

Letter From The Chair

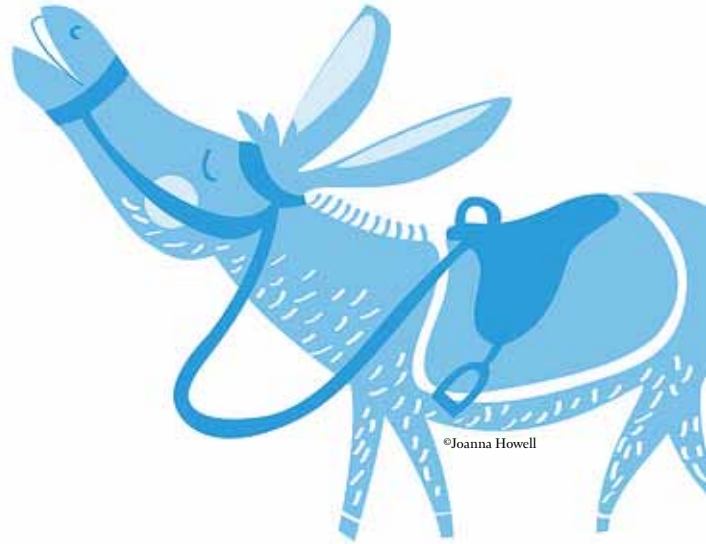
WOW! It could stand for "Why Obama's wonderful". That seems to have been the intent of the Nobel Peace Prize nominating committee, confirming what polls and surveys have been showing consistently for the last eight months. America hasn't been so well viewed in the world since JFK, and it's the force of Obama's persona, policies, and promise that has rebounded our reputation from the all-time postwar lows we had experienced under George W. Bush.

Obama himself acknowledged that his award is more for aspirations than concrete achievements. Turning the one into the other is an ongoing effort that involves ALL OF US. We can start right here in Italy with

Democrats Abroad. We will be heavily involved in the 2010 Congressional elections, fighting to reverse the tendency for the party in power to lose seats during an "off" election year.

But we can't do it without you – your philosophical, physical, and (yes) financial support. Please volunteer to help with programs, communications, or membership outreach. On November 18, come hear Professor Erik Jones speak about his new book on Obama. Attend the November 22 fund-raiser with special guest Kathleen Kennedy Townsend. Write us or call us. WOW = World, Obama's willing. Are we?


Claudia Flisi, Chair
Democrats Abroad Milan



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The DA-M Donkey

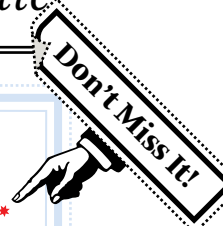
Democrats Abroad Milan November 2009 Newsletter



Dr. Erik Jones,
"The 2008 Elections: A story in four acts"
Wednesday, November 18, 9pm

Professor Jones of the Johns Hopkins University Bologna Center will be discussing his recently published book on the US presidential campaign. Anyone who has heard him speak knows that he is always worth hearing, both for his excellent analysis and spot-on delivery. Professor Pamela Adams of Franklin College in Switzerland will moderate. Casa della Cultura, Via Borgogna 3. Free. Wine + cookies will be sold for the benefit of DA-M. RSVP preferred. cflisi@jhu.edu or eileenber@yahoo.com.

Democrats Abroad Fundraising Event
Sunday, November 22, 5-9 pm



Come help us celebrate DA's 45th anniversary - and prepare for next year's important midterm elections - at a cocktail reception in one of Milan's loveliest private homes, with luscious food, sparkling prosecco, singing and surprises, and music from a maestro. Kathleen Kennedy Townsend, featured on the cover of this month's *IMPRESA* magazine, is one of our special guests. She is Maryland's former lieutenant governor, author, green activist, foundation executive, and daughter of Robert Kennedy. Other guests to be announced. Cost 75 euro per person, payable in advance. RSVP by Nov 15 to damilanevent@gmail.com and we will arrange to meet you in Milan at your convenience for ticket purchase. Note: by law, DA fund-raisers are for Americans. Non-American partners are welcome, but not independent Italians. Questions? Call Claudia at 338 868 1826 or Ann at 347 2986 266.

Events Calendar

- ◇ **Saturday, October 24, 9pm**, *20 Years Since the fall of the Berlin Wall*. Panel discussion with journalist Claudia Flisi (chair of DA-M), Patrizia Toia of the EU Parliament, Renée Maret of the Parti Socialiste Français, Silvia Gadda of Giovani Democratici, and Chiara Cipolletta of Gioventù Federalista Europea. Milano Centro del Partito Democratico, Corso Garibaldi 75, Free, in Italian. *RSVP*.

- ◇ **Thursday October 29, 5 pm.** Bill Clinton will be the keynote speaker at the World Business Forum in Milan, being held at Milano Fiera City. Information on the forum can be [found here](#). Sorry, no discounts for Democrats (we tried!).
- ◇ **Friday October 30, 4 pm,** *Obama, one year after.* A round table discussion with Massimo d'Alema, Mario Deaglio of the University of Turin, Mario del Pero of Johns Hopkins University, Maurizio Molinari of La Stampa, Gianni Riotta of Il Sole 24 Ore, Marco Tronchetti Provera. Amb. Boris Biancheri, and Franco Bruni of Bocconi. In Italian at ISPI, Via Clerici 5, Free. [RSVP](#).
- ◇ **Saturday, October 31, from 8pm,** American-style Halloween Party! Americanites in Milan are hosting *Mi31 Halloween Rocks Milan*. Bistrot Fiori Oscuri, Via Fiori Oscuri 3. [Click here for further details](#).
- ◇ **Friday-Sunday, November 6-8,** Democrats Abroad is holding its regional Europe-Middle East-Africa (EMEA) meeting, this time in Berlin. All DA members are welcome. For more information, or if you are interested in attending contact [Claudia](#), [Ann](#), or [Eileen](#).
- ◇ **Wednesday, November 11, 7 pm,** *Meet the Guru: Edgar Morin.* The French sociologist and philosopher discusses the relationship among ideology, politics, and science. He is one of the creators of the International Ethical, Scientific and Political Collegium. Mediateca Santa Teresa, Via della Mosocova 28, Free, in French. [RSVP essential](#).
- ◇ **Monday, November 16, 10 AM,** *Between History and Myth: Politics and Political Use of Abraham Lincoln.* Join scholars from Italy and the United States in a one-day conference on Lincoln, sponsored by Università Statale in Milan. Department of Scienze Politiche, Via Conservatorio 7, Milano, Sala Lauree, in English. For more information [contact Prof. Marco Sioli](#).
- ◇ **Wednesday November 18, 9 pm** - Dr. Erik Jones (see highlighted events).
- ◇ **Sunday November 22, 5 pm** – DA-M cocktail with special guest Kathleen Kennedy Townsend (see highlighted events)

Regional Events

- ◇ **Rome, Wednesday, November 4, 7 pm-midnight,** *Celebrating Peace and Democracy Party.* One year after his election, the Nobel Peace Prize winner, and US President is celebrated in Rome. Casina Valadier, Villa Borghese, Piazza Bucarest, Cost 20 euros, includes light dinner and drinks. Contact [Kass Thomas](#).
- ◇ **Florence, Wednesday, November 4,** *Wine and Wisdom with Bob Shrum.* Robert Shrum of the Kerry and Gore campaigns, and friend of Ted Kennedy will be the guest speaker for this event. Cost 30 euros. Contact [Cathleen Compton](#).
- ◇ **Geneva, Thursday, November 19, 6-9pm,** *Monthly Meet-up,* 6-7pm: DA Geneva group planning meeting, all are welcome to listen + participate. 7-9 pm: Cocktails, followed by casual dinner in the neighborhood. Brasserie des Halles de l'Île, Place de l'Île 1. [See here for further details](#).
- ◇ **Geneva, Friday, November 20, 11:45am-2pm,** *AIC Welcome-to-Geneva Luncheon for the Honorable Donald S. Beyer, US Ambassador to Switzerland and Liechtenstein.* Intercontinental Hotel, Chemin du Petit Saconnex 7. DA members cost CHF 75 (use DA under name of Association to receive member discount). [Register directly with AIC](#) or [download flyer](#) and return by fax. DA Switzerland has reserved 2 tables for members to be seated together at the luncheon. [Send us a note](#) and let us know you will be attending.

Letter From The Editor

It's almost a year since I left New York and came to Milan. I left the states on literally the eve of the election last year and I must admit that when I got on that plane I had little confidence in the American people to vote in the way that I hoped. Like much of the world I'd become discouraged with the path that America had been following and the much-talked-about "change" seemed pretty far out of reach. Happily, my pessimism was ill-founded and change did happen. I remember saying on that day, that if Obama did nothing at all during his administration, he had already accomplished much simply by being elected. Here was a person who spoke of reason and cooperation in foreign relations, rather than American exceptionalism and manifest destiny. A realist and an idealist who understands that one must practice components of both ideologies in a world where security, development, human rights, and democracy are part of a complex system of cause and effect. And it is this, I believe, that the Nobel committee was recognizing when it bestowed upon Obama its most esteemed prize: acknowledgement that the President recognizes that qualities of diplomacy and rationality are fundamental to the leader of what is still the most powerful country in the world, to all leaders for that matter.

In this newsletter I look forward to hearing your opinions on the political topics of the day. This month, we are introducing a new feature article, *Bluestreak*, in which *New York Times* contributing writer Elliot Silberberg will give his monthly take on what is going on in the world. He is looking forward to your feedback. As newspaper editor I welcome all comments, feedback, letters, photos, commentary, or other contributions from you. Feel free to e-mail me.

Eileen Bernardi
Editor, DA-M Donkey

Perspectives from Abroad - *Through a lens greenly: Views from the US consul-general in Milan*

If you are wondering whether Obama's Nobel prize was based more on aspirations than on achievement, consider this: the US has done more to promote clean energy and reduce carbon pollution in the last eight months than at any other time in history.

These are the words of Carol Perez, the US consul-general in Milan, in remarks to a group of Stanford alumni on October 5. Since the US consulate in Milan is the second largest American consulate in Europe, she speaks with considerable authority and a wide purview.

She noted that the president's economic stimulus package included \$80 billion for the development of clean-energy technologies -- the largest-ever investment of its kind in the US. That is direct investment; counting other new programs such as tax incentives and loan guarantees, the total is close to \$100 billion. The Administration's vehicle standards impose a 35.5 miles per gallon minimum by 2016, a notable improvement in US fuel economy and the reduction of harmful emissions. The budget and the stimulus package allocate almost \$25 billion to developing public transportation options. The Administration-sponsored clean energy legislation has passed the House and is currently being debated in the Senate.

Green investment is good for the economy as well as the planet, she pointed out, citing a study by the Petersen Institute for International Economics that estimates the creation of 30,000 new jobs for every billion dollars invested. The same study foresees the freeing up of \$450 million in savings for every billion dollars invested, money that can be recycled into the economy.

Ms. Perez encouraged Italian-based companies to collaborate on green-tinged projects with US counterparts and entrepreneurs, pledging the assistance of the consulate in such efforts. She reminded her listeners that the differences between the US and EU on climate change are overblown, and that policy-makers on both sides of the Atlantic have more in common than has been reported in the media in the run-up to December's summit in Copenhagen.

Ms. Perez concluded her remarks by quoting President Obama: "We cannot meet this challenge unless all the largest emitters of greenhouse gas pollution act together. There's no other way."

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Bluestreak - *The Grudge Smudge*

Milan. It was moving to see President Obama in earthquake-shattered L'Aquila at the G-8 last June, even if only on TV. The setting was otherworldly, like a science fiction film about future shock that sadly wasn't make-believe. It had me humming those lines from Dylan: "The streets of Rome are filled with rubble/You can almost think you're seeing double."

That comic sarcasm in the "Yes, We Camp" sign the Tent City residents planted on a hillside also hit home. I love Obama, but it's clear that in this grim world he's got his work cut out for him.

With his tall, thin build and quiet optimism, the president ambles around like a walking exclamation mark. He's magnetized too. In one photo-op walk down a ravaged street, he did an impromptu about-face and the entire entourage of bodyguards, dignitaries and journalists tagging behind pulled a mass U-ie, like a swarm of bees.

The president's desire for dialog and reconciliation was also on display in L'Aquila in his warm handshake with Libya's Colonel Muammar el-Quaddafi. That's the guy President Reagan called "this mad dog of the Middle East" and showered with missiles in 1986. The Quaddafi handshake is the exact opposite of time's revenge on Saddam Hussein. Remember that famous photo of Saddam shaking hands with Donald Rumsfeld in 1983, when it was convenient for the USA to regard the Iraqi as a friend?

These on/again-off/again relationships may be hypocritical, but if they avoid bloodbaths, so what? With the world a timber box, diplomacy, accommodating strange bedfellows and knowing today's friend may be tomorrow's enemy is all basic to realpolitik.

The lesson ought to carry over into private life, but it's hard to drop a grudge. For example, I've been on awful terms with an aunt, regarding a slight to my father, for over thirty years. She's in her 90s now and I often wonder if it's been worth it prolonging my private Israel-Palestinian dispute.

What's despicable is it feels good to bear grudges. I bear hug mine. They feed my pride, offer masochistic satisfaction galore, allow me not to face the nagging feeling I might be wrong and give me the warped satisfaction of thinking it's right that everyone loses. Grudges are like that parable of the scorpion that can't swim that asks a frog to carry it across a river, then stings the frog midway. When they're both drowning, the frog asks, "Why?" and the scorpion replies, "It's my nature."

Obama is the scorpion antidote we need today. He knows holding grudges doesn't pay and his youth helps him ignore the vengeful ghosts of bitter memories. He looks forward, not spitefully back. It's asking a lot to forgive and forget and perhaps it goes against our instincts. The upside is it beats starting World War III.

That said, I also think Obama needs to show the courage of his convictions more and synch the ethics in his eloquence to gestures and deeds. After winning the Nobel, the president has to show he's more than just pretty, moving words. With that noble Nobel halo over his head, it's harder. More grunting and arm-twisting will be needed behind the scenes.

Before receiving the Nobel, Obama's refusal to meet the Dali Lama, correctly interpreted as intended not to anger China, was disappointing. Now it seems an even bigger slight, given the Tibetan leader is a fellow Peace Prize winner. Shaking hands with him, as more hawkish United States presidents have done, would have reminded China and the world that Americans see China's grudge against the Tibetans as contemptible and are not timid about letting the Chinese know.

Back on the home front, the curfew has been lifted and an uneasy truce declared. I've come to practice what I preach. Without forgetting, I have partly forgiven my aunt. We're on speaking terms. We don't get much past banalities, like laughing about the chimney fire the family started that time we merrily torched the holiday gift-wrappings. For a hard nut like me, I could pinch myself over even that little. I also could pinch myself all over, thinking how awesome it is to have such a good man as our president.

Elliot Silberberg is a teacher and writer who lives in Milan.

His work has appeared in *The New York Times*.

Out + About - *Crude Impact*, finely made

Democrats Abroad – Milan and Americanites in Milan screened the award-winning documentary, *Crude Impact*, on September 30 at Bistrot Fiori Oscuri in Milan. About 35 people watched the film, a scathing condemnation not only of the petroleum industry but also of the public as unthinking accomplices. According to the filmmakers, through blind consumption and the failure to protest against the injustices and wars that the system perpetuates, we all contribute to the continued existence of a corrupt industry.

A post-screening Q & A was led by Prof. Clara Poletti, director of Bocconi's Center for Research on Energy and Environmental Economics and Policy. Her background as both academician and practitioner made her answers relevant and practical. Some attendees commented that she was better than the documentary.

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Professor Clara Poletti during the Q+A.



Professor Clara Poletti and Claudia Flisi, chair DA-M chapter

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