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, answer the following questions:

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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) |

1. Describe the events at Sleepy Lagoon.  How where they portrayed in the media?  Give some examples of media bias in the coverage from your research.
2. Describe how the trial progressed.  Where there any flagrant violations of due process or judicial bias?  Describe these in detail, providing evidence from your research.
3. Why do you think Zoot Suiters were targeted?  Give evidence from your research to support your position.
4. Describe the progression of the riots?  How did the media fuel the rioting?  How did the rioting end?  What actions helped end the rioting? Provide evidence from the research.