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JOE TACOPINA HONORED BY ITALIAN AMERICAN BAR ASSOC.

NEW YORK, NY - One of the hottest young criminal defense lawyers in New York is an Italian American who takes pride in his heritage, recently recognized by the National Italian American Bar Association as a distinguished member of the community. Joe Tacopina is a criminal defense lawyer based in New York City, and after only about ten years out of law school, he has won some of the most recent sensational cases in the New York area.

The eloquent speaker has been compared to a lion hunting prey during a trial. Tacopina talks circles around other brilliant attorneys but identifies well with average citizens on a jury. His talents are sought-after by many New York police officers, as he has earned a reputation as a friend of this group when under attack.

Tacopina managed the acquittal of Richard Sanfilippo, one of the so-called "Morgue Boys" accused of stealing drugs, guns and cash from drug dealers and innocent civilians and then "playing" with their loot. The lawyer was also a central figure in both the Abner Louima sexual torture case and the Patrick Dorismond killing, two of the most inflammatory and polarizing legal events in New York City's recent history. Neither defendant, both New York City police officers accused of assault and wrongful shooting respectively, saw a single day in jail. Tacopina also made a name for himself as a civil rights lawyer after he garnered a \$5 million settlement for Bronx Police Officer Elizabeth Bryant, whose fellow officers taunted and threatened her for being a lesbian.

He has also successfully defended models accused of stalking, Orthodox Jews with un-Orthodox habits, newsmen accused of impersonating officials at Ground Zero, and other high-profile cases.

Tacopina has appeared on *Larry King Live*, *Hardball*, *The O'Reilly Factor*, and other prominent cable television news shows. He also has served as a legal consultant for CNBC, MSNBC, FOX News, Rivera Live, CNN, Court TV, the New York Times, the Daily News, and the New York Post. He has been an invited speaker at several universities and law seminars, including the Fordham University School of Law and the National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers. Tacopina is also a member of the Columbian Lawyers Association, an organization for New York-area based Italian American lawyers.

Those who know him explain that Tacopina has had a special spark since his childhood. A football, wrestling and hockey star at Poly Prep, a private high school in Brooklyn, where he grew up, Tacopina later starred on the hockey rink at Skidmore College. He cites his mother as the reason for his determination and discipline, and Joe McGinniss's novel *Fatal Vision* as the reason for his chosen career path.

Tacopina's first experience with the legal profession came when he got himself a job with Jimmy LaRosa, one of the best criminal defense lawyers in New York at the time. He offered to work for free, as long as he could



NANCY SCIOCHETTI, president of the National Italian American Bar Association, presents an award to attorney Joe Tacopina as a distinguished member of the community.

gain experience in the field. His fortitude paid off and the next summer, at the age of 25, Tacopina was a member of the defense team for one of the city's biggest criminal trials of the past few decades.

Tacopina moved onto law school at the University of Connecticut and then to a position with a Brooklyn district attorney's office, where he distinguished himself as a go-getter who loved the thrill of arguing before a jury. After winning 39 of 40 cases, mostly homicides, Tacopina was ready to enter private practice.

In 1995 without an office or clients, Tacopina did just

that. Manhattan diners became his office space, an answering service, a cell phone and phone cards, the budding criminal lawyer made it work. Just as he was beginning a stint as a coat checker at a local hotel, the "Morgue Boys" case fell into his lap, and the rest is history. More success is on the way for Tacopina, who often has the urge to move to Italy and forget it all. But in the end, the lure of the courtroom prevails.

Joe Tacopina is married to the former Tish MacDonald. They reside in Westport, Connecticut with their five children.

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