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Hist 225 Section 33 – American Dreamscape Entry

Equality

Fiorello La Guardia (December 11,1882-September 20,1947) Previous mayor of New York, fought for freedom of races to achieve their own dreams, instead of allowing other to take that away from you. In his New York, New Deal programs were pushed for and systems improved. He also took down the big bad Tammany Hall, which decimated the landscape during the Gilded Age. Fiorello La Guardia sacrificed his time and money so other could lead more prosperous lives.

Mayor Fiorello La Guardia lived his life fighting for those who could not fend for themselves, in a series of David vs Goliath scenarios, he defied the established political system in the name of equality. Many people may define the American dream as becoming rich, especially during the Gilded Age of American policy. La Guardia went against the grain, finding the American Dream to allow everyone to have a fighting chance in this world, and he saw it as his mission to do so. Born in New York to Italian and Jewish heritage, but spending much of his childhood moving from place to place, first out West when his father got a job in the military. Out West, La Guardia faced racism and saw the brutal treatment that these railroad conglomerates treated the immigrant workers. His helplessness to change anything as a boy, strengthened his resolve to fight for rights later showed. Additionally, the fact that the Army dumped his father into poverty from serving of contaminated meat. Due to his fathers poverty, the family decided to move back to Austria Hungary. Le Guardia got a job as a consulate in Budapest, where his fight for equality began. His limited power scope still afforded him the ability to change a process hurting immigrants: the full-scale medical examination in America. Instead La Guardia made them do the examination in the country before going, even stopping ships until it was done so. This saved many immigrants money and fear for the trip to America, and lead into the next chapter of his life, finishing law school and becoming an immigration lawyer in New York.

 After he rose up through the ranks to become attorney general of the state, La Guardia faced his first battle against the political machines that were prevalent in New York. This was a brutal loss, as Tammany’s connections would allow the big companies to keep doing what they were doing and the smaller manufacturer’s were not allowed to pollute Manhattan from New Jersey, create bad meat, and many other activities that were limited. After being called childish to his face for caring about the lives of others during a court preceding that went the other way, La Guardia made a move into politics, where he beat out the big bad machines to become a Congressman of New York. Here he fought for Prohibition’s removal, and was vehemently against Jim Crow laws and other regulations, but had trouble passing bills in the House of Representatives.

 There he developed his political skills that enabled to beat the machine again on the mayor’s race, believing he could do more there. He was very right, unable to secure the position but then able to fight them head on. A critique of his was his overbearing reach of power, where he would get in the way of bills. However it needs to be understood that he needed to fight for ethnic minorities rights in a time when that was frowned upon. So every single day he fought the political machine, until with the help of other in power, crushed the political machine that had been eating at the rights of the individual for decades, piece by political piece. First, he exposed the caniving machine in scandal after scandal. He began creating economic diversity, by creating an exam for all ethnicities to take, not just the Irish. He also increased the relief system to include all races. This was all while working tirelessly to improve the city’s systems (like firefighting, schools and the police force.) He also was the first to speak out against Adolf Hitler in a far too isolationist American landscape.

 La Guardia cared about all humans within the bounds of New York. In fact he even cared about whether or not the children got their comics during a newspaper boy’s strike, reading them to the children, after his radio address. He retired and died a few short years, always seeking to equalize the bond between New Yorkers and him.

Today we should look towards La Guardia’s accomplishments with respect for his goal. His American dream was for everyone to have a chance to achieve there’s. As an immigrant travelling for Americas superior university education, I appreciate that La Guardia’s showed America that it was a great idea for immigrants to be right alongside Americans for a better future. He knew that seeing the city prosper was one thing, but everyone had to be involved, even those that still suffer today, like African Americans. Being rich is one thing but we should work hard and be rich and diversely so.

[[1]](#endnote-1)

1. E-Book: Bayor, Ronald H*., Fiorello La Guardia : ethnicity, reform, and urban development* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2017) <https://eds.a.ebscohost.com/eds/detail/detail?vid=0&sid=1a52cd4c-e182-458a-946a-4bb5d1b5bd35%40sessionmgr4008&bdata=JkF1dGhUeXBlPWNvb2tpZSxpcCxjcGlkLGF0aGVucyxzaGliJmN1c3RpZD1zODg2MzEzNyZzaXRlPWVkcy1saXZlJnNjb3BlPXNpdGU%3d#AN=vmc.b32177574&db=cat00024a>

Book:La Guardia, Fiorello H., and Morris Robert Werner. *The Making of an Insurgent, an Autobiography, 1882-1919*. Philadelphia, PA: (J. B. Lippincott Co , 1948).

Radio Reading: “NYC Mayor LaGuardia's Legendary Radio Readings.” *NPR*, NPR, 30 Nov. 2008, [www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=97621982](http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=97621982).

Electronic Video: The la Guardia Story

Book:"Thomas Ressner. Fiorello H. La Guardia and the Making of Modern New York. New York: McGraw-Hill. 1989. Pp. Xvii, 700. $24.95." *The American Historical Review*, 1991. doi:10.1086/ahr/96.3.989-a. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)