

# RACIAL CONFLICT AND VIOLENCE IN 1940s LOS ANGELES: THE “ZOOT SUIT RIOTS”

## RESOURCES:

**RG 181, Records of the U.S. Naval Districts and Shore Establishments, Eleventh Naval District, Commandant’s Office, Central Subject Files, 1924-1958.**

For ten days in June of 1943, the city of Los Angeles was gripped by a wave of racial conflict and violence. Wartime paranoia over foreign enemies had become focused in Los Angeles in recent months on the Chicano youth, who expressed their culture and their identity by wearing the old fashioned “zoot suits” first made popular in the 1920s. Mounting tensions culminated in violent confrontations between Navy servicemen, joined by civilians, and the “zoot suiters.” This event brought to the forefront issues of racial tension and conflict brewing in Los Angeles and elsewhere in the United States, and pointed to the reluctance of Anglo-Americans to accept the diversity of the city of Los Angeles. This event is significant to the history of Mexican-Americans in Los Angeles, and is described in Navy records held by the National Archives and Records Administration—Pacific Region (Laguna Niguel).

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Primary Sources

P8-5 (Zoot Suit Gang) 1943, Folder 1 of 4; Central Subject Files, 1924-58; Records of the Commandant’s Office; Eleventh Naval District; Records of Shore Establishments and Naval Districts, Record Group 181; National Archives at Riverside.

P8-5 (Zoot Suit Gang) 1943, Folder 3 of 4; Central Subject Files, 1924-58; Records of the Commandant’s Office; Eleventh Naval District; Records of Shore Establishments and Naval Districts, Record Group 181; National Archives at Riverside.

### Secondary Sources

Mazón, Mauricio. *The Zoot-Suit Riots: The Psychology of Symbolic Annihilation*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1984.

Ríos-Bustamante, Antonio José. *An Illustrated History of Mexican Los Angeles, 1781-1985*. Los Angeles: University of California, Chicano Studies Research Center Publications, 1986.

Sánchez, George J. *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.

Scott, Robin Fitzgerald. "The Mexican-American in the Los Angeles Area, 1920-1950: From Acquiescence to Activity." Thesis (Ph.D.): University of Southern California, 1971.

### **Internet resources**

National History Day website: <https://www.nhd.org/>

National History Day California website: <https://www.nhdca.org/>

National Archives Online Catalog: <https://catalog.archives.gov/advancedsearch>

How to Do Research at NARA: <https://www.archives.gov/research/start>

Citing Records in the National Archives of the United States:

<https://www.archives.gov/publications/general-info-leaflets/17-citing-records.html>

Information on National Archives at Riverside: <https://www.archives.gov/riverside>