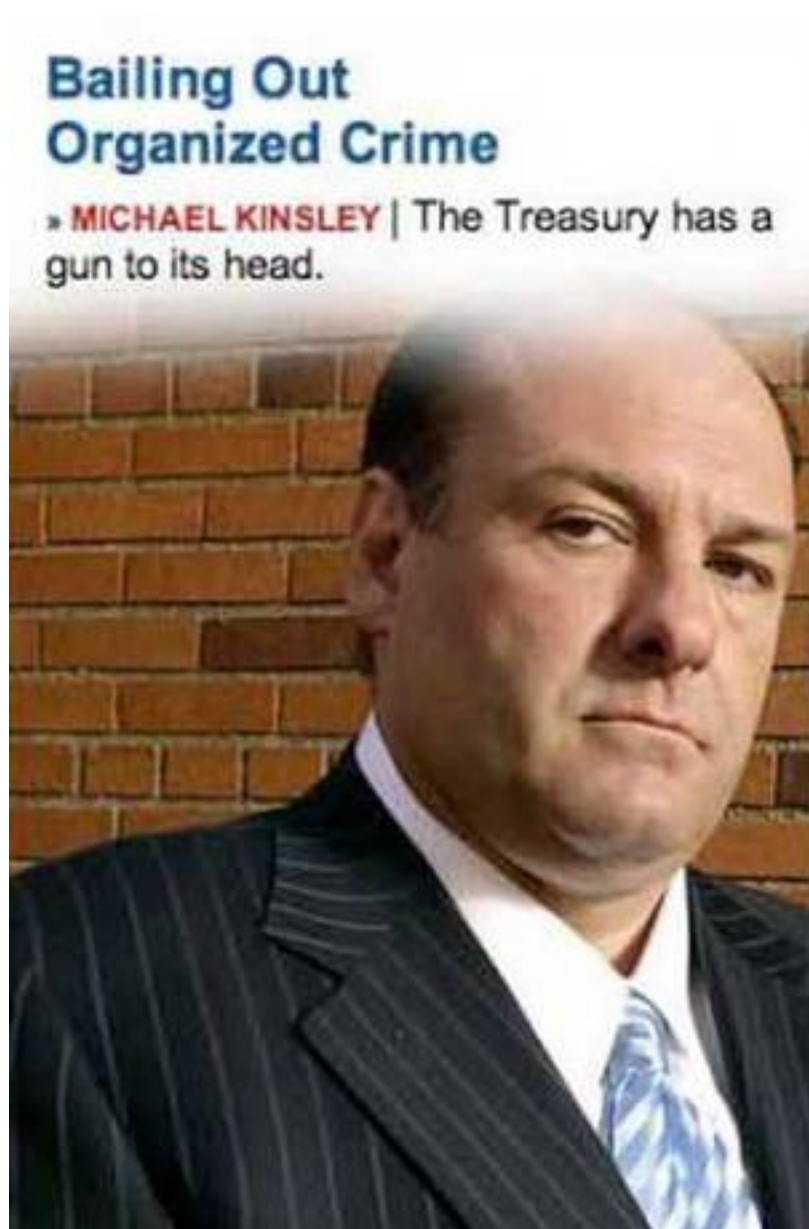




## **Just when we thought it was safe to go back into the water...**

Anthony Julian Tamburri (March 06, 2009)



No matter how much we think we have progressed in our social and ethnic evolution, there is always someone to raise the ugly head of bigotry, reminding us that the 1950s — when WASPdom reigned supreme — may still, to some degree, be with us today.



Numerous are the references to Italian Americans as bigots, buffoons, palookas, womanizers, and the like, all of which, obviously, are gross misjudgments in human characterization.

Another example of such insensitivity by a non-Italian American rose its ugly head once again today with [Michael Kingsley's op. ed. for the Washington Post, "Bailing Out Organized Crime, The Treasury Has a Gun to Its Head."](#) [2] There is, to underscore the bigotry of the article, a photograph of James Gandolfini in a Sopranoseque pose (as seen above). To consider this over the top with its highly calumnious stereotypes is an understatement: "William P. 'Billy the Bailout' Baritone?"; "And don' you fugget it."; "We would borrow one of these cars, open the trunk and stuff someone inside. Then we would call his family and demand, say, a million dollars to open the trunk and let him out."; "'Dat's right,' said the soon-to-be assistant secretary. 'Too big to fail. And then they have the friggin' cojones [sic; this is Spanish!] to accuse us of going legit just because we want a small rescue package of \$10 to \$15 billion, at least in the first tranche'."; "Mr. Baritone amplified: 'We only slam a window on people's fingers when they don't pay up'." These are some of the samples from Mr. Kingsley's piece. Need we say more? I don't think so.

Such mindless, insensitive gibberish comes from a supposedly enlightened liberal, sensitive to the socially acceptable, and now I have to assume those he considers, party-line affirmative action groups. Yet, he proves to be a non-Italian American who obviously revels in mocking, as some would put it, one of the last ethnic groups acceptable to deride openly and publicly in the United States. To use the bully pulpit of the US capital's major newspaper is unfathomable and, simply, unacceptable.

Mr. Kingsley (who, by the way, is not alone; click on [Curtis Sliwa](#) [3], who, in turn, is half Italian American) is much too astute not to realize where he was going; namely, in the direction of offending one of the largest ethnic groups in the United States. One might thus only assume that it is, within his social universe, indeed acceptable to poke fun at certain groups while not at others; or, simply, he does not care. One of these two conceptual phenomena is clearly in play. Surely, we are wont to ask, as in fact did Mr. Joseph Grano in his letter to Mr. Kingsley earlier today in an email: "Is there another ethnic group that you would dare denigrate, as you have Italian Americans, today?"

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