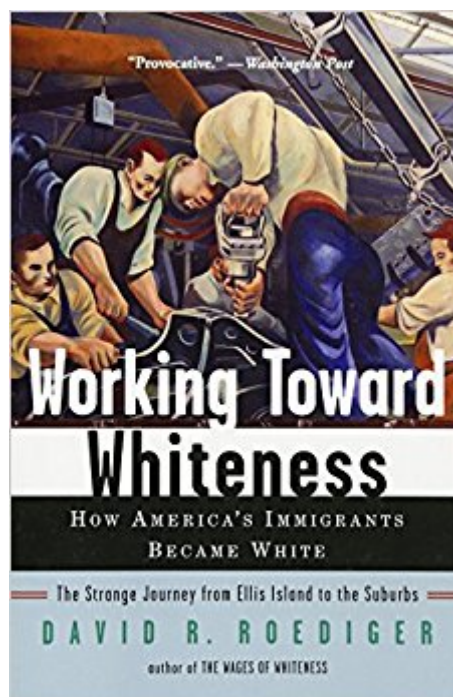




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Working Toward Whiteness: How America's Immigrants Became White: The Strange Journey From Ellis Island To The Suburbs



Synopsis

At the vanguard of the study of race and labor in American history, David R. Roediger is the author of the now-classic *The Wages of Whiteness*, a study of racism in the development of a white working class in nineteenth-century America. In *Working Toward Whiteness*, he continues that history into the twentieth century. He recounts how American ethnic groups considered white today—including Jewish-, Italian-, and Polish-Americans—once occupied a confused racial status in their new country. They eventually became part of white America thanks to the nascent labor movement, New Deal reforms, and a rise in home-buying. From ethnic slurs to racially restrictive covenants--the racist real estate agreements that ensured all-white neighborhoods--Roediger explores the murky realities of race in twentieth-century America. A masterful history by an award-winning writer, *Working Toward Whiteness* charts the strange transformation of these new immigrants into the "white ethnics" of America today.

Book Information

Paperback: 352 pages

Publisher: Basic Books; 7.9.2006 edition (August 8, 2006)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0465070744

ISBN-13: 978-0465070749

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 0.8 x 8.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 14.9 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.8 out of 5 stars 17 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #73,246 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #44 in [Books > History > Americas > United States > Immigrants](#) #123 in [Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Social Sciences > Emigration & Immigration](#) #243 in [Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Social Sciences > Specific Demographics > Ethnic Studies](#)

Customer Reviews

Too much recent scholarship "simply ignores the long, circuitous process by which 'new immigrants' became 'white ethnics,'" declares Roediger (*The Wages of Whiteness*), finding that the process in the early 20th century was slower and messier. Well-detailed examples include Greeks and Italians victimized by white mobs at the turn of the century (with the Chicago papers providing the parenthetical identification "Italian" in crime stories just as they did "Negro"). Jobs, Roediger finds, were often divided on lines that separated whites from European immigrants, but unions opened to

European immigrants more readily than to blacks, Mexican-Americans and Asian-Americans. Most significantly, he sees the oppression faced by Europeans as qualitatively different than that faced by other groups and goes into painful detail. Roediger hearkens back to the 1924 immigration restrictions, showing how they drove the "great migration" of African-Americans northward, thus rendering immigrants less "foreign" to some entrenched whites. Reinforcing that were the immigrant drive for home ownership, backed by New Deal-era restrictive racial covenants and laws against interracial marriage. While slow going, Roediger's book tills some major historical ground.

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When immigrants from southern and eastern Europe arrived in America, their status was somewhere below that of "native" white Americans but above that of blacks and other nonwhites. In the period 1890 to 1945, social upheavals in labor, housing, and politics shifted and allowed these immigrants to take on the mantle of whiteness. Roediger explores the social forces that elevated the social status of these immigrants and contributed to deepening racial divisions. This ethnic focus is really deemed by Roediger as part of race history in the U.S., how people were placed within an evolving intellectual and social structure. Roediger focuses on the early twentieth century, when these new immigrants lived an in-between existence as their white consciousness took form. Segregated housing practices, and labor unions favoring the immigrants over blacks, helped to solidify the whiteness status. U.S. policy, notably the New Deal, also helped to confirm the inclusion of people who had formerly suffered the low social status of unassimilated immigrants. Vernon Ford

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Roediger's book, *Working Towards Whiteness* helps to illuminate a gap in most American's historical knowledge, the shifting line of racial classification. While we often accept that current definition of race, including whiteness are givens, Roediger does a great job of laying out the process of how many European immigrants, while "white" wouldn't have been the beneficiaries of the privileges of "whiteness" they share in today. While we've got a long way to go towards being a fully inclusive country, we could make a great deal more headway towards that goal if people took the time to read this work.

Remarkable book.

Stunning!! It is impossible to understand race in America without reading the history outlined in this book.

How we have forgotten history.

Rare topic well voiced.

Fantastic

I had to read this for a sociology class, but ended up being gripped as I rarely am by an academic text. Roediger sheds light on a little-known history of race that recontextualizes both historical and modern anti-Black racism, while calling into question color lines that are now considered stable. Some sections are dense with citations and anecdotes, but the book is structured according to both theme and chronology in a way that makes it surprisingly easy to read. Anyone interested in the intertwined forces of racism, capitalism, labor, and nationalism should read this book.

The service was quick and useful and my product was secure safely when it arrived at my door step. i do recommend.

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