

# THE LEGACY OF GIOVANNI FALCONE: NEVER LOWER YOUR HEAD, BE BRAVE AND ALWAYS FULFIL YOUR COMMITMENTS UNTIL THE END



Your brother was a great judge and statesman, among the first to understand the real dimensions of the mafia phenomenon and the importance of judicial cooperation. His work and legacy have helped to change the strategies to combat organized crime. His path has been defined by the spirit of sacrifice and the awareness of risks. He was born and he lived in Sicily and was surrounded by forms of acceptance and resignation caused by the Mafia. What was his relationship with his land? Can you tell us about how he developed his strength and determination in Sicily?

Giovanni was profoundly Sicilian, a man who has always maintained a special bond with his land.

We must keep in mind that our family had always lived in Kalsa, an historic district of Palermo, in which, as Giovanni himself repeatedly said, many mobsters lived. It was precisely in such a context that Giovanni grew up, his character developed, and he began to meet other kids playing soccer in the parish camp. For example, during his adolescence and in that neighbourhood, he met Paolo Borsellino for the first time, as well as other kids destined to become famous Mafia personalities of the future, such as the boss Tommaso Spadaro, whom he met at a ping-pong tournament organized in an oratory. These circumstances allowed him to come into full contact with the minds of many of them and to fully understand their attitudes and characteristics. Only a person who grew up in such a context could have had the tools and the flexibility to understand the real dimensions of the Mafia phenomenon. Only a person gifted with his own intuition could have understood the fundamental role that could have been played by a broader judicial cooperation.

What were the pillars of Giovanni Falcone's thinking on justice and international cooperation?

It all began when the prosecutor Costa was murdered at the beginning of the 80s. The judge Chinnici wanted to set up a working group with the collaboration of Giovanni, Paolo Borsellino, and Giuseppe Di Lello. This project was then developed and consolidated by Antonino Caponnetto, who in 1984 officially announced the establishment of a pool of magistrates, including Leonardo Guarnotta. The pool intended to coordinate the investigations and to provide an overview of the Mafia phenomenon with the aim of eradicating it and returning Sicily to its honest citizens. A decisive moment in the creation of the c.d. "Falcone method" is embodied in the Spatola process, in which Giovanni, thanks to his investigations, succeeded in convicting 75 members of the Spatola/Gambino /Inzerillo gang. It was thanks to this success that the Falcone Method was universally recognized as an innovative and revolutionary investigative technique based on 3 pillars: observing the phenomenon from above and then analysing it in detail like in a magnifying glass; identifying, tracking and dismantling the economic relations between the criminal organizations; and making use of the collaboration of the "pentiti"

(state's evidence figures) as a key tool to understand the mafia dynamics. A collaboration was born with the US DEA and the FBI in those years precisely thanks to this investigative technique. This collaboration brought great results, allowing drug trafficking to be defeated even overseas.

Was there ever a moment in your brother's life in which he thought that the Mafia could never be defeated?

No, he never thought that. On the contrary, my brother Giovanni claimed that the Mafia would certainly be defeated. The Mafia has not always existed; it is a human phenomenon, and like all human phenomena it has had a beginning and it will have an end. If anything, it must be said that Giovanni, during his work against the Mafia as a magistrate, encountered numerous obstacles and enemies which tried to discredit him and put his work in a bad light, criticizing his innovative methods. These attacks made him realize that this phenomenon was extremely rooted, complex and intertwined. Achieving the final goal would have not been simple at all. But despite this, his profound sense of duty and loyalty and love for his city and for the institutions pushed him to never give up on his goal.

You are the head of the Giovanni and Francesca Falcone Foundation. How does the Foundation carry on the legacy of your brother?

This is a question that I am often asked and to which I always reply with a phrase from Giovanni which I consider his moral testament: "Everyone must do his or her duty to the end and play his or her part, big or small, at the cost of having to endure whatever sacrifice".

From this point of view, the Falcone Foundation carries out activities in the fields of education and cultural promotion. I would say that we are dealing with "counter-culture" and teaching young people what the Mafia is and how despicable its activities and methods of action are. Therefore, we have been working on projects for over 26 years together with thousands of Italian schools explaining to students who Giovanni was and why he died, but also providing them with the tools to take sides, support freedom and take a stand against the mafia, even when it offers attractive prospects.

We organize a competition every year, in collaboration with the Italian Ministry of

Education, Universities and Research (MIUR), in which hundreds of schools from every corner of the country participate. Thanks to this initiative, we can raise awareness in the schools and tell stories that normally remain outside of the classrooms. The event culminates in the so-called "Ship of Legality": about 1,500 Italian students travel to Palermo every 23 May to celebrate the memory of Giovanni and of the other great men and women who lost their lives fighting for the common good.

The new generations have not lived through the most violent years of the fight against organized crime, the bloody years of massacres of Capaci and via D'Amelio. Was that mafia more dangerous than the contemporary one? You have defined the present organized crime as a "silent" phenomenon.

Today the Mafia, a bit like the whole world due to globalization, is certainly changed; in a certain sense it has become more "bourgeois", infiltrating administrations, professions and economic and power centres in general. But we must not take the risk of believing that for these reasons it has become less dangerous and bloody. On the one hand, it is true that thanks to the strong suppressive measures carried out by the State with the means of law enforcement, the bloody seasons of mafia attacks have ended. On the other hand, some of the most horrible and offensive crimes for the whole community are committed today and are caused by organized crime. The Mafia and other organized crime networks are primary actors in the phenomena of the agromafias, the trafficking of human beings linked to the "caporalato" (illegal recruitment of workers), the trading of weapons and the patronage system which often influences the management of public resources.

Today, the Mafia makes less noise and you see it less, but this does not mitigate its danger and despicability. Kids must learn that they can find themselves dealing with the Mafia and its methods. They can be confronted by people without "coppola" and "lupara" (the traditional Sicilian hat and the sawn-off shotgun associated with the Mafia) and with degrees and ties, but they need to behave accordingly, rebelling against its dishonest logic.

What are the difficulties encountered by the Foundation in promoting legality?

Promoting the values of justice and legality is certainly not a simple activity; even today, after so many years, we encounter challenges, especially in the most neglected areas of the country and specifically in the city suburbs, where, at times, it is difficult to communicate the very concept of rule of law. However, I would like

to stress that, little by little, thanks also to education and awareness activities, something is changing, and we have a greater perception of the importance of respecting fellow citizens and legality.

You have decided to carry on a painful legacy, but yours is a mission that can change the future of many. What has been the most beautiful moment of the Foundation in which you have been able to witness the results of its work?

The moral legacy left by Giovanni is very painful and carrying on his ideas is a constant and tiring activity, but I must admit that it also brings many happy moments. During my frequent visits to Italian schools, I talked with young people and I heard their pertinent and interesting questions. For me, having the opportunity to help them in their personal growth and training is a reason for great pride and satisfaction. But the greatest joy is undoubtedly seeing thousands of children and young people with their eyes full of enthusiasm, promising to always carry the ideas of Giovanni Falcone with them. They are the hope and the future of Italy and seeing them so united every 23 May during the parade in the streets of Palermo, gathering beneath the Falcone Tree to show which side they have decided to join, is really an immense success for our land.

The Goal 16 of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development focuses on promoting peaceful and inclusive societies, justice and strong institutions. Member States recognize that there can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development. What is the advantage that organized crime gains from the weakness of the judicial systems?

Violence and insecurity are general problems that are related to the general well-being and that all countries experience; for this reason, we should be confident about the achievement of Goal 16 of the Post-2015 Development Agenda. The simple fact that we talk about it and that we have also reached an agreement on important issues such as justice, corruption, fundamental freedoms, and peace is a good step forward in my view. Moreover, it is exactly where institutions are absent that the seeds of mafias can germinate. If people are not offered the prospect of hope and personal development, it is easier for them to be seduced by the sirens of crime, which can offer them valuable and easy rewards in return for committing terrible acts. Because of this, I believe that creating a mechanism to prevent violence by fighting crime and terrorism at all levels means making enormous progress towards the achievement of peace.

What is the relationship between the lack of development and growth opportunities, and crime?

Well, it is a closely connected relationship, as I said before. When a State is not able to offer the prospect of hope to its citizens it provides an "assist" to organized crime and therefore mafia. I would say that the lack of opportunities and economic development contribute to generating a feeling of aversion towards the institutions, in which they are considered guilty of not taking an interest in the wellbeing of citizens. The Mafia was born by taking advantage of a similar mechanism of hostility towards the State. The State did not care for its citizens, and the Mafia inserted itself in this "vulnus", offering, in its opinion, better living conditions. Yet, history teaches us that none of the people joining criminal organizations have seen their living conditions improved; on the contrary, all of them have only found themselves constantly having to execute orders, commit horrendous crimes, and worry about their own affiliates and the police.

But we must not make the mistake of thinking that the Mafia is exclusively linked to the poverty, or to Southern Italy. There are so many elements in such a complex phenomenon and it is impossible to find a single cause. In addition to economic hardship, in fact, there are other elements to consider, for example, familial affection, the desire to exercise power or even an inclination for violence and the desire for revenge.

What is the role of education in fighting the Mafia and other organized crime networks?

As Gesualdo Bufalino said, "The Mafia will be defeated by an army of elementary teachers". Crackdowns by law enforcement certainly will not be enough if they are not supported with educational and cultural activities. These activities will wipe out the fertile ground in which the Mafia thrives. In fact, school plays a decisive role and should aim to create a society that repudiates the Mafia's negative values, such as its "omertà" or indifference, until they are completely eradicated.

Education has a duty to promote the culture of legality and explain to young people that respecting others is beautiful and makes you feel good while worshipping false myths can lead to terrible consequences.

What is the message that the Foundation would like to send to young people all over the world?

The same thing that  
Giovanni taught us, and the same thing we tell the students we meet: never  
lower your head, be brave and always fulfil your commitments until the end. The  
future is all in their hands.