**Fashion or Fascists: The Zoot Suit Riots**

The Zoot Suit riots engulfed Los Angeles from May 30, 1943 to June 10, 1943.  On the surface, the riots appear to be conflict between “zoot-suiters” or “Pachucos” (mostly Mexican young men) and (mostly White) sailors, soldiers and marines.  However, upon closer examination, the riots illustrate the role of media bias and racial profiling in in shaping public opinion and polarizing racial antagonisms, particularly during wartime.

In the 1940s, many young Mexican men, segregated in poor and working class neighborhoods in Los Angeles, adopted the zoot suit as their fashion statement.  Zoot suits, with their oversized fit, were considered extravagant and flamboyant.  Furthermore, because they required so much fabric to make, they were also deemed unpatriotic during wartime rationing.  The press seized upon this fact, and exploited and fueled racial tensions and suspicions to sell newspapers.

**Using the information and video presented in class + research found in the websites below, complete the following prompt:**

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| Resources[****Penn State Zoot Suit: An American Fashion that changed history****](https://penntoday.upenn.edu/2011-04-07/research/zoot-suit-all-american-fashion-changed-history)[****KCET Los Angeles' 1943 War on the Zoot Suit****](http://www.kcet.org/updaily/socal_focus/history/la-as-subject/los-angeles-1943-war-on-the-zoot-suit.html)[****Mercury News Interview with a Pachuco****](http://www.mercurynews.com/ci_23384220/zoot-suit-riots-latino-culture-california-anniversary)[History 101: The Zoot Suit Riots](https://www.dailykos.com/stories/2014/1/3/1266933/-History-101-The-Zoot-Suit-Riots)[Gallery of Pictures](http://all-that-is-interesting.com/zoot-suit-riots) |

***"Zoot-suiters" were criticized both by their parents, who saw their clothing styles and use of English as signs that they were rejecting the parents' culture, and by some non-Mexican Americans, who regarded them as alien and dangerous.***

* **Write a first-person account from the perspective of a young zoot-suiter in which you describe your feelings about being caught between your parents' fear that you are becoming "too American" and others' fear that you are "not American enough."**