

The Zoot Suit

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Introduction

Between the early 1920s to the 1940s, the Zoot Suit was a style which created major controversy among a wide span of ethnic groups and cultures. Zoot suits have wide-leg, tight-cuffed, pegged pants and a long coat with oversized lapels and thick padding on the shoulders and are worn by mostly males at the time. It was common for people of many races and ethnicities to dress in this way because it not only brought forward a strong political meaning, but it was also granted the youth with the pleasure of providing a major fashion statement by looking good and sharp during these times.

Origin of Zoot Suit

The geographic origin of the Zoot Suit was an African American comedy show during the 1930s, popularized by the singers in the jazz genre. The suits had initially been linked with the African American communities like Harlem, Detroit, and Chicago during the 1930s but popularized nationwide by their jazz musicians during the 1940s. Its popularity mainly included the Riots by the Zoot Suit, commonly being associated with murders of the Sleepy Lagoon, which took place in the August of 1942 (Rios, 2018). The Sleepy Lagoon had been among one of the more enormous reservoirs located outside Los Angeles made popular by the fact that it was the swimming pool used Mexican youth who were not allowed to use segregated public pools.

Being known as a popular recreational ground for Mexican communities the Sleepy Lagoon soon became not only a place of recreation but an open ground of gangs to confront each other and fight. So much so that these fights eventually lead to many deaths like Jose Diaz's death, for example, a partygoer who lived near the Sleepy Lagoon. Which caused a public outcry that was against subject zoot-suiters, one that was fueled by the local tabloids.

Zoot Suit Popular Culture

The Zoot Suit finds its popular culture references as a symbol of resistance from the Mexican American people. It can be noted how after the riots, the local media and LAPD remained committed to making sure American Mexicans were not being unscathed. After the riots, the city came with a clear subject stance in the group, one that, to the zoot suit, represented both galls in the Mexican youth and the threat coming with criminality (Education & Days, 2017). The attacks from the off-the-block military men on the communities for 1943 came with the chance for blatant violence in the zoot suiters. Although the police can only have sanctioned the subject attacks, the city's media endorsed them shamelessly, leading to more popularity of the sect.

The ending of the zoot suit

Even though, the craze of the zoot suit ended dead, it was not without the claim of someplace in history, along with a subject symbol of resistance in the course of the period of the spiral tensions between races in America. The significance of the zoot suit style mainly came from people wearing the style for a range of different reasons. The style had many meanings including the pleasure of looking good, sharp and belonging to a part of youth in those years of World War II in America. The zoot suit needed to be looked at solely as some costume that conveyed political resistance (Rios, 2018). One of the reasons the zoot suit invoked riots during World War II was that at the time, the sect became illicit among the white community, even with many Mexican Americans serving in the US military in high numbers.

Conclusion

As the rioting subsided, Governor Earl Warren of California authorized the formation of a citizens' team to investigate and discover the reason for the Zoot Suit Riots (Rios, 2018).

According to the committee's findings, various reasons contributed to the protests. Still, racism was the root cause, and the LAPD's reaction to it, as well as sensationalized media coverage, aggravated it (Rios, 2018). Worried about the town's reputation being tarnished by the riots, Los Angeles Mayor Fletcher Bowron came to his conclusion, claiming that racial discrimination was not a component, and those young offenders were responsible for the violence.





(The search for an authentic Zoot Suit, 2021)

URL [LACMA](#)



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