

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR HILDA L. SOLIS

JUNE 9, 2026

Commemoration of the 83rd Anniversary of the Zoot Suit Riots and Recognition of Their Enduring Impact on Civil Rights and Racial Justice in Los Angeles County

Eighty-three years ago, in June 1943, Los Angeles County was shaken by the Zoot Suit Riots, a series of racially motivated attacks that targeted Mexican American, African American, and Filipino American communities throughout Los Angeles County. During the riots, mobs of U.S. servicemen, often aided or tolerated by local law enforcement and emboldened by inflammatory media coverage, assaulted young men and women of color, stripped them of their clothing, and subjected them to public humiliation and violence.

The riots took their name from the "zoot suit," a style characterized by wide-legged trousers, long coats, and distinctive accessories. Popular among many young people of color, the zoot suit became a symbol of cultural identity and self-expression during a period marked by segregation and discrimination. Mexican American youth known as "pachucos" became closely associated with the style and were routinely portrayed as criminals and delinquents. Young women known as "pachucas" similarly challenged racial and gender stereotypes through their fashion, confidence, and cultural pride, asserting their place in public life at a time when opportunities for women, particularly women of

MOTION

Mitchell _____

Horvath _____

Hahn _____

Barger _____

Solis _____

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color, were severely constrained. In particular, the gender subversion embodied by pachucas often faced extreme scrutiny, with authorities equating their rejection of traditional feminine subservience as queerness, and further subjecting lesbian and non-conforming youth to misogyny and violence.

The violence did not emerge in isolation. It was the culmination of years of discriminatory policing, segregation, economic inequality, and anti-Mexican sentiment. One significant precursor was the 1942 Sleepy Lagoon case, which followed the death of José Gallardo Díaz near what is now the City of Bell. Despite a lack of credible evidence, authorities arrested and prosecuted a group of Mexican American youths, fueling widespread outrage and deepening distrust of law enforcement within the community.

On June 3, 1943, tensions erupted after confrontations between servicemen and Mexican American youth in downtown Los Angeles. Over the following days, hundreds of servicemen traveled through neighborhoods across the county, including East Los Angeles, attacking people wearing zoot suits or perceived to be associated with them. Mexican American, African American, and Filipino American residents were among those targeted. Rather than protecting victims, law enforcement frequently arrested those who had been attacked.

The violence continued for several days before military authorities intervened on June 8, 1943, restricting servicemen's access to Los Angeles County and helping bring

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the riots to an end. In the aftermath, much of the media portrayed the attacks as justified, while public officials focused on restricting zoot suits rather than addressing the racism and discrimination that fueled the unrest. Similar acts of anti-Mexican and anti-zoot suit violence subsequently occurred in communities across the nation.

Los Angeles County First District Supervisor Hilda L. Solis first authored a motion in 2023 to formally recognize these injustices on the 80th anniversary of the Zoot Suit Riots. That action underscored the County's responsibility to acknowledge the racism and civil rights violations that fueled the violence and to ensure this history is formally recognized and not forgotten.

Today, the Zoot Suit Riots remain one of the darkest chapters in Los Angeles County's history.

I, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors recognize June 3–8, 2026, as Zoot Suit Riots Remembrance Days in Los Angeles County and commemorate the 83rd anniversary of the Zoot Suit Riots, honoring the Mexican American, African American, and Filipino American communities who endured these acts of racial violence and recognizing the resilience of those who fought against discrimination, exclusion, and injustice.

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