

Crossing the Colour Lines in the City of Angels: The NAACP and the Zoot-Suit Riot of 1943

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On Thursday June 3rd 1943, Navy personnel based at the Chavez Ravine Naval Reserve Training School in Los Angeles launched a series of attacks on young Mexican American men living in the area. Initially, the servicemen targeted Mexican American adolescents wearing zoot-suits (broad shouldered, thigh-length jackets and baggy trousers, tapered at the ankle), beating and stripping them. By the weekend, the Los Angeles Police Department had arrested over 60 zoot-suiters.¹ Zoot-suiters were viewed by the servicemen, the police and the local white press as an interchangeable term with *Pachuco* gangs. These groups of second generation Mexican Americans were seen as a dangerous, disloyal criminal element in the city in need of a lesson in respect. Yet not all *Pachucos* wore zoot-suits, and not all zoot-suit wearers were *Pachucos*.²

Over the next ten days, the servicemen and other military personnel on leave were joined by civilians in a hunt for further zoot-suiters. Many commandeered Taxis in their search. Violence spread to Long Beach, San Bernadino and San Diego and retaliation by zoot-suiters included the running over of a policeman and the stoning of a trainload of sailors.³ The atmosphere of vigilante violence was spurred on by local press stories such as 'Zooters planning to attack more servicemen ... Would jab broken bottle-necks into the faces of their victims ... Beating sailors' brains out with hammers also on the program'.⁴ When no zoot-suiters could be found, partly due to a resolution passed by the city council banning the wearing of the suits, the mobs attacked not only Mexican Americans but also African Americans.⁵

Analysis of the Zoot-Suit Riots in Los Angeles' black press highlights the fact that although the black community was not the primary target of violence, the riot was clearly viewed as part of a larger pattern which victimised the city's ethnic/racial minorities. Consequently, organisations representing these groups united to publicise the plight of the riot victims. The riots, and the response to them, raise questions of how Los Angeles' African American and Mexican American communities viewed each other. My examination of the events of June 1943 seeks to understand the extent to which these groups were prepared to work together to fight prejudice. It also forms part of broader work examining the role of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in a western city. By assessing the response of the local NAACP branch to this event, this paper will investigate how America's oldest existing Civil Rights organisation worked in a region without the clear-cut goals presented to branches in the South, and within a racially diverse community that differed from the ghettos of many northern cities.

Until the mid 1990s, study of the riots was pursued largely within the historiography of Mexican Americans. Studies by Mauricio Mazon, Edward Escobar and Eduardo Obregon Pagan have described the events as 'defin[ing] and entrench[ing] Mexican American Identity'.⁶ Their work has categorised the riots as providing a space to contest concepts of race, loyalty, social conformity and social geography between whites and Mexican Americans.⁷ This placing of the 'Zoot-Suit Riots' within a specific ethnic history is indicative of a vital element of the historiography of Los Angeles as a city. Historical construction of the city is still dominated by Robert Fogelson's conceptualisation of Los Angeles as *The Fragmented Metropolis*.⁸ The city is seen as centre-less and by implication, incapable of

being synthesised. One recent history of the city underlines this point by taking the form of an A to Z.⁹ This approach has led to a thin collection of volumes that have charted the city's history, and a broader number of texts that have either approached the city through various themes (literary, architectural, demographic) or from the perspective of a particular ethnic/racial/special interest group.¹⁰ These histories exist in parallel. Scholars make few connections between the different elements of the population.

The most notable attempt to reconceptualise ethnic/racial relations, and to intertwine the histories of different racial and ethnic groups in the city has been conducted in the work of George Sanchez. In *Becoming Mexican American*, Sanchez points out that the vast majority of Los Angeles' ethnic communities lived amongst each other in central and east Los Angeles. Ghetto boundaries were fluid and 'ethnic intermixing characterised most, but not all, central and east-side communities'.¹¹ These communities had existed in such a state from the start of the twentieth century. Whilst various groups may have been forced out (including the Chinese and the Japanese), or left as wealth and relative lack of racial hostility allowed them (most notably southern and eastern European immigrants), Mexican Americans and African Americans continued to share overlapping community spaces and bore the brunt of racial prejudice. Sanchez's approach breaks the pattern of Mexican American and African American historiography whilst mapping out an altogether more complex model for historians to wrestle with. Rather than dealing with W.E.B. Du Bois's concept of 'the color line', Sanchez has presented the ethnic racial history of Los Angeles as a series of intersecting color lines, and at each intersection differing class and gender relationships have affected the outcome.¹²

Two recent works on the 'Zoot-Suit Riot' and the broader notion of inter-racial activity during the Second World War have followed this approach and argued that the events acted as an area of cross-cultural and social engagement that led to a building of links between the two communities. Douglas Henry Daniels has argued that the sharing of the zoot-suit between African American and Mexican American youth suggests that there was a 'veneer of ethnic sophistication' operating in Los Angeles, if only from the 'bottom up'.¹³ For Kevin Leonard, the response to the riots, rather than the clothes, formed the bridge between the two communities. Leonard presents evidence to suggest that the Second World War created the conditions for inter-racial co-operation. He argues that the influx of minorities into Los Angeles from 1942 onward, caused by the massive growth in production in war industries, gave activists from all minorities a chance to create a united platform to fight discrimination.¹⁴ Leonard argues that the black press in the city, most notably the *California Eagle*, became increasingly concerned about the plight of Mexican Americans, relating their problem to the black community.¹⁵ He also presents evidence of the NAACP's involvement in fighting back in the midst of the riots, when the branch President, Thomas Griffith Jr, sent telegrams to both the President and the State Governor, and of its leaders' involvement in inter-racial bodies designed to protest against the discrimination.¹⁶ He argues that the response to the zoot-suit riots heralded the start of a process of inter-racial co-operation wherein black leaders recognised the possibilities of inter-ethnic/racial co-operation.

By arguing that the war acted as a means of creating solidarity between different communities in Los Angeles, Leonard eschews evidence from both before and after the war that indicates that this event created an exception to a broader rule; that the activities of the Los Angeles NAACP were motivated primarily by self-interest rather than any feeling of inter-racial affinity. Here was a branch that only acted to support another community when its interests were threatened, in this case by the beating of African Americans in Watts and on Central Avenue. Examining relations between the NAACP, the middle-class black community it represented, working-class African Americans and Mexican Americans over a

period of twenty years, there is little evidence to suggest that the branch was concerned with prejudice against other groups, unless it affected black middle-class interests, or could further the Association's aims.

That the NAACP did form alliances with other organisations at the local level during this period is clear from the (equally fragmented) historiography of NAACP branches that has been slowly constructed over recent years. Although branches have acted as a key source of funding and activists for the Association (Ella Baker called their work 'the life blood of the Association'), the national history of NAACP branch activism remains incomplete.¹⁷ This incomplete picture is due to a number of factors. The sheer size and scale of the Association's branch portfolio, combined with the varying longevity of certain branches and the scale of action (or in-action) by others has made the role of such branches hard to quantify. Further research has also been retarded partly by the belief shared by many in the academy that the NAACP has a heritage too conservative to make it worthy of study. From the foundation of the first branch in New York in 1910, only a year after the National Association had voted itself into existence, the number of branches grew steadily so that by 1919, there were 317. From thereon, branch numbers and membership fluctuated. Factors such as economic depression and the change in circumstances brought about by the Second World War saw branch numbers shrink, then expand rapidly. For example, the branch membership of Houston, Texas rose from 5,679 in 1943 to 12,700 in 1945, before starting to shrink again.¹⁸

Of the texts within the NAACP historiography covering branches, several analyse the creation of alliances formed across class and race boundaries in the fight for black equality during the 1930s and 1940s. August Meier and Elliott Rudwick's study of the Detroit branch demonstrates how the local NAACP united with unions of the CIO to fight discrimination in car factories during the period.¹⁹ Adam Fairclough has shown how Louisiana branches allied themselves with churches, masonic orders and other social groups (most of whom were African American) to fight prejudice across the state.²⁰ Christopher Robert Reed's study of the Chicago branch has also demonstrated how, by 1943, the city's branch was allying with labour unions to fight discrimination.²¹ These studies, amongst others, demonstrate that NAACP branches were capable of forming alliances to fight discrimination. However we still do not have a broad enough group of studies to understand whether all branches followed this approach, and what factors led some branches to embrace inter-organisational alliances and others not to.

In examining the 'Zoot-Suit Riots' and the response of the NAACP within this broader framework, I intend to demonstrate three points. Firstly, that the race-centric, middle-class structure and composition of the NAACP, working within a fractured black Los Angeles, mitigated against interaction with both the broader black community and other minorities. I will additionally argue that branch policy in relation to the disturbances was governed by a reactive, conservative streak that reflected elements of both local and national policy. Finally, I will argue that the impact of the riot on the branch was short-term, with no lasting inter-racial alliances being forged as a consequence.

The Los Angeles branch of the NAACP was founded in 1913. The initial composition of the group that founded the branch reflected the vision of a black 'Talented Tenth' Du Bois had set forth in *The Souls of Black Folk*. Du Bois had argued that African Americans required an educated bourgeoisie to raise the economic and political aspirations of the broader African American community as they climbed America's social, economic and political structures and ultimately gained an equal place at America's table. It was a dentist, John Somerville, who became the first branch president at the end of 1913. He was joined by 52 other representatives of the Los Angeles black middle-class, including lawyer E. Burton Ceruti, furniture dealer John Shackleford, Dr. Wilbur Gordon, and building contractor

Eugene Blodgett.²² All subscribed to the then radical, progressive manifesto that the NAACP's founders had outlined in 1909; fighting for black civil rights through a mixture of non-confrontational agitation and litigation.²³ The middle-class nature of the branch would be reflected in both its leaders (Somerville was succeeded by dentist cum lawyer H. Claude Hudson, who was in turn succeeded by lawyer Thomas L. Griffith) and in its programme. The key issues for the Los Angeles branch up to the start of the Second World War were residential segregation, racial discrimination in public places, fighting misrepresentation of African Americans in the film industry and defending those from the black community who had suffered at the hands of local justice.

The demographic structure of Los Angeles offered any civil rights group working in the city possibilities for inter-racial co-operation. Los Angeles' minorities lived largely in shared ghetto areas. In 1911, it had been possible for one of the city's black newspapers, *The Liberator*, to note: 'the Negroes of California are treated as citizens and are allowed to enjoy unmolested whatever he has [sic] honestly acquired'.²⁴ Such writing was in part responsible for the moderate rise in the black population. Black Angelenos counted for 7,599 of the city's population of 319,198 in 1910, 2.38% of the population. By 1920, they would account for 2.71%. The community proved small and relatively affluent.²⁵ Yet Los Angeles' Anglo population and city authorities responded to this growth, and to an increasingly 'racialised' climate nation-wide, by adopting prejudicial customs and laws from other areas of the United States.²⁶

In 1919, in line with the gradual growth of Los Angeles' black community, the California Supreme Court ruled that race restrictive residential covenants could be legally enforced to stop African Americans moving into white-owned property. The issue of covenants was a pressing one for the high percentage of homeowners amongst Los Angeles' small, affluent black community; 36.1% owned their own homes in 1910, the highest percentage in the country. One black resident noted in 1917 that black areas were being 'encircled by invisible walls of steel. The whites encircled us and made it impossible for us to go beyond these walls'.²⁷ Laurence De Graaf has argued that by 1920, such covenants had created what amounted to a 'spatial ghetto' for the city's African Americans with 'some of the social, economic, and psychological characteristics of a ghetto in the broader sense of the term'.²⁸

Yet as George Sanchez has noted, such 'ghettos' were not restricted to African Americans, but shared with significant populations of Mexican Americans, Japanese Americans, Russian Americans, Jews, and working-class whites. Despite sharing the same neighbourhoods and indignities of ghettoisation, middle-class African Americans responded to these problems from the perspective of racial self-interest.

If black Angelenos initially found the NAACP's platform out of touch or elitist (one member of the local community recalled that the branch was 'run by aristocrats'), alternative channels of expression and protest were open via a disparate network of black churches and social clubs. Two alternate activist groups founded in the early 1900s had floundered by the 1930s. Both the liberal Los Angeles Forum and the Los Angeles branch of Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) had failed to appeal to a broad enough section of the city's black population. Again, despite the inter-racial nature of ghettoisation, organisations were race-centric.²⁹

Where other cities across the United States had witnessed a rise in black union activism during the 1930s, the nature of African American labour in Los Angeles mitigated against large union membership. During the 1920s, the largest sector of African American employment in the city had been in the non unionised construction industry. A combination of racial prejudice and competition with Mexican Americans kept black Angelenos out of the

oil industry, agricultural and packing work. In 1940, only 17% of black men in the city were employed as labourers, 10% below the national average. Los Angeles' largest single group of black workers were the porters on local and regional rail and tram services, numbering below 80. Yet through a combination of age and antipathy, even this workforce with a national heritage of labour activism remained largely un-organised within the city. According to Josh Sides, many porters saw themselves as part of a middle-class elite, with too much to lose from union activism. This lack of an organised base of black working-class activism is one key factor that set Los Angeles apart from other 'northern' cities during the 1930s.³⁰

With Los Angeles black civil rights organisations fighting for equality with whites, little effort was made during the 1930s to ally with other minorities facing discrimination. Correspondence between the Los Angeles NAACP and national headquarters for the decade shows no awareness on the part of the branch of any possibility of 'common cause'. No response was offered from the branch when local and state government proposed a racialised solution to the economic depression; deportation of Mexicans. In that year, the state of California forbade the use of Mexicans on public works. In February and March, 3-4,000 Mexicans and Mexican Americans were detained for questioning by police in East Los Angeles and surrounding areas in the search for 'illegals'. In the following two months between 13,000 and 35,000 Mexicans and Mexican Americans were deported (many soon returned).³¹ Rather than being seen as a chance to help other exploited minorities, black Angelenos greeted removal of the Latino workforce as a chance to enter areas of the job market previously closed. In 1933, the *California Eagle* voiced fears that returning Mexicans might cause black unemployment to rise further.³² Arnold Shankman has noted that economic depression created a climate where class, not racial status, determined black-Latino relations.³³ It should be noted that a key Mexican American civil rights group, the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), also backed repatriation as it felt Mexican immigrants were damaging the racial status of Mexican American citizens. Despite the proximity of Los Angeles different minority groups to each other, and the shared nature of discrimination, issues of employment and race acted as divisions between African Americans and ethnic Mexicans.

It is clear that throughout the 1930s, the sole objective of the branch was protecting African Americans. Writing to national Director of Branches, Robert Bagnall in 1931, branch president H. Claude Hudson noted: 'We have continued to drive the principles of our organization home to *both groups* and our position here as a *race* is more secure now than it was ten years ago'.³⁴ The reference to 'both groups' underlines the point that the Los Angeles NAACP saw their fight in polarised black/white terms. The use of the term 'as a race' also points to a race consciousness that precluded working with other minority groups. As noted above, similar views were held by other middle-class 'race groups' such as the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) and LULAC.

Lack of involvement in the affairs of other minorities during the 1930s was also influenced by the impact of economic depression on the Association, internal splits, and the weight of cases the NAACP had to deal with based in its own community. The effect of the massive economic downturn on head office in New York led it to increase fundraising demands being placed on branches. The branch found it hard to cope. In 1931, Los Angeles managed to raise only \$284 for the National Office and \$19 toward the running of *The Crisis*.³⁵ In 1925, the branch, with only 274 members, had raised more than \$2,500 in a year.³⁶ By the end of 1933, Walter White was writing to the branch begging 'We need funds desperately ... Can't you think of some way that you and your fellow officers can raise some money before Christmas?'³⁷ Yet throughout the 1930s, the branch's numbers stayed below 2,000, and fundraising remained a problem.³⁸

Leadership struggles between former and current branch presidents proved a further distraction. Partisan campaigning during presidential elections and spats over local politics frequently brought leading members of the branch into open conflict. Bitterness amongst those leading the branch subsided with the election of a new president, Thomas Griffith, in 1935 (although the end of his presidency would prove even more rancorous). Yet this infighting within the branch over city and state politics proved another distraction to addressing issues of inter-racial co-operation.³⁹

Whilst financial concerns and internal politics were two factors that distracted the Los Angeles NAACP, it was the heavy caseload provided by acts of discrimination and prejudice specifically against the black community that was the biggest hindrance to work outside its natural constituency. Restrictive covenant cases, discrimination in restaurants, employment inequality in New Deal works programmes, cases of police brutality, and the desegregation of Los Angeles' public swimming pools, kept the branch busy throughout the 1930s.⁴⁰ Part of this new strategy was developed by Charles Houston and Thurgood Marshall in the Association's legal department, that saw court cases being fought where they would establish precedents of equality in law.⁴¹ Furthermore, new 'popular front' tactics were introduced that allowed branches to form alliances with unions and other groups to pursue local objectives.⁴² In relation to the plight of other minorities, Walter White used a speech in 1938 to urge 'action to wipe out bigotry based on racial hatred no matter who are the victims, nor where such bigotry and oppression exist'.⁴³ At a national level, the NAACP had signalled a preparedness to form alliances to fight racism. The response of the NAACP to the Zoot-Suit riot echoed that preparedness, but also demonstrated the limits of any co-operation.

The year before the riots, Los Angeles' NAACP and the black community it served, demonstrated again, the complex nature of race relations in the city. This time, the issue at stake was the forced re-location of the city's Japanese American population. In the aftermath of Executive Order 9066, and the clearing of the Japanese American community from the heart of Los Angeles, a community intermingled with African Americans, the branch said and did nothing. This was in large part due to a fear of being seen as disloyal to the war effort. Cheryl Greenberg has also argued that the branch must have seen internment as a distinct 'war' issue rather than a 'race' issue. Internment had to be justified by these branches on grounds of war security, she has argued; there is no other way to explain the lack of criticism of the racist actions of the U.S. War Department.⁴⁴ African Americans were quick to exploit their neighbours' misfortune for the sake of breaking out of the ghetto around Central Avenue. The 7,500 occupants of that area of Little Tokyo were soon replaced by African Americans, and the area renamed Bronzeville.⁴⁵ Charlotta Bass used the pages of the *California Eagle* to urge black Angelenos to take not just the houses, but also the businesses of Japanese Americans. As she asked rhetorically, 'If it must be lost to them, why shouldn't it fall into our hands?'⁴⁶ Here, a decision based on race was seen at first as a benefit. Japanese American misfortune was the black American's gain.

The history of racial/ethnic relations detailed above demonstrates that in the fight for equality and survival during the 1930s, the Los Angeles branch of the NAACP did not address the needs of other minorities oppressed by white racism. In the early 1940s, a number of factors came into play that caused a brief moment of unity: changes to Los Angeles' population brought about by the war, including an influx of white service personnel into the predominantly Mexican American area of East Los Angeles, a desire to show loyalty/gain reward by fully participating in the war effort: a shared sense of dissatisfaction that war conditions had not brought equality in the workplace for the two minorities: and a shared sense of injustice at a campaign conducted in the white press that vilified Mexican and black youth. It would, however, be the NAACP's response to racially motivated violence

that pushed it into alliance. For the duration of hostilities, the branch was prepared to work with others outside its normal sphere of influence.

The first confluence of the factors mentioned above occurred in the weeks prior to the riot. On May 24th, black defence worker Lenza Smith was shot dead by police. Branch President Griffith decided to respond to the killing in traditional NAACP style, by demanding judicial action and holding a meeting at a black church the following Sunday. This moderate response had a clear benefit in that it cooled tempers in the black community (*Eagle* headline, 'Police slaying incites near riot on East 52nd Pl.').⁴⁷ On Sunday May 30th, Griffith led a public meeting of 1,500 that included African Americans, Mexican Americans and union activists from the AFL and CIO. Here was the first sign of a black-Latino alliance. In his address, Griffith noted his concern at police brutality and joined other speakers in offering the following statement, 'There will be no riot in this community to divide and disrupt the war effort which must carry weapons to the black and white soldiers who offer blood sacrifices on every continent of the world'.⁴⁸ For Griffith, the aim of the meeting was to show loyalty to the United States, whilst attacking police brutality/violence against minorities; as long as both were required, the alliance would remain. The violence of the next month met those requirements.

The June 10th edition of the *Eagle* provides a useful counterpoint to the portrayals of the violence offered by the white press. Where the June 7th headline of the *Los Angeles Times* read 'Zoot Suiters Learn Lesson in Fights With Servicemen', the *Eagle's* June 10th edition (it was a weekly, published every Thursday) noted that a 16-year-old black youth, Joseph Nelson, had been dragged from a streetcar by service personnel and had his 'pants cut'.⁴⁹ Griffith used the paper again to affirm the loyal credentials of the city's minorities. He argued: 'It is certainly doing Hitler's job magnificently when the servicemen of this area can be organized to attack civilians whose brothers have fought gloriously on Bataan and Corregidor'.⁵⁰ For Griffith, the irony of the loyal minority in a time of war was key. During 1943 and 1944, branch leaders joined a series of inter-racial councils, all pushing for equal rights as a sign of loyalty.⁵¹

Further evidence that the Los Angeles NAACP was engaged in a spasm of inter-racial activism, rather than a fundamental change in practice or policy, can be seen in the June 17th *Eagle*. In the story 'Mob Victim's Eye Cut Out', the paper contained the advice of Griffith for the 23-year-old defence worker who had been disfigured; sue the city of Los Angeles for failing to protect his rights. Inside the paper is a story that hints at the false promise of the unity fostered by the riot. Under the headline 'NAACP Army of Democracy Recruits 2,000 members in 2 weeks', the article relates that the branch is building a 'gigantic vocal and militant people's organization' to deal with the problems created by war, and the ones that would follow peace. The interests of the race-centric branch, rather than the multi-racial alliance, appeared paramount.⁵²

These newspaper accounts demonstrate the Los Angeles branch reacting to the riot, making common cause with Mexican Americans, organising rallies and increasing membership. They do not show any deeper interest on the part of the NAACP in the plight of Mexican Americans. In 1945, Griffith did emphasise to the Los Angeles Jewish Community Council 'the importance of close co-operation between Negroes, Jews, and other racial and religious minorities'.⁵³ Yet the branch did not live up to this objective. The cross community bodies set up in the aftermath of the riot were gone by the war's end. The one notable involvement of the branch in an inter-racial context, in the school desegregation case *Westminster School District of Orange County, et al v. Gonzalo Mendez et al*, was purely as the local branch contact for the NAACP national legal team. It is ironic that the inter-racial

unity that typified the response to the events of June 1943 depended on the racist actions of the Los Angeles Police Department and United States Navy personnel.

There is clearly more research to be done regarding inter-racial relations within the city. The first efforts to chart this relationship from an African American perspective have done so by arguing over the constructive nature of the alliance against racial violence formed in 1943. But it is clear that the complexities of Los Angeles' racial, class and demographic structures require a deeper reading that will shed more light on both the communities and organisations studied here, and the city itself. Further study will also broaden understanding of how local and regional factors affected the growth and development of NAACP branches, and the impact that this had on the fight for civil rights in different regions of the United States.

1. Cosgrove, S., 'The Zoot-Suit and Style Warfare', *History Workshop Journal* Vol.18, Autumn 1984, p.81.
2. 'City, Navy Clamp Lid on Zoot-Suit Warfare', *Los Angeles Times* 9 June 1943, p.1. A more detailed history of the term 'zoot-suit' can be found in Cosgrove, S., 'The Zoot-Suit and Style Warfare' and in Douglas Henry Daniels, 'Los Angeles Zoot: Race 'Riot', the Pachuco, and Black Music Culture', *Journal of Negro History*, Vol.82, No.2, Spring 1997, pp.201-220.
3. Cosgrove, S., 'The Zoot-Suit and Style Warfare', p.86. For an examination of *Pachuquismo* see McWilliams, C., *North From Mexico: The Spanish-Speaking People of the United States*, (Monthly Review Press, 1961), pp.239-243.
4. McWilliams, C., *North From Mexico*, p.248.
5. The only book to focus entirely on the 'riots' is Mazon, M., *The Zoot-Suit Riots: The Psychology of Symbolic Annihilation*, (University of Texas Press, 1984). Articles include: Pagan, E.O., 'Los Angeles Geopolitics and the Zoot Suit Riot, 1943', *Social Science History*, Vol.24, No.1, Spring 2000, pp.223-256; Richard Griswold del Castillo, 'The Los Angeles "Zoot Suit Riots" Revisited: Mexican and Latin American Perspectives', *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos*, Vol.16, No.2, Summer 2000, pp.367-391; Cosgrove, S., 'The Zoot-Suit and Style Warfare'. Broader studies of Mexican American History that analyse the riots include: McWilliams, C., *North From Mexico: The Spanish-Speaking People of the United States*, (Monthly Review Press, 1961); Escobar, E.J., *Race, Police and the Making of a Political Identity: Mexican Americans and the Los Angeles Police Department, 1900-1945*, (University of California Press, 1999) and Sanchez, G.J., *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity Culture and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945*, (Oxford University Press, 1993). The ban on the suits is examined in Mazon, M., *The Zoot-Suit Riots: The Psychology of Symbolic Annihilation*, p.75.
6. Escobar, E.J., *Race, Police and the Making of a Political Identity: Mexican Americans and the Los Angeles Police Department, 1900-1945*, pp.285-287.
7. Pagan, E.O., 'Los Angeles Geopolitics and the Zoot Suit Riot, 1943', *Social Science History*, Vol.24, No.1, Spring 2000, p.225.
8. Fogelson, R., *The Fragmented Metropolis: Los Angeles, 1850-1930*, (University of California Press, 1993).
9. Pitt, L., & Pitt, D., *Los Angeles A to Z: An Encyclopedia of the City and County*, (University of California Press, 1997).
10. In the first group of text can be found such examples as Davis, M., *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles*, (Pimlico, 1988) and Caughey, J. & Caughey, L., *Los Angeles: Biography of a City*, (University of California Press, 1976). In the second group are the text featured in footnote 1 and texts on the city's black community including; Taylor, Q., *In Search of the Racial Frontier: African-Americans in the American West 1528-1990*, (W.W. Norton and Company, 1998), Tolbert, E.J., *The UNIA and Black Los Angeles*, (Center for Afro-American Studies, University of California, 1980), and articles including Bunch, L.G., 'A Past Not Necessarily Prologue: The Afro-American in Los Angeles', in Klein, N.M., & Schiesl, M.J. (eds.), *20th Century Los Angeles: Power, Promotion and Social Conflict*, (California Regina Books, 1990), pp.101-130 and De Graaf, L.B., 'The City of Black Angels: Emergence of the Los Angeles Ghetto, 1890-1930', *Pacific Historical Review*, Vol.39, No.3, 1970, pp.323-352.
11. Sanchez, G.J., *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity Culture and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945*, p.77.
12. Sanchez's most recent contribution to this approach (which also demonstrates how this history can bring communities together now) can be found in Sanchez, G., 'Working at the Crossroads: American Studies for

- the 21st Century: Presidential Address to the American Studies Association, November 9th, 2001', *American Quarterly*, Vol.54, No.1, March 2002, pp.1-23.
- 13.Daniels, D.H., 'Los Angeles Zoot: Race "Riot", the Pachuco, and Black Music Culture', *Journal of Negro History*, Vol.82, No.2, Spring 1997, p.205.
 - 14.Leonard, K.A., 'In the Interest of All Races: African Americans and Inter-racial Co-operation in Los Angeles during and after the Second World War', in De Graff, L.B., Mulroy, K., & Taylor, Q. (eds.), *Seeking El Dorado: African Americans in California*, (University of Washington Press, 2001), p.315.
 - 15.*Ibid.*, p.322.
 - 16.*Ibid.*, pp.320-324.
 - 17.Baker,E., quoted in Payne, C.M., *I've Got the Light of Freedom - The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle*, (University of California Press, 1995), p.87.
 - 18.Pitre, M., *In the Struggle Against Jim Crow: Lulu B. White and the NAACP, 1900-1957*, (Texas A&M University Press, 1999), pp.34-44.
 - 19.Meier, A. & Rudwick, E., *Black Detroit and the Rise of the UAW*, (Oxford University Press, 1979).
 - 20.Fairclough, A., *Race and Democracy, The Civil Rights Struggle in Louisiana, 1915-1972*, (University of Georgia Press, 1995).
 - 21.Reed, C.R., *The Chicago NAACP and the rise of Black Professional Leadership, 1910-1966*, (Indiana University Press, 1997).
 - 22.Anderson, E.F., *The Development of Leadership and Organization Building in the Black Community of Los Angeles from 1900 through World War II*, (Century Twenty One, 1982), p.38. Tolbert, E., *The UNIA and Black Los Angeles*, (Center for Afro-American Studies, University of California, 1980), p.90.
 - 23.Bunch, L.G., 'A Past Not Necessarily Prologue: The Afro-American in Los Angeles', in Klein, N.M., & Schiesl, M.J. (eds.), *20th Century Los Angeles: Power, Promotion and Social Conflict*, (California Regina Books, 1990), p.108.
 - 24.Ill, L.G.B., 'The Greatest State for the Negro' Jeffereson L. Edmonds, Black Propagandist of the California Dream', in De Graaf, L.B., Mulroy, K., & Taylor, Q. (eds.), *Seeking El Dorado*, p.136.
 - 25.De Graaf, L.B., 'The City of Black Angels: Emergence of the Los Angeles Ghetto, 1890-1930', *Pacific Historical Review*, Vol.39, No.3, 1970, p.330.
 - 26.For further understanding of the issue of race construction and consciousness during this period see Jacobson, M.F., *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race*, (Harvard University Press, 1999).
 - 27.*Ibid.*
 - 28.De Graaf, L.B., 'The City of Black Angels', p.333.
 29. Anderson, E.F., *Black Los Angeles from 1900 through World War II*, p.71. On Communists, see Sides, J., *Working Away: African American Migration and Community in Los Angeles from the Great Depression to 1954* (PhD Dissertation, University of California, 1999), p.75.
 - 30.Sides, J., *Working Away*, pp.66-72.
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45. Talyor, Q., *In Search of the Racial Frontier*, p.268. Sides, J., *Working Away*, p.106.
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47. 'Police slaying incites near riot on East 52nd Pl.', *California Eagle*, May 27th 1943, p.1a.
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