



UNIVERSITÀ
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HORIZON EUROPE
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DaShoW - A Darker Shade of Whiteness: The Italian Ethnic Press in Louisiana and the Making of Racial Awareness in The Gulf South (1877-1945)

The stereotypical representations of Italians as racially inferior and dangerous for public security saturated the American public discourse at the end of the Reconstruction (1877) and tragically materialized in 1891 when 11 Italian Americans were lynched in New Orleans.

The racial landscape of the Crescent City is exemplary of the Italian migrants' struggle for acceptance across the South and can be fruitfully used as a testbed to study the intertwining of diaspora and race both in the Gulf South and nationally. Through the study of the public discourse emerging from rare and still understudied Italian-language ethno-cultural periodicals published in Louisiana and widely distributed outside the state, DaShoW illuminates how the shifting discourses on Africans, African Americans, Native Americans published in the Italian-language periodical press contributed to 'manufacture, assert and defend the Italian race' within one of the largest diasporic Italian communities in the United States. The project will demonstrate how the racialization of Southern Italians in New Orleans and Louisiana was the result of the appropriation of stereotypes rooted in the North/South post-Risorgimento divide transposed from Italy and rhetorical strategies ascribable to the Italian Positive School of Criminology. DaShoW will study the rhetorical and practical strategies through which the Italian communities of Louisiana and the Gulf South negotiated their racial standing between 1877, which ended the Reconstruction thus paving the way for the deprivation of African Americans' voting rights, and the formation of an early Southern civil right movement (1945). DaShoW promotes a comprehensive framing of the Italian diasporic presence in the racialized geographical, social and cultural context of the Gulf South and aims to preserve and popularize perishable documents for the study of Italian emigration through the digitization of primary sources and the production of digital learning tools.

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