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## Anti-Italianism

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**Anti-Italianism** is a hostility toward Italian people and [Italian culture](#). It uses stereotypes about Italian people, a popular one being that most Italians are naturally violent, or somehow associated with the Mafia. Like most racist and biased sentiments, anti-Italianism often uses discrimination, prejudice, and even violence.

### Anti-Italianism in the United States

Because of the common association, some Italian Americans see all films or shows about the Mafia as potentially harmful to the Italian American community. This became something of an issue for the HBO show "The Sopranos" when certain Italian Americans complained about the stereotypical nature of the show. Other Italians feel that such shows are beneficial only if they feature the Mafia as a common or accepted part of Italian American life.

However, due possibly in part to the portrayal of the Mafia in the media, Italians have been stereotyped as violent, sociopathic, "knife-wielding" gangsters and street ruffians. [[http://www.italianstudies.org/iam/Gesualdi\\_6.htm](http://www.italianstudies.org/iam/Gesualdi_6.htm) *Annotated Bibliography - p 6*] Feagan and Feagan, 2003. 79-81, 92-93] This stereotype ranges from portraying Italians as working class thugs, to violent "guappo" immigrants, to Mafiosi.

Other stereotypes portray Italians as overly-emotional, melodramatic, plebeian, [superstitious](#), hot-blooded, aggressive, ignorant, obsessed with food, and prone to crime and vengeance over trivial slights. Gottesman, Ronald. Violence in America: An Encyclopedia [<http://books.google.com/books?id=rSIYAAAAIAAJ&pg=PA1948&dq=violence+in+america+encyclopedia>] ] The fear of Italians reproducing too much played a small role in Margaret Sanger's drive toward encouraging birth control. [<http://www.catholiceducation.org/articles/sexuality/se0057.html> *Angry White Female: Margaret Sanger's Race of Thoroughbreds*] ] Italian males are sometimes stereotyped as "Italian Stallions" or "Latin lovers," while females have been stereotyped as either overly matriarchal or voluptuous, flirtatious, and exotic. Italians have often found themselves at the receiving end of ethnic jokes, parodies, and discrimination due to certain stereotypes. Cordasco, Francesco. [[http://juniusbooks.com](http://juniusbooks.com/search.php?keywords=cordasco%20classified%20bibliographical%20experience) /search.php?keywords=cordasco%20classified%20bibliographical%20experience *The Italian-American Experience*] [[http://books.google.com/books?id=xSk9m\\_LbJ0C&pg=PP1&ots=4MyfYT9oHB&dq=italian+american+experience&sig=DVI5oGoCoG4K52kEGXg9TTwOu2o](http://books.google.com/books?id=xSk9m_LbJ0C&pg=PP1&ots=4MyfYT9oHB&dq=italian+american+experience&sig=DVI5oGoCoG4K52kEGXg9TTwOu2o)] ]

In America and many other nations, Italians have also been stereotyped as swarthy perpetual foreigners in a lower class, restricted to blue collar jobs. They have been stereotyped working as construction workers, chefs, beggars, peddlers, plumbers, and in other working class jobs. Lord, Eliot. *The Italian in America* [Proxy-Connection: keep-aliveCache-Control: max-age=0

[tp://books.google.com/books?id=axQOAAAAIAAJ&pg=PA1&dq=italian+in+america](http://books.google.com/books?id=axQOAAAAIAAJ&pg=PA1&dq=italian+in+america)] ] Another stereotype of Italian American is the "" or "[guido](#)", a working class or lower class Italian male. In their own community, Italian Americans themselves will sometimes refer to such "buffoon-like" Italian males as "cafones". "Cafone" is an Italian word that originally meant "peasant", but its meaning evolved to refer to rude, ignorant, uncouth people, particularly from the south. Degrading and even dehumanizing images have been prevalent in the perpetuation of ignorance and historical myths. LaGumina, Salvatore John. *Wop!: A Documentary History of Anti-Italian Discrimination in the United States* [[http://books.google.com/books?id=qFtgLMQnL68C&pg=PA1&ots=xXKe-cpMX0&dq=anti-italian&sig=6foRmrHLK3iA\\_HG3M78cRo\\_XBsM#PPP1,M1](http://books.google.com/books?id=qFtgLMQnL68C&pg=PA1&ots=xXKe-cpMX0&dq=anti-italian&sig=6foRmrHLK3iA_HG3M78cRo_XBsM#PPP1,M1)] ]

Many ethnic stereotypes against Italians have been in use for centuries. In the 16th century, John Calvin, the French reformer who helped establish the Reformed Church of Switzerland, condemned Italians as lazy, two-faced, and deceitful. [*citation needed*]

After the American Civil War, some poor Italian immigrants were recruited to fill the place of abolished slave labor by working on Southern plantations, while Italians in the North often worked in sweat shops and factories. The Italian American's role as a hard laborer has contributed to many stereotypes that persist today. Many Americans saw the swarthy, darker skinned Italians as a "missing link" between whites and blacks. In some areas of the South, as well as the North, Italians were "semi-segregated". Many native Americans viewed Italian immigrants as lowlife criminals and undesirables swarming into North America. In 1921, Congress passed a racially-based quota which limited the number of Italians that were allowed to enter the United States annually. The quota was not repealed until 1965. OSIA [[http://www.osia.org/public/pdf/SyndCol\\_RealStories.pdf](http://www.osia.org/public/pdf/SyndCol_RealStories.pdf)] ]

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[ItalianCulinaryAcademy.com](http://ItalianCulinaryAcademy.com)

There also became an association in [Protestant society](#) between Italians and the negative image of perceived Catholic immorality; specifically gambling, perversion, and violence. These cases are especially true of stereotyping and discrimination against people of Southern Italian origins, such as Neapolitan or Calabrian, and Sicilian origin. Poor Southern Italian immigrants have often been feared or distrusted due to their unique appearance and culture, their perceived willingness to work in low pay jobs, and the stereotype of Italians as a *Mafioso*.

Sociologically speaking, the largest common denominator among anti-Italians is ignorance and parochialism, a relative lack of exposure to other cultures and ways of life. American ethnocentric attitudes and "nativism" — a form of often racially-rooted chauvinism — have contributed greatly to this kind of prejudice. German-American and Irish-American groups have often been mentioned as particularly virulent in their animosity toward Italians (and most "swarthy" or dark non-British foreigners, a category that includes Greek, Arabic, and Hispanic immigrants), but the claim has not been substantiated as specific to these groups, as this form of rejectionism has been historically documented across all Northern European ethnic groups, and particularly among US Americans of English and Scot-Irish ancestry. As is often the case with hostile racial or ethnic stereotypes, the enormous contributions of Italians, not only to America, but to world civilization in the arts, music, science, mathematics, government and law, urban and infrastructural construction, and even culinary traditions, are forgotten or deliberately ignored.

### Violence against Italians

In the United States, Italian immigrants were subject to extreme prejudice, racism, and, in many cases, violence. During the 1800s and early 20th Century, Italian Americans, being seen as non-Anglo and non-white, were the second most likely ethnic group to be lynched. Mangione, Jerre. *La Storia: Five Centuries of the Italian-American Experience* [<http://books.google.com/books?id=MKzorg2128cC&pg=PP1&ots=uq05NT8xKG&dq=la+storia+five+centuries&sig=12Izqvskua1FE2hR16heoMPplg>] ]

The largest mass lynching in American history involved the lynching of eleven Italians in the city of New Orleans. Moses, Norton H. *Lynching and Vigilantism in the United States: An Annotated Bibliography* [[http://books.google.com/books?id=OpP\\_gZ3kJEC&pg=PA1&ots=0UeZqEewZ6&dq=lynching+vigilantism&sig=q9iXT0Eulih6G4w5MP5HaETPWJ4](http://books.google.com/books?id=OpP_gZ3kJEC&pg=PA1&ots=0UeZqEewZ6&dq=lynching+vigilantism&sig=q9iXT0Eulih6G4w5MP5HaETPWJ4)] ] The Italians, who were thought to have assassinated police chief David Hennessey, were arrested and placed in a jail cell before being brutally murdered by a lynch mob that stormed the jailhouse, with witnesses claiming that the cheers "were nearly deafening". Cries of "hang the s" were heard throughout the riot. Reporting on the incident, one newspaper reported "The little jail was crowded with Sicilians, whose low, receding foreheads, dark skin, repulsive countenances and slovenly attire proclaimed their brutal nature". Gambino, Richard. *Vendetta: The True Story of the Largest Lynching in U. S. History* [[http://books.google.com/books?id=jA9-dmAsoMwC&pg=PP1&ots=IQVFvcj9a0&dq=vendetta&sig=O1-od3z0hxkvsynrGVih\\_2oyDOQ](http://books.google.com/books?id=jA9-dmAsoMwC&pg=PP1&ots=IQVFvcj9a0&dq=vendetta&sig=O1-od3z0hxkvsynrGVih_2oyDOQ)] ] Afterwards, hundreds of Italian immigrants, most of whom were not criminals, were arrested by law enforcement. Decades after, an anti-Italian phrase, "Who kill-a the chief?" remained popular in the New Orleans area. Gambino, Richard. *Blood of My Blood: The Dilemma of the Italian Americans* [<http://books.google.com/books?id=4WW3AVJITXkC&pg=PP1&ots=XRkBPqJnxF&dq=Blood+of+My+Blood:+The+Dilemma+of+the+Italian+Americans&sig=O19FHuyj9vgjYWC4QB-h-ZyvYSoc>] ] Sowell, Thomas. *Ethnic America: A History* [<http://books.google.com/books?id=lpT69mf8REUC&pg=PP1&ots=3Tq1CiGPX&dq=ethnic+america&sig=TNePXARdBNuS1Boo40bRQbLnSuG>] ]

In the 1920s, two Italian anarchists, Sacco and Vanzetti, experienced prejudice and ultimately death due to their Italian ancestry and extreme political views. Though not lynched, Sacco and Vanzetti were subject to a mishandled trial, and many historians agree that the judge, jury, and prosecution were extremely biased against the Italian immigrants. Sacco and Vanzetti were eventually put to death, convicted of a murder despite the lack of evidence against them. Rappaport, Doreen, "The Sacco-Vanzetti Trial", New York: Harper Trophy, 1994, c1993. KF224.R36 1994x.]

Anti-Italianism in Switzerland often cites the 1971 beating death of a recent Italian immigrant named Alfredo Zardini.

In Australia, anti-Italian riots occurred on numerous occasions since Italian immigrants, or "wogs" (an Australian English slang for Southern Europeans/Eastern Europeans), first began arriving to the country in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Many Australians viewed the Italian immigrants as "immoral", "low", and "dirty". O'Connor, Desmond. [http://books.google.com/books?id=dECY9RIn9-MC&pg=PP1&ots=gZDhF5UDvG&dq=no+need+to+be+afraid&sig=XAltZU4HQh3KV\\_nEibjL5ix5IVo#PPA62,M1](http://books.google.com/books?id=dECY9RIn9-MC&pg=PP1&ots=gZDhF5UDvG&dq=no+need+to+be+afraid&sig=XAltZU4HQh3KV_nEibjL5ix5IVo#PPA62,M1)]

### Italian American and Italian Canadian internment during World War II

During World War II, thousands of Italian Americans as well as thousands of Italian Canadians were put in internment camps on American and Canadian soil, along with Japanese Americans, German Americans, and ethnic Germans from Latin America. Thousands more were placed under surveillance or had their property repossessed by the government.

Joe DiMaggio's father, who lived in San Francisco, had his boat and house confiscated. One official<sup>who?</sup> stated

that if it had not been for Joe DiMaggio's status as a celebrity baseball player, his father would most likely have been sent to an internment camp. Countless Italian owned businesses in North America were vandalised and boycotted during this period. Many of Italian origin were physically assaulted and intimidated. Unlike the Japanese Americans, Italian Americans and Italian Canadians have never received reparations, even though President Bill Clinton made a public declaration admitting the US government's misjudgement in the internment. Di Stasi, Lawrence (2004). *Una Storia Segreta: The Secret History of Italian American Evacuation and Internment during World War II*. Heyday Books. ISBN 1890771406.]

### Anti-Italianism after World War II

Former Italian communities once thrived in their African colonies of Eritrea, Somalia and Libya. Some 150,000 Italians settled in Libya, constituting about 18% of the total population. [ <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-46562/Libya-Libya-Italian-colonization>] All of Libya's Italians were expelled from the North African country in 1970, a year after Muammar al-Gaddafi seized power (a "day of vengeance" on 7 October, 1970). [ <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/4380360.stm> *Libya cuts ties to mark Italy era.* ]]

Marshall Tito, the Yugoslav partisan leader wanted the Istrian peninsula eliminated of Italian people. From 1943 to 1945 25,000 Italians were killed in an event known as the Foibe massacres. At the end of World War II the former Italian territories in Istria and Dalmatia became part of [Yugoslavia](#) by the Paris Peace Treaty (1947). Economic insecurity, ethnic hatred and the international political context that eventually led to the Iron Curtain resulted in approximately 350,000 people, mostly Italians, choosing to [leave the region](#). [ <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9B0DEEDB1439F935A35755C0A961948260> *Election Opens Old Wounds In Trieste* ] [ <http://press.princeton.edu/titles/7366.html> *History in Exile: Memory and Identity at the Borders of the Balkans* ]]

In 2004, Daniel Mongiardo, a Democratic Italian American physician and politician, ran against Republican Jim Bunning in the Kentucky Senatorial election. In response to Mongiardo's dark features, Bunning declared that Mongiardo "looked like one of Saddam Hussein's sons". [ [http://dir.salon.com/story/news/feature/2004/10/12/bunning\\_kentucky/index.html](http://dir.salon.com/story/news/feature/2004/10/12/bunning_kentucky/index.html) *Weirdness in Kentucky - Salon.com* ] ] Bunnings later went on to declare that Mongiardo's "thugs" had assaulted his wife. The comments were viewed by many as ethnic slurs.

Canadian politician Ed Havrot also controversially used anti-Italian slurs while serving in the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, referring to one of his Italian-Canadian opponents as a "wop". Claire Hoy, "Bill Davis", (Toronto: Methuen Publications, 1985), p. 255.]

In March 2008, Rev. Jeremiah Wright caused controversy when he noted in an article that the Italians looked down their "garlic noses" at the Galileans. The Joint Civic Committee of Italian Americans said it was "saddened" by the comment, while the Italian American Human Relations Foundation called it an example of "hatred". [ [http://news.yahoo.com/s/nm/20080327/ts\\_nm/usa\\_politics\\_obama\\_pastor\\_dc\\_2](http://news.yahoo.com/s/nm/20080327/ts_nm/usa_politics_obama_pastor_dc_2)] [ <http://www.nbc5.com/politics/15726560/detail.html> *Rev. Wright Slurs Italians In 2007 Eulogy - Politics News Story - WMAQ | Chicago* ] ]

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### Further reading

- \* Henry Heller. "Anti-Italianism in Sixteenth-Century France". Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2003. xii, 307 pp
- \* Smith, Tom. *The Crescent City Lynchings: The Murder of Chief Hennessy, the New Orleans "Mafia" Trials, and the Parish Prison Mob* [ <http://www.crescentcitylynchings.com/> ]

### References

### External links

- \* <http://www.zmag.org/sustainers/content/2005-06/13parenti.cfm>

- \* <http://www.rps.psu.edu/0405/dark.html>
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- [List of anti-ethnic and anti-national terms](#) — List of ati-ethnic ad ati-atioal terms, where "ati-ethnic" refers to ethnic hatred, or setimets of hostility towards a ethnic group ad "ati-atioal" refers to setimets of hostility towards a particular state or other atioal... (Wikipedia)
- [Alfredo Zardini](#) — Alfredo Zardii (c. 1941 &dash; March 20, 1971) was a Italia immigrat who was attacked ad killed i Zürich, Switzerlad.Like may other Italias i the 20th cetury, Zardii came to Switzerlad to work &dash; i 1970, 17% of the... (Wikipedia)
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