

IRISH IN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

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Within the criminal justice system, Irish Americans have voluntarily or involuntarily played many roles, including politicians, cops, mobsters, belligerent drunkards, and undesirable immigrants. Irish American culture has traversed from the lowest criminal class to the upper echelons of national politics and local government over the past two centuries in the U.S. Their role in the criminal justice system was transformative of their group and of the system. This Essay discusses Irish and Irish American's involvement in the criminal justice system as criminals and terrorists, police officers, and community members and leaders. First, Part II of this Essay reviews racist attitudes and prejudices towards Irish in the U.S. Part II also discusses pressures placed on Irish communities that subjected them to abuses within the system, but also helped bond communities. Then, Part III discusses development of stability and criminality in Irish neighborhoods, stigmatization of Irish men as drunks and thugs, and the link between community and political power. Part

Cusack

III also discusses distinctions between Irish men and women who immigrated during the late 1800s. This section differentiates between roles played by Irish men and roles played by Irish women as observant domestic servants, patrons, and feminists. Part IV discusses stigmatization of Irish as terrorists. This part briefly reviews terrorism in Northern Ireland and overall crime in Ireland. Part IV also explores the relationship between U.S. Irish American communities, terrorists, and international law. Finally, Part V explains how Irish became involved in police work and rose to prominence in the U.S. through the criminal justice system. This involvement is interesting because Irish were an abused class who broke free of governmental oppression by integrating into the criminal justice system, not by continuing to defy it. Their survival, adaptation, and growth could possess generalizable patterns that other groups can emulate to transfigure from oppressed to politically valuable. However, Irish American involvement in the U.S. criminal justice system seems somewhat unique thus far, which is why it is the subject of this Essay.