Los Angeles Zoot: Race "Riot," the Pachuco, and Black Music Culture

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Source: *The Journal of Negro History*, Spring, 1997, Vol. 82, No. 2 (Spring, 1997), pp. 201-220

Published by: The University of Chicago Press on behalf of the Association for the Study of African American Life and History

Stable URL: http://www.jstor.com/stable/2717516

LOS ANGELES ZOOT: RACE "RIOT," THE PACHUCO, AND BLACK MUSIC CULTURE

By
Douglas Henry Daniels*

Zoot(y), *adj.* [according to jazzman Zutty Singleton, the term was New Orleans patois for 'cute' (a suggested etym. differing from the one offered in 1943 quot., q.v.); some currency c. 1925-c. 1945, obs. since except historical; see also the much more widely current DAP, SHARP] Initially: see second 1946 quote; also, since c. 1935: see 1944 quot.

1943 *New Yorker*, 19 June, p. 14; As for the word 'zoot,' it is simply a corrupt form of 'suit.'

1946 *The New Cab Calloway Hipster's Dictionary*, s. v. *zoot*: overexaggerated as applied to clothes.

1946 *Really the Blues*, p. 311. Colored kids . . . work on their dungarees, pegging the legs till they're real sharp and zooty.—p. 376. *zooty*: stylish, fashionable.

1961 *Down Beat*, 13 Apr., p. 20. After World War II, like the clothing it described, the word *zoot* faded from use, except in satiric context — and as the nickname of a very great tenor player [i.e., Zoot Sims].

—Robert S. Gold, *Jazz Talk*

"We [pachucos] were a minority group of a minority group. So, in a way, we were challenging cops by being with two or three friends and dressing sharp. But in those days, I was prepared for any sacrifice to be able to dress the way I wanted to dress. I thought it looked sharp and neat, and it was the style."

—Cesar Chavez, *Autobiography of La Causa*

The interrelationships between black, Hispanic, and American popular culture are evident from an examination of the so-called "zoot-suit" riot that occurred in early June 1943 in Los Angeles. Such riots also took place elsewhere that year, but the first was in Southern California, where there were neither fatalities nor destruction of property—unlike in New York and Detroit; in Los Angeles, whites not only attacked and beat Mexican-Americans and blacks, but stripped from them their fashionable zoot-suits. Finally, there was little retaliatory violence by the victims of racism, which was also a different pattern from eastern cities.[1]

The zoot-suit was associated with black urban youth when it appeared on the scene around 1940. Malcolm X's autobiography recounted the importance of his first zoot-suit and suggested the style had racial connotations as the preferred choice of hip black men and entertainers. Youth of Mexican and Filipino descent were the prototypical wearers of the garb in Southern California, however. In other words, consideration

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of this aspect of black urban culture and clothing style revealed one of numerous instances of African-American influence upon Mexican-American, Filipino, and American popular culture; the jazz music and dances adopted by black and white teenagers also shaped popular culture among Mexican-American and Filipino youth, revealing African-American influences in areas of American culture where they are not expected or are not sufficiently acknowledged as evidence of the power and dynamism of black American culture.[2]

By examining the Los Angeles dimension to the zoot suit phenomenon and the so-called riot, we can appreciate the extent to which the presence and acculturation of Mexican-Americans and Filipinos altered the usual black-white scenario, producing one that was more complex. Ideas about the zoot suit usually lack a strong historical and political dimension, and research on American history often has no popular culture dimension. Analysis of the Los Angeles zoot suit riot and journalists' and politicians' interpretations, and the outfit's connections with race relations, jazz music and dance, slang, and ideology, permit an understanding of the politics and social significance of what is often seen as trivial in itself—popular culture and its attendant styles. "Zoot" preceded the styles of the new music known as bebop by a few years, but both were a rebellion against accepted dress and musical styles and, moreover, they sometimes went beyond fashion and entertainment statements, embodying an intellectualized political position.[3]

The very term "zoot-suit riot" was a euphemism which obscures more than it elucidates. In the Southern California metropolis, the term was a means of preventing citizens from understanding a host of issues, such as the significance of a popular style of dress, its alleged connections with juvenile delinquency, its role in the violence reported in local newspapers at that time, and the allegedly criminal character of Mexican-Americans.[4]

It is necessary to clarify the meaning of a number of words before proceeding. "Mexican-American" refers to the Spanish-speaking people of the southwest. Though admittedly some were Mexican citizens, the zoot-suiters appear to have been U.S. citizens. These urban youth were often known as "pachucos" among Mexican-Americans. Black and brown Americans who wore zoot-suits generally referred to them as "drapes," "chukes," probably from "pachuco," was also used by the Spanish heritage youth; "tacuchi" was the term an anthropologist encountered in Tucson. Young female counterparts, "cholitas," "pachucas," or "pachuquillas," did not receive as much journalistic attention as the men; they were usually viewed as auxiliaries in a girls' gang paralleling the boys'. Their very stylish appearance and dress, featuring tight sweaters, short or long flared skirts, and large earrings were taken as evidence of their immorality by local reporters. This essay, however, focuses upon the young males.[5]

Los Angeles' black community dated from the late nineteenth century, but their numbers mushroomed in the 1920s, and by 1931, when Duke Ellington's band came to Hollywood to make a film, the jazz district on Central Avenue flourished. Numerous clubs, well-known jazz musicians, dancers, and singers mingled with Hollywood's celebrities—"all the stars, both black and white, came to Central Avenue." The Dunbar Hotel, at 41st and Central, accommodated black entertainers, and its night club, the Alabam, its after hours spot, The Breakfast Club, and its barber shop were famous

hangouts; in the 1940s, the Down Beat, another night spot, was nearby. In this jazz world described by Buck Clayton, Red Callender, Marshall Royal, Lee Young, and others, well-dressed sports, businessmen, various hangers-on, and white slummers reveled in the jive talk and black music culture into the 1950s.[6]

This analysis of the Los Angeles zoot-suit riot indicates that black and brown American youth found highly charged emotional and symbolic meaning in dress, music, and dance fads. Moreover, they played a leading role in spreading their life style or philosophy to American youth. While the 1940's are generally seen as a period of progress for blacks, Mexican-Americans, working women, and various reformers interested in their causes, the riots make it clear that a powerful coalition of reactionary forces sought to halt these seeming advances. Developments in Los Angeles and Southern California reveal this fairly clearly in the early 1940s.[7]

ZOOT RIOT

Disassociation of the zoot-suit from the disturbances leads to greater clarity as to the salient issues in the confrontations. The very terms in which the Los Angeles riot were discussed were totally misleading, indicating the desire of police and the press to recast events to fit their biased views of society. The zoot-suit rioter was neither Mexican-American, Mexican, nor black delinquent youths; the actual rioters were in fact white U.S. soldiers and sailors from nearby military bases and white Los Angeles residents who hunted down zoot-suiters and beat and stripped them of their clothing. There was an obvious racist dimension: brown and African-Americans in zoot-suits were targeted, while whites wearing the garb were spared.[8]

The official figures given for the casualties and arrests during several days of rioting indicated that brown-skinned youth sustained the most violence. One hundred twelve Mexican-Americans suffered "serious injuries," compared to 16 servicemen and 4 non-Hispanic civilians. It was estimated that 135 more people were injured but did not seek help at the hospital emergency rooms. Mexican-Americans were also most likely to be jailed—94, while only 20 servicemen and 30 non-Hispanic citizens were incarcerated.[9]

"Similar violence against the zoot suit" occurred elsewhere about this time, suggesting the larger dimension to the problem. Zoot-suiters were attacked in cities as close as San Diego and as far as Toronto; in each instance, either American or Canadian servicemen fought wearers of the strange new fashion. Two members of Gene Krupa's band were beaten by sailors on the Philadelphia subway, allegedly because they were mistaken for zooters. In Baltimore, the local police patrolled the black district on the lookout for gang members who wore the suit.[10]

Citizens of Los Angeles created an atmosphere, identified scapegoats, encouraged the vigilantes, and punished Mexican-Americans for allegedly molesting white soldiers' wives and girl friends, mugging servicemen, violating war-time dress codes, and generally being more aggressive than a colored minority had a right to be. Officers of the law, as well as the public, often cheered the soldiers and sailors and then arrested the victims, while members of the press treated the whole affair as a kind of festivity.[11]

Rather than a full-fledged riot, the Los Angeles affair was actually a series of fights or rather beatings. Moreover, military men by the hundreds left their bases without leave during wartime, some of them for several days. To prevent more outbreaks of violence, the 11th Naval District's rear admiral finally placed Los Angeles out of bounds for his men. When servicemen were occasionally arrested, they were not prosecuted for assault by the police or the military. The behavior of these whites was akin to the vigilantism against the Californios during the first years of the American occupation of the state and then in subsequent decades against Chinese sojourners. In this respect, Los Angeles' 1943 riot was more akin to those of New York in 1863 and 1900, Atlanta in 1906, or Chicago in 1919 than it was to those of the 1960's.[12]

ZOOT OPPONENTS

In the typical manner that characterizes American society's refusal to grapple with complex social issues and to attack symbols instead, the dress itself became the issue. It became the focus of debate in 1942 when the Los Angeles City Council passed a resolution outlawing the zoot-suit. Critics asked that vendors be prosecuted since the suits used too much material in a time of rationing. Wearers of the garb met to discuss giving up their zoot suits. Articles appeared on the wearer as well as the style, its origins, and its significance.[13]

How the garb was associated with delinquency was evidenced in a statement made after a mass arrest of Mexican-Americans in early 1943. About a hundred youth, "mostly Mexicans," were jailed, and it was announced with conviction that "the reat pleat, the reave sleeve and the right stripe are through in this town. Whether it is the clothes that cause the crime or the crime that causes the clothes, we are going to eliminate the boys who support the sharp apparel."[14]

Content analysis of local newspapers revealed more concerning use of the term. In 1942, about the time of the famous Sleepy Lagoon trial in which several Mexican-American youth were railroaded to jail, newspapermen stopped using the term "Mexican" to report crimes involving people with Spanish surnames in certain sections of the city. So as not to jeopardize President Roosevelt's Good Neighbor Policy in the Americas, they resorted to a new expression which everyone understood referred to Mexican-Americans. They filled Southern California newspapers with headlines about "zoot-suit gangsters," or "zoot-suit fracas," and similar expressions. In the northern, southern, and eastern United States as well, identification of criminals and suspects as Negroes, the failure to identify whites as such, and frequent reporting of petty crimes involving blacks, served the same end. A minority group was presented as inherently criminal, while those employers, landlords, merchants, loan sharks, and servicemen who preyed upon them were accorded the respect reserved for heroes.[15]

In a *Time* magazine letter, a soldier stationed in Kearney, Nebraska explained his hostility and that of many Americans to the zoot-suited youth:

> To a soldier who has been taken from his home and put in the Army, the sight of young loafers of any race, color, creed, religion or color of hair loafing around in ridiculous clothes that cost $75 to $85 per suit is enough to make them see red.

> You know they are loafers because no business house would allow them to work in such fantastic outfits.[16]

It never occurred to this soldier, to *Time*, or to other Americans, that these dark-complexioned youth would not be hired by business houses anyway—except perhaps as custodians—no matter what they wore. The typical American's solution to the problem was very simple, indicating their conformist bias: The zoot-suiter should doff his outfit and wear a military uniform.[17]

The fact that Los Angelenos acquired a new veneer of ethnic sophistication should not be overlooked. They found a slang term to identify the scapegoats who were usually singled out for reasons of race, ethnicity, or nationality. The riot was not so much about zoot as it was a pogrom against dark-skinned people. Sailors and soldiers did not measure coat length or cuff size, but beat up Mexican-Americans and blacks regardless of what they wore. When the Los Angeles mayor was asked whether the disturbances were similar to Nazism because of the racial dimension, he came up with the contrived explanation that all the victims were American-born, so this was not a singling out of Mexican nationals.[18]

For some critics, the war was far more important than the issue of racism or poverty, or assigning ultimate responsibility for the riots where they belonged. Zoot-suiters were thought to be anti-patriotic. They should be in uniform, though often they were too young to enlist. They should wear clothes that conformed to federal rationing of material, but some zoot-suits were men's clothing cut down for slimmer and often shorter youth. They were lazy for not working, even though President Franklin Roosevelt's Executive Order did not provide good jobs in war plants for Mexican-Americans. Furthermore, they were suspect of being pawns in the hands of Sinarquistas, a pro-Axis contingent, or of Communist elements. California State Senator Jack Tenney thought zoot-suiters were agents of a foreign power trying to disrupt west coast units.[19]

Even those Americans who believed the riots were non-racial in character and without Axis influences worried about how it *appeared* overseas. After all, Mexico made an inquiry about the involvement of her citizens, and protesters demonstrated in front of American businesses in Mexico City. Too, the Axis powers were quick to criticize the U.S. for the same crimes it accused Nazi Germany of committing, and some Americans voiced the sentiment that the U.S.'s racial policies were hardly any different from Germany's.[20] One public official, accounting for a Mexican-American "crime wave" in 1942, insisted their biological heritage as Indians produced a love of bloody violence. Some citizens even maintained that swing, the new popular music, was responsible for youth misbehavior.[21]

Criticism of public officials occasionally characterized Southern California's response to the nights of violence. Critics claimed the Hearst newspapers, in particular, created an atmosphere of hostility and whipped readers up to a frenzy as it had done for decades. Some held police responsible for not having restrained the mobs or for creating the problem to begin with by not being sufficiently "tough" on the "boy gangsters," but no legal action was carried out against members of the mobs. No changes were made in reporting. No new hiring practices altered the ethnic make-up of the police force. Nor did businessmen make an effort to adopt a nondiscriminatory

hiring policy except as a result of an Executive Order, and then more with white women, in particular, and then African-Americans. All this seemed too much to expect in the 1940's. At best, some social, recreational, and rehabilitative programs for "disadvantaged" youth resulted. As usually occurs after race riots, several investigations and reports emerged to support these programs.[22]

ZOOT REFORMERS

The nights of unrest sparked Los Angelenos' concerns about juvenile delinquency among Mexican-American youth. Sympathetic reformers and scholars such as Carey McWilliams, Emory Bogardus, George Sanchez, and Ruth Tuck constantly emphasized job discrimination against Mexican-Americans, the results of segregated schools, and the lack of equal access to public places and recreational facilities. When they analyzed the causes of the riots, they thus removed some of the blame for them from the pachuco. The whole matter became societal rather than racial. George Sanchez concluded:

> The pachuco is a symbol not of the guilt of an oppressed Mexican minority but of a cancerous growth within the majority group which is gnawing at the vitals of democracy and American way of life. The pachuco and his feminine counterpart, the 'cholita,' are spawns of a neglectful society—not the products of an humble minority people who are defenseless before their enforced humiliation.[23]

By placing ultimate responsibility upon society, sympathizers dramatized the need for reforms. Policemen should study the background and culture of different groups; social workers must be increased to guide and advise wayward youth; supervised work camps were needed for delinquents; playgrounds and pools should be open to all citizens; and discrimination anywhere must be identified, criticized, and exorcised.[24]

Two witnesses to the violence, Chester Himes, the black writer, and Revels Cayton, a labor organizer and member of the Los Angeles Mayor's Committee on Race Relations, argued that, together with racism, a shortage of young women were the basis of the problem. Several thousand single military men convened in the city on weekends but lacked dates, and Mexican-American women—white men thought—should be glad to meet their needs. This explanation was similar to the servicemen's rationale for the riot, insofar as the military men claimed that "their [few white]" women were not safe and, furthermore, at least one had been raped by zoot-suiters. The defense for their retaliative actions seemed groundless the more Los Angeles citizens searched for testimony to support the accusations. Perhaps more importantly, it was identical to the excuses given for brutal southern lynchings of blacks.[25]

Only one commentator raised the most meaningful question about the suit, the causes of the riot, and the proposed solutions. Revels Cayton astutely saw that reformers suffered from a fundamental misunderstanding: "What is the connection between Mexicans not having good houses and white sailors beating them up and tearing off their zoot suits?" The reformers were, after all was said and done, like the zoot suit's opponents, as they were on the wrong track with the wrong questions.[26]

It was to his credit that Cayton claimed there was no causal relationship between zoot suits and Mexican-American juvenile delinquency, but generally, reformers rarely questioned whether the term itself had any meaning useful for analysis. They argued

all Mexicans were not delinquents, not all delinquents wore zoot-suits, not all zoot-suiters were criminals; they pointed out the hardships and discrimination faced by the poor, but they could not diagnose any actual connection between the clothing, politics, and race relations. In fact, the statistical evidence indicated that the Mexican-American youth in Los Angeles had a higher percentage of delinquents, but their *rate* of delinquency was not increasing as much as it was for whites and blacks.[27]

Reformers rarely pointed out the ways in which the riotous servicemen and citizens were at fault. They were so defensive about the alleged inferiority of the minority group, or their gangster traits, and spent so much energy recounting the history of discrimination, they never could effectively assume the offensive to demand that servicemen be prosecuted. Such a failure is due to the fact that, like the police and military authorities, the reformers shared certain fundamental views regarding Mexican-Americans: They believed the youngsters were prone to gangsterism to an excessive degree; and possibly in other ways, as well, they were inferior to the Anglo majority.[28]

One could argue that critics were reluctant to point blame during the war, particularly at the military. Yet what else would prevent future vigilante attacks by enlisted men or Los Angeles citizens? Suppression of the truth was such that four decades afterwards, in fact, until Louis Valdez's play and film, "Zoot-Suit" in the 1980's, these riots were still known for their connection with Mexican-American youth and their excesses rather than with white servicemen and their criminal behavior.

ZOOT-SUITERS

The zoot-suit itself illuminates a neglected aspect of American culture and social history, one whose impact was more far-reaching than has been considered. Its physical dimensions are well known, as sketches and photographs accompanied popular and scholarly analyses. "There is no mistaking a zoot suit once you see it, there being nothing subtle in the style," observed the *Los Angeles Daily News*. It was sometimes a suit, sometimes a sport coat and slacks, and always loosely fitting, except for the pants' cuffs, whose narrow size made the trousers appear even baggier. Coats were often fingertip length; sometimes they reached to the knees, and invariably they had shoulders more like epaulettes. Duck-tail hair cuts—"processes" or "conks" among blacks, long watch chains, wide-brimmed hats with narrow crowns, perhaps adorned with a long feather, and in Southern California, thick-soled shoes accented the suits.[29]

The origin of the fashion itself is obscure, and men such as the famous band leader, Cab Calloway, who popularized the suit on the stage and in the film, "Stormy Weather," and the movie star Clark Cable, said to have worn a similar outfit in the film "Gone with the Wind," have been identified as possible creators. Others maintained it started in Los Angeles in 1934 and was modeled in part after English draped trousers. Professor Bruce Tyler pointed out that Duke Ellington's "Jump for Joy," the musical which opened in Los Angeles in 1942, projected racial pride and criticized white racism; some of its characters wore zoot suits. This musical influenced Mexican-Americans and Filipinos who identified with Ellington's anti-racism as well as his music and styles of dress that were popularized in the production.[30]

The widespread appeal among various ethnic groups was noteworthy, and so was the attraction the suit held for poorer and working-class youth. In fact, their tastes laid the basis for the successes of bootleg tailors in the clothing industry. Certain stores specialized in them—at least two in Los Angeles, on Central Avenue and on Main Street. After the federal government restricted the amount of material that could be used, the suits were merely cut down from larger men's sizes but still possessed a forbidden aura about them.[31]

African-American writers noted a rebellious aspect among zoot-suited youth and their oppressed cohort. Ralph Ellison's insights in his novel, *Invisible Man*, are often noted. Poet-journalist and jazz fan Frank Marshall Davis termed the zoot suit "a form of visual protest" reflecting the fact that blacks, "along with Mexicans, Filipinos, and . . . other repressed minorities [were] . . . denied equality by the establishment." These "eye-blasting suits" were compared by him to the new fashion statements adopted by youthful rebels of the 1960s.[32]

That black, Mexican-American, and Filipino clothing styles had an impact beyond their own circles is hardly ever noted as significant in American popular culture. The public would not have been concerned at all about the zoot suit if the style had not been viewed as a menace to society. For example, psychiatrist Ralph S. Banay claimed the suit was "a psychological manifestation of chaotic sexuality" and noted its popularity among middle class youth in a Brooklyn, New York high school study. "Boys . . . with parents of the middle class and of comfortable economic status, were wearing this attire in the proportion of four out of ten—four zoot-suiters, two conventional dressers, two scholars with no particular interest in clothes, and two in any odd wearing apparel."[33]

ZOOT DANCES

The suit was significant as far more than just a clothing style; its evolution paralleled developments in black music and its popular American offshoots, such as the subsequent Afro-Cuban jazz orchestras and experiments of Machito, Mario Bauza, Chico O'Farrill, Chano Pozo, Dizzy Gillespie, and Charlie Parker. The assistant director of the Latin American Coordinating Council, a local group of community leaders, pointed out the connections between the drapes and the music in March 1943. Stephen J. Keating criticized "the idea that the zoot-suit is the uniform of gangs . . . [as] all wrong." It is rather "the uniform of the jitterbug all over the country" and developed nationally, not locally, "among young devotees of hot music."[34]

When black policemen testified at a hearing on the Los Angeles riots, they claimed the Negro citizen wore the suits because "fundamentally . . . [he is] a jitterbug." Thus adoption of the suit "stems from a deep-seated love of jazz music." Ralph Banay noted the connection with black music as well as the function of its design. Narrow cuffs prevented whirling jitterbug dancers and lindyhoppers from catching their shoes in them while loose-fitting coats and baggy pants permitted the acrobatic movements that were central to these types of jazz dance.[35]

Different types of zoot-suiters were distinguished by Fritz Redl, a professor of Social Work in Detroit; he mentioned first "those for whom the zoot-suit is part of an

expressional dance cult." The very language he employed, especially "expressional dance cult," is appropriate in light of the intense devotion the zoot-suiters paid to their dress, dance, and music. Despite the racism and use of pseudo-scholarly jargon, Redl's interpretation is significant in light of what we now know of the importance of religious possession, trance-like states, dance, and drumming to African and African American cults and religions.[36]

For many zoot-suiters, "boys as well as girls, 'jitterbugging' is something very serious indeed"—like old-time religion. Redl observed—in terms that reflect more knowledge than is apparent: "They perform their dance with tribal fanaticism, with a high degree of absorption and devotion visible in their execution." Their belief was such it did not matter whether adults understood.[37]

Among the various dance enthusiasts, Redl continued, wearing of the zoot-suit was of secondary importance to the dance, which was "the one serious enthusiasm that gives their life consistency and meaning." Just like spirit possession, it aided their sanity, constituting "a much more significant device than any mental hygienist could have invented." Claiming ignorance, Redl confessed "just what it is that gets expression in this orgiastic performance or why it assumes this grotesque form" was inexplicable; "cheap explanations" were far off the mark, shedding little light on "the real mystery." Of course at this time, knowledge of the significance of African survivals was unknown to the general public, journalists, and most scholars.[38]

Not surprisingly, among zoot-suiters, the most "cult conscious" were the African-Americans. The latter had nothing but contempt for the whites "who imitate the form of their dance without really getting the 'spirit' of it." (They lacked true religion.) African-American purists, musicians, and fans spread black music to other ethnic groups much as they introduced the zoot-suit and hip argot to other citizens.[39]

For the African and African-American cultist, or holy-roller, or fundamentalist, the world is basically spiritual in nature. In the course of ceremonies, as a result of music, especially drumming, and the accompanying dance, the dancer becomes possessed by a particular spirit, and, upon regaining ordinary consciousness, cannot recall what happened. This happens during vodun, or in Pentecostal churches when a member of the audience is seized by the spirit, dances or moves animatedly, and speaks in "tongues." This spirit carried over into secular dance.[40]

The music and suit varied in importance among different youth. For serious jitterbugs, the drapes were "something like a cultist's robe," symbolizing their "belief." In the late 1940's some of the most devoted bebop musicians, in a similar development, began wearing West African garb or robes. Some abandoned Christianity for Islam, and dressed accordingly to distinguish themselves from their former identities. Perhaps the zoot-suit served a similar function for adolescents, as well, given the degree to which they worked and saved to purchase the suits, and considering the depth of meaning found in wearing them in defiance of society.[41]

Among some youth, merely wearing the drapes was "a declaration of independence." Their "great moment occurred not on the dance floor," but "when they walk in the streets." The looks of admiration, bewilderment, ridicule, and disgust gave them what they sought. "Knowledge that most 'non zoot-suiters' are against them" was a major basis for their unity. Their satisfaction came gradually rather than in a moment of ecstasy while dancing.[42]

Like the jazz dances, the zoot-suit expressed one's beliefs and convictions in as dramatic a fashion as possible. For these youth, music, the suit, and the dance, all embraced with such seriousness, expressed not only belonging to a group, but an affirmation of self. Their new clothes and slang were symbols of adulthood, ways of distinguishing oneself from "squares" as well as children.

Pachucos were Americanized in terms of their tastes in popular music as well as dress. The close connection between the zoot-suit, Mexican-American youth, and swing music is evident in the literature. Cesar Chavez, who grew up in Central California, "really went for Duke Ellington and Billy Eckstine," popular black bandleaders, in addition to the pachuco clothes. Also, he and his friends "would travel from Delano to Fresno to hear the bands."[43]

After 1943, the spirit of the pachuco was principally spread in the southwest by pachuco songs, which like the suits, appealed to a comparatively small but significant market. They constituted a distinct industry in a fashion reminiscent of blues and jazz records among African-Americans from 1920 to the present. One of the most popular songs reflected the African-American influence in the title, and is a fine instance of the kind of cultural fusion that existed in the world of zoot. The song was Lalo Guerrero's "Pachuco Boogie."[44]

Originally, upon studying the argot and employing it in song, Guerrero's idea was simply to make fun of the pachuco, but he changed his mind because record sales were so successful. When "Pachuco Boogie" appeared on jukeboxes in Tucson, crowds of boys stood around playing it for hours, trying to memorize the spoken monologue. "El Pachuco" was followed by "La Pachuquilla," which sold 60,000 copies in the southwest. Because he was such a rebel, the pachuco in these and other songs became glamorous and his language was even more appealing. Even if his values were not adopted by anyone but the most foolhardy or daring, they were nonetheless appealing to Mexican-American adolescents.[45]

ZOOT ARGOT

The arrival of Pachuco slang was dated by George Barker's older informants, who claimed that they first heard it in the early 1930's, leading the anthropologist to assert it "thus antedated by several years the pachucos themselves." A court reporter with several years' experience credited a gang of marijuana smokers and peddlers, the 7-X gang of El Paso, with first using it. They, in turn, probably derived it from Calo, the argot of the Mexican underworld, which is traceable to Spanish gypsies. As a kind of corroboration of its geographic origins, a number of informants noted the very term "pachuco" is colloquial for "El Paso," and "Del Pachuco" is used to refer to a person from that border city.[46]

By querying informants who spoke Pachuco, Barker learned it was used by young men, usually seasonal laborers, unemployed, and highly mobile individuals. Citizens with middle-class aspirations left it alone, considering it beneath them. When these laborers went to Los Angeles during the wartime boom years, they took their argot with them. Barker observed this migration proved "the greatest single impetus to the spread of the jargon." (With Black English and African-American argot, the exodus of black

southerners was comparable in effect.) After the war, when pachucos left "Losca," or "Los," as Los Angeles was known, to hunt for jobs in other cities or small towns, they spread the language. Many were railroad workers, and this facilitated movement. As noted, pachuco songs introduced the jargon to music lovers via the radio and the jukebox.[47]

Pachuco became even more popular after World War II as a result of these new developments. Eventually, in fact, the entire zoot style polarized youth, leading to confrontations and fights with "squares" in California towns. The argot "became an important part of colloquial slang." Relatively unknown in the 1930's but popularized by the end of the 1940's, it symbolized "the ways and attitudes of the pachucos and of Mexican-American youth" in general.[48]

It is noteworthy to emphasize the argot's lower-class origins, like the zoot-suit, and its spread—also like the drapes—to other groups; like the suit associated with jazz dances and the riots, it was primarily developed and spread by males. Moreover, among pachucos, this slang reminded themselves and others that they were knowledgeable and sophisticated urbanites. These young men spoke it continuously in their own company, but usually not with their elders and middle-class people. Some individuals used it even more marginally, speaking the language among their friends for a time, though not always as inventively as regular users, dropping it in other circles, and maybe abandoning it altogether when they gave up their old associations to settle down. As pachucos matured and raised families, they still occasionally used it to show they were in step with the younger generation.[49]

In its urban underworld origins, conveyance by highly mobile working class men, tapping of their folk tradition, reinforcement by job and social discrimination, and popularization through music, Pachuco was similar to the black jive talk of black song and such popular musicians as Louis Armstrong, Cab Calloway, and Lester Young. Its most singular difference is the fact it has not yet affected American slang as much as the language of black jazz musicians and their associates, though it has been revived in the plays of Luis Valdez.[50]

ZOOT IDEOLOGY

Like the zoot-suit and jazz, the language also expressed a philosophy of life worth analyzing. Malcolm X presented some ideas one would expect from working class youth, transients, and victims of racial injustice. They lost many of their stereotyped ideals about justice, democracy, politics, and the law at an early age. Like Malcolm the young hustler, they learned from their own experience, one which was constantly reinforced by the wisdom of those in the know, that "crime existed only to the degree that the law cooperated with it." A former secretary of Dutch Schultz, who took over Harlem's numbers racket, explained to Malcolm "the country's entire social, political, and economic structure, the criminal, the law, and the politicians were actually inseparable partners."[51]

In such an urban milieu, some young folk came to the same conclusions as Malcolm Little, the future black nationalist, Malcolm X, and some of the more desperate lived accordingly, becoming amoral hustlers, denizens of the nation's underworld. The

Muslim minister explained that shortly before he was arrested and imprisoned, his life was an affirmation of the belief "that a man should do anything that he was slick enough, or bad and bold enough, to do and that a woman was nothing but another commodity." His sister was shocked when she noticed, by his own admission, "Every word I spoke was hip or profane." He smoked marijuana non-stop, took pills, smoked opium, snorted cocaine, and listened to live swing bands and phonograph records for hour after hour.[52]

Faced with discrimination, some young urbanites realized it was better to hustle as best as they could, to sell stolen items or narcotics, or to steal than to work at the usually low-paying menial jobs. Following his mother's advice to obtain a white collar job after graduating as salutatorian from his New Jersey high school, Babs Gonzales took the required written tests and invariably "was always told to come back in two weeks." After two months of waiting, he realized "the game 'whitey' was playing, as I saw dumb ofay [white] boys with 'D' average grades working and laughing at me waiting around offices." To combat this prejudice, he purchased a turban, said his name was "Ram Singh," and migrated to Los Angeles where he found work as "wardrobe attendant" at a Beverly Hills country club. He also befriended two Mexican hustlers, learned Spanish, and used this new identity to avoid discrimination. Given the way in which businessmen and police treated youngsters such as Gonzales, his responses were quite rational. Later the self-styled "Creator of the Be-Bop Language" became a singer and booked bands and acts in show business.[53]

Adversity and their awareness of society produced a "zoot-suit ideology" or hipster's code of behavior based on "a rather tough philosophy of life." Middle-class adolescents were "sissies." The toughness of the zoot youth "involves some sexual precocity . . . (and especially) aggressive daring, constant tests to prove it, and purposeful violation of the behavioral allergies of less tough people, in language as well as in manner." Black Panther Party founder Huey Newton was born too late (1942) to wear such a suit himself, but an older brother, Walter ("Sonny Man"), with whom he was particularly close, proudly posed in one in a photograph taken around 1950; Sonny Man's reputation as a hustler, one whom "the brothers on the block respected . . . and called . . . a hipster," impressed Huey, and the older brother's "street sense" and aggressiveness carried over into his younger brother's political activities after 1966.[54]

After World War II, Pachuco songs conveyed this impression of daring and assertive masculinity. "El Pachuco" was an urban folk hero likely to be admired in brown and black urban circles. He is remarkably similar to the "bad nigger" in African-American tales and ballads and to "Shine" of the Titanic, to Stagger Lee, and to the beboppers in *Dan Burley's Handbook of Harlem Jive*. Babs Gonzales' exploits have been noted above; when he reported for the draft during World War II, he pretended to be a homosexual to stay out of the military. Pianist Hampton Hawes' fantasies growing up during World War II encouraged him to join the Army, but his escapades in Japan as a thief, a heroin addict, and an escapee from the Army stockade reflected the pachuco's attitudes expressed in the popular music.[55]

Two pachuco songs, "Me Estaba Sonado un Frajo" ("I Was Getting Doped Up with a Torch") and "Estaba Rolanda un Frajo" ("I Was Rolling a Cigarette"), both of unknown origin, were about marijuana and the police. The protagonist in each is quite

insouciant. On getting to heaven the pachuco either gives St. Andrew marijuana or says he will petition to get the saint to give him some before he goes to hell.[56]

"El Hijo Desobediente" (The Disobedient Son) is also rebellious, disrespectful, and primarily concerned with fighting and drugs. Late one night two pachucos fight with knives, and the father of one begs his son to desist. The pachuco replies:

Go away from here, my father,
For I am wilder than a burro.
Don't go pulling out your knife,
Or I will transfix your guts.

His father responds by warning him he will die before sunset for his insolence. The pachuco responds:

My last words to my father
Were that they bury me not in California
But that I be buried in Arizona
With three sacks of marijuana.
With an outside visa
And a shot in the arm,
I don't want any morphine now—
But just a good weed.[57]

This is remarkably similar to the philosophy of the hipster, and it must have fit some citizens' stereotyped ideas about pachucos and drug addicts. Their philosophy, music, argot, and dress distinguished pachucos and their followers from the uninitiated—the "venados," "pacoimas," and "Pepsi-Cola kids."[58] Such conformists were ridiculed. This was part of the pressure exerted on youth to abandon their parents' and society's norms for those of the gang, the street, and jazz culture.

Such values did not always entail use of drugs and criminal behavior. There were youth, probably the majority, for whom the *styleacho* was more important than the substance, and symbolic rebellion itself was sufficient. As Cesar Chavez recalled:

> We needed a lot of guts to wear those pants, and we had to be rebellious to do it, because the police and a few of the older people would harass us. But then it was the style, and I wasn't going to be a square. All the guys I knew liked that style, and I would have felt pretty stupid walking around dressed differently.[59]

The suit allowed the most inexperienced adolescents to rank among their peers and to intimidate others. "At Delano dances," Chavez explained, "all the squares sat across the room from us and we had a lot more fun than they did." Also, "little old ladies would be afraid of us" and surprised to find well-mannered pachucos among these youth.[60]

While admiring the style of the hustler and pachuco, many adolescents avoided drugs and crime. They were rebelling against Mexican folk culture, which they felt had little relevance to their world, as well as their parents and the conventions of respectable society. Their rebellion was often symbolic and very different from that of the youth of the 1960's. The latter were active in politics and civil rights, while pachucos and hipsters often avoided conventional politics. The zoot-suiters felt the injustices of racism and poverty but lacked a program or set of ideas about improving society. Chavez contended:

> Our rebellion wasn't the kind of rebellion they have today—students and young people rebelling against society . . . Today these kids have an idea. We didn't know exactly what was happening. We were a step behind them. It's all a matter of evolution.[61]

He also claimed that his generation was more inhibited, and less likely to protest and stand up for their rights, than the present generation of Mexican-Americans. Similarly, Hampton Hawes contended, his generation of musicians "were rebelling, [but] we were doing it musically, nonviolently." Also, "our rebellion was a form of survival. We were pilgrims, the freaks of the forties and fifties."[62]

The zoot-suit and argot represented an important stage in an adolescent male's development. As some youth grew older and gave up the slang, they gave up the zoot-suit. When Malcolm X became a serious hustler, his more conventional dress style or appearance belied his actual behavior—pimping and armed robbery. He was not unlike the Jolly Fellows, the Harlem secret gang members, of the 1930s. They wore gloves, "tight Chesterfields [topcoats], and derbies in the approved style" of the film gangsters who were their heroes. The Jolly Fellows also had their own codes of conduct and utilized "the polite, carefully enunciated and slightly inane understatement" of their film heroes.[63]

In other words, for the pachuco and the hipsters, the zoot-suit was a mask which permitted adolescents to present themselves as adults and as urban sophisticates. When they became more certain of themselves, they abandoned this mask, perhaps adopting another one, such as the more conservative clothing of those who no longer sought the attention of passersby.

Later in life, the outlook, tastes, and argot that constituted their introduction to an adult world might remind them of the good old days. Revivals in music would, therefore, appeal to them. More significantly, political organizers such as Malcolm X and Cesar Chavez used the argot and acquaintance with the zoot world later in life. Chavez could thereby talk to ex-convicts as well as teachers, businessmen, and priests. Leaders who lacked such ties and knowledge of the popular culture, or who disdained it, were involved in different kinds of politics than a Chavez or a Malcolm X.

ZOOT's SIGNIFICANCE

In addition to revealing connections between the styles and dress of modern youth, racial prejudice, and politics, this analysis helped clarify an instance where labeling by the press and the majority of citizens confused the issues. Even more, contemporary reporting on the "zoot-suit gangsters" was based on assumptions that prevented critics' understanding of the youths as humans and defeated the reformers' efforts to alleviate their suffering. As invariably happens when race "riots" and "minorities" are involved, the press, public, and officials completely misunderstood and, furthermore, misrepresented the Los Angeles disturbances of June 1943.

The thoughtless, careless labeling and mistaken assumptions typified much of the analysis on the part of the public, the press, and government officials in subsequent decades. The simplistic use of "communist," "radical," "militant," and similar epithets prevented clear examination of the complicated issues that beset the nation at

mid-century. This practice inevitably reflected the American habit of reducing groups to "us" and "them" and then "good guys" versus "bad ones."[64]

There are other facets that require analysis from the angle of popular culture. What is the connection between popular gangster movies of the 1930's, the public's interpretation of "delinquent" behavior among juveniles, and the values of youth themselves? What happens to a generation of youth raised on gangster films? Moreover, the relations between gangs and individuals of different ethnic groups is another area deserving research. Were Los Angeles gangs integrated? Was there much interaction between Mexican-Americans and blacks on an individual level of the kind that Babs Gonzales reported? How much of the hip philosophy and slang was exchanged as a result?

No less significant is the fact that the zoot-suit fad marked one of the first spontaneous social movements among modern youth. Its "spontaneous" character refers to the fact that to this day it is not clear how the craze started, where, by whom, or why, although many indicators point to young black Harlemites incensed by racial prejudice at home during a war against Nazism abroad. The "hip"[65] philosophy of the zoot-suiter was later found not only among poorer blacks but Mexican-Americans and white urbanites, as well, and it was fed by and energized popular music, swing and bebop, and dances, particularly lindyhopping or jitterbugging.

This music, the popular dances, and clothing styles produced fads among white college youth as they found in jazz a basis for rebellion. As it spread through the American populace, zoot, hip, and subsequent music-related variants, bebop and cool, for example, all involving a style of dress, a type of music, and a stance or posture in addition to an ideology of sorts, assumed new dimensions as the youth grew older and matured intellectually. The seemingly innocuous popular culture fads were often parodied in newspapers and cartoons, but for some who identified with them, they were the cultural dimension of a social movement that acquired a political thrust in the late 1950s with the beat literary and the peace movements, which denounced racism and imperialism in the 1960s, and which challenged traditional American culture and its politics.

Singer Joe Carroll, in an article, "I Am An Unrepentant Be-Bopper," explained "I wasn't that knowledgeable enough to find my way to a disaffiliated position in the manner of the bohemians, so in a situation like the one I was in one could either get out physically [join the Army]. . . or opt out mentally." He concluded, " 'Turn on, tune in, drop out' " is old hat to me. I dropped out each time I turned on the radio and tuned in to a bop record." Carroll also observed, "my disaffiliation (and I soon became aware enough to know that I was consciously opting out) was an intellectual act . . . a move towards a more satisfying intellectual involvement."[66]

Besides illuminating our understanding of popular culture and politics, zoot marked the emergence of a specific urban identity resulting from a concrete experience: growing up poor, urban, and often colored in the U.S. during a period of depression and war. Like jazz in the 1920s, it not only symbolized youthful rebellion against society but gave urbanites a basis for solidarity that could be tapped for decades. It also indicated the profound effect African-Americans had upon different ethnic groups in terms of their Americanization and acculturation to new styles of dress, popular music, slang, and dances, all of which had distinctly Southern and, in some instances, African roots.

NOTES

[1] Gerald Horne, *Black Liberation/Red Scare: Ben Davis and the Communist Party* (Newark, Del., 1994) is good on the reactionary U.S. elements during this era. On the riots in eastern cities, Robert M. Fogelson and Richard E. Rubenstein (eds.), *The Complete Report of Mayor LaGuardia's Commission on the Harlem Riot of March 19, 1935* (New York, 1969); Dominic J. Capeci, Jr., *The Harlem Riot of 1943* (Philadelphia, 1977) and *Layered Violence: The Detroit Riots of 1943* (Oxford, Ms., 1991); Kenneth B. Clark, "Group Violence: A Preliminary Study of the Attitudinal Pattern of Its Acceptance and Rejectional: A study of the 1943 Harlem Riot," *The Journal of Social Psychology* 19 (May 1944), pp. 319-337. Robert Shogan and Tom Craig, *The Detroit Race Riot: A Study in Violence* (Philadelphia, 1964). On race-related urban riots in the colonial era, Thomas J. Davis, *A Rumor Revolt: the "Great Negro Plot" in Colonial New York* (New York, 1985); Winthrop Jordan, *White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550-1812* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1968), 115-120; also, James M. McPherson (ed.), *Anti-Negro Riots in the North, 1864* (New York, 1969); Elliott M. Rudwick, *Race Riot at East St. Louis, July 2, 1917* (Carbondale, Ill., 1964) and William M. Tuttle, Jr., *Race Riot: Chicago in the Red Summer of 1919* (New York, 1970); and *Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders* (New York, 1968).

[2] Alex Haley, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (New York, 1965), pp. 52-3. The wearing of the zoot suit among Filipinos suggests the influence of Black cultural styles upon them; unfortunately, relationships between Blacks and Filipinos, who often worked together as messmen in the Navy and as porters and waiters on the trains, has not been adequately researched. see also Robin D.G. Kelley, "The Riddle of the Zoot: Malcolm Little and Black Cultural Politics During World War II," Robin D.G. Kelley (ed.), *Race Rebels* (New York, 1994), pp. 161-181.

[3] Upon completing this article, I learned of several related essays: Robin D.G. Kelley, "The Riddle of the Zoot;" Steve Chibnall, "Whistle and Zoot," *History Workshop Journal* #20 (1985), pp. 56-81; Stuart Cosgrove, "The Zoot-Suit and Style Warfare," ibid. #18 (Autumn 1984), pp. 77-91; Angela McRobbie (ed.), *Zoot-Suits and Second-Hand Dresses: An Anthology of Fashion and Music* (Boston, 1989), pp. 3-22, reprints Cosgrove's essay with photos not used in the original article; Bruce Tyler, "Zoot-Suit Culture and the Black Press," *Journal of American Culture* 17 (Summer 1994), pp. 21-34. Professor Ramon Favela brought to my attention Jose Montoya, *Pachuco Art: A Historical Update* (Sacramento: Royal Chicano Air Force, 1977).

[4] The microfilm file of newspaper articles on the riots in the Carey McWilliams Collection of the Research Library of the University of California, Los Angeles, is the best place to begin reading about the disturbances of June 1943. The author also read the *New York Times* reports for the second and third week of June. Marilyn Domer, The Zoot-Suit Riot; Culmination of Social Tensions in Los Angeles (Master's thesis, Claremont Graduate School, 1955) offers a much needed corrective to the biased local contemporary reports; Solomon James Jones, *The Government Riot of Los Angeles, June 1943* (San Francisco, 1973 ed.) views the servicemen and officials as responsible for the outbreaks; and Mauricio Mazon, *The Zoot-Suit Riots: The Psychology of Symbolic Annihilation* (Austin, 1984), which was based on his Social Upheaval in World War I: "Zoot-Suiters" and Servicemen in Los Angeles, 1943) Doctoral dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 1976); Mazon places the events in a national context and offers a psychological interpretation of the riots and the stereotype of the zoot-suiter. More recently, an analysis which does justice to the complex events and various themes has been ventured by Stuart Cosgrove, "The Zoot Suit and Style Warfare," Angela McRobbie (ed.), pp. 3-22.

[5] "Zoot Suits and Service Stripes: Race Tension Behind Riots," *Newsweek* 21 (June 21, 1943) pp. 35-40; "Beatrice Griffith, "The Pachuco Patois," *Common Ground* 7 (Summer 1947), pp. 77-84; and *American Me* (Boston 1948); George C. Barker, *Pachuco: An American-Spanish Argot and Its Social Functions in Tucson, Arizona* (Tucson, 1958) Haldeen Braddy, "The Pachucos and Their Argot," *Southern Folklore Quarterly* 14 (December 1960), pp. 255-71; Jacques E. Levy, *Cesar Chavez: Autobiography of La Causa* (New York, 1975), pp. 80-85.

[6] Wilbur "Buck" Clayton and Nancy Miller Elliott, *Buck Clayton's Jazz World* (New York, 1986), pp. 30-65; Red Callender and Elaine Cohen, *Unfinished Dream: The Musical World of Red Callender* (London, 1985), pp. 45, 28-81; Callender recalled: "All the bands were coming through and all the movie stars went 'slumming' on Central Avenue because that's where the jazz was happening. You'd see Mercedes-Benz, Cadillacs, Bentleys; people like Mae West, Barrymore, John Steinbeck, Stepin' Fetchit. . .Bill 'Bojangles'

Robinson.. . ." Marshall Royal, known for his work in the Count Basie sax section in the 1950s, and Lee Young (brother of Lester Young) interviews, Jazz Oral History Project, Institute of Jazz Studies, Rutgers University (Newark, N.J.); both musicians chronicle their early years in Los Angeles. Ellington trombonist Lawrence Brown was also interviewed and his recollections are invaluable for recreating this period in the city's music history. Central Avenue Sounds, Special Collections, Research Library, UCLA, consists of a number of interviews with musicians who knew and participated in Central Avenue night life in the 1930s and 1940s.

[7] Sucheng Chan, Douglas Henry Daniels, Mario T. Garcia, and Terry P. Wilson, *Peoples of Color in the American West* (Lexington, 1994) on minorities in the region. On the Los Angeles background, Carey McWilliams, *Southern California Country: An Island on the Land* (New York, 1946) and Robert M. Fogelson, *The Fragmented Metropolis, Los Angeles, 1850-1939* (Cambridge, 1967); Carey McWilliams, *North From Mexico: The Spanish-Speaking People of the United States* (New York, 1968 ed.) is an older but still a good introduction to the history and life of Mexicans and Mexican-Americans in the Southwest. Carey McWilliams, "Race Tensions: Second Phase," *Common Ground* 4 (Autumn, 1943), pp. 7-12, discusses the activities of conservative elements which preached racial hatred and fomented discord in the West. On right wing and Nazi groups which played the same role in the east, Shogan and Craig, *Detroit Race Riot*, pp. 26-28, also Thurgood Marshall, "The Gestapo in Detroit," *Crisis* 51 (August, 1943), 232-33, 246-47. See Richard Griswold del Castillo, *La Familia: Chicano Families in the Urban Southwest, 1848 to the Present* (Notre Dame, 1984); Romo Ricardo, *East Los Angeles: A History of A Barrio* (Austin, 1983); and Mario T. Garcia, *Desert Immigrants: The Mexicans of El Paso, 1880-1920* (New Haven, 1981) and *Mexican-Americans: Leadership, Ideology, and Identity, 1930-1960* (New Haven, 1989).

[8] Report of the Los Angeles Committee for American Unity, as quoted in Solomon J. Jones, *Government Riots*, p. 42.

[9] Don Thomas Sine, Zoot-Suit Riots of Los Angeles, 1943: A New Perspective (Master's thesis, California State University, Long Beach, 1976), pp. 1-3, gives these figures; in addition, 500 people—sailors, civilians, Mexican Americans—were arrested but not charged. According to "Zoot Suits," *Newsweek*, p. 36, 94 civilians and 18 servicemen were listed as "seriously injured," while 94 civilians and 20 servicemen were arrested.

[10] "Zoot Suits and Service Stripes" *Newsweek*, p. 39.

[11] Anonymous, "Zoot-Suit Epidemic," *Science News Letter*, June 19, 1943, p. 388 claims a Detroit research group, led by Dr. Fritz Redl, viewed the phenomenon as a "social movement." Some of the best, and most critical, contemporary analyses of the June outbreaks are Thomas J. McCarthy, "Report from Los Angeles," *Commonwealth* 38 (June 1943), pp. 243-44 and Carey McWilliams, "The Zoot-Suit Riots," *New Republic* 108 (June 1943), pp. 818-20; McWilliams, *North*, pp. 238-58; and Beatrice Griffith, *America Me*, pp. 15-28. The War Productions Board banned the zoot suit to conserve material in March 1942; Sine, Zoot-Suit Riots of Los Angeles, 1943, p.3.

[12] Sine, pp. 17, 59-61 found evidence among the Papers of the Commandant of the Eleventh Naval District, Federal Archives, Laguna Nigel, Ca. on steps taken by the rear admiral to limit the servicemen's rioting; but the author also disclosed there was "no evidence available to ascertain if the Army actually prosecuted servicemen arrested during the riots;" Mauricio Mazon also used these documents.

[13] This is summarized in McWilliams, *North*, pp. 238-258; also see the file on the riots in the Carey McWilliams Collection, Special Collections, Research Library, UCLA.

[14] New York *PM* March 3, 1943 and California *People's World*, March 29, 1943 clippings in the Carey McWilliams file on zoot-suit riots.

[15] Ralph H. Turner and Samuel J. Surace, "Zoot-Suiters and Mexicans: Symbols in Crowd Behavior," *American Journal of Sociology* 62 (1956), pp. 14-24 examines the uses of the terms. The famous case was known as the Sleepy Lagoon Case. See the zoot-suit file in the Carey McWilliams Collection for newspaper articles and Mario Garcia, *Mexican-Americans*, pp. 171-72. Marilyn Domer, Zoot-Suit Riot, pp. 36-7, 59-62, 154-55 discusses the role of the press. On police-citizen relations in New York, Fogelson and Rubenstein (eds.), *Complete Report*, pp. 106-21 and Detroit, Shogan and Craig, *Detroit Race Riot*, pp. 45-59, 106-10.

[16] Letter to Editor, *Time* 41 (July 12, 1943), p. 8.

[17] *Ibid.*

[18] Significantly, "Filipino and Caucasian youths who affected the zoot-suit were not molested;" Report of the Los Angeles Committee for American Units, as quoted in Solomon J. Jones, *Government Riots*, p. 42.

[19] *The New Leader* article in the Carey McWilliams zoot-suit file, UCLA. Mario Garcia, *Mexican-Americans*, pp. 168-72 discusses the Sinarquista movement. Mazon, Social Upheaval, pp. 195-196. On the controversial Senator Tenney, Neal Gabler, *An Empire of Their Own: How the Jews Invented Hollywood* (New York, 1988), pp. 380-81; he was head of a state legislative committee to investigate subversion during the war.

[20] *New York Times*, June 16, 1943, p. 8; Solomon J. Jones, *Government Riots*, pp. 38-40. See "Draftee's Prayer," in *The Afro-American*, June 16, 1943, and quoted in Merze Tate, "The War Aims of World War I and World War II and Their Relation to the Darker Peoples of the World," *Journal of Negro Education* 22 (1943), p. 530.

[21] A member of the Foreign Relations Bureau [!] of the Los Angeles Sheriff's Office, Ed. Duran Ayres, presented his ideas on racial heritage in a report in 1942. See Appendix A, Solomon J. Jones, *Government Riots*, pp. 85-88.

[22] Shogan and Craig, *Detroit Race Riot*, p. 106; Duane Robinson, *Chance to Belong: Story of L.A. Youth Project, 1943-49* (New York, 1949) on the youth programs that served as a model for numerous communities.

[23] George I. Sanchez, "Pachucos in the Making," *Common Ground* 4 (Autumn 1943), pp. 13-20.

[24] *Ibid.*; Carey McWilliams, "Los Angeles Pachuco Gangs," *New Republic* 108 (January 1943), pp. 76-77; Emory Bogardus, "Gangs of Mexican-American Youth," *Sociology and Social Research* 28 (September-October 1943), pp. 55-65; and "The Mexican Immigrant and Segregation," *American Journal of Sociology* 13 (July 1930), pp. 74-80; Ruth D. Tuck, *Not With the Fist: Mexican-Americans in a Southwest City* (New York, 1946), and "Behind the Zoot-Suit Riots," *Survey Graphic* 32 (August 1943), pp. 313-16; Mario T. Garcia, *Desert Immigrants; Robinson, Chance to Belong* on the social programs that resulted after the war. Kenneth B. Clark and James Barker, "The Zoot Effect in Personality: A Race Riot Participant," *The Journal of Abnormal Psychology* 40 (April 1945), pp. 143-48 is a singular and humorous report of a youth's involvement in the Harlem riot (in his own words) and Clark's sober assessment of the effects of discrimination on personality.

[25] Clipping, probably from the *Pittsburgh Courier*, June 1943, in the Carey McWilliams UCLA file on zoot-suits; Chester Himes, "Zoot Riots Are Race Riots" *Crisis* 3 (May, 1944), pp. 159-74.

[26] Clipping, probably from the *Pittsburgh Courier*, June 1943, in the Carey McWilliams Collection of articles on microfilm, Research Library, UCLA.

[27] On the cover-up, see Mauricio Mazon, Social Upheaval (Ph.D. dissertation, UCLA, 1976), pp. 91-138. See Karl Holton, "Delinquency in Wartime," Solomon J. Jones, *Government Riots*, Appendix B, pp. 89-95. Valborg Birkeness and Harry C. Johnson, "A Comparative Study of Delinquent and Non-Delinquent Adolescents," *Journal of Educational Research* 42 (April 1949), pp. 551-72 gives an idea of the state of knowledge and research on delinquency in enlightened circles at that time. One of the rather interesting results was the observation that delinquents were half as likely to repeat a grade in school as non-delinquents. Louis F. Harvey, "Delinquent Mexican Boy," *Journal of Educational Research* 42 (April 1949), pp. 573-85 also affords a sense of the state of research in 1949.

[28] Solomon J. Jones, *Government Riots* and Mauricio Mazon, *The Zoot-Suit Riots* are quite critical of the authorities, especially the officers and the press. Also, see the report of the Los Angeles Committee for American Unity, which found fault with the authorities, in Solomon Jones, *Government Riots*, Appendix D, pp. 101-105.

[29] *New York Times*, June 11, 1943, p. 21; *Los Angeles Daily News*, March 2 and March 22, 1943, in Carey McWilliams UCLA file. *Down Beat* 9 (September 15, 1942), p. 18. *New York Times*, June 11, 1943, p. 21; *Los Angeles Daily News*, March 2 and March 22, 1943, in Carey McWilliams UCLA file. The photograph of "Boys in Zoot Suits" in Stuart Cosgrove, "The Zoot Suit," in Angela McRobbie (ed.), p. 4, is incorrectly labeled, as these are clearly young boys wearing formal dress coats with tails, vests, and top hats that they obtained during a Harlem riot; in Dominic Capeci, what appear to be the same youths are photographed in the hands of the law and "being brought into the 28th precinct station house." Steve Chibnall, "Whistle and Zoot," pp. 56-81 discusses the effects of the zoot suit and American postwar fashion on English styles and customs, the English version's associations with racketeers and hoodlums, and connections with West Indian immigrants of the 1950s and the Teddy Boys of the 1960's.

[30] See Angela McRobbie, p. 6 on Clyde Duncan, a New Yorker from Georgia who appeared wearing a zoot suit in the New York *Times* June 11, 1943, p. 21, and was given credit for the style. Bruce Tyler, pp. 23-4, 29. Reformer George C. Barker claimed the pachuco youth adopted the fad from Filipinos; *Pachuco*,

p. 22. *PM*, June 13, 1943; clipping, "Theories on Origins of Zoots" in Carey McWilliams UCLA file. *New York Times*, June 11, 1943, p. 21; *Los Angeles Times*, March 22, 1943. *Down Beat* 9 (April 1, 1942), pp. 9 and 10; *Down Beat* 9 (October 15, 1942), p. 10.

[31] "Theories on Origin of Zoots," Carey McWilliams UCLA file. See Malcolm X's recollections, Haley, pp. 52-3. *California Eagle*, August 10, 1944, p. 21.

[32] See Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man* (New York, 1952) (Signet edition), pp. 380-81. In this memorable episode when Harlem exploded, the protagonist accompanies some rioters. Rather than youth, they are mature men, determined, organized enough to clear out and burn their tenement death trap as well as the stores that they first systematically looted, and to exchange gun fire with policemen. Their leader, Dupree, expresses similar ideas to those Horace Cayton heard from zoot-suiters; *ibid.*, p. 473. Frank Marshall Davis, *Livin' the Blues*, John Edgar Tidwell (ed.), (Madison, 1992), p. 49.

[33] Ralph S. Banay, "A Psychiatrist Looks At the Zoot Suit," *Probation* 22 (February, 1944), pp. 81-5.

[34] *Afro-Cuban Jazz* (Verve 20-2522) is a good example of this fusion of big band jazz and Afro-Cuban rhythms and instruments by the above-named artists. *People's World*, March 29, 1943, in Carey McWilliams file.

[35] *Los Angeles Times*, June 15, 1943, clipping in Carey McWilliams UCLA file; David Wary, clipping from *Racial Digest*, July 1943, p. 4, *ibid.* Marshall and Jean Stearns, *Jazz Dance: the Story of American Vernacular Dance* (New York, 1979), pp. 321-24, on Harlem's Savoy Ballroom and the origins of the popular dance, the Lindy.

[36] Fritz Redl, "Zoot Suits," *Survey Midmonthly* (October 1943), p. 4 in Carey McWilliams UCLA file.

[37] Redl, "Zoot Suits," *Survey Midmonthly*, p. 259.

[38] *Ibid.*, pp. 259-60. Melville J. Herskovits, *The Myth of the Negro Past* (New York, 1941), which discussed the existence and significance of Africanisms in the New World, appeared about this time.

[39] Redl., p. 260; Marshall and Jean Stearns, pp. 321-24. Douglas Henry Daniels, "Lester Young: Master of Jive," *American Music* 3 (Autumn, 1985), pp. 313-28 on jazz slang and its importance in the life of a tenor saxophonist known for his innovations and influence in this idiom.

[40] Mechel Sobel, *Trabelin' On: The Slave Journey to An Afro-Baptist Faith* (Princeton, 1988), pp. 140-44. Leonard Barrett, *Soul Force: African Heritage in Afro-American Religion* (Garden City, N.J., 1974) discusses the musical aspects of African religion, while John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (Garden City, N.J. 1970) examines the cosmology. See also John Miller Chernoff, *African Rhythm and African Sensibility: Aesthetics and Social Action in African Musical Idioms* (Chicago, 1979); Migene Gonzalez-Whippler, *Santeria: African Magic in Los Angeles* (New York, 1973) and *Santeria: The Religion: A Legacy of Faith, Rites, and Magic* (New York, 1989); and Karen McCarthy Brown, *Mama Lola: A Voodoo Priestess in Brooklyn* (Berkeley, 1991). In Haley, *Autobiography*, pp. 57-70, Malcolm X recounts his years as a dancer in terms similar to those outlined in this essay. See also Douglas Henry Daniels, "Schooling Malcolm: Malcolm Little During the Golden Age of Jazz," James B. Gwynne (ed.), *Malcolm X: Justice Seeker* (New York, 1993), pp. 45-58.

[41] Redl, "Zoot Suits," p. 260. Richard O. Boyer, "Bop," *The New Yorker* 24 (July 3, 1948), p. 20; "Moslem Musicians," *Ebony* 8 (April 1953), p. 107.

[42] Redl, "Zoot Suits," p. 260. Redl's four types were the jitterbugger; those for whom the suit itself declared independence; those who were not individualistic, but rather group-oriented, for whom the suit was the symbol "of a genuine and spontaneous youth movement;" and finally, those for whom it was a disguise for gang and delinquent behavior.

[43] Jacques E. Levy, *Cesar Chavez*, p. 81.

[44] George C. Barker, *Pachuco*, pp. 23-4.

[45] Barker, *Pachuco*, pp. 23-4.

[46] Barker, *Pachuco*, p. 21; Polkinhorn, Velasco, and Lambert, *El Libro de Calo: The Dictionary of Chicago Slang:* rev. ed., 1986), p. 46, suggests the term "pachuco" might have originated from Pachuca, a city in the state of Hidalgo. See also Adolfo Ortega, *Calo Tapestry* (Berkeley, 1977) on Calo.

[47] Barker, pp. 21-3.

[48] *Ibid.*, p. 23.

[49] *Ibid.*, pp. 25-33.

[50] In the 1980's the zoot suit, its links with music culture, slang, urban riots, and youthful rebellion was revived. Playwright Luis Valdez's play and Hollywood film, "Zoot Suit," utilized the 1942 Sleepy Lagoon trial transcripts, the Pachuco argot, Lalo Guerrero's songs, and a character, "El Pachuco," who was both a

commentator on the action and a kind of chorus, in his depiction of a Mexican American family's life on the Los Angeles scene in 1943. Luis Valdez, *Zoot Suit and Other Plays*, (Houston, 1992). About the same time, a dictionary of Chicano slang was issued, both legitimizing the argot and popularizing it, bringing it and the Pachuco once again to the forefront of popular culture and Chicano consciousness; Harry Polkinhorn, Alfredo Velasco, and Malcolm Lambert, *El Libro de Calo: The Dictionary of Chicano Slang* (Floricanto Press 1986, rev. ed.) (its 1983 subtitle was *Pachuco Slang Dictionary*).

[51] Haley, *Autobiography*, p. 117.

[52] *Ibid.*, p. 135.

[53] Babs Gonzales, *I Paid My Dues: Good Times—No Bread* (East Orange, N.J., 1967); pp. 17-22, 25-29.

[54] Redl, "Zoot-Suit," p. 261; Haldeen Braddy, "The Pachucos and Their Argot," discusses this group in the 1950's. Joan W. Moore *et al.*, *Homeboys: Gangs, Drugs, and Prison in the Barrios of Los Angeles* (Philadelphia, 1978) analyzed the experiences of gang members. Huey P. Newton, *Revolutionary Suicide* (New York, 1974 ed.), pp. 40, 43, and 61; "When I saw how much [Sonny Man] was respected on the block, I began to spend most of my time there, at first in the little gangs we had in school . . . but later in the pool hall and bars. For a long time I was attracted to this way of life, until I discovered it was not what it seemed;" p. 43; the photograph in question is to be found in the hardback copy of this book.

[55] On the "bad nigger," see Lawrence Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom* (New York, 1977), pp. 407-20; Barker, pp. 35-7; Earl Conrad (ed.), *Dan Burley's Original Handbook of Harlem Jive* (New York, 1944); Gonzales, pp. 30-32; Hawes, pp. 33-4.

[56] Barker, pp. 35-7.

[57] *Ibid.* The frankness and nihilism of such songs are noteworthy—a marked contrast with most popular "moon and spoon" songs of the 1940's. Even bad man ballads were less frank about drugs on popular recordings if not in other circumstances.

[58] *Ibid.*, pp. 25-33.

[59] Levy, *Chavez*, p. 82.

[60] *Ibid.*

[61] *Ibid.*, p. 83.

[62] Hawes, pp. 8-9; Hawes contrasted his generation of rebels with those of the 1960s: "The kids rebelling with their music today got a whole Woodstock nation behind them."

[63] Stearns, pp. 318-19.

[64] A zoot-suit hero, none other than Lil Abner, figured in the comic strip of that name for several weeks before the Los Angeles riot. This Al Capp cartoon actually prefigured what occurred in Southern California and several urban areas. Mauricio Mazon discussed the connection between the cartoon and the behavior of servicemen and the public a few weeks later. His psychohistorical interpretation stresses the ritualistic cast to the behavior, comparing the degradation of zoot-suiters with what the servicemen recently experienced as new recruits. In exploring aspects of the nation's psychology and of popular culture, he shows that there are still layers of meaning in the riot that need to be examined. Mauricio Mazon, Social Upheaval, pp. 168-74.

[65] Redl, "Zoot Suits," p. 260 uses the expression "hip," which must be one of its earliest uses in scholarly literature.

[66] Jim Burns, "I Am An Unrepentant Be-Bopper," *Jazz Monthly* # 174 (August 1969), p. 4; Carroll added "the dark glasses, drape suits, and other paraphernalia were a youthful indulgence and needn't be taken seriously . . . but mine luckily led to better things. If a noted jazzman mentioned a book, or there was a reference to a poet in a jazz magazine, I was interested." Ironically, the books which came to dominate his life made him "suspicious of the limitations of jazz-life philosophy;" *ibid.* After completing this essay, I learned of Eric Lott, "Double V, Double-Time: Bebop's Politics of Style," *Callaloo* No. 36 Vol. 11 # 3 (Summer 1988), pp. 597-605, which develops ideas similar to Carroll's.