

9/11. An Interview with Matilda Raffa Cuomo

Francesca Giuliani (September 12, 2011)



"I was at Ground Zero this morning, with my husband, and I heard all the names of the victims. It was the most moving event. Here I heard the Italian names, and for me to hear them down here at the Consulate is even more meaningful, because this is their home." The founder and chair of "MentoringUSA" and New York's former First Lady found the time to share her feelings with i-Italy while attending the 9/11 memorial ceremony held at the Consulate General of Italy.

The Consulate of Italy in New York held a memorial ceremony to honor the Italian and Italian-American victims of the September 11, 2001 terroristic attacks.



Among the numerous distinguished guests and representatives of the Italian and Italian-American community of New York, was Matilda Raffa Cuomo, Chair of the Committee to Establish the AP Program in Italian, Founder and Chair of [MentoringUSA](#) [2], New York's former First Lady — she is the mother of Governor Andrew Cuomo and the wife of former-Governor Mario Cuomo - spoke to us after the ceremony.

Matilda told us how proud she was of her son who, during his speech at the memorial ceremony at Ground Zero, read from President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's 1941 State of the Union address—the famous "[Four Freedoms](#) [3]" speech.

In that speech, Roosevelt's outlined the inalienable freedoms for all people throughout the world: freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom from want and freedom from fear.

Mrs. Cuomo commented: "We will never forget this tragedy, but how do can we remember it in a positive way? How will we look to the future for the young people? The 'Four Freedoms', Roosevelt's program for peace in the world, says it all. And Andrew reiterated them one by one."

Matilda strongly believes that that historical speech is "something we should all be talking about again," as it urges us to think of peace as something to be attained on a global scale, not just in our home country. "We should do everything we can to make life better not only here, but in other countries as well. If not, these terrible tragedies will happen again and again, and more innocent lives will be taken." And 'speaking with her hands,' the Italian way, Matilda underlines the importance of focusing on "peace for the whole world."

Does she fear other terroristic attacks in the future? Not really. She feels rather safe today, given the passionate and scrupulous work of New York State Troopers and Policemen: "I can't tell you what they did for us today. They were magnificent. We don't know how many threats there were, and how many plans were made that didn't work because of the efforts they put forth to keep us safe."

Matilda however, who lives near the U.N. Headquarters, couldn't sleep the night of September 10, as policemen were sounding off their sirens for hours, to the point that she thought that the UN was under attack. "The fear always in us, but we have to thank the policemen and all these people who do all this work, and they do it with their heart, all day, for us."

Mrs. Cuomo's presence at the Italian memorial ceremony was very heartfelt. She had spent the morning with husband Mario in Ground Zero, and the event was "the most moving" to her. "But here I heard the Italian names," she continues, "and for me to hear them down here at the Consulate is even more meaningful, because this is their home."

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[2] http://www.mentoringusa.org/about_us/Our_Founder

[3] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Four_Freedoms

