

**Poggioreale in America  
2022 Student Scholarship Essay**

**by**

**ALEXANDRIA ANDERSON**

**My family is notorious for their strong-willed, hard-working, driven, brave, productive women. The type of women who will step up, take charge, and are not afraid to try something new. Women who will start their own Etsy business while taking care of four children with a husband who travels a lot. Women who will spend hours a day researching to write a book and run a website to connect relatives all over the world. Women who will go to work building airplanes for the war effort in the U.S. when her husband was drafted. Women who will sail across the Atlantic Ocean by themselves, pregnant with another child in tow, to a new, foreign country to start a brand new life. All of them inherited these traits and were instilled with these virtues thanks to my Great Great Grandma, Rosa Spina.**

**In 1912, my Great Great Grandpa Salvatore Todaro decided to move across the world with his seven-year-old son to the Brazos Valley in Texas to escape the hard, oppressive, poor work conditions of Poggioreale, Sicily and to start a new life for his family. A year after Salvatore had moved to America, his wife Rosa boarded a ship bound for the United States with her five-year-old son. On this crowded ship, Rosa bound herself tightly to hide being pregnant. She had to balance getting sick from her pregnancy, caring for her child, and worrying about moving to an unknown place where she could not even speak the common language.**

Upon arriving in Texas, Rosa soon gave birth and began to cook and clean to do her part to help on the farm owned by her husband's relatives. However, life was difficult, and she particularly did not like the heat or the farm work. So Rosa convinced Salvatore, and the Todaros moved to Chicago, Illinois to join her brother and sisters. The war provided hard times for the family; in the 1920's, the Great Depression made work and earning money incredibly difficult. Rosa started sewing and working in a sweatshop to provide for her family as her husband was not well. Because she did not trust the banks, she kept most of her money pinned to her garments until she had saved enough to buy a building for her family to live in. And, as a result of Rosa's hard-work and determination, the Todaro family was able to grow and prosper in Chicago and, years later, in many other parts of the country.

These Italian immigrants came from a small town in Sicily and didn't forget their roots, but brought a piece of Italy with them which has been passed down from generation to generation. The women described earlier are all descendants of this incredible woman, my great great-grandmother Rosa Spina. And I know, thanks to the qualities I have received from my ancestors, that I can conquer any obstacle that crosses my path to hopefully become as successful as the women who have set an example for me.