

## Immigrants laugh and cry like you

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XX September Square, nicknamed Tirana's Square, because of the gathering of immigrants, is yellow coloured. This is the symbol that has been chosen for the European Day dedicated to immigrants. The yellow has entered into the schools, into groups, and also into prisons, where the Senegalese community, lead by Djibril Thiam, cooked for the prisoners.

Thierry Dieng and Yapi Yapo, of the **Ubuntu** movement, inflate balloons and attract the attention of the "brothers" who come in dribs and drabs. Pakistanis, Moroccans, Ivorians, Senegalese and Italian people surround the tables to pick up rosettes and balloons.

"The immigrants came here to eat bread", explains **Yapo** "but they're here also to sow wheat, to contribute to this country's growth. We're more than 4 million people and every year we pay to the State **3 billion 200 thousand** euros."

There is a party atmosphere rather than a revenge one, and for many people the 1st of March represents a moment of gathering among the different communities. "The Italian people" continues Yapo "have to understand that we laugh like them, we cry like them. We are human beings just like the others and the security has nothing to do with integration."

The request of everyone is to be part of the normality. Immigration is always represented as a phenomenon that oscillates between the extraordinariness of the event and the marginality of the behaviour.

"The politicians have to understand that immigration is neither a phenomenon nor a problem: it is a reality" says Iham **Mourtadi**, who has been in Italy for 15 years, metal worker and candidate in the Regional Elections with the Federazione di Sinistra. "Immigrants work, pay taxes, but they are not integrated because they are perceived as a problem. I do not agree with an immigrants strike because it creates a division among workers which is dangerous. This day is not a strike, but a moment of awareness".

According to many immigrants the integration cited by Mourtadi concerns only the work programme. Within the civil rights it is difficult to work clearly and without their recognition it becomes very hard to give concreteness to the word integration. "It's

clear” explains **Elisa Russo**, member of the Immigrants Uil (Italian Workers Union) “that they aren’t just workers, and it’s as many clear that without them we can’t do anything, because their contribution is essential.”

“Behind every worker, immigrant or Italian” says **Jacques Amani**, member of Cgil (Italian General Confederation of Labour) “there are rights and we have to start from these. When we are at work we are asked to produce, it doesn’t matter if we’re immigrants or not. But a person’s life doesn’t end outside of working hours, so, this is the beginning of a struggle and integration, so that the immigrants’ contribution is recognised in Europe.

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