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## A Theme Of Prejudice Against Minorities In Zoot Suit By Luis Valdez

Who knew that wearing a flashy suit was capable of completely change one's cultural identity? Zoot Suit is a play written by Luis Valdez that demonstrates the Trial of the Sleepy Lagoon Case of 1942 in which the courts charged a group of "Pachucos" with the murder of Jose Diaz (Mexican American). It takes Zoot Suit is a political play designed to display the Chicano struggle. The Zoot suit was the Mexican American way of attempting to "fit into" American culture but they perhaps they outdid themselves as they didn't settle in well with the Americans.

During this time, many Mexican-Americans suffered from widespread discrimination as illustrated in Zoot Suit. "Zoot Suiters" felt disempowered with their position in the American society and attempt to use their fashion to send their message and also as a way to regain their masculinity. The group of Pachuco's was accused of the murder not due to any evidence but because of their ethnic identity. However, this ethnic identity of wearing the Zoot Suit had a character who was the main Pachuco and served as Henry's (alleged murderer) alter ego. El Pachuco has arguably one of the most impactful roles throughout this musical due to his interjections within the play which provides clarity for most of the issues that occur. Some of these interjections include his final confrontation with the reporter at the end of the musical as he points out the injustices that Mexican-Americans had to endure. With El Pachuco being the one confronting the report at the end puts the issues of discrimination and prejudices etc. on the forefront of the musical. Similarly, El Pachuco intervenes once again when the judge commands them to stand when their name is said inside the courtroom. This groups the Zoot Suiters together and places a stereotype on them, rather than allowing each of them their own unique identity. Time and time again the Mexican Americans were wrongly harrassed throughout the riots from when the sailors initiated the street fights and claimed the "pachuco's" murdered Diaz to the very end in the courtroom where they were treated guilty until proven innocent.

To conclude, although this musical dates back to a historic event for Mexican American it shouldn't be confined to that singular minority as it should concerns all minorities within the United States. This musical mitigates the prejudices and false representation of the Zoot Suiters of the time and now can be used as a tool for education the lesson in this musical can be applied to any minority group. Not only does this provide insight on past discrimination for those who were unable to witness it, but it also illustrates how influential counterculture can be as it can change an entire society.

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