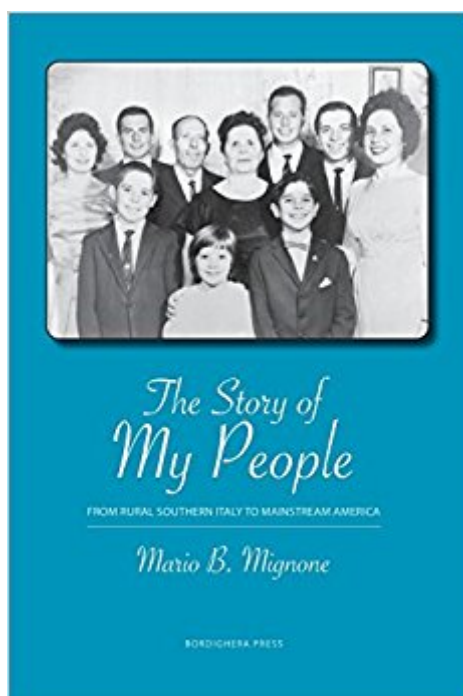


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The Story Of My People: From Rural Southern Italy To Mainstream America



Synopsis

Literary Nonfiction. Italian American Studies. "In *THE STORY OF MY PEOPLE*, Mario Mignone gives eloquent testimony to the hopes, fears, struggles and ultimate triumph of his family's extraordinary journey from rural Italy to the American Dream. He also gives a poignant voice to the millions of other immigrants who left the Mezzogiorno for L'America. In the process, he shows how to perform the critical balancing act of embracing the future while preserving the past."

Stanislao G. Pugliese, Hofstra University

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Customer Reviews

Mario Mignone is the founder and director of the Center for Italian Studies at Stony Brook University. He is director of student exchange programs with University of Rome "La Sapienza" and University of Messina. Mignone served as chairman of the department of French and Italian at Stony Brook for nine years, founded the Association of Italian American Educators and served as its first president. He is a former president of the Long Island Chapter of the American Association of Teachers of Italian.

Prof. Mignone's memoir of the lives of him and his family is an engaging, heartwarming, affirmative account of immigrant life in America. Mignone arrived in the 1960s with his mother and seven siblings. He was 20 years old and he and one of his sisters would be the breadwinners. It was a shock for me when I read that his siblings were placed in classrooms knowing no English and

without accurate assessment of the grade level they belonged in. He says quite simply "they cried for weeks." "The Story of My People" is must-reading for any immigrant and for those of us who are children and grandchildren of immigrants. The author's reaction to Wonder Bread is hilarious. When we were in school, my mother made our lunch on "white bread," but she and my father never ate it. They thought it suitable only "for washing floors." This is not to trivialize the problems of integration - it is not an easy task and just eating white bread won't do it. However, in "The Story of My People," the positive, energetic outlook of the Mignones and their extended family is an example of how to adapt and succeed after leaving the country of one's birth. Mignone's sense of humor, the unfolding of life in America for him and his family, his assessment of current conditions and his thoughts on the status of current newcomers make for an engaging read. Bravo to all immigrants and their descendants who benefitted from their sacrifices and hard work.

"The Story of My People" is an extremely captivating book which illustrates first hand what it is to achieve "The American Dream" for Immigrants during the 1960's. Mario Mignone takes us on an incredible journey describing eloquently the courage and hardships that he endured for the sake of success, along with his drive to earn an education during his years at City College, NY. Through the chapters, he has captured the social and cultural transformation of the Italian immigrant student, along with their deep rooted sense of pride in their rich heritage. It was very moving for me, as I was also a part of this historical experience, which marked a period in time where "The American Dream" seemed almost unattainable. by Giuseppe Battista "Eruditio Populi Liberi, Spes Gentium" (The education of a free people, is the hope of mankind.)

Mario Mignone's book The Story of My People deserves to be read by all the Italian immigrants and in my opinion it belongs in the reading list of all the courses on Italian immigration. In his book Mario Mignone shares with his readers the secret formula that allowed the eight young children of two Italian immigrants to become doctors, college Professors, High School and Elementary School teachers. Since I met the newly arrived Mignone's family the same week they arrived from Italy, I consider myself an eye witness of the extraordinary American successful experience. I truly believe that the author has been able to detach himself completely as one of the main characters of the book and was able to become an impartial teller of his family successful American experience. The main character in my opinion is the author's mother Palmina Mignone, an extraordinary woman with only a 3rd grade education. She "had the strength, the courage, and determination to provide love,

affection, dedication, wisdom and leadership for the family. She became the
“matriarch” of the Mignone’s family. Mario Mignone
became my role model and I began to follow his footsteps. He installed in me the need of an
American education and the importance of an advanced and terminal degree. Thank you Mario for
being my friend and congratulations to the Mignone’s family for the extraordinary
successful American experience. Rocco Pallone, Ph.D. Associate Professor Emeritus, Fordham
University

The Story of My People is a great book for everyone to read and that I very highly recommend it. In
the Story of My People, Mario Mignone has given us a realistic experience of an immigrant Italian
family of eight children who left the agricultural land of Benevento in the 1960s to settle in the new
world of New York and Westchester. In the Story of My People you feel the difficult experiences of
growing up in Italy in the 1950s and 1960s and the struggle and achievement of the American
dream of success in the new land of opportunities by every single member of the Mignone family. A
dream achieved by sacrifice, hard work, family unity, family love, family care and a great faith in
God. Carlo Sclafani, SUNY Distinguished Professor

A moving immigrant autobiography framed in the historical and cultural context of the 1960s and
70s. Reading this book one is persuaded even more by how great this country is as a land of
opportunity. Eight immigrant children realize the American dream: three become physicians, one
dentist, two university professors, and two teachers.

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