

If just everything were different...

The 25th May of 2020 can be seen as the day in which humanity finally opened its eyes. George Floyd was brutally murdered in Minneapolis, in front of many spectators. This event is the starting point of what can be considered as a new era: even if racism is a war that has been fought endlessly in the USA, it still seems as if nothing has ever changed. USA's population started a strong movement of marches and protests in spite of the dangers that come with Coronavirus and social distancing. The problem of racism and power abuse is so strongly felt that risking your own life for change is much more important.

From a protest to another, the question of history is raised. If only history had been different, if only history could have been seen from another perspective, everything could be better. White people had always thought of being on the right side, that there is no other perspective to what has happened in the past. We have seen white people finally taking a stand in this protest as well, becoming conscious that many historical models are wrong, and they must be revised. In the USA people were tearing down statues of Cristoforo Colombo along with other colonialists, and asked the revision of the Columbus Day. The discovery of America was not such a glorious act when you realize everything that came afterwards. Diseases, genocide, slavery.

Italy decided to take part in the protests very actively, even if apparently not directly affected, but the revision of history is one of the most discussed themes lately. Following the peaceful march for Black Lives Matter, some student collectives "ruined" the statue of Indro Montanelli, famous Italian journalist to whom the park in which it stands in is dedicated. Underneath the statue there was the phrase: RAPIST. You are now probably asking yourself how is it possible that an entire park is dedicated to someone that is considered to be a rapist.

Indro Montanelli can be considered as the journalist that changed how journalism worked. From 1945 he is the one that started to promote the freedom of speech, and in doing that he always founded new newspapers just to be able to write what he wanted. But why 1945? What a strange and convenient year to decide that you were a liberal. Before that year, Indro Montanelli was the official war reporter for the Corriere della Sera, he was part of the Fascist Party, and actively consulted with Benito Mussolini on what should his articles on the Italian army say. He was doing propaganda; he was doing Mussolini's dirty game. He was so into this game that he had the chance to meet Adolf Hitler in person, something that just doesn't happen if you are not a convinced fascist.

Trust me, this is not the worst things Montanelli did. This whole Fascist phase can be overflowed somehow. All of us are aware that the Fascist period was a tough one, not following orders could end a life, so your choices were in between life or death. So where does the caption RAPIST come from? In a tv show in 1969, Indro Montanelli goes on describing his "adventures" in Africa in the early 30s. He was a young man that decided to be part of the Italian army fighting for colonialism power. While he was there, he bought, yes bought, a 12 year old girl as a wife. During the tv show, a woman from the audience asked him how could he ever do something like that, why wouldn't he consider this paedophile rape? Why is it that in Italy something like that obviously was not going to be accepted, but in Africa it was legit? Montanelli just answered: "you know, there it is just like this." He even states that in 1933 this practice was finally abolished and that he understood that it was wrong. But it was abolished for the wrong reason. 1933 is the year of the Racial Laws, so this practice was abolished for racist reasons, not because it was considered as paedophilia.

The city of Milan asked the mayor Beppe Sala to rename the park, but he said it is not possible. But Indro Montanelli's name completely clashes with the symbol that park has. The park is in the area of Porta Venezia, that today stands for freedom and peace. It is also where the Gay Pride is usually held. How is it possible that a symbol like this can be juxtaposed to the image of a man that committed child rape without even acknowledging it was?

The revision of history is something important and necessary. In the case of the USA, having the possibility to learn a new perspective to what happened in history, could give the kids the opportunity to open eyes up. It is just a matter of education: if a white kid has the opportunity to see that history doesn't just have white people as the protagonist, this could be a way to understand the entire world. Especially, a white kid, by acknowledging that he has privilege, can understand that "different" people are treated differently. Many white people maybe are blind but not in a negative way, it is just a matter of culture. You are not able to see if you have a pre-given privilege until you understand that there are people that don't.

All the history we learn in school, when we were young, was written by privileged white people for privileged white people. History can't be changed but it can be revised, by considering a different perspective, especially when it comes to analyse events in the far past.

In the case of Italy and Indro Montanelli the concept is a bit different. All the events regarding his life are part of a very recent history, and the question of the child rape came up in the 60's, a time in which it was easy to understand it was actually rape, no excuses. Adding to this, his name was given to the park in 2002, so very recently and perfectly aware of the events in the journalist's life.

Journalists today, commenting on this event, all decided to defend Montanelli for the great things he did against censorship and by excusing him with the phrase: "he was just a son of his time". Are we of the same thought? Should we excuse someone just because he was only 23 when he went to Africa and because there it is a "custom"? In the famous interview he even said that in Italy he would have never slept with a 12 year old girl, why should in Africa be different? He was totally able to understand that it was a barbaric act and that it is not ok, even if there it is considered a tradition.

History here can totally be changed and revised. In 2002, by commemorating an entire park to the journalist, we were openly being in favour and excusing someone that in the past was an active fascist and that admitted of having intimate relations with a underaged child. What is done is done, but we are in a time in which we can finally stop excusing those men that believe they can do anything just because they have power, they are white and they have privilege. Let's see history from another perspective, and create new idols that are surely a much better model to follow for the future generations.