

1. Record Nr.	UNINA9910461644403321
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Titolo	Playing the numbers [[electronic resource]] : gambling in Harlem between the wars // Shane White ... [et al.]
Pubbl/distr/stampa	Cambridge, Mass., : Harvard University Press, 2010
ISBN	0-674-05696-5
Descrizione fisica	1 online resource (320 p.)
Altri autori (Persone)	WhiteShane
Disciplina	306.4/82097471
Soggetti	African Americans - New York (State) - New York - Social conditions - 20th century City and town life - New York (State) - New York - History - 20th century Gambling - New York (State) - New York - History - 20th century Informal sector (Economics) - New York (State) - New York - History - 20th century Lotteries - New York (State) - New York - History - 20th century Electronic books. Harlem (New York, N.Y.) Economic conditions 20th century Harlem (New York, N.Y.) Social conditions 20th century New York (N.Y.) Economic conditions 20th century New York (N.Y.) Social conditions 20th century
Lingua di pubblicazione	Inglese
Formato	Materiale a stampa
Livello bibliografico	Monografia
Note generali	Description based upon print version of record.
Nota di bibliografia	Includes bibliographical references and index.
Nota di contenuto	Front matter -- Contents -- Prologue -- Introduction -- 1. History -- 2. Beginnings -- 3 Dreams -- 4. Turf Wars -- 5. Numbers' Lore -- 6. Of Kings and Queens -- 7. The Dutchman Cometh -- 8. Of Banks and Bankers -- 9. All Over Town -- Epilogue -- Notes -- Acknowledgments -- Index
Sommario/riassunto	The phrase "Harlem in the 1920's" evokes images of the Harlem Renaissance, or of Marcus Garvey and soapbox orators haranguing crowds about politics and race. Yet the most ubiquitous feature of Harlem life between the world wars was the game of "numbers." Thousands of wagers, usually of a dime or less, would be placed on a daily number derived from U.S. bank statistics. The rewards of "hitting

the number," a 600-to-1 payoff, tempted the ordinary men and women of the Black Metropolis with the chimera of the good life. *Playing the Numbers* tells the story of this illegal form of gambling and the central role it played in the lives of African Americans who flooded into Harlem in the wake of World War I. For a dozen years the "numbers game" was one of America's rare black-owned businesses, turning over tens of millions of dollars every year. The most successful "bankers" were known as Black Kings and Queens, and they lived royally. Yet the very success of "bankers" like Stephanie St. Clair and Casper Holstein attracted Dutch Schultz, Lucky Luciano, and organized crime to the game. By the late 1930's, most of the profits were being siphoned out of Harlem. *Playing the Numbers* reveals a unique dimension of African American culture that made not only Harlem but New York City itself the vibrant and energizing metropolis it was. An interactive website allows readers to locate actors and events on Harlem's streets.
