

## Ugly Prey Discussion Questions



1) In interviews, the author is firm in her opinion that Sabella Nitti did not kill her husband. She suggests Francesco Nitti died of natural causes, walked away from the family, or was murdered by his second son. After reading the book, what do you think happened to Francesco Nitti?

2) The author described Sabella Nitti as a "white widow," and in interviews has discussed how her own great-grandmother was a white widow from Abruzzo. What was the immigrant experience for the women in your family?

3) Attorney Helen Cirese faced many obstacles, including the assumption she was wasting her own beauty. Discuss how both Sabella and her attorney were subject to female standards of beauty.

4) This exposed how beautiful women were able to get away with murder, but Sabella was judged for her appearance. Do you think such bias continues today?

5) Sabella Nitti lived in a time before radio, TV, and documentary film. In today's cluttered media environment, would her story still be frontage news?

6) Sabella Nitti was forgotten, but other women in the cellblock were immortalized in the play "Chicago." Why do you think the collective memory forgot Sabella?

## SCHEDULE OF EVENTS



### Community Read Kickoff

Saturday, September 8th

1:00 pm Jazz Concert

By Yazz Jazz



Localist Amy Yassinger leads this award-winning Chicago band, which will treat us to tunes from the Jazz era.

## SCHEDULE OF EVENTS



A Jim Gibbons Historical Presentation

Tuesday, September 18th, at 6:00 pm

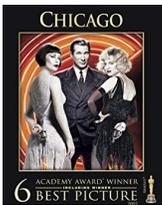
The 1920s: Flappers,  
Speakeasies and Coolidge



### Saturday Cinema

Saturday, September 8th, 2:00 pm

*Chicago: The Musical*



Saturday, September 22nd, 2:00 pm

*Some Like It Hot*



Register for events online at [www.sfvpld.org](http://www.sfvpld.org)

or call (708) 749-1050

Walk-ins are welcome

## SCHEDULE OF EVENTS



Book Discussion: *Ugly Prey*

Monday, September 24th, at 7:00 pm

Q & A with Emilie Lucchesi before the discussion.



Saturday, September 29th, 2:00 pm

Sensational Trials of 1920s Chicago

Presented by Emilie Le Beau Lucchesi

### Community Read Finale!

Refreshments will be served.

Message from the author

Dear Stickney Forest View,

I am excited to bring Sabella Nitti's story to Stickney, Illinois – the place where her saga began. I am grateful to the SFV Public Library for selecting *Ugly Prey* for your One Book One Community program. The public library is where I first learned of Sabella's story in a book about the real-life women who inspired the play *Chicago*. I studied her photograph and didn't see the ugly, dangerous killer the prosecutors claimed her to be. I saw a scared, innocent woman who didn't understand why she was facing the gallows. Sabella Nitti was a hardworking woman who endured her tribulations without bitterness. Her story is a timeless tale of deception, judgement, and redemption. Although *Ugly Prey* takes place almost a century ago, I feel there are strong themes that resonate with modern life. I look forward to sharing her story with my fellow book enthusiasts and public library supporters.

—Emilie

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Emilie Le Beau Lucchesi, PhD, began her career as a journalist. She received her first assignment from the Chicago Tribune shortly after her twenty-fourth birthday. In the following decade, she wrote more than 800 stories for the esteemed paper. Her work has also run in the New York Times, LA Times, and the country's biggest newspapers.



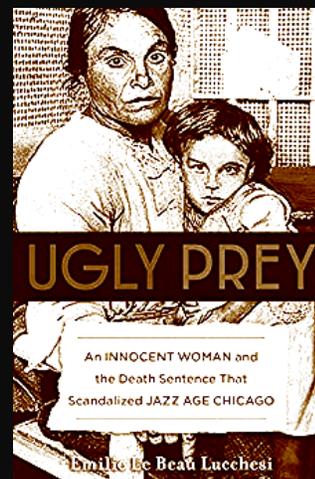
In addition to her journalistic work, she teaches university courses and speaks to professional groups, community organizations, and social clubs. Find her at [www.emilie-lucchesi.com](http://www.emilie-lucchesi.com)

# A Stickney-Forest View

## Community Read

### September 2018

## UGLY PREY



An Innocent Woman and  
the Death Sentence  
That Scandalized  
Jazz Age Chicago

By Emilie Le Beau Lucchesi

## Resource Guide



**Stickney-Forest View**  
Public Library District  
*Where great things happen*

6800 W. 43rd Street, Stickney

[www.sfvpld.org](http://www.sfvpld.org)

(708) 749-1050

## ABOUT THE BOOK

*Ugly Prey* tells the riveting story of poor Italian immigrant Sabella Nitti, who lived in Stickney, IL. She was the first woman ever sentenced to hang in Chicago, in 1923, for the alleged murder of her husband. Journalist Emilie Le Beau Lucchesi leads readers through the case, showing how, with no evidence and no witnesses, Nitti was the target of an obsessed deputy sheriff and the victim of a faulty legal system. She was also—to the men who convicted her and reporters fixated on her—ugly. For *that* unforgiveable crime, the media painted her as a dirty and unpredictable immigrant, almost an animal.

Lucchesi brings to life the sights and sounds of 1920s Chicago and its then-rural outskirts, when two other women (who would inspire the musical and film *Chicago*) also captured headlines for killing their lovers. But they were beautiful, charmed the all-male juries, and were quickly acquitted, raising doubts with many Chicagoans about the fairness of Nitti's conviction.

Featuring two other fascinating women—the ambitious and ruthless journalist who helped demonize Sabella through her reports and the brilliant, beautiful, twenty-three-year-old lawyer who helped humanize her with a jailhouse makeover—*Ugly Prey* is not just a page-turning courtroom drama but also a thought-provoking look at social justice.

*Available in hardcover or ebook.*

*Purchase at Amazon.com, Barnes & Nobles (stores and online), Kmart.com, Target.com, and independent retailers.*

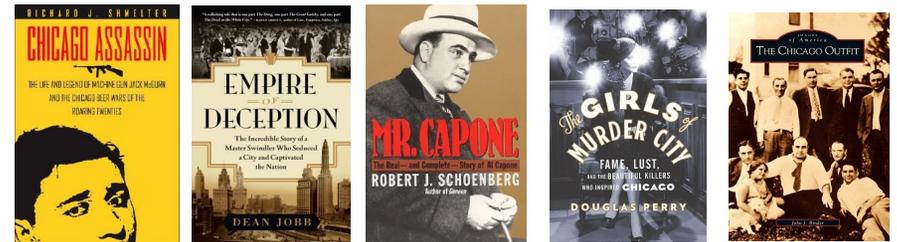
*The library will have copies available for check out, or buy a signed copy in person from the author on 9/24 & 9/29.*

## READ-ALIKES

### Roaring '20s Fiction



### Roaring '20s True Crime



### Movies & Television

