
The Zoot Suit Riots In The United States

Mexican Americans often wore zoot suit consisted of high-waisted, wide-legged, tight-cuffed, pegged trousers, and a long coat with wide lapels and wide padded shoulders that displayed their culture. These zoot suits were often worn by Mexican American youths and were attacked because of it. People of color were the target and it didn't matter what sex or age they were. The zoot suit riots were a series of mob fights between U.S civilians and U.S armed forces against Mexican Americans mostly youth. Zoot Suiters were often beaten up, stripped of clothes, then arrested by LAPD who witnessed the beating. They were even humiliated in front of their own people and we hunted down as if they were animals. It began in downtown Los Angeles which led to wanting to destroy the Mexican American communities.

For example, Vicent Duarte was a 15-year-old who was shot in both legs during an Azusa theater riot on Thursday, June 10, 1943. He was an innocent boy who wasn't doing anything wrong and was attacked because of the color of his skin. And then, of course, the white Americans are the hero based on this. On Friday, June 4 29 Taxi Caravan took 200 or more sailors and marines hunting for Mexicans. And then on the fifth day of the riot, 5,000 civilians came to Los Angeles to help beat Mexican Americans. These people knew where to find Mexican Americans and beat them down without any reason it was just because of the color of their skin and on how they dressed. Mexican Americans were judged unfairly and almost lost their lives because of it.

The reason why I chose this topic was that in some way I felt connected to it and see how it still happens in my community. Where people are judged because of the clothes they wear or the color of their skin. For example, when my father was taken by ICE agents just because of the color of his skin made me feel terrified of my own country. Another situation that happens was when my uncle was beaten down by Americans because he looked like a gangster. It gives people fear to even go outside or maybe to walk down the street. And to me, that isn't fair because people should have the right to wear whatever they want and not be discriminated against for it. I am a 19-year-old Mexican American woman who wants to wear whatever she wants. If I want to wear an Oaxaca dress with huaraches that's what I am going to wear. I want to express and show love towards my roots is there anything wrong with that. I definitely don't want to live in my country with fear I was born in the United States and I should be given respect and brought down with so much negativity around. This topic is important to me it opened my eyes to see what my people went through and gives me the strength to fight for my rights. We all have a voice many don't know how to use it and some are afraid.

Another thing is that this topic of the Zoot Suit Riots gave me a reason to continue to fight and

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figure out ways to help my people. The Majority of Mexican Americans are humiliated because of the color or race they are. I also feel this topic is so important and should be taught more to students about the unfairness towards Mexican Americans. I am still angry at the fact the Zoot Suit Riots ended with the statement of "If caught wearing a Zoot Suit in public, up to 30 days in jail". Why are Mexican Americans getting blamed for it and the White Americans getting away with it? The society I live in today is the same it hasn't changed one bit because people are always going to have a say in your appearance. Sometimes that can also affect our reputation and our lives outside the house. That's the reason why some people decide to hide their real identity because they have a fear that they will be rejected by society.

Based on my art piece there are two sides to it the dark thunder violence and the other is peaceful with freedom. So let's start off with the dark side it has deeper colors to it. For example, I drew a policeman with a bloody bat on his hand to show how they used to hit Mexican Americans during riots. The jail building represents the consequence of wearing a zoot suit. I felt it was important to the topic because why should you go to jail for wearing something you like. It doesn't make any sense to me how wearing zoot suits can lead to going to jail it wasn't fair to Mexican Americans. The car represents the transportation that white Americans had during the riots and would have many people in it ready to "hunt" Mexicans. Another point to add is that while driving around men would have pieces of Mexican American clothes and would show it as a trophy they received. Lastly, the most important detail that has a big impact on my art piece is thunder and color. The reason I chose this combination was that it was a dark time for Mexican Americans many people were injured and almost lost their lives. I also felt that the color went well with the idea of darkness and it represents the darkness of white American people that's why I chose the color white for the thunder. Every little detail I have on my art piece represents something. Another little detail I did was I wrote "Riots" in the color red to represent the blood of Mexican Americans caused by white Americans.

The other side represents freedom and love. In my point of view, I feel like zoot suits were used by Mexican Americans to express their love for their race. And they didn't start the riots the white Americans did because they were either racist or believed they were doing the right thing. That's why I drew this side with pretty blue color for the sky, clouds, birds and a tree. To represent in my view the innocence some of the people had to believe that they were doing the right thing to create a better society. For example in the video, there's a white American old lady who said that she White Americans said that Mexican Americans are the ones who bring diseases and are dirty.

This topic connects to the topic of race and Latino baseball because of the way they need to hide their identity to live their lives. From the example in this topic, Mexican Americans need to hide their identity to avoid getting arrested, humiliated, beaten down and being a target to white Americans in general. And in the topic of Latino baseball, Mexican Americans needed to

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change their background or identify to be able to play baseball. During that time Mexican Americans weren't able to play because of their race so the coaches would change his background in order from him to play.

Another topic the zoot suit riots connect to is the great depression. The great depression also involved with the repatriation in the 1930s where 1-2 million people were shipped to Mexico and 50% of them were U.S citizens. Mexicans were blamed for the depression in the west, diseases and taking jobs away.

To wrap this up Mexican Americans were forced to leave their country unfairly because of their race and color of their skin. This is what leads to the zoot suit riots in my point of view. It connects to the zoot suit riots because white Americans tried to make them leave by torturing them with these cruel riots. Targeting anyone, in general, it didn't matter the sex or age you were.

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