

Salve a tutti dell' Associazione Siciliani del Texas e della Confederazione Siciliani del Nord America (CSNA),

I'm not sure where to begin other than the same way I shall end, thank you! I'm at a loss for words to explain my experience, I know my dad understands and I'm sure a lot of you do too, but this will be my best attempt. Please sympathize!

Every day spent in Italy will always be remembered, not only because it was my first visit, but it was the best location to be immersed in. Palermo/Sicily has now joined Texas for my favorite place on earth, I couldn't have asked for more from the city and the Sicilian American Association of Texas. I'm at a loss for words when it comes to Palermo/Sicily, the most welcoming area in all of Italy. From the University of Palermo students, the local people and everyone made me feel at home.

I began in the beginner's course of Italian, with a couple of amazing teachers; I was very fortunate with how the class was conducted. The teachers spoke only Italian, not one word of English to enforce the submersion. It was challenging at first but throughout the course I picked up a large vocab and now post course, I am working on the transition words that will connect the vocab and allow me to speak conversationally.

Outside of school I met and had a few friends from the dorm I was living in. The dorm was incredible, an end suite with a great view. Daily the maids came and cleaned the floor and restroom, the neighbors who were also in school were very friendly, and the security and staff were great. The building was conveniently located right down the street from the school, less than a 10 minute walk, and also was a new building with a courtyard, wifi and a huge study room for all the students. Although most of my neighbors struggled to speak English, we worked with each other, teaching through speech and even notecards. I would recommend this place to anyone visiting for school.

The surrounding city was astounding, from the beautiful monuments, to the arm length neighboring buildings, down to the cobblestone streets. Everything was amazing. I walked the entire city countless times, miles and miles, trying to get in as many sites as possible. One of the key points that most people likely don't know about is the geography surrounding Palermo. Mountains in every direction and the blue sea make up what I would compare to the Lake Tahoe of Sicily. I rode buses and walked as far as my feet would take me to view these monsters face to face. Steep is an understatement for how vertically inclined they are, almost impossible to climb. I made it to the face of a few of them actually but I had to back down, they were worth the venture though just to see their beauty up close. When I return in the future I will conquer them and put a custom made Texas flag with a Sicilian symbol planted in the middle of it.

Another highlight of my trip to Sicily was getting to experience my father receiving such a warm and heartfelt welcome from the Mayor's office in Catania. This is where our family is from and the people and staff at Catania's City Hall were wonderful! They are also conducting some research on our family's history and seeing the joy that this brought to my father was amazing.

As said above, indescribable is the word I will use to explain my trip to Sicily. It shouldn't be a question whether or not anyone should visit Palermo and Sicily; they should be the first places on the list with an open end date for leaving. I can't thank the ERSU and UNIPA and CSNA for the bilateral agreement reached and signed by Vincenzo Arcobelli and Graci, the Associazione Siciliani Texas/SAAT for the scholarship received as well as the Staff of University of Palermo and the special courtesy of Prof. Cappello, you have changed my life and I will always be thankful. Grazie mille, my life is forever changed for the better from this experience.

Highest Respect and Sincerity,

Nicholas Frank Lombardo

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Nick F. Lombardo". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the typed name.