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“...the politically aware will know that the police brutality and injustices rendered in this play are still happening; **others may lose the point**. Most significantly, this play illuminates events that had a major impact on the Chicano community of Los Angeles during World War II, incidents that are carefully ignored by **most high school history books**.” Jose Huerta, in the introduction to *Zoot Suit*, published months before the Rodney King riots in 1992. (13) (Valdez, 1992)

Framing the Historical Process

Historians are constantly making decisions. Decisions about what to include, what to leave out; the level of detail, the amount of exaggeration. In turn, teachers of history are also constantly making decisions. Decisions about what to include, what to leave out; the level of detail, the amount of exaggeration. In today’s era of high stakes testing, the balancing act of state standards and preparation for an increasingly *unstandardized* world creates multiple moments of tension in a history teacher’s head. This project was born out of one history teacher noticing patterns and similarities between the past and the present and wondering how to make these connections explicit, creative, and useful for students to examine as they develop their own sense of self and purpose within a high school history classroom.

Richard Harris and Rosemary Reynolds examine the purpose of history education in their article “*The history curriculum and its personal connection to students from minority ethnic backgrounds*.” They examine the change in purpose and function of the high school history curriculum, especially taking into account matters of identity-formation of the student. They note “...in recent years, more attention has been paid to the notion of developing young people’s historical consciousness (see Seixas 2004). Put simply, historical consciousness is the way in which people make connections between the past and the present, which consequently affects what they believe is possible in the future” (Harris & Reynolds, 2014).

This use of history as a place of imagining possibilities for the future is an important one for the high school history classroom. A history teacher is constantly juggling three tenses, the past, the present and the future. Just like a science classroom that might focus as much on what is still *unknown*, a good history classroom will leave plenty of space for students to imagine social possibilities beyond what humans have already presented to each other. Never appearing on standardized exams, however, this type of approach can feel radical in nature, especially for students considered by state measures to be “behind.” That’s why the later inclusion of identity theory by Harris and Reynolds provides an interesting frame with which to view history curriculum.

*The danger of using history as a means of inculcating a sense of social cohesion is that it can result in calls for a simplistic version of the past, which in turn can present an exclusive view of the past; rather than acting as a potential unifying focus such history can serve to alienate some individuals and groups. This notion is supported by identity theory. Tajfel and Turner's (1979) theory about social identity, for example, would suggest that the way students self-identify and relate to the past could create in- and out-groups, depending on whether students feel the history that is taught **includes them**. (Harris & Reynolds, 2014)*

This theory has implicitly shaped my curriculum creation before I ever read it in a book (or article). Students' first commentary to me my first week of teaching was "I hate history, I'm just in this class for the Regents." I looked at the curriculum on standardized testing in NY State, and I hated history too. Massive social movements, systems of oppression, cultures of resistance, debate and critique had been boiled down to the blandest, and often most conservative form – multiple choice questions with singular "right" answers that provide no room for critical response. The essay questions were much more likely to encourage students to examine the perspective of the oppressor than describe the movements of resistance in various cases (in the last five years alone, South Africa, Imperialism in Africa more broadly, the Spaniards in the Caribbean and Mexico in the 1500s). In-and out-grouping becomes extreme when students countries, let alone regions, of origin are completely excluded or portrayed only in a negative light on state standardized materials.

This is always my frame for teaching in a school with constant pressure from the exams. Yet, I've focused my intellectual energy on creating curriculum that (hopefully) puts students in the minds of test-creators, not test-takers; of textbook critiquers, not textbook-readers; of historians, not history students.

When I was reading *Zoot Suit*, by Luis Valdez (1978), I couldn't help but compare it, both the time period it was written *about* and the time period it was written *in* to the contemporary situation in this country. In his introduction to the play, Professor of Theatre, Jose Huerta alludes explicitly to the present "...the politically aware will know that the police brutality and injustices rendered in this play are still happening; others may lose the point. Most significantly, this play illuminates events that had a major impact on the Chicano community of Los Angeles during World War II, incidents that are carefully ignored by most high school history books." But written in 1992, before the Rodney King riots, Huerta had less foresight than Valdez on the contemporary implications of the play.

US social movements have come far in many ways, but the struggle remains the same, particularly against police brutality. While researching the *Zoot Suits*, for example, I

found a small, near flippant, reference to Ruben Salazar, a Mexican American journalist, harassed by the Los Angeles Police Department [LAPD] for his investigations into police brutality. Salazar was 'accidentally' killed by the police (firing tear gas canisters on a crowd of Chicano anti-war protestors in 1970). Did Luis Valdez have Salazar's killing in mind as he was writing the script for *Zoot Suit* a few years later? Was the Vietnam War fervor combined with civil rights activism allowing him to imagine what it was like during World War II in LA as Mexican-American youth protested via fashion and culture even as they served?

Forty-four years after Salazar's death, another case of police brutality sparked outrage across the country and has gotten support of activists in both the immigrant rights and #BlackLivesMatter movement as emblematic of the struggle between communities of color living under a racist police state. Alex Nieto, gunned down by four San Francisco Police Department officials while eating dinner in a public park, wearing a fashionable new jacket.

Taken together, these instances tell a long story of police brutality towards the Mexican American community, one tied to racism in this country during moments of patriotic fervor and wartime, and continued police brutality during "peacetime."

In the *Zoot Suit* context of the 1940s, the country was at war. History textbooks often describe this era as one of great patriotism and unity - everyone wanted to fight the fascists of course! FDR desegregated defense factories! Truman would even desegregate the military! Rayna's character in *Zoot Suit* presents at once that rosy patriotic picture - a young man about to join the military - and the dark underbelly of a racist state controlling a minority population through brute force.

What is similar, then, to today? I made many connections between the present and this era while reading the story of the Sleepy Lagoon Murder Trial and the *Zoot Suit* riots. Then, and today police departments across the country are using racial profiling to harass, arrest and convict Black and Brown residents at a higher rate than their white peers. Then, and today, certain aspects of clothing are symbols of resistance to a racist state to some, items of fashion to others, and an affront to patriotism to others still. 'Hoodies up', the mantra of young men of color after Trayvon Martin was killed in 2012 references the irrational fear and "gang" associations with certain items of dress. The press long antagonized victims of police brutality by discussing supposed gang affiliation or alleged records rather than mourning a family's loss. In 1942, the Press's coverage of what was happening between police officers and Mexican American youth was more explicitly racist, however the effects have been similar - police abuse, brutality, and killing of Black men and women.

A black boy killed by the police has his life put on public trial in 2016, while police officers escape consequences from friendly judges and press. The LAPD had a 'vengeance squad' that carried out beatings of Zoot Suit wearing youth in the 1940s. The NYPD finds ways to continue to punish those who report on abuse, like Ramsey Orta, the young man who filmed the death of Eric Garner at the hands of NYPD Officer Daniel Pantaleo.

Rather than "tell" these connections, however, I turn them over to students to swirl in their minds, draw parallels, and create analogies to better understand the past and the present, and better be able to imagine possibilities for the future. The following curriculum includes a historical overview, for teachers mostly, though it can be used with students; and a five-to-ten day curriculum that culminates in a theater project modeled after activities I learned at *El Teatro Campesino* and the *National Endowment for the Humanities* Summer Institute.

The Zoot Suits

In the 1930s, there was a strong community of Mexican Americans in Los Angeles. Some families had never moved, as national borders crossed them in 1848. Others came as part of the Bracero program (only started in 1942) and found ways to stay. But economically motivated xenophobia was a strong force against Mexican descendants. From 1930-39, Mexicans were nearly 50% of the deportations in the country though they were less than 1% of the US population (5, Escobedo). 35,000 left from LA alone. This number is significant, because in 1940 there were only approximately 38,000 Mexican and Mexican-Americans in LA in a city of 1.5million (2.5%)(“Zoot Suit Timeline,” n.d.). The Los Angeles Police Department had institutionalized its harassment of young Mexican Americans in the form of a 'Vengeance Squad' and a department of Foreign Affairs whose chief held decidedly racist views.

The onset of the war in August of 1941 brought a huge military presence to California. Many soldiers shipped off from ports in Southern California, and many more celebrated their leave time in LA's dancehalls. Some Mexican Americans, second or third generation, joined their Anglo American peers in the factories, some in the military, and many in the dancehalls. Yet, Mexican Americans continued to face racist discrimination from the police department and society at large. The situation worsened in the early 1940s. A newly developing Chicano cultural phenomenon flaunted fashion and pride, especially in the form of an item of clothing known as the Zoot Suit: "fingertip jacket, trousers with wide knees that tapered at the ankle; heavy, thick-soled shoes; and hair in a duck tail coat' (Escobedo, 2013). Historian Eduardo Pagán credits African American jazz musicians as the first wearers of the fashion, though it was soon picked up in LA dance halls and popularized by young Mexican Americans (Chávez, 2005). The LAPD used this clothing to identify targets of harassment, and the press, eager to sell papers,

inflamed these associations between fashion and “gang” membership. Community members boiled with anger.

In August of 1942, a group of Chicanos known as the 38th Street Gang got into a rumble with a neighboring group after a series of escalating events. The next day, a body was found near the site of the fight, and the LAPD used the death as an excuse to sweep up over 600 young Mexican and Mexican American youth in one of the largest raids in city history. Only twenty two would be charged, only seventeen convicted in the largest mass trial in California history. All seventeen would be acquitted upon appeal, but not until after a series of worsening events including what became known as the Zoot Suit riots.

The Zoot Suit Riots

The US entered World War II after the bombings of Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. Eight months later, Los Angeles media became obsessed with what the Los Angeles Police Department was billing “a Mexican crime wave,” culminating in the raids and trial of the Sleepy Lagoon Murder case. A year later, while the suspects languished in prison, more and more US military men made their way through Los Angeles. Tensions between white military recruits and Mexican American youth rose, as the press continued to fan flames and associate aspects of Mexican American youth culture with gangs, violence and criminal activity. Eventually, the tensions would lead to violence, with some reporting fights between military men and Chicano youth occurring 2-3 times a day in the spring of 1943. White high schoolers at a dancehall complained that zoot suiters were taking over the beach area. Sailors on leave harassed Mexican-American young women, started a fight with zoot suit wearers, and word of the altercation spread to the military base (Pagán, 1996). The civilians and soldiers join forces for what happened next (Tovares, 2007). A second fight started four nights later, on June 3rd, 1943, and when LAPD responded, they arrested only Mexican Americans involved. After that, over 200 sailors took taxis to East LA and began beating whomever they identified as a zoot suiter, though sometimes spilling into anyone of color they found in their path (there are reports of African Americans and Filipino Americans also victims of the violence of these gangs of military men). The violence continued for days, with LAPD usually lackadaisically responding, arresting and releasing soldiers, or solely arresting Mexican Americans acting in self-defense. Hundreds were beaten.

When a young mother, Amelia Venegas, advocated for the rights of youth she witnessed being harassed by the police on the street, she was arrested and charged with carrying a concealed weapon (brass knuckles she brought along for protection while walking alone...during the riots). The press applauded the police department for clearing LA of “miscreants” and “hoodlums,” and the violence continued. It took the US Military nine days to order its men to stay on the base. The LA City Council’s response was to ban the wearing of zoot suits.

The Appeal, an investigatory commission, moments of progress?

The following years held a few moments of progress. Then-California Governor Earl Warren faced pressure during the riots to create an investigatory commission into the cause of the violence, and the commission found the press responsible, however there were no consequences. In 1944, all men convicted in the Sleepy Lagoon Murder trial were released upon appeal. However, the women who had been associated with the suspects had been ordered 'wardens of the state' and sent to horrible juvenile institutions remained there, without ever being formally charged of a crime. First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt alluded to the racism that caused the violence by commenting:

"The question goes deeper than just [zoot] suits. It is a racial protest. I have been worried for a long time about the Mexican racial situation. It is a problem with roots going a long way back, and we do not always face these problems as we should."(Brown, 2013)

And the press labeled her a communist.

Zoot Suit: the Play

Luis Valdez grew up with his family, migrant farmworkers in central California, traveling to follow seasonal agricultural jobs. He was introduced to theater at school, and to Cesar Chavez and other Chicano leaders through his community. He wrote his first plays in college at San Jose State University. His career really began, though, when he founded El Teatro Campesino, a group of striking farmworkers that traveled along the agricultural belt performing what are known as *actos* to share knowledge, critique the bosses, and organize other workers. He began to do his own work in 1967, apart from the United Farmworkers Union, and began to gain national and international attention. *Zoot Suit* was first performed in 1978, and it made it to Broadway as the first Chicano play to perform there. It would be made into a film by 1981, and is continuing to run, next year at an LA theater once again.

Day 1: Fashion and Politics: An Introduction to the Zoot Suit

1. How does fashion show politics?
2. What fashion is penalized today?
3. What fashion is celebrated today?
4. Do you think any fashion penalized today will be celebrated in the future? Like What?

Examine images of the [Zoot Suiters](#)

Watch first 5 minutes of *Zoot Suit* (getting dressed scene)

Answer/discuss parallel questions

1. How does fashion show politics?
2. What fashion is penalized today?
3. What fashion is celebrated today?

4. Do you think any fashion penalized today will be celebrated in the future? Like What?

Read Alouds:

Pg 26-27 of Zoot Suit

1. ZOOT SUIT

The scene is a barrio dance in the forties. PACHUCOS and PACHUCAS in zoot suits and pompadours.

They are members of the 38TH STREET GANG, led by HENRY REYNA, 21, dark, Indian-looking, older than his years, and DELLA BARRIOS, 20, his girlfriend in miniskirt and fingertip coat. A SAILOR called SWABBIE dances with his girlfriend MANCHUKA among the COUPLES. Movement. Animation. EL PACHUCO sings.

EL PACHUCO

PUT ON A ZOOT SUIT, MAKES YOU FEEL REAL ROOT
LOOK LIKE A DIAMOND, SPARKLING, SHINING
READY FOR DANCING
READY FOR THE BOOGIE TONIGHT!

(The COUPLES, dancing, join the PACHUCO in exclaiming the last term of each line in the next verse.)

THE HEPCATS UP IN HARLEM WEAR THAT DRAPE SHAPE
COMO LOS PACHUCONES DOWN IN L.A.
WHERE HUISAS IN THEIR POMPADOURS LOOK REAL KEEN
ON THE DANCE FLOOR OF THE BALLROOMS
DONDE BAILAN SWING.

YOU BETTER GET HEP TONIGHT
AND PUT ON THAT ZOOT SUIT!

(The DOWNEY GANG, a rival group of pachucos enters upstage left. Their quick dance step becomes a challenge to 38TH STREET.)

DOWNEY GANG Downey ... ¡Rifa!

[p. 4]

HENRY REYNA *(Gesturing back.)* ¡Toma! *(The music is hot. EL PACHUCO slides across the floor and momentarily breaks the tension. HENRY warns RAFAS, the leader of the DOWNEY GANG, when HE sees him push his brother RUDY.)* ¡Rafas!

EL PACHUCO *(Sings.)*

TRUCHA, ESE LOCO, VAMOS AL BORLO
WEAR THAT CARLANGO, TRAMOS Y TANDO
DANCE WITH YOUR HUISA
DANCE TO THE BOOGIE TONIGHT!
'CAUSE THE ZOOT SUIT IS THE STYLE IN CALIFORNIA
TAMBIÉN EN COLORADO Y ARIZONA
THEY'RE WEARING THAT TACUCHE EN EL PASO
Y EN TODOS LOS SALONES DE CHICAGO
YOU BETTER GET HEP TONIGHT
AND PUT ON THAT ZOOT SUIT!

What fashion is celebrated?
What fashion is penalized (if any)?
What can we learn about US history using this play?
[ex: cross cultural connection between Harlem and LA]
What questions do you have now?

Pg 37-39 The Press (some historical background)

5. THE PRESS

Lights change. EL PACHUCO escorts DELLA off right. THE PRESS appears at upstage center.

PRESS Los Angeles Times: August 8, 1942.

A NEWSBOY enters, lugging in two more bundles of newspapers, hawking them as he goes. PEOPLE of various walks of life enter at intervals and buy newspapers. They arrange themselves in the background reading.

NEWSBOY EXTRA! EXTRA! READ ALL ABOUT IT. SPECIAL SESSION OF L.A. COUNTY GRAND JURY CONVENES. D.A. CHARGES CONSPIRACY IN SLEEPY LAGOON MURDER. EXTRA! (A CUB REPORTER emerges and goes to the PRESS, as LIEUTENANT EDWARDS enters.)

CUB REPORTER Hey, here comes Edwards! (EDWARDS is besieged by the PRESS, joined by ALICE BLOOMFIELD, 26, a woman reporter.)

PRESS How about it, Lieutenant? What's the real scoop on the Sleepy Lagoon? Sex, violence ...

CUB REPORTER Marijuana?

NEWSBOY Read all about it! Mexican Crime Wave Engulfs L.A.

LIEUTENANT EDWARDS Slums breed crime, fellas. That's your story.

[p. 25]

BLOOMFIELD Lieutenant. What exactly is the Sleepy Lagoon?

CUB REPORTER A great tune by Harry James, doll. Wanna dance? (ALICE ignores the CUB.)

LIEUTENANT EDWARDS It's a reservoir. An old abandoned gravel pit, really. It's on a ranch between here and Long Beach. Serves as a swimming hole for the younger Mexican kids.

BLOOMFIELD Because they're not allowed to swim in the public plunges?

PRESS What paper are you with, lady? The Daily Worker?

LIEUTENANT EDWARDS It also doubles as a sort of lovers' lane at night — which is why the gangs fight over it. Now they've finally murdered somebody.

NEWSBOY EXTRA! EXTRA! ZOOT-SUITED GOONS OF SLEEPY LAGOON!

LIEUTENANT EDWARDS But we're not going to mollycoddle these youngsters any more. And you can quote me on that.

PRESS One final question, Lieutenant. What about the 38th Street Gang — weren't you the first to arrest Henry Reyna?

LIEUTENANT EDWARDS I was. And I noticed right away the kid had great leadership potential. However ...

PRESS Yes?

[p. 26]

LIEUTENANT EDWARDS You can't change the spots on a leopard.

PRESS Thank you, sir. (PEOPLE *with newspapers crush them and throw them down as they exit.* EDWARDS *turns and exits.* ALICE *turns towards HENRY for a moment.*)

NEWSBOY EXTRA, EXTRA. READ ALL ABOUT THE MEXICAN BABY GANGSTERS. EXTRA, EXTRA. THE PRESS *and CUB REPORTER rush out happily to file their stories.* The NEWSBOY *leaves, hawking his papers.* ALICE *exits, with determination.* Far upstage, ENRIQUE *enters with a rolling garbage can.* HE *is a street sweeper.* During the next scene HE *silently sweeps up the newspapers, pausing at the last to read one of the news stories.*

What is the *viewpoint/perspective* of the Press? How can you tell?

Ex: what words demonstrate bias? How are Mexican-Americans discussed? How are white people discussed? How can you tell?

Pg 61-63

Press, Prosecutor, Defense

JUDGE F.W. CHARLES We'll now hear the Prosecution's concluding statement.

PRESS Your Honor, ladies and gentlemen of the jury. What you have before you is dilemma of our times. The city of Los Angeles is caught in the midst of the biggest, most terrifying crime wave in its history. A crime wave that threatens to engulf the very foundations of our civic wellbeing. We are not only dealing with the violent death of one José Williams in a drunken barrio brawl. We are dealing with a threat and danger to our children, our families, our homes. Set these pachucos free, and you shall unleash the forces of anarchy and destruction in our society. Set these pachucos free and you will turn them into heroes. Others just like them must be watching us at this very moment. What nefarious schemes can they be hatching in their twisted minds? Rape, drugs, assault, more violence? Who shall be their next innocent victim in some dark alley way, on some lonely street? You? You? Your loved ones? No! Henry Reyna and his Latin juvenile cohorts are not heroes. They are criminals, and they must be stopped. The specific details of this murder are irrelevant before the overwhelming danger of the pachuco in our midst. I ask you to find these zoot-suited gangsters guilty of murder and to put them in the gas chamber where they belong. (*The PRESS sits down.* GEORGE *rises and takes center stage.*)

[p. 74]

SHEARER Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, you have heard me object to the conduct of this trial. I have tried my best to defend what is most precious in our American Society — a society now at war against the forces of racial intolerance and totalitarian injustice. The prosecution has not provided one witness that actually saw, with his own eyes, who actually murdered José Williams. These boys are not the Downey gang, yet the evidence suggests that they were attacked because the people at the ranch thought they were. Henry Reyna and Della Barrios were victims of the same bunch. Yes, they might have been spoiling for a revenge — who wouldn't under the circumstances — but not with the intent to conspire to commit murder. So how did Jose Williams die? Was it

an accident? Was it manslaughter? Was it murder? Perhaps we may never know. **All the prosecution has been able to prove is that these boys wear long hair and zoot suits.** And all the rest has been circumstantial evidence, hearsay and war hysteria. The prosecution has tried to lead you to believe that they are some kind of inhuman gangsters. Yet they are Americans. Find them guilty of anything more serious than a juvenile bout of fisticuffs, and you will condemn all American youth. Find them guilty of murder, and you will murder the spirit of racial justice in America. (GEORGE *sits down.*)

JUDGE F.W. CHARLES The jury will retire to consider its verdict. (*The PRESS stands and starts to exit with the BAILIFF. EL PACHUCO snaps, All freeze.*)

[p. 75]

EL PACHUCO Chale. Let's have it. (*Snaps again. The PRESS turns and comes back again.*)

JUDGE F.W. CHARLES Has the jury reached a verdict?

PRESS We have, Your Honor.

JUDGE F.W. CHARLES How say you?

PRESS We find the defendants guilty of murder in the first and second degrees.

JUDGE F.W. CHARLES The defendants will rise. (*The batos come to their feet.*) Henry Reyna, José Castro, Thomas Roberts, Ismael Tores, and so forth. You have been tried by a jury of your peers and found guilty of murder in the first and second degrees. The Law prescribes the capital punishment for this offense. However, in view of your youth and in consideration of your families, it is hereby the judgement of this court that you be sentenced to life imprisonment...

RUDY REYNA No!

JUDGE F.W. CHARLES ...and sent to the State Penitentiary at San Quentin. Court adjourned. (*Gavel. JUDGE exits. DOLORES, ENRIQUE and family go to HENRY. BERTHA crosses to JOEY; LUPE goes to TOMMY. ELENA crosses to SMILEY. GEORGE and ALICE talk.*)

[p. 76]

DOLORES REYNA ¡Hijo mío! ¡Hijo de mi alma! (*BAILIFF comes down with a pair of handcuffs.*)

BAILIFF Okay, boys. (*HE puts the cuff on HENRY RUDY comes up.*)

RUDY REYNA ¿Carnal? (*HENRY looks at the BAILIFF, who gives him a nod of permission to spend a moment with RUDY. HENRY embraces him with the cuffs on. GEORGE and ALICE approach.*)

SHEARER Henry? I can't pretend to know how you feel, son. I just want you know that our fight has just begun.

BLOOMFIELD We may have lost this decision, but we're going to appeal immediately. We're going to stand behind you until your name is absolutely clear. I swear it!

EL PACHUCO What the hell are they going to do, ese? They just sent you to prison for life. Once a Mexican goes in, he never comes out.

BAILIFF Boys? (*The BOYS exit with the BAILIFF. As they go ENRIQUE calls after them.*)

ENRIQUE REYNA (*Holding back tears.*) Hijo. Be a man, hijo. (*Then to his family.*) Vámonos... ¡Vámonos! (*The family leaves and EL PACHUCO slowly walks to center stage.*)

[p. 77]

EL PACHUCO We're going to take a short break right now, so you can all go out and take a leak, smoke a frajo. Ahí los watcho. (*HE exits up center and the newspaper backdrop comes down.*)

Guiding Questions for class discussion:

How are the two accounts of what happened different (the prosecution and the defense)?

How are such different interpretations of what happened to Jose Williams possible?

What does this scene remind you of? // What does not feel familiar?

Possible questions for a written response:

Why would young people wear the zoot suit?

Why would they wear it if it was associated with being a “gang member”?

Why would the press associate wearing a zoot suit with being a “gang member”?

The Zoot Suit was banned! Why? What might lead up to that point?

Day 2: Drawing history and social change

Opening: How would you draw history?

Parallel lines, a Tree, a river?

i.e. does change “just happen”? does ‘history’ just happen? (What is history?) How do major events or changes come about? Can one event set off a massive change in society? Can a major event have no effect?

Think about what you know about the #BlackLivesMatter movement (anti-police brutality) of today. What **analogy** would you make for how the movement got started/where it’s going?

Parallel lines, a Tree, a river?

Discussion of cause and effect – telling a story requires some kind of order, first this, then that. Historians are constantly making decisions about what to put first, second, third, which first thing might be a cause of the fourth thing, but an effect of something else. Philosophers and political organizers have their own theories – they might say all revolutions happen when x,y or z conditions exist; or theories about what kind of societies are better than others.

After drawing your analogy, share it with your small group. And...

(a strategy learned at the NEH Summer Institute):

Create a visual tableau of social change // history. In small groups [of 5-6], build a form with your bodies that represents or symbolizes what history means to your group. The rest of the class will look at your tableau and make inferences about how you think social movements “happen”. One way to do this is have one group share, and the audience can adjust the tableau to represent more of what they feel about how positive change happens.

Questions to guide students along the creation of their analogy drawings:

- do you think change happens quickly or slowly?
- Can one event spark an entire movement?
- When you tell a story, do you include every detail, or do you focus on a) action, b) ideas, c) people involved, etc?
- From whose point of view do you think your analogy represents? Who would be included/excluded from your analogy?

Day 3: Using analogy for historical case study

Use cards with the different events leading up to the LA City Council ban of the Zoot Suit and place each event along your analogy of “how history happens.” How would you **sort** these events along your pictorial analogy? Does your analogy “work”?

Attack on Pearl Harbor - December 7, 1941, Japan bombs Hawaii, the United States enters World War II.

Executive Order 8802 signed - June 25, 1941 President Franklin D. Roosevelt, under pressure from A. Phillip Randolph and other civil rights leaders, signs an executive order barring discrimination “in the employment of workers in defense industries or government because of race, creed, color, or national origin.” (“FDR, A. Philip Randolph and the Desegregation of the Defense Industries - White House Historical Association,” n.d.) A large migration of African Americans to major cities will follow.

Murder of Jose Diaz – August 2, 1942 José Díaz’s body is found near the Sleepy Lagoon, near the site of a fight between two rival neighborhood groups. 600 Mexican and Mexican American youth are arrested that night.

Bracero program: August 4, 1942 the US and Mexican government come to a diplomatic agreement to allow low wage Mexican laborers to enter the US for seasonal agricultural work. A large migration of Mexicans to Southern California begins.

Sleepy Lagoon Trial (1) – October 13, 1942, 22 of the youth arrested are put on trial in the People v. Zamora case. “The trial took place in an atmosphere of intense prejudice fed and sustained by the press in Los Angeles. Throughout the trial the prosecutor pointed to the clothing and hairstyle of Pachucos as evidence of their guilt. This only added fuel to the fire of prejudice held by the non-Latino community. The prejudice and discrimination encountered by Leyvas and the 38th Street Gang was an example of **racial profiling**.” (“Zoot Suit Timeline,” n.d.)

Sleepy Lagoon Conviction (1): On January 12, 1943 in the case of People v. Zamora, presided by Judge Charles Fricke, the court found five of the seventeen defendants in

the case guilty of assault and sentenced to six months to one year in jail. Nine were found guilty of second degree murder and sentenced to five years to life. Henry Leyvas, Jose Ruiz and Robert Telles were found guilty of first degree murder and sentenced to life imprisonment. The twelve found guilty of murder were sent to San Quentin State Prison to serve their sentences.

The young women of the 38th Street Gang refused to testify against the gang during the trial. Due to their refusal to cooperate they were sent to the Ventura School for Girls, a women's reformatory, without benefit of trial or jury. Dora Baca, Henry's girlfriend, was among the five young women sent to this reformatory.

Sleepy Lagoon Trial acquittal: The community organizes a Sleepy Lagoon Defense Committee, with members of the Mexican-American, Jewish, African American and white allies. They fund a legal appeal, and in October of 1944 the men are acquitted.

LAPD war on crime// the "Mexican Problem" – 1940s, the LAPD launches a war on crime, primarily targeting Mexican American youth.

Zoot Suits become popular amongst Mexican American youth in cities across the US, after African American jazz musicians first begin wearing them.

World War II rationing of wool – March 8, 1942, the War Production Board issued order L-85 with the goal of 15 percent reduction in the amount of textiles used in women's wear. Men's fashion amongst war supporters was shifting to include less wool (no more vests, pocket flaps, other 'extra' items]

Riots: May 31 – June 8; 1943 White US Servicemen on leave travel to East LA with weapons and strip and beat whoever they find wearing a Zoot Suit.

1943

- May 31: Twelve sailors and servicemen clashed violently with Pachuco youth near downtown Los Angeles.
- June 3: Fifty sailors leave the Naval Reserve Armory in Chávez Ravine, near Chinatown, attacking anyone wearing zoot suits.
- June 4-5: Rioting servicemen conduct search-and-destroy raids on Mexican Americans in the downtown area.
- June 6: The rioting escalates and spreads into East Los Angeles.
- June 7: The worst of the rioting occurs.
- June 8: Major rioting ends in Los Angeles but spreads into other ports and urban centers such as Detroit, Chicago, Philadelphia and Harlem where African Americans dressed in zoot suits become targets.

Military officials restricted their men from entering Los Angeles June 8, 1943

LA City Council bans the wearing of the Zoot Suit June 9, 1943

What other events would you add to your analogy to represent either that time period, or make connections to an event that is more contemporary?

For example, how would you include more recent instances of police brutality, and protests against police brutality, in your analogy drawing?

Day 4: Making connections between the past and the present:

Return to the initial questions from the introductory day

What clothing is considered “dangerous” to the police today? Why?

What clothing is considered “popular” amongst teenagers? Why?

Read short histories of #BlackLivesMatter and #ICEFREENYC movements.

#BlackLivesMatter

In February of 2012, 17 year old Trayvon Martin was walking alone in Sanford, Florida, when an unknown man approached. This man, George Zimmerman, was a supposed ‘neighborhood watchman,’ not a trained police officer. What happened next spurred the beginning of one of the largest social movements in recent American history.

George Zimmerman shot and killed Trayvon Martin, who was wearing a hoodie and other fashionable items of the day, and at his trial, a year later, Zimmerman was able to take advantage of conservative Florida laws that protect the right to ‘self-defense’ (or Stand Your Ground). Though charged with second-degree murder, or manslaughter, Zimmerman was found not guilty on all counts.

Alicia Garza and Patrisse Cullors, Black queer organizers from California reacted to the non-indictment on social media, and soon after, on the streets, with the hashtag #blacklivesmatter framing marches. Thousands took to the street across the country.

In March of 2014, in a lesser known case, Alex Nieto is shot and killed by four members of the San Francisco PD while enjoying a pre-dinner burrito in a public park in his neighborhood of Bernal Heights.

On July 17, 2014, Officer Daniel Pantaleo of the NYPD killed Eric Garner with a chokehold, in broad daylight in Staten Island, and the videotape of the death, filmed by Garner's friend Ramsey Orta, spread rapidly across the country. On August 9, 2014, Michael Brown was gunned down at point blank range by Darren Scott, a police officer in Ferguson, MO. The ensuing trial and nonindictment of both officers again led to massive protests in the streets across the country. While President Obama and the Department of Justice have spoken out against police brutality in vague terms, little policy changes have occurred at local levels, and instances of police killing of unarmed people of color has continued.

#ICEFREENYC

In December of 2015, the Department of Homeland Security announces new immigration enforcement "priorities" along with an announcement about new raids to begin in January 2016, on homes and families of recent migrants from Central America. Pro-immigrant rights groups spring into action across the nation as fear spreads throughout communities with undocumented residents. In North Carolina, a student, Wildin Acosta is picked up on his way to school, and this story becomes a spark for teacher and community-led organizing demanding the release of students picked up across the South under similar circumstances.

In New York City, a broad coalition gathered in January 2016 to plan responses and build a proactive network to protect migrant residents from the intersection between over- and abusive-policing of communities of color and the immigration detention system. Fewer New York residents fall under the 'new' categories of 'priority enforcement,' however raids and deportations have been happening regularly since the 1996 immigration law changes made the number of 'deportable' criminal offenses rise to the 100s. Many of the activists in the room had been fighting community members' deportations for decades. But the newfound attention towards the inhumane practices of the Obama Administrations Department of Homeland Security led to newfound energy for a movement to stop the connection between city government (namely, the NYPD and criminal court system) and ICE. Seven activists were arrested blocking traffic in lower Manhattan, and another group interrupted the Mayor's speech at a predominately African American church during a commemorative service for Dr. Martin Luther King Jr's birthday.

Meanwhile, in California, activists and community members continued to mourn and protest police brutality in San Francisco, particularly surrounding the death of Alex Nieto, a Mexican-American resident of Bernal Heights who was shot and killed in March of 2014 by four SFPD officers while enjoying a pre-work dinner in a public park.

Back in NYC, in March of 2016, activists and community members gathered in the South Bronx, in a predominately Mexican American neighborhood, to stand in solidarity with

the family of Alex Nieto on the two year anniversary of his murder. While none of the officers have been held responsible for his death, the chief of police of San Francisco just resigned after protesters went on hunger strike and escalated pressure against the administration.

Discussion questions:

Look back at your analogies from yesterday. How are these events and movements similar or different to what was happening in Los Angeles in the 1940s? What can you place on your analogy to “tell the story”?

Where do you think the #BlackLivesMatter or immigrant rights movement is heading? What do you think is going to happen next?

Day 5: Culminating Project

Culminating project:

Or:

Create a short *acto* for each of these historical events.

Luis Valdez, the author of *Zoot Suit*, is known for the *actos* he helped create to organize farmworkers in California when they were first unionizing and advocating for better labor standards. These *actos* are like short skits, they are very creative and funny, and they follow five general principles. As a culminating activity for this unit, you will create your own *acto*. It can either be historical – about a particular situation with the *Zoot Suit* – or contemporary – thinking about the connections we made yesterday between past discrimination and resistance and the present. Feel free to interview each other or other community members as you write your script.

- (1) to inspire the audience to social action;
- (2) to illuminate specific points about social problems;
- (3) to satirize the opposition; (make fun of, make humorous)
- (4) to show or hint at a solution;
- (5) to express what people are thinking.

Scaffolds for this project – it could be spread into several days, with each of these opening questions as the ‘opener,’ a short class discussion sharing out student opinions, the sharing of resources, and then work time on their own *actos*.

1. How do you find out “what people are thinking”?

Brainstorm interview questions using the *Question Formulation Technique* and your topic as the question focus.

2. What could be included in theater that would inspire an audience into social action?

3. What are the specific points about the case you chose that you want to communicate to your audience? Who is your prime audience – you peers, educators, community members, etc.?

4. What possible solutions are there to the social issue you are discussing? How can you demonstrate it in theater?

5. How can movement on stage demonstrate meaning/words/ideas?

Practice theater exercises as a class.

Ex. Whole class enters classroom, one at a time, stands in a position, and then returns to outer circle – next person enters, continues; in response to the previous person, to music.

Class presentations:

Groups present their actos, and students will watch, using a rubric with the 5 guidelines for an acto and see how well their classmates were able to abide by them. They can ask questions about editorial decisions (i.e. why did you have this person stand there?)

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Appendix A:

Source: Historian Glen Gendzel, San Jose State University
lecture during NEH Summer Institute

History of the Peoples of California

California history:

California's history is one that both parallels a more national perspective and represents more extreme reactions to changes. California, like the US, has had racist xenophobic laws and enforcement since US first established political control in 1848. The context of the Zoot Suit riots, and tensions between police and communities of color in California, and the US, benefits from a broader perspective on ebbs and flows of migration and racism.

The area now known as California with straight borders on the eastern side and the Pacific Ocean serving as the western border has some of the most diverse range of climates in what is now the United States. The indigenous people who inhabited this area for thousands of years before the arrival of Europeans, developed over 150 different languages and cultural systems, thanks in part to geographic separation known as 'microclimates.' In 1602, on a map-making expedition, Spanish conquistadors erroneously established that there was no gold in California. Over 100 years later, in 1769, the Spanish returned to build a chain of 29 missions - a form of colonial empire-building still well-known to California public elementary school students who are often assigned to 'build a mission' out of graham crackers and home supplies. Franciscan priests occupied these buildings, along with soldiers sent to enforce the conversion and colonizing process of the indigenous people surrounding each mission.

Russians arrived about 50 years later, in 1807, and sent hunters down Northern California. Within just a few decades, they had killed most of the seals, otters and useful wildlife. Spain maintained control of most of the current area until 1821, when Mexico gained its independence. It was newly formed Mexico, then, that opened California to "foreign" trade. New Englanders came from the East, and had to take an oath of faith to Mexico and the Catholic Church in order to access the California (Mexican) markets. By 1841, the Oregon Trail opened, allowing for more cross-country travel rather than previous journeys slowly by boat and Anglo-Americans began a popular imperial method of trespassing and squatting. Similar conflicts in Texas came to a head and in 1846, the US and Mexico went to war.

By 1848, a defeated Mexico acquiesced to US the land that today is California. Just days after the war ended, gold was discovered in the land. Over the next ten years, over 250,000 wealth-seekers arrived to the new US American state. People from the Pacific came first, and then other US Americans and Europeans arrived. The immediate diversity combined with conflict over valuable natural resources led to the first hostility towards

immigrants of color. The Foreign Miner's Tax was never enforced against Europeans, just against Latin American and Chinese miners. By 1869, however, the Transcontinental Railroad needed workers, and thousands of Chinese workers joined Irish, Germans, Italians, Brits and Scandinivians along the lines. There was a backlash to these non-European workers as well, however, and in 1882, the Chinese Exclusion Act ensured difficult entry for Chinese migrants for the next 80 years. The Japanese, attempting to separate themselves from Chinese patterns of migration and exclusion, opneed their own businesses rather than compete for white labor. Still, American racist immigration policy followed them, too, and in 1913, the California legislature banned any Asians from owning land. By 1929, the US had ended all Asian immigration; and in 1941, the Japanese-American community would be victims of a terrible instance of discriminatory action by the state. Of the 120,000 sent to internment camps, 90% were from California. Two-thirds were US Citizines.

Parallel to decreases in Asian migration due to discriminatory laws and practices, the ebb and flow of Mexicans and Filipinos to the US followed the whim of economic need. By the 1920s, California had become the number one agricultural state, and Mexicans and Filipinos escaped immigration quotas that restricted other migrations at the time. After the hit of the Great Depression, however, xenophobia and racism followed them, too. In the 1930s, California *paid* to "repatriate" (deport) 150,000 Mexican agricultural workers.

In the late 1930s and early 1940s African Americans moved in the hundreds of thousands to California cities, World War II in particular bringing workers to shipyard sand factories.

By 1942, however, California once again needed cheap labor to fill its fields. The Bracero Program began to bring low wage workers for the fields while Americans took better-paid factory jobs in the cities. Braceros were paid less than half what American workers were making and forbidden from taking any other job. Ina ddition, part of their paycheck was removed to enter a Mexican pension fund; funds they never saw, to this day.

The 1965 change in immigration law opened California to migrants from China, Mexico, India, Phillippines, Korea, and though migration slowed by the 1980s, by 1999, California became the first state with no racial majority.