

Discover the Fascinating History of Italians Race, Color, and Power in Chicago from 1890 to 1945

Chicago, often referred to as the "Windy City", has been a melting pot of different cultures and ethnicities for centuries. Among the many immigrants who arrived in the city in the late 19th and early 20th centuries were the Italians, who played a significant role in shaping the city's history. In this article, we delve into the intriguing story of Italians and their experiences with race, color, and power in Chicago between 1890 and 1945.

The Influx of Italian Immigrants

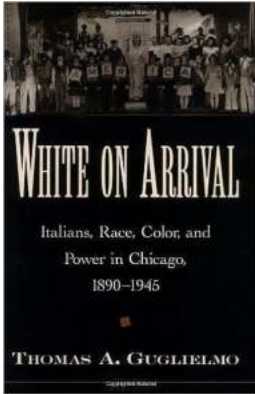
During the late 1800s, Italian immigrants started arriving in Chicago in large numbers, seeking better economic opportunities and escape from political turmoil in their homeland. They settled primarily in the West Side neighborhood known as "Little Sicily," which became a thriving Italian community.

Challenges and Discrimination

Upon their arrival, Italians faced numerous challenges and discrimination. They encountered hostility from established ethnic groups and faced prejudiced attitudes that questioned their morality, intelligence, and suitability for American citizenship. Italians strove to overcome these obstacles and establish themselves as productive members of society.

**White on Arrival: Italians, Race, Color, and Power
in Chicago, 1890-1945: Italians, Race, Color and
Power in Chicago 1890-1945**

by Thomas A. Guglielmo (Kindle Edition)



★★★★☆ 4.5 out of 5

Language : English

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Text-to-Speech: Enabled

Screen Reader: Supported

Word Wise : Enabled

Print length : 296 pages

Lending : Enabled



The Role of Color and Ethnic Identity

Race and color played a significant role in the experiences of Italians in Chicago. Despite their diverse origins and appearances, Italians were often labeled as "other" and subjected to racial profiling and discrimination. This discrimination was deeply influenced by the prevailing racial hierarchy of the time, which placed Italians in an ambiguous position between being considered white and non-white.

Organized Crime and its Impact

One aspect that cannot be ignored when discussing Italians in Chicago during this time period is organized crime. While not all Italians were involved in criminal activities, the rise of notorious figures like Al Capone and the operation of various mafia organizations contributed to negative stereotypes and further stigmatized the Italian community.

Empowerment and Political Influence

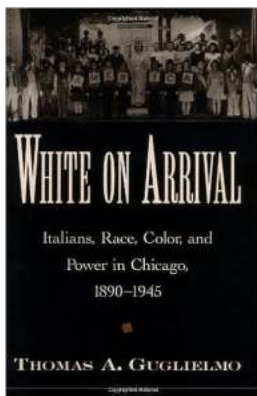
Despite the challenges they faced, Italians gradually gained economic and political power in Chicago. They ventured into various industries such as manufacturing, construction, and food production, becoming key contributors to the city's growth. Italian politicians emerged and successfully wielded influence,

paving the way for greater representation and empowerment for the Italian-American community.

Legacy and Cultural Contributions

The legacy of Italians in Chicago is far-reaching. Their contributions to the city's architecture, culinary scene, and cultural heritage remain evident to this day. From iconic Chicago-style pizza to renowned architectural landmarks like the Willis Tower, Italian influence is deeply ingrained in the fabric of the city.

The history of Italians in Chicago from 1890 to 1945 is a captivating tale of struggle, resilience, and progress. This community faced adversity, discrimination, and the challenges of assimilation. However, they also left an indelible mark on the city, shaping its culture, economy, and political landscape. By understanding their experiences, we gain a deeper appreciation for the complexity of race, color, and power dynamics in Chicago's history.



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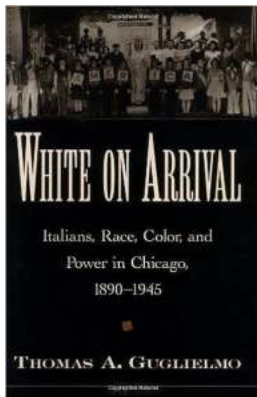


Immigrating to the United States, Italians, like all others arriving on America's shores, were made to fill out a standardized immigration form. In the box for race, they faced two choices: North Italian or South Italian. On the line requesting information on color, they wrote simply "white." By World War II, the only option they had for race and color questions was "white."

This identification is suggestive of the many ways in which Italians became white on arrival in the United States, as Thomas A. Guglielmo demonstrates in this prize-winning book. While many suffered from racial prejudice and discrimination, they were nonetheless viewed as white, with all the privileges this color classification bestowed, in the corridors of American power--from judges to journalists, from organized labor to politicians, from race scientists to realtors. Taking the mass Italian immigration of the late 19th century as his starting point and drawing on dozens of oral histories and a diverse array of primary sources in English and Italian, Guglielmo focuses on how perceptions of Italians' race and color were shaped in one of America's great centers of immigration and labor, Chicago. His account skillfully weaves together the major events of Chicago immigrant history--the "Chicago Color Riot" of 1919, the rise of Italian organized crime, and the rise of industrial unionism--with national and international events--such as the rise of fascism and the Italian-Ethiopian War of 1935-36--to present the story of how Italians approached, learned, and lived race. By tracking their evolving position in the city's racial hierarchy, Guglielmo reveals the impact of racial classification--both formal and informal--on immigrants' abilities to acquire homes and jobs, start families, and gain opportunities in America.

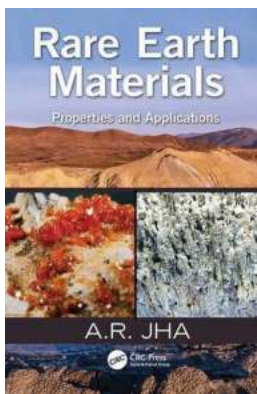
Carefully drawing the distinction between race and color, Guglielmo argues that whiteness proved Italians' most valuable asset for making it in America. Even so, Italians were reluctant to identify themselves explicitly as white until World War II. By separating examples of discrimination against Italians from the economic and social advantages they accrued from their acceptance as whites, Guglielmo counters the claims of many ethnic Americans that hard work alone enabled their

extraordinary success, especially when compared to non-white groups whose upward mobility languished. A compelling story, *White on Arrival* contains profound implications for our understanding of race and ethnic acculturation in the United States, as well as twentieth-century immigration, urban, and political history.



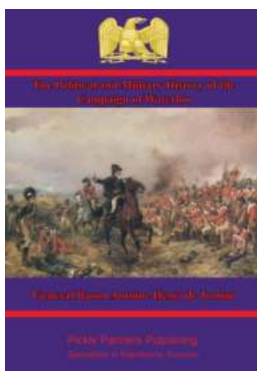
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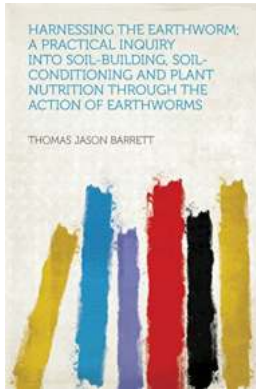
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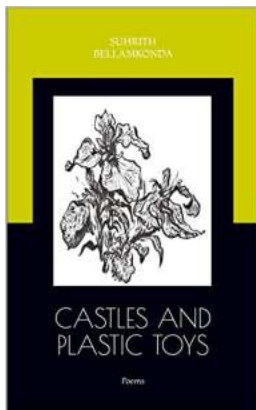
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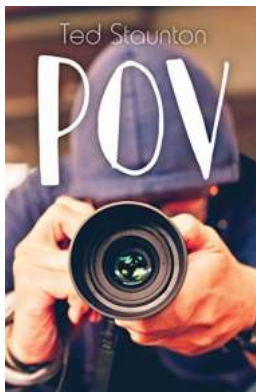
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