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Homework 2

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**Historical Context of Zoot Suit Riots:**

The Zoot Suit Riots represent the series of clashes between the U.S servicemen and the young Mexican and other minority groups in Los Angeles. The name was given as Zoot Suit Riots because of the attire worn by those young Mexican Mobs. There are specific reasons behind these clashes. Although racial segregations were already there in the United States, after the US involvement in World War II, the racial tensions further worsened. At that time, some workers were brought from Mexico to fill the job positions in Agricultural and other sectors in the US. It was an agreement between the US and Mexico. However, those temporary Mexican workers were not greeted by the white people.

However, in 1942 near the Sleepy Lagoon a murder occurred, and the Zoot Suitors were accused of it (Pagán, p. 12). They were involved in a fight at night before the killing. After the incidence, the California Government ordered the law enforcement agencies to investigate into the murder, and they arrested many Mexican Americans for the trials of the murder. Many people stood against the incidence and attacked the decision as a failure of justice. On the other side, the media was also involved in portraying the Mexican youth as a dangerous gang in the city. The aggression between the servicemen and the Mexican youth was getting stronger.

Likewise, in June 1943 Joe Dacy Coleman, a sailor was beaten badly, and the group of sailors claimed that a group of Mexican American youth attacked them ((Pagán, P. 13). On the next day, the number of sailors struck the Mexican Community in Los Angeles. The Zoot Suiters were tortured in the hands of uniformed sailors. It got worsen further on 7th of June 1943, when thousands of members of the armed forces and the general public attacked the minority group. As a result, the government involves the military police in this matter. It controlled over the riots. Many people got injured but no when was killed. The number of Mexicans were arrested in comparison to the servicemen. Racism is reflected in those events.

**Larger Structural Relationships**

These riots reflect on social segregation. Racism existed in the United States from Colonialism period, and it divided the people into different races. On the basis of it, there was a division of superior and inferior races. Slave trading was introduced in America, and African Americans were considered as slaves. The white people emerged as the superior race holders, and other races were regarded as inferior races. Another division which was existing in the society from ancient times based on wealth. People with wealth were influential while poor people were living suppressed lives.

Bringing Mexican People to the United States for temporary employment was interference in the societal structure of the US. Society was segregated on the basis of social constructions of superior and inferior classes. The minor classes were getting exploited in the hands of superior classes. The physical torture and humiliation of Zoot Suiters is a piece of evidence for it. On the other side, the discrimination of the Government also reflects the segregated structural systems in the United States (Alford, pp. 225-236). During the riots, most of the men and women arrested were Mexican Americans. Moreover, there was segregation in the military during World War II. At that time, it was believed that Mexican Americans were spying for the Japanese Americans. Most of the conflicts were based on the social structure that was existing in the United States in many areas. It points out the relationships between the superior race and the inferior races living in the US.

# Works Cited

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Pagán, Eduardo Obregón. Murder at the Sleepy Lagoon: Zoot Suits, Race, and Riot in Wartime LA. Univ of North Carolina Press, 2004.