

Life in The United States as an Italian Immigrant

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Introduction and Personal Background

Life in the [United States](#)-New York is easier. I don't mind the frequent abuse. At Least here, I am not forced to fight and kill for survival. Despite the hardships of traveling, I prefer it that way. Back there in the southern regions of Calabria and Campania, times are tough, I thought. The government has failed us. Look at our Prime Minister "the Iron Baron"- a death symbol. The 18th century in Italy was almost ungovernable. I like to compare it to the Picasso Guernica portrait. The hard calamities that hit us were the consistent wars and natural disasters that seemed to reoccur every fortnight (Bon Tempo & Diner, 2022). My name is Marco Bonaventura. I am a first-generation Italian immigrant who immigrated to America in the 1800's. I immigrated to the new world in search of a better life and to live the American dream, but I ran into many obstacles along the journey. In this writing, I will go into detail about my life during this period as an immigrant in this new world. I am a 25-year-old man who works in a local textile industry to make ends meet, and this is my story.

Italian Migration in the Nineteenth Century

Late into the 18th century, migration was a norm for the Italian people. The peasants also referred to as the *Contadina* (italics) were the most affected. They had traveled via the Italian peninsula all the way from the developing countries in Africa to the mighty in Europe. Here, they found the Europeans partitioning Africa, and they were offered homes. This was in exchange for their skills. Back home, I worked as a skilled craftsman in Lombardia and Veneto. However, the locals here couldn't afford to pay for services due to the poverty levels in which the disasters had left them. It was simply an economic depression in Europe (History.com Editors, 2026).

Poverty and the Decision to Emigrate

The main reason that finalized my exit from Italy was poverty. I could not even afford basic meals. I wore old clothes very often. What is the role of the government? I kept on wondering. While the landlord cartels were charging very high prices for the land, money was on the low. Little employment, high taxes, and a volatile political climate were the day's order. These conditions made me leave. Despite all these, I planned to return to Italy one day. With all the savings, I assumed I would return, buy land, and await my final days. I decided to try my luck in the United States, the land of milk and honey. In Italy, skilled artisans received 1.4\$-0.30 cents a day, while in the USA, it was

18\$! Already, huge numbers had traveled there, including my neighbors. I thought, why not do the same? 19th November 1898, I began my transit. My destination was New York (History.com Editors, 2026).

Journey to the United States

The 3000-kilometer mark voyage journey to the USA wasn't encouraging at all. I felt distracted. Additionally, traveling to the USA mainly entailed the shipping route. The trip hurdled by overcrowding rooms and unsanitary living conditions, it was a nightmare. After ten days of waiting in the steamship, we arrived at the Ellis Island immigration center. A forced 50-cent fee was imposed on me as they began their scrutiny. First, they started by checking my head for any deformations. They then checked my medical and physical well-being. Luckily, I passed the test. Those who failed were separated from their family and deported back to Italy. This led to its renaming: the island of tears-"L'Isola dell Lagrime" (National Archives and Records Administration [NARA], 2024).

Discrimination and Employment in New York

On my approval to work, I was first busted by prejudice and hate. The influx of Italians in the USA had bred hatred already. They claimed that the Italians had come to overtake their jobs. Occasionally, they were attacked. This led to us cramping together in small houses to achieve our safety. I luckily got a job as a textile industry laborer where I got 9 \$ a day. Racial discrimination was also the order of the day here-except that the pay rates were high and the taxes low. My current relationship with my peers is excellent, except for my American bosses, who ponder me daily. Despite all these, I would prefer to work here as I plan to leave Italy with enough money. I always told myself that when the going gets tough, the tough gets going (New Americans Museum, 2023).

The American Dream and Industrialization

Every individual's dream about America is a mere belief that every American citizen possesses the freedom to lead a good life that includes access to suitable housing, a piece of land, and a better and more enjoyable experience than our forefathers (Bon Tempo & Diner, 2022). Often, people viewed America as the land of unparalleled opportunity. Big business growth was coupled with negative and positive impacts on the American dream. The Industrial Revolution fueled job growth, which made more jobs available for the working people. This gave many people opportunities that did not exist in the previous years. Machines being produced and introduced into the homes freed up more time for leisure activities. Machines speed up production in the fields, factories, and apartments. As these businesses grew, the need arose for white color workers to manage the actions of the more significant operations.

With more time available, people had additional time for leisure activities and sporting events. These

activities and events grew because of the Industrial Revolution. The common laborers invested their free energy in move lobbies, baseball parks, and delight parlors, while high society residents spent leisure time in cantinas, clubs, and friendly requests (Bon Tempo & Diner, 2022). Any of these leisure activities could be a part of the American dream because they make people happy and make them want to pursue a better life and be satisfied.

Anti-Immigration Sentiment

As with any immigration, there is always opposition to it. This is known as anti-immigration and played a part in the American dream. Many had fears of mass immigration into their areas. With individuals fearing immigrants into their neighborhoods, this caused resentment towards the newcomers to the city. At the time, this would create tensions between the races and, at times, fights (New Americans Museum, 2023).

Conclusion

In conclusion, living as an immigrant in the United States was extremely difficult. I felt at times as if I did not belong and was not welcomed in this new world. I felt as if I was discriminated against just because I was in search of a better life for myself and my family. People seem to forget that just a few years before this, most of them were often immigrants their selves. We are all looking for our happiness, or in other words, we, as Americans, are searching for the American Dream.

References

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