

What caused the Zoot Suit Riots?

- ▣ Late 1930s-close to 3 million Mexicans & Mexican Americans in the U.S.
- ▣ Largest Mex.-Amer. community in U.S.?
- ▣ By 1940s, Mex.-Amer. urban youth had formed styles of speech & dress that were neither traditionally Mexican nor traditionally American.
- ▣ Zoot suits-type of fashion worn by some urban youth & popular among Mexican -Americans
 - Some adults saw the flashiness of the zoot suits as excessive.
 - Among white servicemen the suits were seen as even antagonistic and un-American.

Zoot Suits



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- ▣ 1940s-Mex.-Amer. continued to face racial segregation in schooling, housing, movie theaters, restaurants, swimming pools, etc.
 - Also faced severe discrimination in employment & by the criminal justice system
- ▣ Bracero Program
 - The need to ensure an agric. labor supply turned out to be the U.S. gov's main concern in responding to the Zoot Suit Riots.

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- ❑ Majority of service men & women stationed in LA during riots were white
- ❑ Riots occurred 6 months after the Sleepy Lagoon murder trial-controversial case
- ❑ Rioting occurred in May & June 1943 in LA
 - 1000s of servicemen participated in the attacks in which they target Mex.-Amer. youth with beatings & racial slurs & stripped them of their zoot suits
 - Police arrested more than 500 Mex.-Amer.
 - No servicemen were arrested
 - Incident set off a wave of attacks against Latinos/as in 7 other U.S. cities

Zoot Suit Riots



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- ▣ According to Doc. A, who caused the riots?
- ▣ According to Doc. B, who caused the riots?
- ▣ Does Doc. A support the claim that the press was, in fact, “decidedly inflammatory”? How?
- ▣ Why did the Coordinator of Latin American Youth decide to send a telegram to the Office of War Information? What does this tell you about the seriousness of the riots? How could this have affected U.S.-Mexico relations?
- ▣ How did the context of WWII influence the riots?