

Zoot Suit Riots And The Role Of The Zoot Suit In Chicano

From Coveralls to Zoot Suits: The Lives of Mexican American Women on the World War II Home Front

Flamboyant zoot suit culture, with its ties to fashion, jazz and swing music, jitterbug and Lindy Hop dancing, unique patterns of speech, and even risqué experimentation with gender and sexuality, captivated the country's youth in the 1940s. *The Power of the Zoot* is the first book to give national consideration to this famous phenomenon. Providing a new history of youth culture based on rare, in-depth interviews with former zoot-suiters, Luis Alvarez explores race, region, and the politics of culture in urban America during World War II. He argues that Mexican American and African American youths, along with many nisei and white youths, used popular culture to oppose accepted modes of youthful behavior, the dominance of white middle-class norms, and expectations from within their own communities.

In June 1943, the city of Los Angeles was wrenched apart by the worst rioting it had seen to that point in the twentieth century. Incited by sensational newspaper stories and the growing public hysteria over allegations of widespread Mexican American juvenile crime, scores of American servicemen, joined by civilians and even police officers, roamed the streets of the city in search of young Mexican American men and boys wearing a distinctive style of dress called a Zoot Suit. Once found, the Zoot Suiters were stripped of their clothes, beaten, and left in the street. Over 600 Mexican American youths were arrested. The riots threw a harsh light upon the deteriorating relationship between the Los Angeles Mexican American community and the Los Angeles Police Department in the 1940s. In this study, Edward J. Escobar examines the history of the relationship between the Los Angeles Police Department and the Mexican American community from the turn of the century to the era of the Zoot Suit Riots. Escobar shows the changes in the way police viewed Mexican Americans, increasingly characterizing them as a criminal element, and the corresponding assumption on the part of Mexican Americans that the police were a threat to their community. The broader implications of this relationship are, as Escobar demonstrates, the significance of the role of the police in suppressing labor unrest, the growing connection between ideas about race and criminality, changing public perceptions about Mexican Americans, and the rise of Mexican American political activism.

Luis J. Rodriguez writes about race, culture, identity, and belonging and what these all mean and should mean (but often fail to) in the volatile climate of our nation. His passion and wisdom inspire us with the message that we must come together if we are to move forward. As he writes in the preface, "Like millions of Americans, I'm demanding a new vision, a qualitatively different direction, for this country. One for the shared well-being of everyone. One with beauty, healing, poetry, imagination, and truth." The pieces in *From Our Land to Our Land*

capture that same fantastic energy and wisdom and will spark conversation and inspiration.

The Zoot Suit Riots in 1943 and the infamous Sleepy Lagoon murder trial of the preceding year represent a turning point in the cultural identity and historical experience of Mexican Americans in the United States. This engaging study of these regrettable events provides context for understanding the continuing battles in the 21st century over immigration policy and race relations. Although the "zoot suit" had earlier been a black youth fashion trend identified with jazz culture, by the 1940s, the zoot suit was adopted by Mexican American teenagers in wartime Los Angeles, who wore it as their unofficial "uniform" as an act of rebellion and to establish their cultural identity. For a week in June of 1943, the Zoot Suit Riots, instigated by Anglo-American servicemen and condoned by the Los Angeles police, terrorized the Mexican American community. The events were an ugly testament to the climate of racial tension and resentment in Los Angeles—and after similar riots began across the nation, it became apparent how endemic the problem was. This book traces these important historic events and their subsequent cultural and political influences on the Mexican American experience, especially the activist and reform efforts designed to prevent similar future injustices. General readers will gain an understanding of the challenges facing the Mexican American community in wartime Los Angeles, grasp the racial and cultural resistance of the larger Anglo-American society of the time, and see how the blatant injustices of the Sleepy Lagoon trial and the Zoot Suit Riots served to galvanize Latinos and others to fight back. Those conducting in-depth research will appreciate having access to original materials sourced from Federal and state archives as well as newspapers and other repositories of information provided in the book.

- Connects the racially and socioeconomically motivated events of the World War II-era 1940s to the Chicano movement of the 1970s and the current battles over immigration legislation, allowing readers to see the recurring theme in American history
- Exposes the distortions of a yellow journalistic press in its coverage and treatment of the Sleepy Lagoon trial and Zoot Suit Riots, providing documentation of how white America's perception of Mexican Americans has been fashioned over many years by the mainstream media
- Documents how the zoot-suit and Pachuco cultures of Mexican American youths of the 1940s—an expression of their identity and an attempt to establish their place in the larger American culture—were a key reason behind the violent culture clashes
- Includes previously unpublished primary documents from the National Archives and Records Administration and the Franklin Roosevelt Library

Some of the nearly forgotten histories of communities of color. Read about people who fought back against exploitation and injustice -- and won. From the Zoot Suiters to the welfare rights movement, *Roots of Justice* shows how, through organizing, ordinary people have made extraordinary contributions to change society.

The Zoot Suit Riots
The History of the Racial Attacks in Los Angeles During World War II
Createspace Independent Publishing Platform

Follows a girl in the 1920s as she strives to become a drummer, despite being continually reminded that only boys play the drums, and that there has never been a female drummer in Cuba. Includes note about Millo Castro Zaldarriaga, who inspired the story, and Anacaona, the all-girl dance band she formed with her sisters.

"Luis Alvarez has quite simply crafted a magnificent first book—one that tells a national story from African American and Mexican American youth in New York and Los Angeles to Nisei, Filipino, and Euro-American zooters and the wartime race-based violence that erupted in Detroit, Beaumont, and Mobile."—Vicki L. Ruiz, author of *From Out of the Shadows: Mexican Women in Twentieth-Century America* "Alvarez has broken new ground, with implications for our understanding of minority youth cultures of the past and today."—Edward J. Escobar, author of *Race, Police, and the Making of a Political Identity: Mexican Americans and the Los Angeles Police Department, 1900-1945*

Provides a detailed account of the political events, social trends, and racial attitudes that contributed to a week-long outbreak of violence in Los Angeles in 1943 by white servicemen and civilians against young Mexican-American "zoot suiters."

*Includes pictures *Includes accounts of the fighting *Includes online resources and a bibliography for further reading *Includes a table of contents "Marching through the streets of downtown Los Angeles, a mob of several thousand soldiers, sailors, and civilians, proceeded to beat up every zoot suiter they could find. Pushing its way into the important motion picture theaters, the mob ordered the management to turn on the house lights and then ran up and down the aisles dragging Mexicans out of their seats. Streetcars were halted while Mexicans, and some Filipinos and Negroes, were jerked from their seats, pushed into the streets and beaten with a sadistic frenzy." - Carey McWilliams, journalist Even enemies will agree that the United States is a unique nation, in that its culture has been developed almost entirely by immigrants, people who have come to the country from other places and carved their way into society. Sometimes called a melting pot, sometimes a tossed salad, the nation has been shaped by all that is good and bad of the people who live here. Sadly, history has taught that where there is immigration, there will always be conflict. Just as any newly married couple will argue over whose family to spend the holidays with, so those coming from different nations and cultures will clash over which traditions can be integrated into the new society and which ones must be left behind. One might think that after some 400 years of dealing with these issues, the nation would have mastered the subject, but instead the opposite seems true. In the early days of 2016, Americans are engaged in a heated presidential campaign fraught with rhetoric and fear over the role of immigrants in the United States. Candidates frequently speak out against certain cultures, insisting they are dangerous to the American economy or even national security. Because the nation is at war against an enemy defined more by religion and ethnicity than traditional national boundaries, there is a heightened sense of fear and that is adding fuel to the debate and no doubt clouding the judgment of many who are speaking out. They are warning the American people that there had never been a crisis like this in the nation's past, and that swift action must be taken or the country will not survive. The truth is that there has been a crisis much like this and that actions taken in the past, while often swift, was also just as often unjust. Few examples signify that like the Zoot Suit Riots, the national crisis that precipitated them, and the culture of fear and bigotry that nurtured them. If the name of the event sounds silly, its premise was both nearly comical but also deadly serious. It was the product of people of different races, cultures and practices, a story of immigration and clashes between nations on a grand scale and police and young people on an intimate one. The story unfolded in 1942 and 1943 but has been a recurring issue. If indeed, as philosopher George Santayana so famously contended, "those who cannot remember the past are

condemned to repeat it," then the Zoot Suit Riots are one aspect of our nation's history that proves it. *The Zoot Suit Riots: The History of the Racial Attacks in Los Angeles during World War II* looks at the riots in L.A. during the war. Along with pictures of important people, places, and events, you will learn about the Zoot Suit Riots like never before, in no time at all.

During World War II, unprecedented employment avenues opened up for women and minorities in U.S. defense industries at the same time that massive population shifts and the war challenged Americans to rethink notions of race. At this extraordinary historical moment, Mexican American women found new means to exercise control over their lives in the home, workplace, and nation. In *From Coveralls to Zoot Suits*, Elizabeth R. Escobedo explores how, as war workers and volunteers, dance hostesses and zoot suiters, respectable young ladies and rebellious daughters, these young women used wartime conditions to serve the United States in its time of need and to pursue their own desires. But even after the war, as Escobedo shows, Mexican American women had to continue challenging workplace inequities and confronting family and communal resistance to their broadening public presence. Highlighting seldom heard voices of the "Greatest Generation," Escobedo examines these contradictions within Mexican families and their communities, exploring the impact of youth culture, outside employment, and family relations on the lives of women whose home-front experiences and everyday life choices would fundamentally alter the history of a generation.

Recounts the story of the largest mass murder trial in California's history, in which 22 Mexican-American youths were tried and 17 were convicted for a crime to which none of the defendants were ever tied. Opens a window onto a time and place that highlights the historical prejudices of white America towards Mexican Americans.

Like his lavishly praised novels *Rabbit Boss* and *Mile Zero*, Thomas Sanchez's *Zoot-Suit Murders* combines a tautly arched narrative with fiercely visual prose and a starkly revisionist view of the American melting pot.

A group of Mexican-Americans are sent to San Quentin unjustly for the death of a man at Sleepy Lagoon. Based on the actual case and zoot suit riots of 1940's Los Angeles. "Perfect for history buffs, dance enthusiasts, poets, and just about anyone looking for a great story." —School Library Journal (starred review) From the Young People's Poet Laureate Margarita Engle comes a searing novel in verse about the Zoot Suit Riots of 1943. Thousands of young Navy sailors are pouring into Los Angeles on their way to the front lines of World War II. They are teenagers, scared, longing to feel alive before they have to face the horrors of battle. Hot jazz music spiced with cool salsa rhythms beckons them to dance with the local Mexican American girls, who jitterbug all night before working all day in the canneries. Proud to do their part for the war effort, these Jazz Owl girls are happy to dance with the sailors—until the blazing summer night when racial violence leads to murder. Suddenly the young white sailors are attacking the girls' brothers and boyfriends. The cool, loose zoot suits they wear are supposedly the reason for the violence—when in reality the boys are viciously beaten and arrested simply because of the color of their skin. In soaring images and searing poems, this is the breathtaking story of what became known as the Zoot Suit Riots.

The Mexican American woman zoot suiter, or pachuca, often wore a V-neck sweater or a long, broad-shouldered coat, a knee-length pleated skirt, fishnet stockings or bobby socks, platform heels or saddle shoes, dark lipstick, and a bouffant. Or she donned the same style of zoot suit that her male counterparts wore. With their striking attire, pachucos and pachucas represented a new generation of Mexican American youth, which arrived on the public scene in the 1940s. Yet while pachucos have often been the

subject of literature, visual art, and scholarship, *The Woman in the Zoot Suit* is the first book focused on pachucas. Two events in wartime Los Angeles thrust young Mexican American zoot suiters into the media spotlight. In the Sleepy Lagoon incident, a man was murdered during a mass brawl in August 1942. Twenty-two young men, all but one of Mexican descent, were tried and convicted of the crime. In the Zoot Suit Riots of June 1943, white servicemen attacked young zoot suiters, particularly Mexican Americans, throughout Los Angeles. The Chicano movement of the 1960s–1980s cast these events as key moments in the political awakening of Mexican Americans and pachucos as exemplars of Chicano identity, resistance, and style. While pachucas and other Mexican American women figured in the two incidents, they were barely acknowledged in later Chicano movement narratives. Catherine S. Ramírez draws on interviews she conducted with Mexican American women who came of age in Los Angeles in the late 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s as she recovers the neglected stories of pachucas. Investigating their relative absence in scholarly and artistic works, she argues that both wartime U.S. culture and the Chicano movement rejected pachucas because they threatened traditional gender roles. Ramírez reveals how pachucas challenged dominant notions of Mexican American and Chicano identity, how feminists have reinterpreted *la pachuca*, and how attention to an overlooked figure can disclose much about history making, nationalism, and resistant identities.

The award-winning ¡Ask a Mexican! columnist presents a narrative history of the progression of Mexican cuisine in the United States, sharing a century's worth of whimsical anecdotes and cultural criticism to address questions about culinary authenticity and the source of Mexican food's popularity. 25,000 first printing.

A selection of the author's plays includes his most critically acclaimed works, exploring the theme of a search for identity in such settings as World War II, nineteenth-century California, and the television industry.

Once Upon a Time meets *Game of Thrones* in book two of New York Times bestselling author Gena Showalter's magical, romantic dark fantasy series, in which the fairy tales we know and love are prophecies of the future. Welcome to the Forest of Good and Evil, where villains may be heroes and heroes may be villains...it all depends on who you ask. Ashleigh Ansklelisa may be called the Glass Princess due to her weak heart, but Saxon, king of the Avian, knows she is more dangerous than broken glass, in this Cinderella retelling that sweeps readers into the magical land of Enchantia, filled with treacherous enemies, unexpected allies, forbidden love, and dangerous magic! Can destined lovers find their way to each other, or will evil win the day? Everything changes at the stroke of midnight as one determined princess fights for her legacy, her love, and the crown that is her destiny. Praise for Gena Showalter: "Utterly unique and absolutely riveting—I couldn't put it down! What a marvelously cool world." —#1 New York Times bestselling author Sarah J. Maas on *Firstlife* "Firstlife is a nonstop thrill ride that will stop your heart...and shock it back to life. This book is #1 on my keeper shelf!" —#1 New York Times bestselling author P.C. Cast "Firstlife illuminates the depths of human resilience and the power of love, even in the darkest hours." —#1 New York Times bestselling author Kresley Cole

"Surveys the political events, social trends, and racial attitudes that contributed to a week-long outbreak of violence in Los Angeles in 1943 by white servicemen and civilians against young Mexican-American 'zoot suiters.' Includes a narrative

overview, biographies, primary sources, chronology, glossary, bibliography, and index"--Provided by publisher.

ZOOT SUIT (n.): the ultimate in clothes. The only totally and truly American civilian suit. —Cab Calloway, *The Hepster's Dictionary*, 1944 Before the fashion statements of hippies, punks, or hip-hop, there was the zoot suit, a striking urban look of the World War II era that captivated the imagination. Created by poor African American men and obscure tailors, the "drape shape" was embraced by Mexican American pachucos, working-class youth, entertainers, and swing dancers, yet condemned by the U.S. government as wasteful and unpatriotic in a time of war. The fashion became notorious when it appeared to trigger violence and disorder in Los Angeles in 1943—events forever known as the "zoot suit riot." In its wake, social scientists, psychiatrists, journalists, and politicians all tried to explain the riddle of the zoot suit, transforming it into a multifaceted symbol: to some, a sign of social deviance and psychological disturbance, to others, a gesture of resistance against racial prejudice and discrimination. As controversy swirled at home, young men in other places—French zazous, South African tsotsi, Trinidadian saga boys, and Russian stiliagi—made the American zoot suit their own. In *Zoot Suit*, historian Kathy Peiss explores this extreme fashion and its mysterious career during World War II and after, as it spread from Harlem across the United States and around the world. She traces the unfolding history of this style and its importance to the youth who adopted it as their uniform, and at the same time considers the way public figures, experts, political activists, and historians have interpreted it. This outré style was a turning point in the way we understand the meaning of clothing as an expression of social conditions and power relations. *Zoot Suit* offers a new perspective on youth culture and the politics of style, tracing the seam between fashion and social action.

World War II marked a turning point for Mexican Americans that fundamentally changed their expectations about how they should be treated by the greater U.S. society. The experiences of fighting alongside white Americans in the military, as well as of working in factory jobs for wages equal to those of Anglo workers, made Mexican Americans less willing to tolerate the second-class citizenship that had been their lot before the war. Having proven their loyalty and "Americanness" during World War II, Mexican Americans in the postwar years wanted to have the civil rights they knew they had earned. In this book, Richard Griswold del Castillo and Richard Steele investigate how the World War II experiences of Mexican Americans galvanized their struggle for civil rights and how the U.S. government responded to the needs and aspirations of Mexican Americans. The authors demonstrate, for example, that the U.S. government "discovered" Mexican Americans during World War II and set about addressing some of their problems as a way of forestalling a sense of grievance and disaffection that might have made the Mexican American community unwilling to support the war effort. The authors also show that, as much or more than governmental programs, the personal wartime experiences of Mexican Americans formed their civil rights consciousness. The book concludes with a selection of key essays and historical documents from the World War II period that collectively gives a first-person understanding of the civil rights struggles of Mexican Americans.

Murder at the Sleepy Lagoon: Zoot Suits, Race, and Riot in Wartime L.A.

Los Angeles, the summer of 1943. For ten days in June, Anglo servicemen and civilians

