

# Zoot Suits, Race, and Riot in Wartime Los Angeles

In the summer of 1943, as the United States entered its third year of involvement in World War II, a series of violent riots erupted in Los Angeles, California. The riots, which became known as the Zoot Suit Riots, were sparked by tensions between white servicemen and Mexican-American youth. The riots left dozens of people injured and one man dead.

## The Zoot Suit

The zoot suit was a flamboyant style of dress that emerged in the African-American and Mexican-American communities in the 1940s. The suits were typically made of brightly colored fabric and featured wide lapels, baggy trousers, and a long coat. Zoot suits were seen by many as a symbol of defiance and rebellion, and they quickly became a popular target for harassment by white servicemen.



## Murder at the Sleepy Lagoon: Zoot Suits, Race, and Riot in Wartime L.A. by Eduardo Obregón Pagán

★★★★☆ 4.1 out of 5

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Enhanced typesetting : Enabled  
Word Wise : Enabled  
Print length : 327 pages  
Screen Reader : Supported



## **The Riots**

The Zoot Suit Riots began on June 8, 1943, when a group of white sailors attacked a group of Mexican-American youth in downtown Los Angeles. The violence quickly escalated, and soon riots were spreading throughout the city. Over the next three days, white servicemen and civilians attacked Mexican-American youth, beating them, stripping them of their clothes, and even cutting their hair.

The riots were finally brought under control on June 11, after the mayor of Los Angeles declared a state of emergency and ordered the National Guard to intervene. However, the damage had already been done. Dozens of people had been injured, and one man, José Díaz, had been killed.

## **The Aftermath**

The Zoot Suit Riots had a profound impact on the Mexican-American community in Los Angeles. The riots reinforced the perception that Mexican-Americans were outsiders and that they were not welcome in the city. The riots also led to a crackdown on zoot suits, and many Mexican-American youth were arrested and charged with vagrancy.

The Zoot Suit Riots are a reminder of the racism and violence that Mexican-Americans have faced in the United States. The riots also highlight the importance of understanding the history of racism in order to prevent it from repeating itself.

The Zoot Suit Riots were a dark chapter in the history of Los Angeles. The riots were sparked by racism and hatred, and they left a lasting legacy of division and distrust. However, the riots also helped to raise awareness of the plight of Mexican-Americans in the United States. The riots led to a

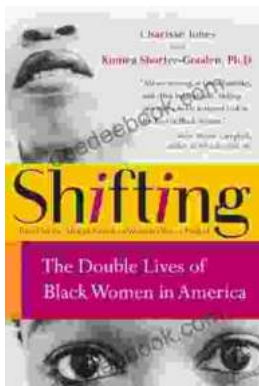
number of reforms, including the establishment of the Fair Employment Practices Committee and the creation of the Mexican-American Political Association. These reforms helped to improve the lives of Mexican-Americans, and they laid the foundation for the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s.



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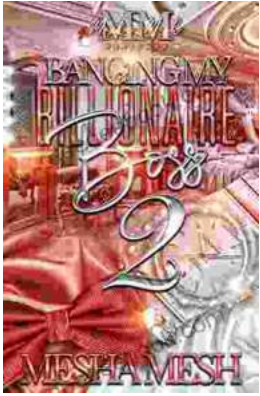
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