What’s in a Photograph?  
Debating Images of Italian Canadian Internment

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In 2006 the Canadian federal government began to respond to demands to redress historic wrongs committed against “immigrant minorities” through the Community Historical Recognition Program (CHRP). This article focuses on a major Italian Canadian project created by this program and analyzes the public history version of the internment narrative that it produces. That narrative is based on a variety of sources—including interviews with the descendants of internees and collections of photographs—that were brought together for the first time by this project. This study argues that even if one of the major CHRP-funded projects apparently circumvented the government’s effort to control the recognition message, the resulting history remains problematic. The version of the recognition message that emerges from the Italian Canadians as Enemy Aliens website fails to analyze the complicated information contained in its own sources, particularly the photographs of Italian Canadians.

En 2006, le gouvernement fédéral du Canada a répondu aux demandes de réparation des injustices commises par le passé envers des « minorités immigrantes » en mettant sur pied le Programme de reconnaissance historique pour les communautés (PRHC). Le présent article porte sur un important projet concernant les Italo-Canadiens créé dans le cadre de ce programme et analyse la version du récit de l’internement qui en est issue, celle-ci constituant de l’histoire publique. Ce récit s’appuie sur diverses sources que ce projet a permis de rassembler pour la première fois, entre autres des entrevues avec les descendants des internés et des collections de photographies. Selon l’auteur, même si ce projet — l’un des principaux projets financés par le PRHC — a apparemment court-circuité la tentative du gouvernement d’influer sur le message de reconnaissance, l’histoire qui en résulte demeure problématique. En effet, dans la version du message de reconnaissance qui émerge du site Web consacré aux Italo-Canadiens en tant qu’étrangers ennemis, on ne parvient pas à analyser l’information complexe

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contenu dans les sources mêmes du site, en particulier les photographies d’Italo-
Canadiens.

ACCORDING TO RECENT SCHOLARSHIP, particularly that of historian Ian
Radforth and political scientist Matt James, Canada is imbued with a “culture of
redress.” This condition, developed over the last thirty years, has supplanted or
perhaps reinforced an earlier, international “Age of Apology.”1 The origins of this
condition in Canada have been traced to the 1980s and, specifically, to the apology
and financial compensation extended by the federal government to Japanese
Canadians for their mistreatment during the Second World War.2 Japanese
Canadians were not alone in their experiences, however, and several other groups
began to demand acknowledgement of, and redress for, “their unjust pasts.”3 The
list of groups is a lengthy one, and not all of those making demands, nor all those
who have been mistreated, have been recognized. For example, those detained
as Communists during the Second World War have sought neither redress nor
apology from the government that interned them.4 Notwithstanding this exception,
that a culture of redress has flourished since the Japanese Canadian settlement is
particularly evident in the creation of the Canadian federal government’s
Community Historical Recognition Program (CHRP). This program, introduced
by the Conservative government of Stephen Harper in 2006, sought to create a
“federal framework for addressing past wrongs committed against immigrant
minorities.” To this end it dedicated twenty-five million dollars to address “eligible
wrongs” against Ukrainian Canadians, Italian Canadians, Chinese Canadians,
Indians travelling aboard the Komagata Maru, and Jews who were denied entry to
Canada as they fled Europe aboard the MS St. Louis.5

Within this culture of redress, the internment of Italian Canadians—both
naturalized and not, as well as those who were Canadian-born of Italian parents—
during World War II has been the subject of considerable debate at least since the
late 1980s, when a second generation of postwar Italian Canadians, along with
descendants of interwar immigrants, began to publicly discuss the treatment of
Italian Canadians almost fifty years before. This was the beginning of the effort—
spearheaded by organizations like the National Congress of Italian Canadians

1 Ian Radforth, “Ethnic Minorities and Wartime Injustices: Redress Campaigns and Historical Narratives
in Late Twentieth-Century Canada,” in Nicole Neatby and Peter Hodgins, eds., Settling and Unsettling
2 Jennifer Henderson and Pauline Wakeham, eds., Reconciling Canada: Critical Perspectives on the Culture
of Redress (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), where groups and their claims are outlined, and
in some cases discussed in detail. The chapter by Matt James, “Neoliberal Heritage Redress,” pp. 31-46,
focuses on the Canadian government’s management of “the newly important terrain of historical redress.”
3 Matt James, “Degrees of Freedom in Canada’s Culture of Redress,” Citizenship Studies, vol. 19 no. 1
4 As Ian Radforth ably documents in his chapter, “Political Prisoners: The Communist Internees,” in Franca
Iacovetta, Roberto Perin and Angelo Principe, eds., Enemies Within: Italian and Other Internees in Canada
and Abroad, (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 2000), pp. 194-224, the wives of the internees
ran a campaign for the immediate release of the men at the time of their internment, but there has been no
subsequent redress campaign.
(NCIC) under the umbrella of the Italian Canadian Redress Committee (ICRC)—to construct an “internment narrative” that would support a redress campaign aimed at securing recognition (and eventually compensation) for what had occurred after June 10, 1940. This was the date when the Italian dictator Benito Mussolini declared war on Great Britain and her allies and the Canadian government designated Italian Canadians as “enemy aliens” and interned about half of one percent—roughly 580 individuals—of the total Italian-origin population.

This first iteration of a public redress campaign was, according to some, only partially successful. In 1990, Prime Minister Brian Mulroney apologized “for the wrongs done to our fellow Canadians of Italian origin during World War Two.” Despite the NCIC (and others) declaring the apology a “sweet victory,” some found it unacceptable because it was not issued in parliament and did not include financial compensation. For others, however, including many academics, the apology was inappropriate insofar as it legitimated a narrative that “drew on selective evidence, ignored competing interpretations, and offered a simplified version of the past.”

This critical response to the first redress campaign and the government’s apology emerged most clearly at a conference on Italian Canadian internment held in Toronto in 1995. That conference set out to challenge the too-simple narrative of the Italian Canadian internment episode that was crafted, in particular, by entities like the ICRC. Papers presented at the conference were published in the influential collection *Enemies Within: Italian and Other Internees in Canada and Abroad*, edited by historians Franca Iacovetta, Roberto Perin, and Angelo Principe. That collection included a study of mine, “Images of Internment,” based on a collection of photographs of internees, in which I argued that the evidence in those images suggested that some of the internees were, in fact, committed fascists. However, despite my argument and the compelling evidence elsewhere in the volume for a more complicated and realistic counternarrative about Italian Canadian internment, the ICRC redress-campaign narrative persisted.

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6 The figure for Italian Canadians interned is derived from the Italian Canadians as Enemy Aliens (ICEA) website to be discussed below and itself the subject of a forthcoming study. The 1941 Canadian census reported a total Italian-origin population of 112,625.

7 The most important statement about this first redress campaign is Franca Iacovetta and Robert Ventresca, “Redress, Collective Memory, and the Politics of History,” in Iacovetta, Perin, and Principe, *Enemies Within*, pp. 378-416. The apology issued by Prime Minister Mulroney is cited on p. 380.

8 For an example of others celebrating the apology, see *The Encyclopedia of Canada’s Peoples*, ed. P. R. Magocsi (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), s.v. “Italians,” by Franc Sturino, pp. 787-832, which presents the apology as both due recognition of the poor treatment of the Italian community in Canada and their designation “as non-preferred immigrants.” Sturino characterizes the apology as evidence of the “acceptance of Italians into Canadian society on an equal footing.”

9 Iacovetta and Ventresca, “Redress,” p. 381. James, “Neoliberal Heritage Redress,” p. 8, argues that the Mulroney years, which included the Japanese Canadian redress agreement, predate what he convincingly calls the government’s “neoliberalization” of the discourse and practice of redress, a process developed through the governments of Chretien, Martin, and, in particular, Harper. In this light, the Mulroney apology to Italian Canadians and refusal to include compensation was in keeping with the government’s pre-neoliberal position.

10 For more detail, see Franca Iacovetta and Roberto Perin, “Introduction, in Iacovetta, Perin, and Principe, *Enemies Within*, pp. 3-21.

The attempts of scholars, in *Enemies Within* and elsewhere, to complicate the ICRC narrative have recently been challenged by a second iteration of the campaign for redressing Italian Canadian internment. Part of that challenge has been directed to my study in *Enemies Within*, with its alternative interpretation of the contents of some internment photographs, and this challenge requires a response; this article will build on my earlier chapter on fascist symbols in photographs of some Italian Canadian internees. My earlier findings can now be enhanced by additional information that has become available due in part, ironically, to the limited success of the very same second iteration of the campaign for Italian Canadian redress that has been critical of my analysis of photographs of internees.

This second iteration began to unfold more than ten years ago, when the claim for redress was resurrected in the run up to the 2006 federal election; both majority party candidates—the Liberal Paul Martin and the Conservative Stephen Harper—promised again to consider redress for Italian Canadian internment during the Second World War. No action was taken following the election, possibly because Stephen Harper’s Conservative Party was limited to the position of a minority government. After the 2010 election, however, Harper’s new majority government announced the creation of a program that would administer funding through the Community Historical Recognition Program (CHRP). The CHRP allocated some five million dollars (out of the program’s twenty-five million dollars) for the recognition of Italian Canadian internment and invited applications for project funding, to be reviewed by a government-appointed, three-person committee. This funding made possible a number of publications and other projects, many of which should be understood as responses to the criticisms published in *Enemies Within* of the previous overly simplistic ICRC narrative.

One of the important issues addressed in that volume was whether those who were interned fit the profile, as presented at the time by the NCIC and others, of politically innocent or naïve men (and women). My intervention in “Images of...”

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12 Franca Iacovetta, “A Numbers’ Game? Stories of Suffering in Italian Canadian Internment in World War Two,” in Rhonda Hinther and James Mochoruk, eds., *Civilian Internment in Canada* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, forthcoming). Some of the projects about Italian-Canadian internment funded by this program are listed at http://www.italiancanadianww2.ca/knowledge/projects. CHRP itself was a larger vehicle used by the federal government to fund projects dealing specifically with Canadian ethnic and immigrant minority groups. Interestingly, the NCIC appears to have played no role in determining a government response to the campaign that it had spearheaded some twenty years before; James, “Degrees of Freedom,” p. 39 et seq., for details about CHRP and some of the projects funded.

13 James, “Degrees of Freedom,” p. 39, outlines the care taken by the government to control the projects approved for funding from the CHRP: “Funding decisions were made by government-appointed boards, composed of members from the community linked to the injustice, but chosen with a careful eye to upholding government messaging and priorities.” For Italian Canadian internment projects the review board was closely associated with Toronto’s Columbus Centre, itself a major benefactor of CHRP funding.

14 The CHRP fund made possible a well-received documentary titled *The Italian Question*, directed by Sun-Kyung Yi (Toronto, ON: Aysha Productions, 2012), which premiered in 2012, and which emphasized again the importance of contextualization in the discussion of the internment episode. The present author, with historian Franca Iacovetta, was one of two principal investigators who were successful in a grant application to CHRP to fund this film. It was produced by award-winning documentary producer and director Sun-Kyung Yi, and includes expert opinion from the likes of Franca Iacovetta, Roberto Perin, and others.
Internment” focussed directly on this question and was based on the collection of photographs of interned Italian Canadians preserved by Osvaldo Giacomelli, one of their number. In my examination of those photographs, I argued that they contained evidence to challenge the profile of political innocence—of at least some of the internees—proposed by a variety of historians, journalists, filmmakers, poets and others. This effort to understand what is portrayed in these images of internment and what might have motivated one of their number to preserve his collection, has been questioned in at least two of the projects financed by CHRP.

One of these is an article by anthropologist Sam Migliore, published in a CHRP-funded essay collection. The other is a much more extensive project created under the auspices of Toronto’s Columbus Centre: Italian Canadians as Enemy Aliens: Memories of World War II (ICEA) is a website that includes a large collection of videotaped interviews, letters, photographs, and other artifacts intended for public use by educators, researchers, and others. The ICEA website’s descriptions of many of Osvaldo Giacomelli’s photographs of internees include variants of Migliore’s criticism of my effort to contextualize visible fascist symbols therein, dismissing my analysis of those symbols because their meanings are ambiguous at best. For example, the description accompanying a photograph of internees in a vegetable garden with a fascist banner contains the following dismissal of my argument:

Earlier articles on the subject used such symbols and other activity to imply fascist support by Italian Canadian internees. A recent review by anthropologist Sam Migliore … notes the need to consider multiple-meanings when analyzing symbols. As he notes, “symbols of any kind are human constructions that have no meaning in-and-of themselves”. While wearing the berets may in fact suggest fascist sympathy and support, it may also reflect group belonging and identity, or resentment for the internment experience. In fact, “Me ne frego” [the slogan embroidered on the banner] and versions thereof are still used (although considered vulgar phrases). This modern usage is not linked to fascism or implied political affiliations.

Before considering this critique, however, a brief review of Giacomelli’s collection of internment photographs is in order.

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15 Scardellato, “Images of Internment.”
The Giacomelli Photograph Collection

Giacomelli preserved a collection of photographs showing Italian Canadian internees in the Second World War internment camp known as Camp B70 or Ripples Internment Camp, near Fredericton, New Brunswick.¹⁹ In these photographs some of the internees are shown displaying, surreptitiously, symbols of fascism and fascist regalia—in some cases while striking poses and exhibiting body language that mimic those of the Italian dictator Benito Mussolini. Some of these photographs were produced by a government-authorized photographer, while others appear to have been created with an illicit camera. As already noted, the evidence in these images—whether authorized or not—strongly challenges the often-repeated claim that all those interned were politically naïve. In fact, part of my argument in “Images of Internment” was that some internees, including Giacomelli himself, were sympathetic to Italian fascism.²⁰

Recently, the Giacomelli photographs were reproduced on the ICEA website accompanied by a warning about how they might be interpreted.²¹ The descriptions also note that Giacomelli has been presented in some accounts as a “fascist supporter and Mussolini-adherent” and repeat Giacomelli’s claim that he had been wrongfully interned. In pursuit of this claim, according to the website, he sued the government of Canada, but the lawsuit was unresolved at the time of his death in 2006.²²

The caution about the multiple meanings of symbols is the focal point of the present study and will be discussed in light of documents made available by the ICEA project in particular, and in the context of Italian Canadian internment in general. At the same time, the ICEA website—especially because of the individual internee biographies that it makes available—provides an opportunity to revisit the larger question posed in my earlier study of the political sympathies and affiliations of some of those interned, including Giacomelli, and their awareness of the events in which they were caught up.

Unfortunately, there have been no responses to questions raised in Enemies Within about Giacomelli’s family history and the reason(s) why he was one of the last Italian Canadians to be released from internment. In particular, nothing has been published to challenge the scepticism I expressed about his rationales for refusing to fight in the Canadian army and especially in Europe if he were to have been released from internment. He refused because, he claimed, he had a brother in the Italian army and his parents were both in Italy. His objection is reasonable except that there is no evidence that he had a brother serving in the Italian army.²³

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¹⁹ For the details of the acquisition of this collection on behalf of the Multicultural History Society of Ontario (MHSO) see Scardellato, “Images of Internment”, pp. 339-340.
²¹ See note 18 above.
²² Giacomelli’s lawsuit is presented in Migliore, “Painful Memories,” pp. 369-370 and is discussed in greater detail below.
²³ Presumably, to be liable for service in the Italian army Giacomelli’s brother had to have been born after the family’s return to Italy in 1929 and so would have been about ten years old when Italy entered the war.
In fact, in a 2005 account of his experiences, published shortly before his death, there is no mention of a brother or of parents in Italy.  

Giacomelli was one of twenty-six Canadian-born internees who were detained after Mussolini entered the war on the side of Hitler on June 10, 1940. They were held, together with some 350 other Italian Canadians detained on that day, under the Defence of Canada Regulations (DOCR) of the War Measures Act as “Italian” or “Italian Canadian” enemy aliens. He was the son of Italian-immigrant parents, Gaspare Giacomelli and Giuseppa Guiducci, and was born in Hamilton, Ontario in August 1921. When he was eight years old he returned with his family to Italy, where he lived until 1939. Then, at the urging of his parents, and some two months before the beginning of World War II, he returned to Hamilton, where he had been born some eighteen years earlier, to live with an aunt and uncle. It is not clear whether his parents feared he might be conscripted, which was a real possibility given that Italy’s citizenship laws follow the principle of *ius sanguinis*. He was detained by the RCMP at his work site with the Canadian National Railways near Bronte, Ontario and, at the time, he “didn’t even know that war had begun.”

When he was interned, Giacomelli was considerably younger than typical Italian Canadian internees, most of whom were in their early forties. He was not married, which was also exceptional among his fellow internees, but his occupation as a labourer (in his case as a railway navvy or maintenance worker) placed him clearly within the largest occupational group of those detained. He was also well within normal parameters in that his detention was “justified” in government records only “on suspicion that he was ‘an important member of the Hamilton Fascis [sic].’” (The Hamilton Fascio was one of the Italian-government sponsored organizations implanted and sustained by fascist diplomats to encourage political support among Italians abroad and to exercise some authority in their midst.) He was in a minority position amongst other Italian Canadian internees, however, in that he was one of a relatively small number who spent time in two internment camps—Petawawa and Fredericton. But perhaps the most unusual aspect of his

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25 The total number of detentions of Italian Canadian men between June 10, 1940 and the end of the war in 1945 was some 580. This figure, and others cited here, are derived in large part from tallies based on the ICEA biographies published on its website. A study focussing on that material and what it reveals about Italian Canadian internees is in preparation.

26 During the First World War, for example, men born abroad of Italian parents who had not given up their Italian citizenship were considered reservists by the Italian government and were called to arms. As noted by Matthew Poggi in a review of an earlier version of this study, it is unlikely that the principle would have disappeared by the 1940s when Italy again was at war. We do not know whether Giacomelli’s parents had become naturalized Canadians before their son’s birth.

27 See Scardellato, “Images of Internment,” for more biographical details about Giacomelli. Additional information not found in Scardellato is derived from ancestry.ca, including the record of his return to Canada by way of Ellis Island and New York aboard the SS *Vulcania*, which sailed from Naples in early July 1939. According to the ship’s manifest, he was “in transit” through the USA and travelling to Hamilton, Ontario to his uncle Luigi Giacomelli. In early October 1939, so after the beginning of the war in Europe, he crossed the border into Canada at Buffalo, New York, headed to Hamilton, Ontario but his contact there was listed as “Nazareno Spellachi.” All this suggests he spent some two months in the USA, perhaps with a paternal uncle Luigi, after his arrival at New York in July 1939. According to his ICEA biography, he lived in Hamilton with his “aunt Teresa Spallaci.”
internment was its length; he was released on May 29, 1945 from the Fredericton camp after having been detained for more than five years. On average, internees were detained for about one and a half years, a calculation based on dates provided on the ICEA website for some 535 internees. The length of Giacomelli’s detention was exceeded by only one other Italian Canadian, Nello Trasciatti, who we will discuss in some detail below.

Earlier, our ability to speculate about the content of Giacomelli’s internment photographs was limited by a lack of information about the internees who appeared in them with Giacomelli. Until the recent posting online of the ICEA biographies, for example, studies on the topic of Italian Canadian internment generally referred to individual internees either anonymously or by use of their initials. This discretion served to protect an individual’s identity and authors from possible legal or similar action by those who did not wish to be associated with this moment in Italian Canadian history. Now, however, this anonymity has been overcome to a considerable extent by the materials made available by the ICEA project.

The website, as noted, provides access to an extensive collection of documents that were gathered by Columbus Centre researchers, including videotaped interviews with family descendants of the internees. In particular, the researchers were able to collect a large number and variety of photographs associated with the internment episode, significantly increasing what had been previously available. This resource, because individuals appearing in photographs are sometimes named, greatly enhances our ability to identify individuals in photographs collected and preserved by Giacomelli and other internees.

All of the photographs reproduced on the ICEA website can be grouped according to two major types. One consists of family photographs, which were usually provided by descendants of internees when they were interviewed for the Columbus Centre project. These sometimes also include an image of the interned family member, and they span the period from the era of internment itself, or before, to the near present. The second major type consists of photographs from the Fredericton camp, gathered, either directly or indirectly, from mostly family donors. These are images of internees who posed for group portraits produced by authorized government photographers after the internees had petitioned to have photographs taken. Some thirteen of the photographs in the Giacomelli

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29 Readers should note that since the final review of this study before publication many of the photographs of internees originally posted on the ICEA website have been removed. There is still some reticence among the descendants of internees to have presented in public the names and faces of family members who were interned. Requests for research copies of images used, uniquely, in the CHRP-funded booklet by Joyce Pillarella, Remembering the Internment: Italian Canadians during World War II, Montreal, (Montréal, PQ: Graphic Design, 2012), for example, were refused by the families holding them.
30 Family collections were also the source for a number of photograph-like images that have been posted; these are in the form of portrait sketches or paintings of some internees by interned Italian Canadian artists.
31 Ted Jones, Both Sides of the Wire: The Fredericton Internment Camp, 2 vols. (Fredericton: New Ireland Press, 1988), vol. 2, pp. 424-426, describes the successful initiative launched by German Canadian internees in the Fredericton camp to have photographs taken to send to loved ones and others.
collection are of this type, while another sixteen appear to have been taken with an illicit or unauthorized camera.\footnote{Scardellato, “Images of Internment.” Photographs posted on the ICEA website were also gathered from institutions like the Glenbow Museum and Archives and the Canadian War Museum, where they appear to have been donated by internees’ descendants.} For our purposes it is the authorized photographs that are the most important because, in part, they add meaning to Giacomelli’s collection of unauthorized images.

The Giacomelli photographs are of both large and small groupings of mostly Italian Canadian internees posed in the Fredericton camp, and they form the largest collection provided to ICEA researchers.\footnote{The photographs are those that Giacomelli had donated originally for deposit to the MHSO, in the course of an interview with him conducted in 1995. Much smaller collections were gathered from the descendants of other internees (Felice Martinelli), while some were obtained from archival collections (Ruggero Bacci, Antonio Rebauadengo). Photographs for internee Vincenzo Poggi, for example, are from a collection in the Canadian War Museum as well as Poggi’s descendants. See Travis Tomchuk, “Biography of Vincenzo Poggi,” ICEA website, http://www.italiancanadianww2.ca/tour/internees.} As it has been described more fully elsewhere, it is important here to note only that the collection is unique because of the quantity of photographs of internees it contains and the presence of the unauthorized photographs. The sixteen unauthorized photographs present individuals or small groups of internees in winter (eight) or summer (eight) settings in the Fredericton internment camp. The thirteen authorized photographs in the collection are portraits of internees in a variety of groupings ranging in number from nine to twenty-six. Four of the authorized photographs have been created with an “A” series number in the bottom right hand corner of the image, and the internees’ clothing suggests that these were taken in the summer. The remaining authorized images are numbered without an accompanying letter, and in these the internees are dressed in warm clothing.\footnote{Scardellato, “Images of Internment,” pp. 340-348. The speculation that some of the unauthorized or illicit photographs in this collection were created in Petawawa now seems unlikely. Rather, those that were posed in a vegetable garden, in particular, fit well with what is known about the environment of the Fredericton camp. The same is true for one of Giacomelli’s illicit photographs that shows four internees posed beside a two-storey internment-camp building, one of two erected in the Fredericton camp to accommodate the internees transferred from Petawawa. See, for comparison, the various photographs and map of the Fredericton camp compound reproduced in Jones, “Both Sides,” vol. 2, after p. 542.} Information occasionally provided in the ICEA biographies of internees, together with information drawn from some of the documents posted on the website, suggests that most of the authorized group photographs, as well as the unauthorized Giacomelli photographs, present groupings of supporters of fascism. At the centre of this realization is a letter, written as a type of legal deposition to the internment authorities, by one of those interned, the artist Vincenzo Poggi, to report and protest the violence he had suffered at the hands of some of his fellow internees.\footnote{Vincenzo Poggi, “What I know to be the reasons for the incident which happened to me in the Fredericton Camp Feb. 6\textsuperscript{th} 1943,” CWM 20020203-020, Canadian War Museum, Library and Archives Canada, Canadian Armed Forces: RG 24, Vol. 6586, File 5-1-1, originally also reproduced in Tomchuk, “Biography of Vincenzo Poggi.” It was written as part of the court martial proceedings arising from the incident Poggi describes, and which I describe below. These documents from the CWM have since been removed from the ICEA website.}
Vincenzo Poggi and Identifying Facists

Poggi’s internment experience was unusual insofar as he was detained twice—first from June 10, 1940 to the end of January 1941, and then again from January 6, 1942 until the end of September 1943. Born in 1900, he was trained in Italy as an artist and immigrated in 1929 to Montreal, where he went to work in the studio of Guido Nincheri (who was also interned). A year later he was joined in Montreal by his mother. The ICEA website reproduces a number of accomplished portraits he made of some of his fellow internees. While detained he also taught painting, an activity that would add to his difficulties as an internee.

These troubles began while he was detained in Camp Petawawa. In his deposition he reported that in January 1942 fellow internee “Nello Trasciatti and other fascist leaders” objected to his presence in their barrack because he was “not a good fascist, and only good fascists were desired in that particular hut.” In the months that followed “Trasciatti and his fascist stooges,” in Poggi’s words, continued to harass him, so much so that he was forced to quit his painting lessons to a British internee, in part because the latter was a suspected spy in the camp. The situation only erupted in physical violence against Poggi, however, after he and the other Italian Canadian internees remaining in Petawawa had been transferred to Fredericton. The move occurred in mid-July 1942. According to Poggi, by November of that year “Trasciatti [had] built around himself a whole host of informers whose duty it was to report to him all Italians who did or said anything against the Axis powers.” He further noted that “… P/w’s [Prisoners of war], Maravale [sic], Cocomille [sic], and Giaconelli were his chief stooges.” During the months that followed, Poggi described a number of incidents of harassment he and other Italian Canadians endured, including one in which Trasciatti “commanded … Cocomillo [sic] and Giaconelli to throw my bed and blankets out the window.”

Finally, in early February 1943, he and his belongings again were physically ejected from his barrack by “a group of between 20 and 25 men,” amongst whom he recognized “only three Italians, Trasciatti, Maravalle and Cocomile.” The others in the group were later identified by camp authorities as “German sailors” and German Canadians who had been declared, like Italian Canadians, civilian enemy aliens. During this “eviction” he was shaken violently by his attackers and kicked in the back several times, all the while watched, directed, and followed by both Trasciatti and Cocomile. The violence against Poggi and twenty-one other internees was described by contemporaries as part of an attempted “cleanout” undertaken by some internees against “homosexuals & criminals & instigators (troublemakers).” Ten of the perpetrators of this attack were court martialed by internment authorities.\(^{36}\) Given Poggi’s account of the behaviour of a number of Italian Canadian internees, it should not surprise us to learn that some of them are also readily identified in internment-camp photographs made available by the ICEA project.

\(^{36}\) Poggi “What I know,” also names Tony [Antonio] Di Pietro and Fioravante (Fred) Tenisci as acting in concert, in various capacities, with Trasciatti’s “stooges.”
In Poggi’s account, Nello Trasciatti clearly emerges as one of several (otherwise unnamed) leaders among the self-described “good fascists.” In Fredericton, Trasciatti was schooled by “O. Kraus, an ardent Nazi supporter and fanatically [sic] anti-British,” who taught him German and who supported his (unsuccessful) bid to become the representative for “the Italian elements.” Trasciatti is readily identified in six of the illicit photographs in the Giacomelli collection, including an outdoor group portrait in a garden in the Fredericton camp.

In the garden, Trasciatti holds one end of a banner on which the fascist motto “Me ne frego” (I don’t give a damn) has been embroidered. This same surreptitious form of display can be seen in the two internees in the front row, to the left of those holding the banner. Both hold military-style berets which have mottos—unfortunately illegible—embroidered on them. Trasciatti and Giacomelli appear together with other internees six times in this sequence of sixteen photographs but, apart from these two individuals, it is not possible to name the others even though they are easily recognized elsewhere in both Giacomelli’s illicit and the government-authorized portraits.

Nello Trasciatti appears five times in the thirteen government photographs preserved by Giacomelli as mementos of the more than five years he and Trasciatti spent in internment. This includes another instance in which this Italian Canadian fascist leader is clearly associated with the fascist motto discussed above. In the photograph labelled “37” by the government photographer, Trasciatti holds in his hand a military-style beret at waist level so that the motto, “ME NE FREGO,” embroidered on its side can be “seen” by the camera. Giacomelli crouches in the front row of this photograph, wearing a white sweater and military-style beret. He is flanked in the same row by internees, all of whom also wear military-style berets and some of whom cross their arms in a pose favoured by the fascist dictator Benito Mussolini.

Internnee Antonio or Antonino (Tony) Di Pietro, “a fanatical [sic] fascist and a stooge of N. Trasciatti,” squats next to Giacomelli, while Francesco Cocomile is

37 Lucy Di Pietro, “Biography of Nello Trasciatti,” ICEA website, http://www.italiancanadianww2.ca/tour/internees, where Trasciatti is named as “one of the fascists [sic] leaders in Petawawa Internment Camp.” Contrary to this biography, however, Poggi does not state that “he was singled out for the beating by Trasciatti, Maravalle, and Cocomile, with all three actively participating.” Rather, he appears to have been kicked and otherwise roughly treated by German merchant seaman and German Canadian civilian internees under the supervision of Trasciatti and Cocomile. See Jones, “Both Sides,” vol. 2, pp. 560-575. This episode of inter-internee violence is analyzed from the perspective of queer history within the Fredericton and other Canadian internment camps by Paul Jackson, “The Enemy Within the Enemy Within: The Canadian Army and Internment Operations during the Second World War,” *Left History*, vol. 9 no. 2 (2004): pp. 45-83.
39 For more detail, see Scardellato, “Images of Internment.” It is clear from the manner in which the banner is held by the internees—so that the motto is visible to the camera but well below their waist level, so that it cannot be easily seen by other observers—that this should be understood as a surreptitious act by a “fascist leader” and some of his fellow internees, including Giacomelli.
40 Trasciatti is named individually in the ICEA descriptions of three of the illicit Giacomelli photographs. These are presented as illustrations for the Trasciatti biography. Giacomelli is present in two of these photographs but he is not named as such in conjunction with Trasciatti.
posed at the far right of the front row.\textsuperscript{41} Elsewhere in these government photographs we can identify other “fascist stooges,” as named by their victim, Vincenzo Poggi.

So, for example, the photograph numbered “36” by the government photographer includes Italian Canadian internees Di Pietro, Giacomelli, Trasciatti, Cocomile, and Giuseppe (Joseph) Frascadore, the latter standing at the far right in the back row. This photograph is even more interesting because it preserves on its verso the autographs of some of those portrayed, including “Maravalle Luigi … Schiappacasse [Attilio], A[ntonio]. Di Pietro, Franco [Francesco] Testa, G. Portapiola(?), Jos. Frascadore, Cocomile Francesco” but not the signatures of Giacomelli and Trasciatti.\textsuperscript{42} Several of the men already discussed in photograph “37” also are included in “36,” and it seems likely that the two photographs were taken at about the same time, since Giacomelli and Trasciatti, for example, wear the same clothing in both photographs.\textsuperscript{43}

As a Hamiltonian, Giacomelli was close to some of his fellow Hamilton internees, including some of those who were interned as alleged criminals but also potential fascist subversives. This might explain his presence in the photograph with the hand-engraved number “44” in its bottom right corner and the handwritten date “1942” in its top border. The photograph includes eleven internees, three of whom have been identified as Rocco Perri, Francesco Zaffiro, and Francesco Cocomile, as well as Giacomelli himself. Perri, a convicted bootlegger and criminal from Hamilton, and a suspected member of the mafia\textsuperscript{44} is posed on a bench in the back row of the photograph, with Giacomelli standing in front of him and Perri’s right hand resting on Giacomelli’s right shoulder. Perri rests his left hand on the shoulder of another internee standing in front of him, Francesco Cocomile. There is at least one other authorized photograph that does not appear to have been part of Giacomelli’s collection but includes him nonetheless.

In the government-authorized photograph numbered “A8”, originally donated to the Glenbow Museum and Archives in Calgary, a group of seven internees is posed with three men standing in a row behind four others seated on a bench.

Giacomelli stands in the middle of the back row with his left hand resting on the shoulder of the man seated immediately in front of him. The seated internee has been identified as Italian Canadian Antonio Rebaudengo, described in his ICEA biography as “a strident fascist supporter. There are some claims he followed the hard-line tactics used by the party in Italy, including threatening and intimidating non-supporters and/or opponents.” He was one of those responsible

\textsuperscript{41} Tomchuk, “Biography of Vincenzo Poggi,” and Poggi “What I know.” At least three of the other internees in photograph “37,” unfortunately not named, also can be seen in a number of the illicit Giacomelli photographs, which is also true for some of those who appear in photograph “36,” discussed below.

\textsuperscript{42} Photograph reproduced with Aspillaga, “Biography of Osvaldo Giacomelli,” ICEA website. At least one of the names, “Schiappacasse,” is given as “Schiappacasse, Attilio,” together with “Franco Testa,” in Jones, “Both Sides,” vol. 2, p. 706, as the names of two Italian merchant seamen who were still interned in Fredericton by the summer of 1945.

\textsuperscript{43} Two of the signatures on the verso were inscribed by German or German Canadian internees: “W. Rademacher and LH Feldbamer.”

\textsuperscript{44} Antonio Nicaso, Rocco Perri: The Story of Canada’s Most Notorious Bootlegger, trans. Gabriella Colussi Arthur (Mississauga, ON: John Wiley and Sons, 2004), p. 178, where internment photograph “44” appears, without credits and shorn of its engraved identification number.
for the “formation of a Provincial Federation of the fasci of Calgary, Edmonton, Lethbridge and Venice,” an anti-Semite, and one of the few internees who spent time in all three internment camps where Italian Canadians were detained: namely Kananaskis, Petawawa, and Fredericton.45

Ruggero Bacci “was committed to many programs and projects supported by the fascist Italian government.”46 He helped to establish and was involved in the city’s Casa d’Italia, a group created under the direction of Italy’s fascist government. He also served as the secretary of Toronto’s Fascio Principe Umberto, the local branch of the Italian fascist party, named in honour of the only male offspring of the Italian royal family. Bacci was an “avid early Fascist—a fascista di prima ora—that is, a member of the Fascist party in Italy before Mussolini’s followers marched on Rome in October 1922.”47 He was detained in June 1940 and released from Fredericton in late May 1943. While interned, Bacci compiled a list of other Italian Canadian men detained with him, and, like Giacomelli and others on that list, he retained a collection of government-authorized photographs in which he is posed with other internees.48 In the four photographs in this group

45 Lucy Di Pietro, “Biography of Antonio Rebaudengo,” ICEA website, http://www.italiancanadianww2.ca/tour/internees. This photograph and others that accompany the Rebaudengo biography on the ICEA website were donated originally to the Glenbow Museum and Archives by the Rebaudengo family.


48 The Roger [Ruggero] Bacci collection is available in the Archives of Ontario, MHSO Collections, F 1405, B-241 & A-301. The historian John Zucchi was responsible for the donation to the MHSO of Bacci’s photographs of Fredericton Italian Canadian internees.
preserved by Bacci, several of the faces, and on occasion names, seen in the Giacomelli collection are also present. Most important for now is the photograph labelled “54” by the government photographer.

This portrait of eleven internees includes Bacci himself, standing on the far right of the middle row. Gino Tiezzi stands on Bacci’s right and Donato Sansone to his right. Francesco Cocomile stands at the far left of the row, while Giuseppe (Joseph) Frascadore is crouched on the far right of the front row. The individual standing in the middle of this photograph, however, is perhaps the most interesting. He has been identified as Mario Duliani, author of The City Without Women, a “documentary novel” recounting the experiences of Italian Canadian internees. This novel was first published in 1945 in French as La Ville Sans Femmes and later, in 1946, in Italian as La Cittá Senza Donne, and it has distinguished Duliani as the “only internee, Italian or otherwise, to write a first-hand, book-length account of his confinement,” an accomplishment widely acclaimed by many scholars. For those who have argued that Duliani was unjustly interned because he was never

Figure 2: Government internment photograph “54”: centre row, right to left: Ruggero Bacci, Gino Tiezzi, Donato Sansone, Mario Duliani, Roberto Pancaro, Francesco Cocomile; front row, crouched at right, Giuseppe Frascadore.
Source: Archives of Ontario, MHSO collection, Ruggero Bacci donation.

Thank you to Matthew Poggi for identifying Mario Duliani in this photograph. As noted, the Bacci photographs were donated to the MHSO by Bacci and now form part of the MHSO photograph collection in the Archives of Ontario (AO). MHSO Collections, F 1405 B-241 & A-301; the ICEA project credits the Bacci family for this collection. The Bacci photographs in the AO include a typescript description that provides the names of (most) of the internees shown in the four photographs, including Duliani in photograph “54.”
an agent of Mussolini’s government nor perhaps even a supporter of fascism, however, it will be interesting to note that Duliani was also photographed in Fredericton sitting next to Adrien Arcand, the self-proclaimed “Canadian Führer,” at the centre of a circle of his supporters.50

Duliani also appears in at least two other government-authorized photographs, but in these instances they are portraits from the Giacomelli collection. In the photograph labelled “51,” for example, Giacomelli stands at the right end of a row of seven men, with Trasciatti standing next to him on his right. In this case, Trasciatti wears his beret, presumably the one with the fascist motto embroidered on its side as seen in photograph “37,” and Duliani is posed immediately next to him. Giuseppe Frascadore stands in the same row, at the far left, and it is this individual who acts as a link to another, well-known internee who appears elsewhere in another authorized internment photograph.51

The photograph labelled “A23” is reproduced as part of the ICEA biography for Frascadore but it is credited to the “private collection of the Joseph Di Pietro family.”52 In this portrait of nine internees, Frascadore appears at the far left of a row of four standing men. The two immediately next to him, although still nameless in my research, are readily identified in other authorized photographs. In the front row of this photograph, seated second from the right with arms crossed, and wearing a French-style beret and a white undershirt, is Adrien Arcand. Seated next to Arcand, on his right, is Major Joseph Maurice Scott, described as the “Director General of the Fascist Legions of Canada,” part of Arcand’s National Unity Party of Canada.53 Before discussing criticisms of how some of these photographs of internees have been interpreted, we should return to the Giacomelli collection to review one final photograph.

The image numbered “A59” shows a large group of internees, mostly dressed in summer clothing, posed behind a circular flower bed in the middle of the Fredericton camp, immediately opposite its main, western gate. A total of some twenty-six internees are shown in the foreground while another two are in the

50 Roberto Perin, “Actor or Victim? Mario Duliani and his Internment Narrative,” in Iacovetta, Perin, and Principe, *Enemies Within*, p. 312. Duliani was photographed with Adrien Arcand and some of his followers while interned in the Fredericton camp. The photographs are reproduced in Jean Côté, *Adrien Arcand: une grande figure de notre temps* (Montréal: Éditions Pan-Am, 1994).


52 This photograph (http://www.italiancanadianww2.ca/collection/details/dicea2011_0040_0002) was donated to the ICEA project by the family of internee Joseph Di Pietro, brother of Antonio Di Pietro, who, as we have seen, was one of Trasciatti’s collaborators in Petawawa and Fredericton. But neither Di Pietro brother is included in it.

53 Thank you to Matthew Poggi for his references to this photograph. Jones, “Both Sides,” vol. 2, pp. 344-350, provides useful information about Arcand and Scott, as well as Joseph Farr, leader of the Canadian Union of Fascists, and other members of the fascist movement in Canada. Jones also reproduces the government-authorized photograph “A37,” after p.542, which he titles “The French Canadian Group” and which includes Arcand, Scott, Farr and others.
background, one walking through an arbour on the right in the photograph and another in the distance on the left, in front of a hut. In this portrait, a number of familiar faces from the photographs reviewed above can be discerned, but it is possible to name only a few individuals. Arcand stands in the middle of the group, in the centre of the photograph, bare headed, wearing a white undershirt similar to the one seen in photograph “A23,” and with his hands clasped behind his back. Gino Tiezzi stands to his left, and one person over in the front row, and two over to the right of Tiezzi is Giuseppe Frascadore who, in turn, stands immediately next to Joseph Farr, leader of the Canadian Union of Fascists. Major Joseph Maurice Scott stands, with another internee also seen in other photographs in this collection, on the far left of the grouping. Although this image formed part of his collection, it is unlike the others that he kept as mementos of his internment years because Giacomelli himself does not appear in it. Perhaps what is significant here, however, is not his absence from the portrait, but rather the fact that it features, at its centre, the most prominent Canadian fascist of his day, Adrien Arcand, together with several of his best-known followers.

Migliore’s Critique
As already noted, my efforts to understand the photographs preserved by Giacomelli and his motives for keeping them have been criticized by Sam Migliore in an essay titled “Painful Memories of a Forgotten Past.” In that essay, which focuses primarily on the internment of Italian Canadians from Nova Scotia, Migliore chose to include a section on the Hamiltonian Giacomelli. Migliore, himself a former resident of Hamilton—as well as a scholar of the city’s Italians and some of the cultural practices of its immigrants from Racalmuto, Sicily—provides a brief description of Giacomelli’s experience as an internee, followed by a report on the lawsuit Giacomelli initiated against the Canadian government.

Migliore’s choice to devote considerable space, in a relatively short article, to this late development in Giacomelli’s internment experience might be premised on an assumption that a lawsuit, even if interrupted by the death of the claimant, somehow confers some validity to the claim itself. The case was also reported in the Hamilton Spectator in October and November 2005, when then Prime Minister Paul Martin announced his government’s intention to fund a program “to commemorate and educate the public about the internment [of Italian Canadians],” a program which would emerge later, under the Conservative federal government of Stephen Harper, as part of the CHRP. This was also the time when the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation aired Il Duce Canadese, a series on Italian Canadian internment “based on real events.” In other words, Giacomelli’s lawsuit was

54 The location for the photograph is confirmed by another, unfortunately not labelled by the government photographer but titled “Inside the compound,” in Jones, “Both Sides,” vol. 2, after P. 542; also, after p. 542, see the photograph titled “A view of the compound/enclosure area.”
55 The photograph which immediately precedes this one numerically, so photograph “A58,” is reproduced in Côté, Adrien Arcand, and was posed in the same location as “A59.” It appears to be a portrait, however, of only the French-Canadian contingent interned in the Fredericton camp. Arcand is positioned in the middle of the photograph with Maurice Scott beside him on his right.
56 The series was scripted by historian Bruno Ramirez and aired on the CBC in 2005. The script was published
initiated at the beginning of what has been described above as the second iteration of the redress campaign.\textsuperscript{57}

In “Painful Memories of a Forgotten Past,” Migliore transitions from his discussion of Giacomelli’s lawsuit to a brief overview of \textit{Enemies Within} in order to critique my chapter on Giacomelli’s photographs. Given that his criticism is paraphrased and repeated at various points on the ICEA website, it is worth reproducing in detail. Migliore notes that

some of the photos taken at the internment camps clearly show the presence of fascist symbols. A study of the symbols alone, however, does not tell us why internees displayed [them] …, nor does it tell us what the symbols meant to the individuals in the photographs. Do the symbols indicate guilt? Do they indicate that these individuals posed a danger to Canada? Or, do they suggest pride in Italy, resentment for their internment, or a variety of other possibilities?… From my perspective, symbols of any kind are human constructions that have no meaning in-and-of-themselves.\textsuperscript{58}

Here Migliore misconstrues my original article as a study of the meaning of symbols I chanced upon in a photograph collection.\textsuperscript{59} Rather, in my original study I argued that the symbols represent the political ideology of Mussolini’s fascist dictatorship and as such I did not feel that their meaning merited discussion. What is more interesting, I proposed, was the individual himself—now, of course, individuals plural—and what we might assume about him, his political mindset, his association with these symbols during his internment, and now his willingness to act, and to be grouped and photographed with self-admitted fascists.

At the same time, we can also agree with Migliore that caution is necessary in our efforts to understand the intentions of those displaying such symbols and, we should add, the body-language they adopted when they displayed them. So, in addition to the possibilities put forward by Migliore about why internees chose to be photographed with these symbols—guilt, pride in Italy and so forth—we must add the important point, made by Migliore himself, as well as the ICEA project researchers, “that a number of the internees … were committed fascists.”\textsuperscript{60}

We also cannot ignore what the photographs might suggest about male bonding, for example, and the \textit{braggadocio} (vain blustering) exhibited by many of the

\textsuperscript{57} Carmela Fragomeni, “Hamilton’s Italian Detainees …,” \textit{Hamilton Spectator}, October 14, 2005; Fragomeni, “Chasing Justice, 65 Years Later,” \textit{Hamilton Spectator}, October 14, 2005; and Fragomeni, “PM’s Deal Won’t Derail Internment Lawsuit,” \textit{Hamilton Spectator}, November 16, 2005. In her 2005 article Fragomeni reports portions of an interview with Giacomelli about his internment in which he recounts events, including the hearing he was granted to review his internment and possible release. Here, he reports being hit by a soldier, as he had in an earlier interview, but he does not mention a brother in the Italian army and parents in Italy as reasons for his refusal to enlist in the Canadian army. Rather, he is quoted as saying “I said I would fight for this country, but not for the British. I guess that’s what kept me in [the internment camps].”

\textsuperscript{58} Migliore, “Painful Memories,” pp. 374-375.

\textsuperscript{59} According to the ICEA website, “previous articles” had revealed the existence of these symbols in the photographs, but they appear to have been examined in detail only in Scardellato, “Images of Internment.”

\textsuperscript{60} Migliore, “Painful Memories,” p. 372.
internnees, in particular when their posturing is placed in the context of physical violence against those deemed “unworthy” of membership in their self-selected group of “good fascists.”

Migliore also claims that “symbols” and “concepts” can only be interpreted through an “understanding of the meanings people attach” to them “as part of their everyday life experiences—and, how people construct, deconstruct, and reconstruct these meanings over time.” Following this reasoning we might conclude that nothing can ever be known about the motivations of those interned because we can no longer have direct access to them and, even if this were possible, we would still be unable to posit meaning in their narratives because “people construct, deconstruct, and reconstruct meanings over time.” To put this in a different way, if we could engage Giacomelli in conversation now would he be, in any way, a useful or reliable narrator of his experiences as an internee?

Historians have long since learned to be wary about the possibility, posed by postmodernism, of multiple, equally authoritative interpretations of any event, let alone those in the past; that is, in a world that is now a “foreign country.” Meanings do change over time and the past is inevitably rewritten both by those who lived it as well as those who attempt to understand past actors and their experiences. It is for this reason that historical context is fundamental to our efforts and why it is important to know who the faces are—in a given photograph, for example—and what we know about them and their behaviour before, during, and after those photographs were created. At the same time, it is important to avoid reading the present ahistorically into the past, so that a motto or slogan (me ne frego) adopted in Italy by the first, most strident, and most thuggish fascists—the so-called squadristi (members of a small group or squad)—is stripped of its menace and nihilist challenge and presented instead as a mere “vulgar phrase” still in use today. The phrase can be translated as “I don’t give a damn,” and it might be useful to speculate whether, in the interests of public history, the inclusion of this type of otherwise unnecessary and ahistorical qualification was imposed by the family donors of the Giacomelli photograph collection.

In other words, complicating the simplified version of the Italian Canadian internment experience proposed by entities like the NCIC, or as presented in a project like the ICEA, is necessary and can only be accomplished by contextualizing the events of the time, and the actors who were their protagonists.


62 For the origins of the phrase see Christopher Duggan, Fascist Voices: An Intimate History of Mussolini’s Italy (London: Vintage Books, 2013), p. 21, where he associates it with Italian soldiers in the First World War and their nihilistic bravado in the face of death.
Otherwise, we can lose ourselves in the tautology that events in the past can never be known because their meaning changes over time, a position that would render suspect the very title chosen by Migliore for his article: How can we know that the “memories” he reviews were, are, or will be, “painful” if we accept, without context, that “people construct, deconstruct, and reconstruct … meanings over time”?

Migliore (and others) agree that some of those Italian Canadians who were interned were indeed fascists. To this we can now also say, based on information derived from the ICEA website, that some of these individuals, on some occasions, were photographed together, sometimes exhibiting symbols which were directly associated at the time with fascist political ideology. This is not to say, at least not until the declaration of the Defence of Canada Regulations (DOCR), that they were “guilty” of some act against the Canadian state. After the declaration of the DOCR, however, which is when all of the photographic and related materials discussed here were created, the continued expression of allegiance to the political ideology of an enemy state, including the violence they were willing to perpetrate against their fellow internees, must have placed individuals like Nello Trasciatti and his “stooges” in a difficult and probably illegal position in the eyes of the law in wartime Canada. But this observation also should not be taken as an endorsement of the internment itself nor of the use of the draconian measures enshrined in the DOCR to effect it.

Conclusion
What are we to make of Giacomelli himself? The question is an important one and bears directly on Migliore’s challenge about the meaning of symbols and the intentions of those who create and display them. As we have seen, he was one of the youngest of those detained in 1940 and he was also one of those held for the longest period of time. We also know that he had been active in fascist organizations as a youth in Italy and that he continued some of this activity after his return to Hamilton. In addition, he appears to have been a dedicated collector and preserver of photographs of his experience, including some that were taken with an illicit camera and which have been found only in his collection. And in every photograph we can identify individuals who were clearly fascist supporters or sympathizers.

Was he, in fact, a supporter of the movement within which he had grown up in Italy and one with which he had continued to engage, legally, after his return to Canada and, illegally, after his internment in 1940? Did he, in fact, preserve his photographs of those five years of his life in support of his

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63 For an account of Giacomelli’s activities as a youth in Italy, as well as his membership in the Dopolavoro (after work) group based in Hamilton’s Casa d’Italia, see Scardellato, “Images of Internment,” p. 339.

64 Two exceptions might be the two interior photographs of a musical ensemble in the Giacomelli collection, probably created with an illicit camera; see Scardellato, “Images of Internment,” p. 346. It is difficult to speculate about some of those portrayed in the photographs—as possibly “naïve” or apolitical individuals, for example—because we do not know when the photographs were produced and whether those who were most suspect in the eyes of the government were detained the longest. Perhaps the naïve and apolitical had all been released before the photographs were taken and so could not be posed with committed fascists.
political beliefs, beliefs which he appears to have been willing to argue in court, at least towards the end of his life?65

Unfortunately, his death in 2006 extinguished a case that might have allowed us to witness a legal challenge to the Canadian government’s efforts to defend Canada against an apprehended internal threat in a time of war. The court case might also have provided a useful forum for a discussion about government apologies to “wronged” groups and the “culture of redress” that has emerged as a consequence of those apologies.

Finally, how does Giacomelli’s internment experience fit with our opening discussion about apology, redress, and the discipline known as public history? The most recent version of the culture of redress has been critiqued, in part, because of how it was manipulated by the neoliberal agenda of the Canadian federal funding authority after the 2010 election of Harper’s Conservative government.66 A group’s desire for recognition through redress was approved but only with careful scrutiny. In some cases, as political scientist Matt James has noted for example, funding was directed to an element within a minority group deemed to be more likely to present a version of the past that was more acceptable to the government than that proposed by other factions within the group.67 Although similar care was taken with the allocation of CHRP funding to Italian Canadian applicants who were approved by the government-appointed review board, in particular to the cluster of Columbus Centre-directed projects, at least some of the work that was funded has been described as “diverging” from CHRP restrictions and preferred government narratives about past injustices. As James has noted,

the Italian-Canadian projects take a different approach. They draw explicit linkages, highlighting patterns of Canadian blameworthiness that raise tough questions for the contemporary political community…. [One of the panels created for a Columbus Center exhibition noted] “Canada has a history of interning populations it considers a threat to public safety…. Holding views in favour of fascism, communism, or religious fundamentalism is not specific to certain communities; nor does this necessarily make a person or group of people a security risk.”68

As we have seen, however, more careful attention to, and discussion of, the materials made available by the ICEA team, in particular on their website, would

65 Migliore, “Painful Memories,” p. 369, reports that Giacomelli’s lawsuit for compensation for his internment was based on a challenge under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and so may well have adressed his freedom of political belief.

66 The proponents of the notion of a “culture of redress” appear unaware of earlier work undertaken under the rubric of an “age of apology.” This is extremely unfortunate given that much of the discussion about some “recent Canadian projects of narrative revision [of Canadian history]” had already received considerable attention, for example, in Radforth, “Ethnic Minorities and Wartime Injustices.”

67 James, “Degrees of Freedom,” pp. 44-45, 47, notes the example of how CHRP funding for Chinese Canadian head-tax redress was directed by the government-appointed project-review board to a particular “faction” within the group.

68 James, “Degrees of Freedom,” pp. 40 and 43, reviews a limited selection of works produced with CHRP funding and, although he provides an overview of all CHRP works funded (p. 59), he does not divide these according to ethnic group. His Italian Canadian review focuses on projects produced by the ICEA team but he provides no information about the narratives constructed by other CHRP-funded Italian Canadian projects, including, for example, Sun-Kyung Yi’s documentary film, The Italian Question.
have made possible an even more divergent interpretation of the past, one closer to
the public history version of Italian Canadian internment proposed by the editors
and authors in *Enemies Within*. So, rather than praising the ICEA projects for
navigating past the “fraught history of memory” proposed by the critics of the first
iteration of the Italian Canadian redress campaign, it would be more appropriate
to consider which memory is perpetuated in the work now available in the
permanent ICEA exhibit and website, which presumably might be used by a wide
range of educators, students, and researchers—some of whom will assume it is the
authoritative source on Italian Canadian internment? And, is it enough to observe
that we can now rest assured that history is well served because “the Italian-
Canadian experience [has been used] to focus on the mistreatment of others”?

69 James, “Degrees of Freedom,” p. 46.