

# Immigration to america



My name is Alberto Benito, a father of four and a caretaker of my old father Benito. One year after World War I ended, on the 11th of November in 1919, I moved to the USA. I had an expectation to change my life to the best in terms of economic viability and social stability. My journey began on the 5th of November 1918 and lasted for six days aboard a coal powered passenger/cargo ship. It is hard to describe how rough the journey was and how much I concerned about the documents. It is unbelievable how much risk I exposed myself to crossing the wild Atlantic waters. However, because my journey to the USA was economical, purposeful and goal-oriented, everything else, except of ensuring my credentials in the pockets, wasn't much of my concern. Having worked in a local Italian winery, I decided to immigrate because of the family reasons. I needed to increase the income to be able to provide my family and at the same time to support my ill father's health needs.

After World War I, USA was thought to be a safe place that people from all over the world could seek asylum in. The asylum would guarantee financial security, social security and restore people's prosperity in adhering to moral and religious biases. As a Catholic, I expected to nourish my religious believes while at the same time working in a better environment as compared to Italy. After arrival to the USA, I settled on the Ellis Island at the Ritz Carlton Hotel. The accommodation fee for the two months at the hotel I settled was roughly \$75 with respect to the dollar value at the moment. \$75 was not a problem due to the fact that I landed a full-time job and part-time job that guaranteed at least \$213 per month. These jobs comprised of driving a local tycoon's family around the city of New York and delivering

railroad materials along a construction route. Having found a job very soon, I thought to myself that things were working out as I had expected. However, one problem with migrating to a large nation with dynamic economic approaches is that one cannot be sure of what may transpire with time.

Partly introduced in 1919, the Prohibition Act was signed as a law under the 18th Amendment of the US Constitution in the year 1920. This Act was signed as a tool to regulate, if not to entirely ban, the manufacture, sale and transportation of alcoholic beverages. As a driver of the Italian-American tycoon and a driver of a construction company, I thought that the alcohol ban had nothing to do with me. I consoled myself saying that everything would remain the same or it was bound to get better. While I was a family driver of the tycoon, I was rarely introduced and neither did bother to investigate what business the tycoon was running. My ignorance did not prosper for long as one day I was summoned by the tycoon's wife to a meeting. During the meeting I was informed that due to the reasons associated with the Prohibition Act, my job had been terminated indefinitely. At this meeting I learned that the tycoon used to be an importer of Italian wines into the USA. Following the ban of alcohol, the tycoon could not afford keeping his employees, hence, the reason for the cut back.

Being a victim of the law that was supposedly created to influence people positively, I started to blame the US government for ruining my chances to achieve my personal financial goals. Losing my full-time job was one thing, surviving as an Italian in the USA was another. After the ban of alcohol by the US government, a counteraction phenomenon started to brew under the government's watch. Illegalizing alcohol had a business advantage to it: the

alcohol value rose and American Mafias came to existence (Berh, 1996). The American Mafias were a group of Italian alcohol underground manufacturers, sellers and transporters. For these groups, the alcohol ban was the only thing they were awaiting to boost the output of their businesses. This phenomenon had a secondary effect on my life in the USA; I was fired from my part-time job for being an Italian. The argument of my part-time employer was that organized crime was particularly conducted by Italians who were calling themselves the American Mafias. For the construction company to associate well with law enforcement officers and maintain good public reputation, it had no other choice than firing all Italians.

With the law authorities and the American Mafias facing off in the alcohol war, my life was getting worse daily until one fateful day. A former colleague from the part-time job introduced me to a captain. With reference to the American Mafias, a captain was a low ranked manager of an alcohol dealing gang under a specific family. In New York, there were about 20 Mafia Families running organized crime across various cities. My disparity to earn a living drove me to take the job. With my former experience, being a driver was the best position I could take. On a daily basis, my crew and I would pick whiskies and wines from various underground manufacturing plants to deliver them to speakeasies around the city of Manhattan. Salary at the new job was better than the previous two combined as I earned about \$100 - \$150 per week (translating to 400 - 600 a month). However, the higher the pay was, the riskier the task we would conduct. This nature of job required that every operant on the taskforce to be armed with a rifle. The relevance bagging ammunition to work was due to the escalating insecurity created by

competing gangs and ambushes from law enforcers (Hansen & Gibneys, 2005).

The involvement of Italians in the alcohol trade catapulted hatred from the American society. Most Italian Catholics were accused of being Jews whose intentions were parallel to those of the Americans. It is through this case that anti-Semitism escalated narrowing the chances of an Italian to make it in the USA. This type of life influenced my decision to return to Italy as there was no place for Italians in the USA. On December 3rd 1926, I left the USA with a group of other Italians who thought they had enough of USA. I did not quit my job as it was dangerous to do so; I just left.