

**Poggioreale in America
2022 Student Scholarship Essay**

by

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What seems like an eon ago in the early 1900s, my great-great-grandfather, Antonino Zinnanti, made the treacherous journey to the United States. As my grandmother tells the tale, he left Poggioreale and a large family of nine with his brother at the immature age of 17 or 18 for the classic search for a new and better life during a tough time at home. Luckily, they endured the treacherous journey in the hull of a ship with starvation rations and only a bucket for a toilet. In about three weeks' time, they reached the port of New Orleans.

On arriving, they heard of another Italian family making their way to a community called “Mudville,” now known as Bryan, Texas. With farming in their Italian blood, the brothers naturally became farmers in their new home, though they had to evolve. To make a life for themselves, they began to grow the cash crop of the south: cotton. Despite being a difficult change at first, the brothers made the transition and ultimately found what they came to the United States for. As they say, the rest is history.

Though quite obviously, I never knew my great-great-grandfather, Antonino, I greatly love and respect him for the hardships he had to overcome to establish our family line in the United States. The default answer as to why Antonino’s decisions contributed to my life today is that I probably wouldn’t

be here today if he hadn't begun the journey to America. However, more importantly, Antonino was an extremely hard-working man who, from ground zero, built the foundation for my family here in America. According to my grandmother, this hard-working attribute has passed all the way down from him to his son to my grandmother to my father to me. If this is true as my grandmother tells me, then one of my most prized possessions, my work ethic, originated with my great-great-grandfather. For this, I will forever be grateful for the sacrifices and journey he made to begin anew in America, and now this same Poggiorealesi blood runs in my veins as it did his.