular race (Acerbo). Prior to the fascist time period, this concept was especially useful as people would determine superiority and inferior based on the shapes of people’s skulls, if it did not meet the standards put in place, people were not considered to be part of the superior race. While these three concepts are all ideas that were recognized by the fascist regime as different ways to distinguish different races, the fascist party chose to base their ideas of race mainly on the “integrale” concept or the comprehensive concept of race, believing that it contained something “more” than the other three concepts did not.

The “integrale” concept of race, as determined by the fascist regime, enters the domain of ones’ spirit as well, claiming that those people who are of “Italian blood” are not just anyone who lives in the peninsula and lives under the laws the all Italians live under. Instead, Italians should want to and strive to keep the lineage “pure” because not everyone living in Italy truly

understands the moral and material properties that those who are “true” Italians do. Therefore, the fascists were very adamant at keeping this concept of race true and encouraged Italians to adopt the same ideas, as they assumed that Italians would want to keep the race “pure”. They were to serve as a model for humanity because they were able to keep their race pure, therefore, they should be seen as a superior model to other races that do not understand their moral ideas (Acerbo 24). This law was also called the “legge del sangue” or rule of blood, in short, stating that those who were not of “pure” Italian blood were not considered to be part of the Italian race. This was the one way that the fascist regime could discriminate Italians from immigrants and the African people because even though they could adopt the language, traditions and possibly the physical characteristics if one parent was Italian, it was impossible for them to be considered Italian based on the integrale concept. Since the only way that one could be considered Italian under this law, then they would have to have two Italian parents, but this did not apply to any Africans, only those who were “true” Italians.

Not only were these racial laws applied in the peninsula, but they further translated to the rule of Italy’s colonies. According to McLean, “enforcing a racial hierarchy within Italy’s colonies had been a political objective since the liberal era”, confirming the idea that this concept of a racial hierarchy was officially promoted on both the peninsula and in the colonies (160). While the idea of a racial hierarchy was one that was not new under fascism, it was not until this time that the formal doctrine outlining all the racial ideas of the administration was created and more heavily enforced. According to Maria, Italo-Eritrean born in 1917 during the liberal period, while there was a racial divide prior that was seen as more “natural” in its ways, it was “only during fascism was there a vicious racism” (Palumbo 81).

This idea of racial hierarchy that was established through the racial laws put in place in 1922, created a distinct separation between races, with some seen as clearly “better” than others, as it was highlighted throughout Italy’s campaign in Africa, specifically in Ethiopia. When the Italians were first conquering Africa, they were warned of all of the dangers that could occur if they were to interact or have relations with the African people. The Italians saw the Africans as inferior to them as they were “not as developed” and presented a risk to the health and strength of the “Italian race” (McLean, p. 161). For these reasons, along with others, Italians were advised to avoid interactions and especially relations with Africans as not to hinder the superiority of the Italian race. Laws banning mixed marriages were put in place in both Eritrea and Ethiopia in 1933 and 1937 respectively to prevent the “weakening” of the Italian people (“Africa: Italian Colonies”). In addition, while the Eritrean people were once working jobs in the public sector alongside Italians, the rise of fascism stressed such intense racial and political superiority of the Italians, that the Eritreans were removed from their positions and reassigned “lowest levels of public employment (Ofcansky et al. 36). All of these warnings were released when Italy first set out to conquer lands in Africa, however, after the conquest of Ethiopia under the rule of Haile Selassie, Italian government officials during the fascist era expressed that “Italy’s imperial campaign in Ethiopia had come out of a larger and more ambitious racial project” (McLean, p. 181). It was at this point that the motives for conquering land in Africa was not just to give Italy control of important waterways and trade routes, but more importantly to express the superiority of their race over others. The conquering of Ethiopia proved to be a crucial step in the “rejuvenation of the Italian race” and express to the world that they were of a superior race than those in many other areas (McLean, p. 182).

The first step in establishing the superiority of the Italian race was through the conquest of African countries, most notably Ethiopia. The second step to doing so was to take over the Ethiopian government and control the lands in a way that was consistent with their racial ideas. In order to do so, the “most radical and restrictive” racial policies were put in place both in Italy as well as in the colonies, that called for discrimination and a clear divide between those who were Italian and those who were not (McLean, p. 182).

Chapter 4

Italianization of the Native Africans

One of the major ways that Italians were able to establish a racial hierarchy and essentially attempt to “Italianize” the African people was through the education system put in place for the native colonists once Italian East Africa was established. Depending on the area in which people lived, the education put in place was different, but they all had the same goal, to force the Italian culture on African people and try to strip them of their heritage. Prior to fascism, the purpose of a standardized education was merely to “instill its subject peoples a devotion for Italy and respect for Italian civilization” while still allowing the native people to practice their cultures (De Marco 6). This original policy was designed to create a combination of cultures, both the native culture and Italian culture, not one of complete assimilation. Italians wanted schools for the natives to help bring about a change in mentality, hoping to gain respect from the natives as opposed to a more negative outlook. 1914 was the first point that education was seen as a tool to rapidly assimilate the native people, which occurred in Libya and because of this structure, schools began to Italianize native children (De Marco 8).

On June 1, 1936, Mussolini announced the foundation of his fascist empire in Africa and all of the countries conquered were joined together into one area, Italian East Africa, that was divided into five regional governments along with a capital, Addis Ababa (De Marco xiv). At this point in time, the areas that did not have a structured education system in place prior to the rise of fascist rule, fell quickly to the impact of the new government. Specifically, this applied to Tripolitania and Cyrenaica (De Marco 13). Also, the Italians created different strategies for assimilating different populations, specifically Muslims and Jews (De Marco 13). It was believed that the Jewish population would be easier to assimilate because their culture was

similar to Italian culture, the only major difference was religion (De Marco 13). Muslims on the other hand were seen to be a greater challenge by Italians because their culture differed and therefore, the process for assimilation that was created was much more rigorous (De Marco 13). Learning Italian was made mandatory in school for all of the Muslim children and the government elementary schools were described as an “instrument for resuscitating and developing respect and devotion for Italy” (De Marco 13).

Unlike these two areas, Italian Somaliland and Eritrea were the two regions that did not have this same formal governmental education structure in place. This was due to the fact that Somaliland was comprised of large percentage of the population that were nomadic (De Marco). For the obvious reason that they were not living in one place, it was very difficult and useless to create a strict education system because it would not be used. Eritrea, was also unique due to their highly diverse population. This area was comprised of many different cultures, all of whom spoke different languages, were of different races and religions (De Marco). Therefore, it wasn't possible to create one school that would be able to educate all people due to the many differences and diversity of the area.

Even though the African people were supposed to adopt the Italian language and culture, becoming as Italian as possible, they were never seen as being Italian by the fascist regime. While they may have considered themselves to be Italian after some time, especially if they ended up moving to Italy, the fascist regime failed to recognize them as Italian based on the “integrale” concept of race. This created a very deceiving environment because while African people could have considered themselves to be Italian, they were not seen that way by those controlling them and were still treated as though they were different. Since they did not meet the standards for being the superior race, which would equate to being Italian in terms of the

“integrale” concept, they still received a great deal of mistreatment, even after they were forced to become as Italian as possible.

Chapter 5

Colonial Media

Importance

During the period of colonization (1890-1941), most people never had the opportunity to travel to the colonies, so all they knew was the information they were exposed to in the media. After much research and personal accounts that have been discovered after the fact, historians have documented that the representations of the African people during this period were inaccurate to the actual events occurring. However, these representations were the only thing that most Italians knew about the African people. Therefore, seeing that almost all of these representations, especially those created by Italians are inaccurate, there were many skewed beliefs about the African people during this time, but to the Italians, it seemed as though this was the truth.

Media took many forms during this time, as it does today, but in the late 1800s and early 1900s, not everyone in Italy had the ability to read. In 1911, the census reported that “illiteracy rates for people over age six at: Piedmont 11%; Lombardy 13%; Tuscany 37%; Sardinia 58%; Calabria 70%”, in short at least half of the population was illiterate during the period of colonization, as these numbers had not changed much from 20-30 years prior (The Gramsci Reader 53). Therefore, some of the more widespread methods of disseminating information was through pictures or songs that could be shared with all. Many different pieces have been found that represent the African people in a variety of ways and it is what the Italians used to form their beliefs

Visual Media

Aurelio Bertiglia (b. 1891- d. 1973) created a series of five postcards depicting the Italian conquest of Ethiopia, spread around to the Italian public in 1936. All of these postcards show different scenes in the series of the conquest in Ethiopia. In all of the postcards, Bertiglia uses children with a cartoon-like feel to them as his subjects as opposed to a more accurate representation of Ethiopians and Italians. This playful representation of the Ethiopian people alludes to the fact that they should not be taken as seriously or be seen on the same level as Italians, this child-like portrayal evokes a fun, joking feeling. However, this was a very serious situation, but when portrayed in this way, those viewing the postcards may not recognize this and view it as more of a joke instead.

One of the postcards in this series depicts two Italian soldiers walking away from battle with the Italian flag in their hand. The battle being represented is likely during the Italo-Ethiopian War in which after some time the Italians won, giving them control of Ethiopia. You can see the Ethiopians holding a white flag in their hands signifying that they are surrendering their land over to the Italians and are giving up on the war. While this is not how the battle occurred in reality, Bertiglia wants the audience of the postcards to believe that the Ethiopians merely surrendered instead of putting up a long and hard fight. The Ethiopians are also holding up their hands and doing the fascist salute, McLean describes this gesture as “it conveying to its viewers not only that Italians had successfully conquered Ethiopia but also that the local population was grateful for the foreign presence” (McLean 156). This insight from McLean expresses the idea that Bertiglia wanted the Italian public to believe about the African people, that they wanted them to conquer them and were happy that the Italians did so. The reason for portraying this image is so that the Italian public, not knowing much of the true facts, could feel

as though what their country was doing was good for the people of Ethiopia, that they were changing them for the better. However, Bertiglia fails to illustrate the true sentiments and events that were occurring, as there was much hostility and most of the African people did not like the Italians being in their country. The Italians treated the African people very poorly, as they believed they were superior and it is likely that they were not at all grateful for the Italian presence in their country, where all of their customs and beliefs were abruptly uprooted.

In addition to portraying the Ethiopians in a way that expressed their gratitude of the Italians for coming in and conquering their land, Bertiglia also portrayed the Italians in a more positive light than what was the reality of their behavior during colonization. In the series of five postcards by Bertiglia, he portrays the Italian soldiers as strong and charismatic, their heads are held high facing upwards with large smiles on their faces and they are taller than the African people (McLean 155). Looking at their gestures, one can infer that they are in Ethiopia as an act of charity towards the African people, or at least this is what Bertiglia wants the Italian public to believe. Instead of showing the truth about the Italian regime, how they wanted to take over and enforce racially superior plans on the African people, the Italians are shown as good guys. They are seen as though they are coming to Africa to do the people a favor and help civilize a less developed country, which is what they wanted to make it seem as though they were doing, but this was not the case at all. These pictures were merely a form of propaganda that were used to promote the ideas of attempting to modernize the African colonies and their people as well (Polezzi, "Imperial Reproductions: The Circulation of Colonial Images Across Popular Genres and Media in the 1920s and 1930s" 36). However, it is a great representation of how media can be used to portray a skewed image of the truth, and how many people believe this to be reality, especially during this time because so few Italians were ever actually in Africa. Therefore, if one

was only exposed to these postcards, they would believe the Italians were doing the Ethiopians a service by conquering them and on top of that they Ethiopians want them and are grateful for their presence. Unfortunately, this was not the reality of the situation as there were oppressing policies by the Italians and the Ethiopians did not in fact want them to be there.

Oral Traditions

Another very widespread form of media that discussed Italy's presence in Africa was the song "Facetta Nera" a marching song that was popular during of the fascist regime. The title of "Facetta Nera" translates to pretty little black face in English, so it is clear just from the title that the focus of the song is about the African people. This song was written in 1935, prior to the invasion of Abissinia as a form of propaganda for the fascist regime in order to gain support for their interventions in Africa ("Il Vero Significato Di Faccetta Nera - Messaggero Veneto"). Over time "Facetta Nera" quickly gained support and many people continued to sing the song years after the fascist regime had fallen, but many people failed to recognize the true significance of the song and its lyrics.

As aforementioned, the title of the song signifies pretty black face, which already can clue one in to the contents of the song as well as how the Italians had no problem objectifying the African people ("Carlo Buti – Faccetta Nera"). Skin color was a large focus of the policies put in place by the fascist regime, so it is not surprising that the title of their main song focused on the color of one's skin, a very accurate representation of the basis of their regime. The song begins with the image of a ship coming to the shore, it is an Italian ship because the flag is mentioned and it is coming into the shore of Africa ("Carlo Buti – Faccetta Nera", lines 1-4).

Since one can infer from the title that the song is about the African people, it is not difficult to figure out that this ship represents the Italians that are coming to take over their land.

The second verse of the song focuses on the arrival of the Italians, letting the African people know that they should not worry any longer for the Italians will be there soon (“Carlo Buti – Faccetta Nera”, 6). This connotation makes it seem as though the African people have been waiting for the Italians arrive for a long time to come help them, but this was not the case. The Italians just showed up, the Africans were not needing or waiting for them, but it once again portrays the Italians in a positive light and so the public believed that what they were doing was great for the African people and continued to support the efforts. The song also expresses that once the Italians arrive they will put in place new laws and have a new king, while in reality this was detrimental to the African people, in the context of the song it seemed as though the Italians were doing a great thing (“Carlo Buti – Faccetta Nera”, 8). It expresses that the Italians are coming to bring the African people freedom, and while they may be “free” from their old governments which the Italians believed were not successful they ended up being heavily oppressed under the fascist regime (“Carlo Buti – Faccetta Nera”, 10-12). Therefore, the concept of freedom was a negative thing, but once again the general Italian population did not know this and instead would have taken these words very literally, believing in the work the regime was doing and seeing it as a good thing.

Another questionable expression used in this song is “schiavitù d’amore” which means a slavery of love (“Carlo Buti – Faccetta Nera”, 9). The idea is that this is the motto of Italians, that while it may seem as though the African people are being putting into slavery, it is out of love and charity, which will result in it being helpful to the African people, it is not a negative thing. Also, the title of the song holds a feminine gender and is described as being beautiful, in

reference to the African people. However, Italy is the male knight that is coming to rescue the fragile African people. This contrast captures the notion that the creators of the song wanted the Italian people to believe, that the Italians were “saving” the African people. The song concludes with the idea that the goal of the fascist regime is to bring back the African people back to Rome after they have turned them into Italians (“Carlo Buti – Faccetta Nera”, 18). Once again, there is a sense that the fascist regime is bringing hope and freedom to the African people, that they are needing the Italians to come and conquer them. Unfortunately, this was far from the truth, but most Italians never knew the real truth that most African people did not want the Italians there and the Italians in fact treated them very harshly, not out of charity. However, from the lyrics of this song, the public would think that the Italians are helping the Africans with the hopes of teaching them their culture and eventually incorporating them into life in Italy one day.

“Facetta Nera” became popular with the Italian people very quickly while they were under fascist rule because it stood as a symbol for the regime and what they were doing during colonization (“Il Vero Significato Di Faccetta Nera - Messaggero Veneto”). For this reason, being that the song was one of the most widespread symbols and notions that the Italian people knew about colonization in Africa, it makes sense that they believed what the words were saying because they did not have much other information to convince them otherwise. Unfortunately, the people back in Italy did not have much insight into the truth about what was occurring, aside from the skewed reality that was being presented in the media, so they only knew what the song wanted them to think that, that the colonization was great for the African people and a great act of charity by Italy.

Based on the media that the Italian public was presented, it is possible that many people felt Italy was doing the African people a service, that they were helping those lesser than

themselves. Could this be a reason as to why there is still a divide between Italians and immigrants, who are no less Italian, but not always treated as though they are?

Travel Accounts and Stories

Throughout the colonial period, travel accounts and books based on these accounts written by explorers became very popular throughout Italy. These accounts and stories were written, in many cases, as books to be read for entertainment and were meant to portray the Italian explorer taking on the wild; the animals, land and people found in Africa that were all meant to appear as being wild and uncivilized. The main objective of this genre of books was to first establish the “superior gaze” also known as the “colonial gaze”, describing a sense of Italians looking down on the African people and seeing them as of a lesser capacity for all aspects of life, promoting Italian superiority in the colonies (Polezzi, “Imperial Reproductions: ...” 36). One example of this type of propaganda can be seen through the work of Ardito Desio, a famous explorer who also wrote accounts of many of his travels. Many of Desio’s works are described as being filled “with myths of modernity and modernization, which supported the official line on the civilizing effects of colonization” (Polezzi, “Imperial Reproductions: ...36). The representation of these myths in a variety of different works throughout the colonial period, led the Italian population to believe this was the truth because they were unaware that these representations were not the truth, as most Italians were not in the colonies. They were not only found in Desio’s works, but in almost all travel accounts that were created during this period as well as a majority of the graphical representations to come out of this period (Polezzi, “Imperial Reproductions...” 36).

As seen with the racial laws throughout the colonies, the travel accounts became increasingly harsher and more racist with the shift from the liberal period to the fascist period of colonial expansion. Many of these works have been described as being supportive of the “increasingly aggressive attitudes of Fascism” just as the laws followed this same pattern as well (Polezzi, “Il Pieno e Il Vuoto: ...” 350). One representation of these ideas can be seen in Lidio Cipriani’s book *Un Assurdo Etnico: L’impero Etiopico*, that was made available to the Italian public in 1935. Cipriani, a popular travel author, photographer and anthropologist during the fascist period spent much of his time working on racial theories that he began to share with the public in 1931 and his written and visual works demonstrated these theories as well (“Dagli Album Fotografici Di Lidio Cipriani”). In addition, many of his works demonstrated sentiments in favor of Italian invasion in Africa by attempting to discredit Ethiopia as a state to make Italy’s actions appear more favorable (Polezzi, “Il Pieno e Il Vuoto: ...” 350-351).

Un Assurdo Etnico: L’impero Etiopico immediately displays such sentiments on front cover of the book. The cover of the book is composed of seven different photographs of the Ethiopian people made into a collage. Some of the images show the Ethiopians in their traditional dress, one man is standing guard of the land while another is squatting down shooting a bow and another is a group of Ethiopians participating in what appears to be a ritual or dance important to their culture. there is also an image of a woman staring off into the distance as well as another large group of Ethiopians all sitting on the ground together. By capturing images of the Ethiopian people participating in activities and wearing dress that is customary to their culture, Cipriani is not doing so to shed light on their lives, but instead to represent them in their most primitive state, hoping to reinforce the sentiments held by the government that they needed to be modernized. By selecting photographs in which the Ethiopians are wearing minimal

clothing and engaging in traditional hunting behaviors and all in settings that are outside, Cipriani is looking to portray a sense of “savagery, lack of civilization” that he believed was characteristic of the Ethiopian people (Polezzi, “Il Pieno e Il Vuoto: ...” 351). Cipriani also includes many images and descriptions in the book regarding the physical appearance of the Ethiopian people. Since much of his work was to demonstrate the anthropological differences between races, especially in regards to the “naturalistico” concept of race, Cipriani includes many of these descriptions to support his theories as well. The images inside the book are focused on the anatomy of the head, along with the hairstyles many of the Ethiopian people had which differed drastically from that of the Italians. Not only did many of these books portray the African people in the same sense the Cipriani’s books do, to emphasize their savage nature, but the Italian men in these stories are always portrayed in the opposite was to create a stark comparison between races. The Italian men on the other hand are positively portrayed, standing tall and fully clothed, usually in military outfits, and taking on a heroic stance, an image of the Italian people seen not only in the travel books, but in other media forms such as the postcards by Bertiglia as well (Polezzi, “Imperial Reproductions: ...” 40).

By using travel guides and stories as a form of colonial propaganda, the authors of these books were able to portray images of the African people that supported the myths that the government used to support their expansion efforts. These myths are seen as the underlying motivation for all forms of media throughout the colonial period. Visual representations, oral traditions and travel stories that were created during this time all hold the same underlying messages of the African people. All forms of media representations during this time provide “savage” representations of the African people, whether visual or descriptive, and the Italian’s on the other hand are represented in a heroic, strong and positive manner. These differences

between Africans and Italians that are highlighted in the various media representations of the colonial period are created in line with the political objectives of colonization. The government of this period portrayed colonization as a way to modernize and help the African people, to the Italian public so that their efforts would be met with support as the public believed they were doing so out of charity and willingness to help. However, these representations hide the true reality of the colonial period, yet the Italian public at this time was only exposed to these false representations. Thus, the Italian public was led to believe that Italy's efforts in Africa were bringing about positive change for the people who lived there and were met by gratefulness for the "charity" of the Italians, instead of the horrific reality that was actually occurring. Therefore, the only understanding of the colonies that most Italians were familiar with was based on these false media representations of the colonies as they were not exposed to the true situations that were occurring, causing many Italians to have false understandings of the true reality of the colonial period.

Chapter 6

Current Political Climate

2018 Election

In this day and age, most countries face a divided political party affiliation among their population and Italy is no different in this sense as they too are a politically divided nation. Looking back on the past year, Italy has seen many political changes and challenges that have come with these changes as a new election took place on March 5, 2018. Italy's political system operates as a parliamentary system that is divided into two houses, much like the United States Senate and House of Representatives, with a prime minister and cabinet ministers holding the greatest power and rule over the country. On top of this, the Italian government has a president, Sergio Mattarella, but this position comes with less power than the prime minister as they function as the head of state and are meant to represent national unity. They are required to be an older member of society, being at least fifty years old and while they represent the head of state, they are less instrumental in making decisions for the country (Italy, Senato della Repubblica). This election was particularly pivotal in terms of Italy's relationship to and treatment of immigrants from other countries, because immigration was one of the major issues that divided the coalitions. Most notably, the political party previously called Lega Nord (The Northern League), which in 2017 changed its name to "Lega", was noted, not just in Italy, but especially other countries in the European Union to be heavily anti-immigration, as Matteo Salvini, a strong figure of this party promised to deport illegal immigrants in masses ("Italy Election: What Does the Result Mean?").

This past election saw an increase in support for a few newer parties, with the country being divided among three major alliances; the center-left, the center-right and the Five Star Movement. The center-left coalition is comprised almost solely by the Democratic Party, headed by Matteo Renzi, Italy's former prime minister. The center-right coalition is made up of the traditional center right party, Forza Italia, the newer Lega Nord, which overtook Forza having the greatest percentage of votes in the center-right coalition and the radical right party, Fratelli d'Italia. Finally, the Five Star Movement is a party on its own, created in 2009 by the comedian Beppe Grillo and currently led by Luigi di Maio (b. 1986), that has gained the support of almost the entire southern half of the country (Henley et al.). This party was born out of a frustration with the government and in many ways, is described as a political party that is anti-government ("Italy Election: What Does the Result Mean?").

The election of March 5, 2018, found the country at a stand-still as no coalition won a majority of the votes, which is needed in order to elect a prime minister from one of the coalitions. The Five Star Movement received the largest number of votes for a single party with about a third, but regardless, no coalition had a majority and instead Italy found itself divided into three main coalitions. At this moment in time, the option was to either find a way to join coalitions, so that the votes the parties involved received would add up to be more than the 50% needed or proceed to another election (Henley et al.).

After many months of debate and attempts to create a coalition, the Five Star Movement and Lega Nord joined together to create the majority of the country. On June 1, 2018, Giuseppe Conte of the Five Star Movement was elected as prime minister of Italy, alongside him members of the more right and harsh Lega were appointed to his cabinet (Borghese and Vonberg).

Matteo Salvini

Matteo Salvini (b. 1973), a name that about 10 years ago was once of no significance, is now one that is known not just by everyone in Italy, but everyone in Europe and likely most of the world. Salvini is a member of the Lega party and assumed the role of Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior this past June (Borghese and Vonberg). Prior to gaining this position, Salvini had already made it clear that he holds a political stance that is very anti-immigrant and also against many of the policies that the EU has in place, regarding not only immigration and asylum seekers, but many other topics as well (Borghese and Vonberg). Now that he is in this position of power, Salvini is using his position to put in place his anti-immigrant agenda because he describes immigrants as being “socially dangerous” (Giuffrida, “Italian Government Approves Salvini Bill Targeting Migrants”). However, this notion is on the basis of many assumptions as opposed to fact because while of course some immigrants will commit violent acts, they are not doing so at a rate that is any more than Italians, in most cases the numbers are less. Either way, Salvini and his beliefs have attracted many Italians to rally behind him and Lega Nord because they choose to adopt similar anti-immigration tendencies that he articulates (Borghese and Vonberg). Could the information presented during the fascist era about race and the colonists have an impact on these ideas Salvini and other right wing politicians are spreading to the public?

Salvini wasted no time to put in place his anti-immigration and anti-immigrant agenda after being elected to the cabinet in early June. As it is expected to occur in the world we live in, each and every day there are articles written about this man and things he is doing in attempts to push these motives, some are able to capture his true sense much better than others. In early September, an article published by an Italian magazine, *L'espresso*, explained the man in a way

that captures the many aspects of him. The article describes Salvini as a “camaleonte” or chameleon to signify the way in which he puts on a moderate political face for the public, but in reality, is looking to change not only his party of the Lega Nord, but also Italian politics and Italy’s affiliation with the EU as well (Damilano). Salvini is using his strong power, instead of other methods, in an attempt to gain support of the South of Italy, but either way, his work is causing an even larger political divide among Italians (Damilano). Prior to this, Salvini’s party had an anti-mezzogiorno agenda, in other words they looked to segregate the more economically affluent North from the South and pushed ideas that enforced this belief. However, with the removal of “nord” from their party name, Lega is attempting to win the support of Southern Italians which they had tried to distance themselves from prior. In many ways, Salvini, a man with such overbearing ideas and power, is mirroring the ways in which Mussolini and the fascist regime controlled Italy. The fascist reign took force and maintained power with their strong, radical laws that controlled all aspects of life in Italy, just about 90 years ago, from 1922-1943. Could Salvini and his strong-willed ideas be drawing on political strategies and rhetoric from Mussolini in order to gain control of Italy and attempt to put in place his agenda? If Salvini is in fact drawing upon strategies demonstrated by Mussolini and those who colonized Africa prior to the fascist regime, this could provide an explanation as to why the theme of mistreatment has come back up in Italian culture. Just as the African people were once mistreated during the colonial period, so too are immigrants facing mistreatment today because they are descendent of different cultures and ethnicities.

The end of September brought about even more events and policies to impose Salvini’s anti-immigration ideas and allow the divide between immigrants and Italians to perpetuate, as it has been since colonization. This policy is known as the Security Decree “Decreto Sicurezza”, a

set of 42 articles that tighten immigration policies and change protection for immigrants, and was approved by the cabinet⁷. Even the title of this decree implies that immigrants are inherently a threat to Italy's security, giving the impression to that Italian public that this is the case. The main ideas behind this decree are to take steps in "making Italy safer", as described by Salvini, by reducing immigrants in the country and creating onerous institutional and legal barriers to their ability to enter and remain in the country. (Giuffrida, "Italian Government Approves Salvini Bill Targeting Migrants"). This decree imposes new regulations for the application of asylum seekers, making it much harder for individuals to gain protection in Italy, even though they likely cannot go back to their homelands for risk of their safety. In addition, it will also abolish humanitarian protection, which was crucial for many immigrants coming to Italy. With this protect, immigrants coming to Italy that were not seeking asylum, but were unable to return home were granted protection for two years and had the ability to find work and live safely (Giuffrida, "Italian Government Approves Salvini Bill Targeting Migrants"). However, as Christopher Hein, a professor of law and immigration policies at a university in Rome, explains just how many lives could be impacted if this decree were to become law (Giuffrida, "Italian Government Approves Salvini Bill Targeting Migrants"). The decree could even play a role in the sporting world as many players come from overseas, thus impacting the length of time players' rights in the country last for, likely only three years now (Sarzanini). On top of this, it leaves the decision whether someone is here to seek asylum or if they are at risk to be "socially dangerous" up purely to judgment instead of actual facts. Unfortunately, this means that many immigrants in Italy for legitimate reasons face the possibility of no longer being granted asylum

⁷ Parliament has 60 days to debate a decree before it becomes law (Giuffrida, "Italian Government Approves Salvini Bill Targeting Migrants").

based on the fact that they look like they could pose a threat (Giuffrida, “Italian Government Approves Salvini Bill Targeting Migrants”).

On November 29, 2018, the Salvini Decree became law in Italy, even despite fierce criticism and opposition for the harsh policies that it outlines, the Decree passed with 396 in favor and 99 against (The Local). The law’s passage was described by Salvini as “I’m happy, it’s a memorable day”, having no remorse for the fact that he is making the lives of many very difficult (The Local). Not only does this decree put in place all of the laws listed above, but it also changed the amount of time it takes to process an Italian citizenship application from two years now to four (The Local). Thus, this law makes it even more difficult for immigrants to become citizens, when they are trying to create a better life for themselves, not only affecting the original asylum seekers, but also refugees and legal immigrants in Italy as well. As was expected by Hein, the passing of this decree has led to the lives of immigrants being impacted. Just at the end of January, a 25-year-old man jumped in front of a train in Genoa out of despair and hopelessness after finding out his permesso di soggiorno was being revoked. He was not a criminal, in fact he came to Italy to attend college and graduated with a degree in chemistry, yet he was still impacted by the decree (Leoni).

This decree of Salvini represents just another way that his ideas share many similarities with the assumptions made about the African people during the decades of Italian colonization, as shown through the media presented about them. As I will document in more detail in this study, during colonial times, official Italian national rhetoric and policies promoted the idea that the African people were uncivilized and needed the help of the Italians in order to form a true society, simply because they lived differently and were of a different race. As seen prior, since they were not white as the Italians were, based on the doctrine of race created by the fascist and

prior notions, the Italians believed there was no way they could be as sophisticated as them. Therefore, they saw themselves as superior and more civilized to the African based on a few “scientific” studies of the period, that tried to argue that some races were more evolved than others. In a similar sense, Salvini is using false judgements and a possible idea that the Italians have racial superiority over immigrants to create the basis of his decree and further spread this message to the Italian public. It allows Italians to deny immigrants asylum just because they appear to be dangerous to society, but without any data or facts to prove that they are. It is allowing the Italian population to once again discriminate and create divides between people just because they appear to be different, but without any true knowledge at all, just as Italy did during the colonial period. In actuality, over 5 million foreigners are living legally in Italy and on top of this there are at least 690,000 people living illegally as well, making up over 9% of the population (“Immigration to Italy: a Look at the Numbers”). It is difficult to determine exact statistics on crimes, in 2016, police chief Franco Gabrielli stated that even as the number of immigrants is increasing in Italy, overall the crime rates have seen a decrease in the past 10 years (“Immigration to Italy: a Look at the Numbers”; Misculin). Also, the rate of crimes being reported about foreigners increased at a lower rate than those committed by Italians. While many people may try to claim that the percentage of immigrants being in Italian prisons, which is over 20%, higher than their percentage of the population, foreigners do not have access to all of the other options aside from prison, therefore, for most, prison is their only fate (Misculin). Therefore, there is no evidence that foreigners commit crimes at a higher rate than Italians and in some cases, evidence that there is actually less crime with their presences in the country, so believing that this is so proves to be a big misconception. However, it is one that Salvini chose to base his decrees on, by claiming that immigrants are “socially dangerous”, yet they are no more

dangerous, if even less so than Italians. This example once again brings the idea into question, could the initial false portrayal of the African people during colonization still have an impact on how Italians see a discrepancy between them and immigrants?

In addition to this decree, Salvini has been using his power and influence over the Italian population to further push anti-immigrant sentiments. In October, Salvini threatened to close all of Italy's airports to block migrants from Germany that were supposed to be repatriated in Italy to enter the country (McKenna). However, this idea was completely rumored, as there were no flights of migrants scheduled to come into Italy at all, but Salvini, to exercise his power, looked to go to any extreme measure to prevent the arrival of more migrants to Italy (McKenna). Salvini is looking to traditional concepts of race when forming his sentiments and policies, as it is clear through his actions he does not want those different from or of a less superior race, as once believed and seen through fascist rhetoric presented in colonial media, to be a part of the Italian population. By creating policies and acting in a way that evokes a sense of fear of immigrants in the minds of many Italian people, Salvini is slowly attempting to gain support for his sentiments against immigrants, in hopes that Italians will rally behind his ideas and begin to drive them out as well. In a world that is coming increasingly more diverse every day, it is difficult to comprehend where this great deal of hatred against other cultures comes from, but based on the similarities listed prior, it is likely that prior representation of other cultures play a role into these ideas. Salvini has also been using tragic events occurring in Italian cities to push his ideals even further, causing the Italian population to recognize this and begin to take a stand against him as well. These actions of Salvini were brought to the attention of the larger public and global community after many groups began to protest what Salvini was attempting to turn these tragedies into.

For example, a girl by the name of Desiree Mariottini was raped and killed by a group of African men, an act of violence that is by no means dismissible, but also something that occurs often as a result of the actions of Italian people as well, not just immigrants. At this occasion, Salvini appeared at the scene to bring publicity to this crime committed by immigrants, and some, like Isabella Troisi, a 22-year-old woman present at this event, claim his agenda in doing so was to “make them more scared” of the immigrants, (Horowitz, “Salvini Seizes on 2nd Italian Teenager's Death to Push Immigration Issue”). Salvini is not only trying to scare the Italian population of immigrants, but further he is using these tragic events to push his new “Italians First” movement, with immigrants not being included in the definition of Italians (Horowitz, “Salvini Seizes on 2nd Italian Teenager's Death to Push Immigration Issue”). By bringing publicity and showing up to these tragic crimes that are being committed by immigrants, but not doing so when it is an Italian that commits the crime, Salvini is instilling a false image of immigrants in the minds of the Italian public. Recently, on March 6, 2019, an incident of this sort occurred where a young woman, just 24 years old, was raped by three Italian men between ages 18-20, who had already tried to do so 20 days prior (“Violentata in Stazione, La Boschi: «Stupratori Italiani, Salvini Non Twitta? Cominci a Governare»”). This instance did not receive a visit from Salvini, or any publicity at all, because the criminals were not people of color as made clear by many individuals. In one case, ex-minister, Maria Elena Boschi, tweeted to the public making this fact clear and it was not until after receiving these tweets and messages that Salvini decided to comment on the event (“Violentata in Stazione, La Boschi: «Stupratori Italiani, Salvini Non Twitta? Cominci a Governare»”). However, he never visited the scene with camera crews as he has done multiple times when crimes are committed by immigrants and it is likely he would have never commented if no one had brought to the public eye just what he was

doing, since it wasn't until after this that he responded. Just as was seen in the postcards created during the colonial period, portraying the African people in a certain light, Salvini is doing the exact same thing in present day. He is creating a false image of immigrants so that the Italian public will believe that all immigrants are this way and the public will adopt his anti-immigrant sentiments as well, which could further result in attempts to push them out of society instead of incorporating them into it. Looking back at the interactions with the African people during the colonial period, especially under fascism, the Italians looked to divide themselves from the African people, instead of choosing intermingle with them. Salvini's actions in the present day, are reactivating this groundwork of separation that was created just about 90 years ago under Mussolini.

Not only are these instances pushing Salvini's ideas on the Italian public and making them increasingly more fearful of immigrants for no reason, but they are causing people with extreme beliefs to incite violence against innocent immigrants. The Macerata story, discussed in the beginning of this work is a serious example of a situation caused by the "Italian's First" sentiments of Salvini. Prior to this shooting of many innocent immigrants, a woman was killed by immigrants in the same town just a short time prior and unto the surprise of many, Salvini was at the scene and very vocal about the fact that it was the fault of immigrants and immigration that this situation occurred. Salvini's publicity of this murder and using it to spread his anti-immigrant rhetoric may have facilitated a right-wing extremist to take these ideas to heart and go on this shooting spree. Therefore, it is clear that Salvini is not only using a false portrayal of immigrants to change the minds of the Italian public, but, his actions are inciting people to treat immigrants in horrible ways.

Chapter 7

Current Social Climate

Lodi School Incident

Not only has the current political climate and administration created issues surrounding immigrants, but these sentiments are expanding into the social climate in Italy as well. Just as it has been seen politically, there are also underlying influences of the social culture concerning immigrants that can be traced back to interactions with the African people during the colonial period. These influences have been seen, in many instances, to make the integration of immigrants into Italian life very difficult as the current government is trying to associate negative sentiments around these types of acts. This is resulting in many occurrences of immigrants being segregated from the Italians as well as a divide between those Italians who are trying to help integration occur and those who are anti-immigrant. Not only is this creating polarized perceptions of immigrants, but is leading to divided social environments in the Italian culture as well.

One instance of the social climate in Italy, can be expressed through a situation that occurred in Lodi, a town in the northern part of Italy, with a mayor, Sara Cassanova, who is a part of Lega and looks to uphold the anti-immigrant sentiments that are central to the party's platform. Prior to the start of this school year, any "foreigner" that wished to receive subsidized lunch and bus fees for their children going to elementary and middle school were able to do so (Horowitz, "Italy's Tough Line on Immigrants Reaches a School Cafeteria"). The only thing they had to do was show the proper documentation to prove that they were in fact eligible to receive these subsidized prices. However, this year, Cassanova passed a new law requiring that on top of

the documentations that were already required to receive subsidized lunch and bus fares, foreigners also have to prove that they do not “possess property, bank accounts or other revenue streams in their countries of origin” (Horowitz, “Italy's Tough Line on Immigrants Reaches a School Cafeteria”). Those who are unable to prove this must pay the regular price, 5 euros a day, which many families cannot afford. While the easy solution would seem like bringing lunch from home, unfortunately, children at Lodi’s Archinti school end up being segregated from the rest of their peers if they are unable to afford the lunch provided by the school. Children bringing their lunch from home are unable to take that lunch into the cafeteria, a policy found throughout much of Italy, not just in Lodi, but this means these children are segregated from the rest of their peers. Those who are unable to pay for lunch must eat lunch in a separate classroom and are unable to sit in the cafeteria with their friends because they are now forced to have extra documentation in order to do so. Many mothers of these children expressed the difficulty they were having in finding these particular documents, Imen Mbarek, one mother, explained that she went back to her home country of Tunisia and papers of this sort “simply didn’t exist” (Horowitz, “Italy's Tough Line on Immigrants Reaches a School Cafeteria”).

These innocent children, a majority of which were born in Italy, are suffering merely due to the fact that those governing the area have an anti-immigrant agenda and which they strive to enact on many different fronts. Many people from the town were even trying to protest the fact that people from all over Italy felt compassion for these children and chose to donate money to help these children find their way back to the cafeteria with their friends. The law sparked controversy as it promoted the schools to engage in “discriminatory conduct” (“Discriminazione in Mensa Si Dimette Assessora Di Lodi - La Repubblica.it”). However, the townspeople expressed their underlying anti-immigrant sentiments by claiming these families have so many

children in an attempt to take over Europe and Italy specifically, that they want to exploit the country and get a free ride (Horowitz, “Italy's Tough Line on Immigrants Reaches a School Cafeteria”). What they fail to recognize is that the majority of these children, while of foreign descent, were born in Italy and even further, as much as 80% of the children in this school are considered to be “foreigners” despite them never living anywhere aside from Italy. Based on the laws of *Ius Soli*⁸, children born in Italy to foreign parents are not recognized as “true” citizens until they are 18 years old, even though they have lived in Italy their whole lives. Thus, this law already creates a divide between children who are “true” Italians versus those who are not, even though these children know nothing other than Italian life and culture. Further, the principal of the school, Eugenio Merli, claimed that the decision to make children without lunch eat in a separate room was meant to help families so their children did not have to go home for lunch, not to segregate them (Horowitz, “Italy's Tough Line on Immigrants Reaches a School Cafeteria”). If this were truly the case, one can speculate that the children still would have been allowed to eat lunch in the cafeteria, given the circumstances. After much pushback, the children were eventually allowed to do so, but even then, those bringing their lunch from home were required to eat at separate tables.

It is unfortunate to see innocent children being mistreated and segregated simply due to their race and background, not due to any valid reason. The foreigners were the only people who had to prove these very specific and virtually non-existent documents in order to receive

⁸ A child is considered to be Italian if at least one of their parents is Italian. Children born in Italian who are not born to Italian parents are not granted citizenship until they are 18 years old. They must have lived in the country for the entirety of these 18 years without moving anywhere else. If a child moved to Italy prior to age 12, they must attend school for at least five years before applying for citizenship to prove their proficiency in understanding the Italian language and culture (Camili, Annalisa.)

subsidies, no one else. While these children do not understand why they are being separated from each other, they do in fact recognize that they miss their friends, as Soufiane, a 9-year-old boy, said about his friend Rayen who is still allowed to eat in the cafeteria while he is not. Soufiane also no longer has money to ride the bus and must walk 6 kilometers to school each day, another outcome he does not understand as he sees the school bus drive past every day, wondering why he cannot get on it (Horowitz, "Italy's Tough Line on Immigrants Reaches a School Cafeteria"). While all of this information about the situation screams segregation, Cassanova has even tried to claim that "we're not racist and there's no apartheid here", even though the only people suffering from these policies are "foreigners" (Horowitz, "Italy's Tough Line on Immigrants Reaches a School Cafeteria").

This situation in Lodi, is unfortunately the sad reality for many foreigners, coming to Italy in search of a better life, not one in which they are still facing difficulties and mistreatment. Lodi represents just how easy it is for many Italians to get behind the anti-immigrant sentiments held by Salvini and put others down, without really knowing the situation or understanding that most of these so called "foreigners" were born in Italy and are just as much Italian as they are. However, being that they are perceived as being of a different race due to their skin color and heritage, many people are looking back to the underlying racial ideas that were made concrete during the colonial period and are still basing their decisions of others on these, despite the fact that the world has come a long way since then.

Domenico Lucano and Riace

Just as foreigners have faced segregation and other social problems in the North of Italy, so too is the South of Italy being faced with the mistreatment of immigrants and those who support them. This has become particularly problematic for the town of Riace, a small-town situation in the Calabrian hills, known as one of Italy's poorest regions. In the mid 1990s, as Italy's economy began to flourish in the North, many people left the town of Riace resulting in the population dropping to around 400 from its original 2,500 to 3,000 people that had been residing there since the second world war ("Italian Mayor Arrested for Allegedly Aiding Illegal Immigration"). With this large drop in population, many houses were left abandoned and other establishments, schools especially, faced the possibility of closure due to the fact that there were so few people to keep it running. It was in 1998 that Domenico Lucano, a man from Riace, who would go on to become mayor in 2004, came up with a plan to incorporate immigrants into the Italian community and help restore the town of Riace ("Italian Mayor Arrested for Allegedly Aiding Illegal Immigration"; Momigliano).

Starting in 1998, Lucano began welcoming immigrants and asylum seekers into Riace, allowing them to live in the abandoned homes in hopes that they would begin to restore the town back to what it used to be. As he expected, the immigrants were a large asset to society as they not only participated in the daily life and got jobs, but the children brought students back to the school that was facing the risk of closure due to so few children living in the town prior. On top of this, they learned local trades and reopened many shops that had once closed due to the extreme drop in population ("Italian Mayor Arrested for Allegedly Aiding Illegal Immigration"; Momigliano). Since 1998, over 3,000 immigrants have passed through Riace and today people from over 20 different countries make up approximately one third of Riace's population ("Italian

Mayor Arrested for Allegedly Aiding Illegal Immigration”; Momigliano). Lucano’s initiative to integrate immigrants into Italian society and welcome their talents has been adopted by at least four other towns in southern Italy that have been put in the same situation as Riace once was. On top of these communities putting similar efforts into place, in Reggio Calabria, four of the five “centri di accoglienza straordinaria” (CAS) or centers where teenagers that immigrate to Italy, escaping relief from war and oppression, live and received assistance were closed (Trunfio). The people of Reggio believe they have two options, one of racism and one of welcoming, which many people in Reggio believes take precedent over all political motives. Due to these closures, many families in Reggio have been welcoming these teenagers, coming alone at as young as 14, to Italy and have nowhere to go once they make it to Italy. Abdu, a 16-year-old who came to Italy to escape persecution by ISIS was just one of the many children affected by these closures, he explained that “<< mi sono sentito morire una seconda volta>>”, he felt himself dying a second time with these closures (Trunfio). However, he was welcomed into the home of Tiziana Salazzaro and Alessandro Azzarà who explained that they were not willing to let stereotypes and prejudices condition the way that they live their lives (Trunfio). Just as Lucano has been trying to break the perception that many Italians hold about immigrants, so too are the families in Reggio Calabria who are taking these immigrant children into their homes when they are left with nowhere else to go.

Not only has Lucano been able to help bring immigrants into Italian society, but has been recognized by his continued efforts all over the world. In 2016, Lucano was recognized by Fortune Magazine as one of the world’s 50 greatest leaders and his efforts also led to the creation of a Rai⁹ TV show about Riace as well as a movie presenting the town and these plans as an

⁹ Popular Italian TV company (<https://www.rai.it>)

exemplary model of integration between people and cultures (Giuffrida, “Pro-Refugee Italian Mayor Arrested for 'Aiding Illegal Migration.'”; Momigliano). While many see Lucano and Riace for the good that they have brought to Italy, unfortunately many of the current political leaders view his action as the exact opposite. Sergio Bontempelli, a migrant rights campaigner for the Association of Rights and Borders, expressed his concern for Riace, that they had been under attack for many years because they have been an example of the successful integration of immigrants and Italians (Giuffrida, “Pro-Refugee Italian Mayor Arrested for 'Aiding Illegal Migration”). A friend of Lucano and Calabrian writer, Gioacchino Criaco, also expressed his concern for Lucano since he was able to make something good out of merely nothing, further stating that “efficiency and humanity are not welcomed in a cynical system. This is a system that only takes consensus from politics of fear. In this respect, examples of virtuousness must be eradicated,” (Giuffrida, “Pro-Refugee Italian Mayor Arrested for 'Aiding Illegal Migration.'”).

On October 2, 2018, Lucano was arrested based on suspicion of abetting illegal migration, due to his efforts for many years to help the immigrants that come to Italy, hoping to find their way (Giuffrida, “Pro-Refugee Italian Mayor Arrested for 'Aiding Illegal Migration.”; Momigliano). Prior to his arrest, an investigation on his work had been ongoing for over a year prior as allegation arose of embezzlement and fraud, but those have since been dropped (Candito). This arrest was spearheaded by none other than Salvini, looking to crack down on anyone or any policy that gives a sense of hope to immigrants in becoming integrated into Italian society. The decision to pursue a case against Lucano seems to indicate that the right-wing government is looking to portray anyone who helps immigrants as a criminal in the hopes that it will deter others from doing so, making it even more difficult for immigrants to become integrated into Italian society. Unfortunately, the quotes and sentiments expressed above that

were foreshadowing the arrest of Lucano, demonstrate the sad reality of the state of Italy today (Giuffrida, “Pro-Refugee Italian Mayor Arrested for 'Aiding Illegal Migration”). Anyone who tries to do good for others is punished as recognized by those who are not part of the right-wing. Roberto Saviano, a well-known writer from the left-wing, has expressed the sentiments of these individuals stating, “the government has begun transforming Italy from a democracy to an authoritarian state,” (Momigliano). Following Saviano’s implicit suggestion here, I will examine how the legacy of Italy’s most recent authoritarian regime, under Mussolini, is influencing and informing the current administration in their reception of immigrants and treatment of those who support them. As many Italians that are not member of the right-wing are beginning to recognize, there are connections between the underlying motivations of the fascist government and the current government today. Further, from these underlying ideas and policies, a social divide is becoming apparent between Italians and immigrants. However, Luigi D’Alessio, the chief prosecutor of the investigations is trying to make Lucano’s arrest appear as though it was not motivated based on the fact that he is doing good for immigrants. D’Alessio has claimed that the aims of their arrest are not to “pass a judgement on the Riace program or on [the merits of] hosting migrants”, but merely to see if there are any irregularities in this program (Candito; Momigliano). While D’Alessio is making these claims about the situation, being that the arrest was pushed heavily by the right-wing government, despite the justifications provided by the prosecutor, the larger political context, including the situation in Lodi as well as this situation have prompted many people on the left to see this act as another attempt to create obstacles to the integration of immigrants into Italian life.

In arresting Lucano for his good work in helping immigrants become integrated into Italian society because they are in fact part of the Italian culture too, the government is looking to

deter anyone else from doing the same. This is allowing a negative sentiment to be associated with good acts for the country, as it is not in line with the anti-immigration policies that have been pushed by so many recently.

Chapter 8

Links Between Past and Present

In uncovering the truths about the Italian colonial period in relation to the media that was being presented to the Italian public, one can recognize that these media representations were used to evoke certain sentiments about the African people, since they were not of Italian descent. Through a range of visual and verbal media and through official policies and legislation, authors, artists and political members of the colonial period were able to portray an image of the African people that demonstrated their savage and uncivilized nature. While this was not an accurate representation of the African people, Italians on the peninsula did not know that these representations were inaccurate because they had never traveled to the colonies and therefore believed in them. These colonial media representations of the African people allowed the Italian's to promote the fact that their efforts were done out of charity in an attempt to modernize and civilize the African countries that they colonized. In doing so, they failed to acknowledge that the reality was the exact opposite as the African people did not want them colonizing them and the Italians committed so many atrocities throughout their colonial occupation. In addition, the racial laws put in place in the colonies both segregated and degraded the African people. Therefore, the Italian public had a view of the African people that was one of savagery and their uncivilized nature, believing that the Italians had helped them so much, so they were indebted to them.

Fast forward 90 years and one can see that in present day Italy, negative sentiments and discrimination are still revolving around those from other countries, especially from Africa. Once again, the ideas of promoting racial superiority of the Italian people, in relation to immigrants is resurfacing in Italy, ideas that were last prominent during the colonial period especially under fascism. In addition, immigrants are being portrayed as being less capable, more violent and in a sense, less “civilized”, than Italians as they were during colonial times, in hopes that they are driven out of Italian society. Once again, Italians are being faced with the option to welcome and incorporate immigrants into Italian society, but due in large part to the influence of the right-wing, in many cases individuals are choosing to discriminate against them and individuals who are choosing to help immigrants. The actions in present day Italy mirror those that occurred throughout colonial time, leading one to believe that Italians today are drawing upon the laws and ideas of other cultures to form their ideas and opinions today. These sentiments can be traced back, not only to the colonial period, but specifically to the inaccurate representations that the Italians were presented of the African people. These representations truly sparked negative sentiments and ideas of inferiority towards the African people based on inaccurate representations, but without knowing the truths about the colonial period, people were never given a reason to change their minds. Instead, 90 years later, Italy is faced with a political and social climate that is polarized in their ideas towards immigrants, but holds more negative than positive sentiments towards them, that take root in the colonial period because Italians were never exposed to the truths about Italian colonization and had no reason to think otherwise. Therefore, the media can have strong effects on people as they will believe what is being presented to them, and these representations, whether accurate or inaccurate can shape the ideas of an entire society for years to come.

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- Student Engagement Network grant
- Barry Scholarship for Study Abroad
- Department of Spanish, Italian and Portuguese Certificate of Excellence

SKILLS

- Fluent in Italian