

---

# Against the boss, the third way of women

There are always more women, mothers more than anything else, asking for help in order to escape mafias. According to the Italian legislation, they are not eligible to protection, even if they have done the most disruptive choice : rebelling and escaping the 'Ndrangheta.

**Luigi Ciotti** « *I think we have to help them, and not only in an ethic point-of-view, but also for a reason of human solidarity* »

The first women to sow the seeds were **Rita Atria, Lea Garofalo, Piera Aiello, and Felicia Impastato.**

Women who belonged or had discover belonging to a mafia family, and who rebelled from this violent destiny, encountering sometimes difficult and tragic consequences.

The number of women, especially mothers, that are asking for help to escape from mafias is always growing. We have to help them, also because it means harming the basis of mafia mentality. A mafia member doesn't and cannot understand that someone chooses other values than his own, those that he has been taught since he was a child, and the fact that someone can do it without any personal interests show that these values are not unquestionable anymore and that others can decide to reject them.

It would be the sign of an internal rebellion that, if encouraged and supported externally, could have disruptive effects on the strength and stability of the mafia universe. I realize that the subject is juridically sensitive, as it would mean offer these persons protection and tools - for example a civil registry change - only planned for collaborators and justice witnesses, or for who offers relevant informations according to the law.

Nevertheless, I think that, in the respect of the judiciary paths, politics should and must make an effort to build a « third way » to protect the dignity and liberty of these persons, and to build together a fairest and freer society from the mafia power and its accomplices.

*Luigi Ciotti*

---

## « Take our sons or they'll become mafiosi »

*A choice dictated by love, the testimony of two moms during the three-days conference Contromafiecorruzione.*

I am your mother, and for your own good, I want you to stay away from me. Deny your father and your mother. Deny the mafia that has fed your parents. Go away, go far. We abandon you but we do

it for your own good. One day, we will see each other again, and you'll understand. Maybe. Who knows what string of the human soul can touch the meditated choice of a mother who goes to the judge to ask him to take her own son away. To take him away from his mafia family where he was born. To keep him away from the country where he was -badly- raised. To find him a new mom and a new dad, at least until he is over 18. Twenty women have done it. Twenty moms found the courage. They are the wife of mafiosi, daughters of mafiosi, sisters of mafiosi, granddaughters of mafiosi. Most often, they are condemned for the 416bis article and waiting for their final sentence. They have gone to the president of the Juvenile Court of Reggio Calabria, Roberto Di Bella, and they have told him everything, with the simplest words possible : « Mister the judge, I am ready, take my son. Save him. » Their voices, that the journal « *Repubblica* » has collected thanks to the association Libera, are the only thing we know of these women. Their last name is that of the clan, as rocks crumbling on their future. As is made the law, they do not succeed in getting that off of them as they are neither considered as collaborators of justice nor witnesses, and they do not benefit from a protected identity. It is the same for the offsprings asking the State to take them somewhere else. **Paula, 35 years-old** : « My father was killed by the mafia, as my brother and my uncles. Three years ago, I was with my 15 years-old and 12 years-old sons : the elder was searching information about our clan on the Internet when he found the myth of his lifer uncle. Since that moment, he convinced himself that going to jail was an obligatory step to gain respect. The younger was obsessed with shotguns, he knew the name of every pieces. I was tormented, and I finally told Da Bella « I gave them to you, take them away from here ». Now, the younger lives in a community in Calabria, he doesn't talk about shotguns anymore and take judo lessons. The elder works in a bakery in Central Italy. **Daniela, 37 years-old** : « My husband was killed in 2008 from its very essence, the mafia. He let me alone with our three kids, nowadays we have to live hidden because of our name ». **Then, there is Rita, that has taken this decision in 1994, and that now sets her speech around the words « Rebirth » and « reconstruction ».** « It is possible to have another future when you're born in a mafia family, you just have to be brave ... To the calabrese women, I say that the strength of a mother always wins ». The judge Di Bella has started working to take the 'Ndrangheta children away from the clan education in 2012. The main tool is jurisprudence, and is called « measure of revocation (or limitation) of parental responsibility » and it can be used when the psycho-physical safety of minors is in danger. In substance, it deals with physically taking the children away from their mafia families where their future is foreseeable, and re-write a new future for them, in another place.

It is very delicate when the protagonists are criminal fathers and mothers, and that blood ties are at stake. For this reason, Di Bella has been called the « children thief » numerous times. Nevertheless, he was never discouraged. His idea has become a reality for Calabria, an alternative path undertaken by around fifty children and seven adult women. « Ten of them are now over 18 - tells the magistrate - and five of this ten children are still living outside Calabria, working. The others went back and only one of them has had problems with the justice, and for non-mafia reasons. Other mothers are currently thinking about sending their children away, and for the first time, a father, from jail, has shown appreciation for what we are doing. The diocesan and Caritas networks are greatly helping us ». Nevertheless, difficulties often occur where you don't expect them to. « There are some calabrese municipalities where social workers refuse to take the children away because they are afraid, as some schools that do not collaborate as they should ».

**His idea became a signed protocol between the Government, the Antimafia National Prosecutor, Federico Cafiero De Raho, the Italian Episcopal Conference and Libera President Don Luigi Ciotti, in order to extend the initiative to the whole country.**

300.000 euro were allocated to this initiative, half from the Department for Equal opportunities, half from the CEI, for the support to the communities, to the families homes, to the networks of psychologists involved. The document has been signed the very day when in Rome started « Contromafie » dedicated this year to the links between mafias and corruption. « It is a revolution as numerous mothers and women break age-old codes, who, for the sake of their children, seek another path in order to not raise them in the mafiosa culture », said Don Ciotti to the Angelicum

Congress's audience. « Numerous mafia families ask for an alternative path to be given to their children ».

*Fabio Tonacci, La Repubblica 3rd of February 2018.*