



The Insane Chicago Way: The Daring Plan by Chicago Gangs to Create a Spanish Mafia

John M. Hagedorn

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The Insane Chicago Way is the untold story of a daring plan by Chicago gangs in the 1990s to create a Spanish Mafia—and why it failed. John M. Hagedorn traces how Chicago Latino gang leaders, following in Al Capone’s footsteps, built a sophisticated organization dedicated to organizing crime and reducing violence. His lively stories of extensive cross-neighborhood gang organization, tales of police/gang corruption, and discovery of covert gang connections to Chicago’s Mafia challenge conventional wisdom and offer lessons for the control of violence today.

The book centers on the secret history of Spanish Growth & Development (SGD)—an organization of Latino gangs founded in 1989 and modeled on the Mafia’s nationwide Commission. It also tells a story within a story of the criminal exploits of the C-Note\$, the “minor league” team of the Chicago’s Mafia (called the “Outfit”), which influenced the direction of SGD. Hagedorn’s tale is based on three years of interviews with an Outfit soldier as well as access to SGD’s constitution and other secret documents, which he supplements with interviews of key SGD leaders, court records, and newspaper accounts. The result is a stunning, heretofore unknown history of the grand ambitions of Chicago gang leaders that ultimately led to SGD’s shocking collapse in a pool of blood on the steps of a gang-organized peace conference.

The Insane Chicago Way is a compelling history of the lives and deaths of Chicago gang leaders. At the same time it is a sociological tour de force that warns of the dangers of organized crime while arguing that today’s relative disorganization of gangs presents opportunities for intervention and reductions in violence.

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