

LA

PACHUCADA

A brief history on the Zoot Suiter,

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/ el Don News

P*achuco* was a self-given name for Mexican American youth in the late 1930s. Filling the broad shouldered jacket, high-waisted balloon legged trousers tapered at the ankle, complemented with the pocket watch chain and classic fedora, el Pachuco embraced a **new identity**. A culture distinct from both American and Mexican traditions. The Zoot Suit became the emblem of that new culture, one seen as unpatriotic by many Anglo Americans.

Almost erased from history, the **Zoot Suit riots** shaped Chicano history in incomprehensible ways. Now, the Pachuco is a symbol of pride for Chicanos and all who connect with the notion, "**Ni de aqui, ni de alla.**"



Photo by Gordon Parks.

ZOOT SUIT

The influence of the Zoot Suit still radiates with pride to this day. Mexican American youth and the generations after the Zoot Suit riots are proof that La Lucha was always worth it.

DEFINITIONS

PACHUCO/A refers to members of the Zoot Suit counterculture. An identity embraced by Mexican Americans in the U.S. from 1930 to now.

ZOOT SUIT is the garment worn by Pachucos. Attire includes high-waisted trousers, long coat with padded shoulders, a fedora with a long colored feather and a pocket watch.

SLEEPY LAGOON was a famous hang-out spot used by Mexican American youth who were banned from local pools. Its location became relevant in 1942.

CHICANO/A refers to Mexican Americans whose identity strays away from the Anglo-Saxon narrative.

"UNPATRIOTIC" was a term used against Zoot Suiters as a way to demonize the subculture.

CALÓ is the slang used by Zoot Suiters and Chicanos. It is a mix of Hispanicized English and Anglicized Spanish. Still used now.



The Zoot Suiters were influenced by a new clothing trend often related to the Jazz/swing clubs of Harlem, New York. The number one proponent of the Zoot Suit was Cab Calloway, a famous African-American entertainer.

The style was popularized by Calloway during the Harlem Renaissance. Calloway used the baggy trousers, long coat, pocket watch and chain to dramatize his movements.

Photo from The New York Public Library Digital Collections.

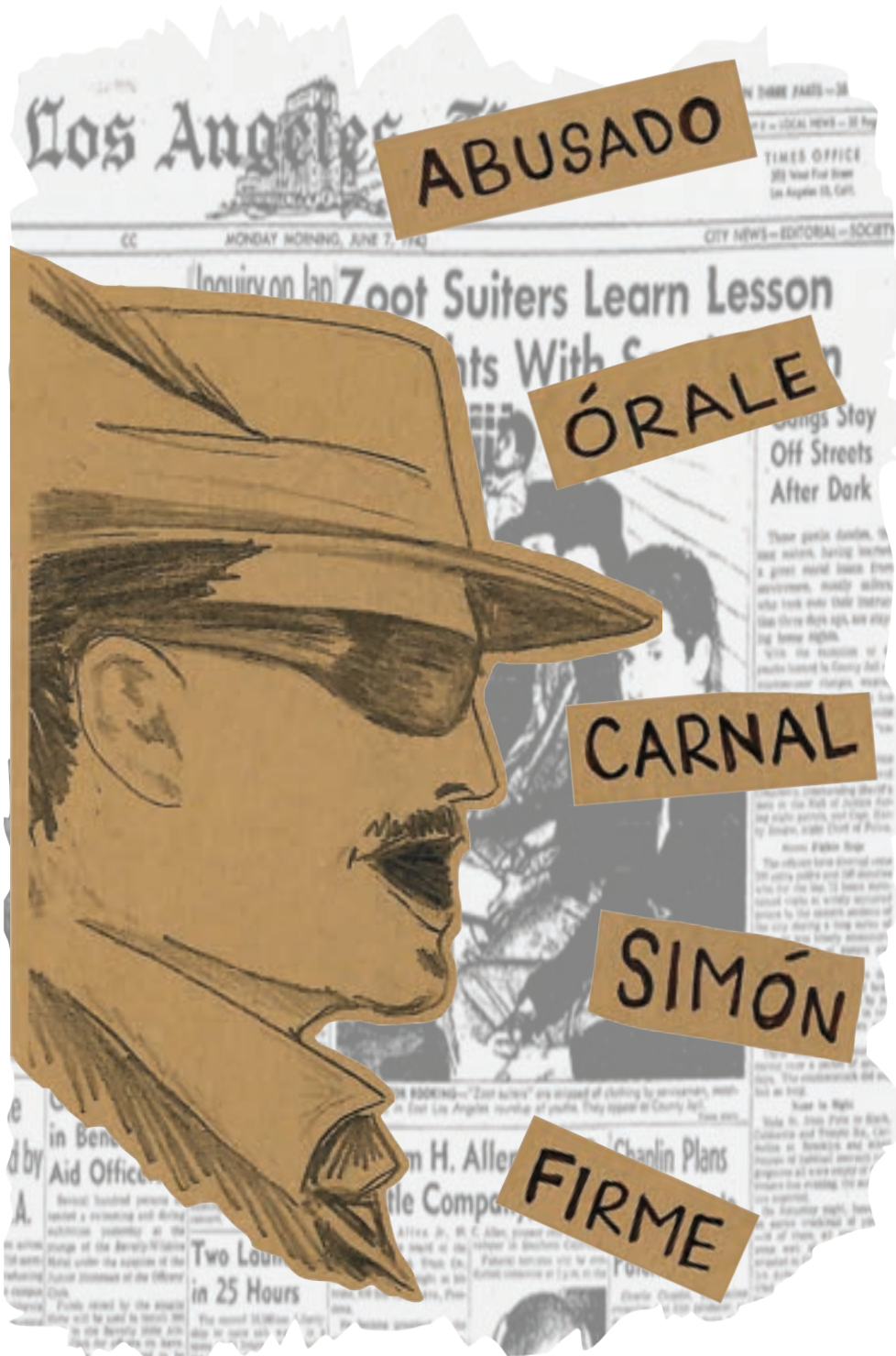
EAST → WEST



CALÓ

Chicano barrio language or, Calo, is a mix of Hispanicized English and Anglicized Spanish. It was a newly introduced way to communicate among Mexican American youth in the 1930s. A few words can be traced to the Nahuatl language of the Mexicas.

Expressions vary by neighborhood.



ÁGUILA: be alert

FRESA: preppy girl

AGUAS: be careful

GÜACHA: "watch"

A TODA MADRE: fantastic

GÜEY: homeboy or idiot

BRONCA: trouble

HYNA: girl or girlfriend

CARNAL(A): brother/sister

LA NETA: the truth

ÉSE/A: cholo/a or dude

ÓRALE: "right on"

FIRME: cool or "hip"

SIMÓN: yes

AN ACT OF REBELLION



**“Ni de aqui,
ni de alla”**

was a sentiment felt by millions of Mexican Americans trying to find their place in the U.S. They were neglected by Western society and deemed as “not Mexican enough” by their families.

In response, Mexican American youth birthed a new identity, one exempt from Anglo-Saxon ideals.

The media saw this newfound culture as an act of rebellion.

The Zoot Suits became illegal for their overuse of cloth during WWII where cloth and fabric were scarce along with labor. In having the Pachucos wear oversized garments to rebel against modern culture, Anglos deemed them unpatriotic.

'SLEEPY LAGOON TRIAL

SLEEPY LAGOON MURDER

The officers said the license number of Leyvas' car corre- were acquitted of murder charges and five were held on assault



Times photo

AT SHOWUP—Henry R. Leyvas, left, figure in "Sleepy Lagoon" murder case, and Ray Obregon at police showup in investigation of gasoline coupon robbery.

sponded to one which Arthur Sage, truck driver for the Wiltshire Oil Co., reported as the number of the car whose occupants held him up at gun point Friday, robbing him of 900 gas ration stamps.

Sage said the car stopped beside his truck as he waited for a traffic signal at Washington Blvd. and Telegraph Road, East Los Angeles, and one of the

charges only. Three, including Leyvas, were convicted of first-degree murder and sentenced to life in San Quentin prison. Nine others were convicted of second-degree murder.

In October, 1944, the District Court of Appeal in a 121-page decision written by Associate Justice Thomas P. White reversed the conviction and the prosecution dismissed the charg-

On the outskirts of Los Angeles, there was a small water reservoir known as Sleepy Lagoon.

It was sometimes used as a swimming pool by young kids.

Pachucos were involved in a brawl near the Sleepy Lagoon reservoir on Aug. 1, 1942 leaving one dead, Jose Diaz. He was a gang member of the 38th Street gang.

Public outrage followed his death, along with the immediate criminalization of the Zoot Suiters.

The Los Angeles Police Department rounded up "more than 600 young men and women, most of whom were Mexican American" (George Coroian 2022).

Henry Leyvas and twenty-one members of the 38th Street had been in the area that night and were then blamed.

The media sensationalized the incident and thus made Mexican Americans and Pachucos a common enemy---calling them gangsters and criminals.



ZOOT SUIT RIOTS

U.S. Servicemen attacked Mexican Americans in the streets.



Top: U.S. Servicemen beat up Mexican American youth after the Sleepy Lagoon murder. Photo by Anthony Potter.

Left: Luis Verdusco was injured during the Zoot Suit riots. Photo by Los Angeles Daily News.

With the slow but inevitable development of a new culture, Mexican American youth were classified as gangsters and rebels.

Shortly after the Sleepy Lagoon murder, American Sailors claimed they had been verbally taunted by Pachucos. Thereafter, U.S. servicemen infiltrated the Mexican American barrios and attacked Zoot Suiters.

They burned and stripped them of their Zoot Suits.

Rioting continued in the streets for days after, bringing military police to the barrios. The newspapers inflated the riots and made Pachucos the perpetrator.

From the riots, those arrested were Mexican and African American men. The response from the media and the U.S. showed clear anti-Mexican sentiments.



FROM 38TH GANG

Young women from 38th Street stand in a lineup following a police capture which resulted in multiple arrests. They were arrested for refusing to testify against the Mexican American men who were also arrested. They were sent to the Ventura School for Girls, a women's reformatory without the benefit of a trial.

Pictured from left to right: Betty Ziess, Ann Kalustian, Frances Silva, unknown, Lorena Encinas, Dora Barrios, Josefina "Josephine" Gonzales, and Juanita "Jennie" Gonzales. Photograph dated August 5, 1942. The caption that goes along with it reads "Mexican gangsterettes in show up."

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