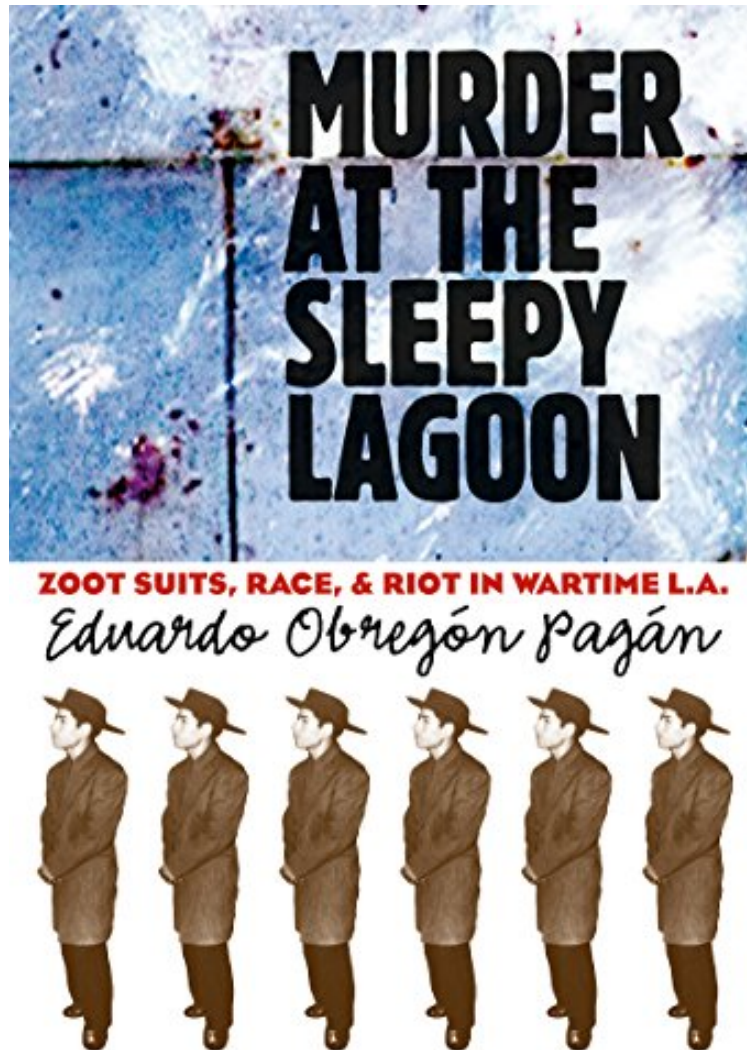


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Murder at the Sleepy Lagoon: Zoot Suits, Race, and Riot in Wartime L.A.

Eduardo Obregon Pagan

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Eduardo Obregon Pagan : Murder at the Sleepy Lagoon: Zoot Suits, Race, and Riot in Wartime L.A. before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Murder at the Sleepy Lagoon: Zoot Suits, Race, and Riot in Wartime L.A.:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Stunning piece of L.A.HistoryBy Anita MadridImportant read for anyone hoping to understand racial conflict in America and the role of business, politics, economics, and the press in contributing to bigotry and exclusion.1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A little rembered episode on

LA HistoryBy David DavisThis incident in LA changed how the law is administered for all of us. It is a landmark legal case for white/Hispanic relations.By the way the lady lawyer in the case lived to her 90s and only recently passed away.15 of 18 people found the following review helpful. A wonderful, nuanced studyBy Jeremiah B. AxelrodThis is perhaps the most sophisticated study of 1940s street-level Los Angeles working class culture to appear thus far.Historiographically, Pagon's book fits firmly in the anti-conspiratorial tradition of Richard Hofstadter, offering very subtle community-oriented analyses of the 1940s LA "pachuco" hysteria where others have tended to see manipulating conspirators at work (blaming, for instance, Hearst's rather irresponsible newspapers, in one common scenario of the left that is dismissed rather perfunctorily here).Pagon, unlike some reviewers of his book, tends to avoid assuming too much about the teenagers who lay at the heart of the Sleepy Lagoon case, preferring to make very cautious statements about them and their motivations. The 38th Street youths emerge here not as figments of some Sociological treatise or as political or ideological pawns, but as energetic, if somewhat clueless, actors on an urban stage that was clearly often quite daunting to them. As such, Pagon does not excuse delinquent behavior - rather, he simply refrains from assuming that the activity of Mexican American teenagers was criminal merely because sensationalist press accounts claimed it was. As is perfectly clear from Pagon's account, several of the Sleepy Lagoon defendants were clearly budding petty criminals of various stripes, but most were ordinary city kids living on the mean streets of wartime LA. (And to doubt that Los Angeles was a violently segregated city during this era of restrictive covenants and police brutality is simply willfully naive.)Although the book fails to provide the sort of details about the youths' motivations and actions that one might wish from a novel, one must recall that this book is in reality a work of rigorously documented history, and in fact represents the most difficult and painstaking sort of social history to actually construct. There simply is not a great deal of written documentation about these immigrant working class kids at more than a half-century's remove. What Pagon has managed to put together is very admirable, and his writing style, despite a bit too much repetition, is wonderfully clear and free of obfuscating jargon. What we have here is a fine work of historical scholarship that reveals quite a bit both about the individual characters involved and about the larger political purposes to which their stories were put.Oh, and the prologue and epilogue represent absolutely wonderful examples of gripping and compelling historical detective writing, including a very reasonable and balanced new theory about just who actually committed the notorious Sleepy Lagoon murder!

The notorious 1942 "Sleepy Lagoon" murder trial in Los Angeles concluded with the conviction of seventeen young Mexican American men for the alleged gang slaying of fellow youth Jose Diaz. Just five months later, the so-called Zoot Suit Riot erupted, as white soldiers in the city attacked minority youths and burned their distinctive zoot suits. Eduardo Obregon Pagan here provides the first comprehensive social history of both the trial and the riot and argues that they resulted from a volatile mix of racial and social tensions that had long been simmering.In reconstructing the lives of the murder victim and those accused of the crime, Pagan contends that neither the convictions (which were based on little hard evidence) nor the ensuing riot arose simply from anti-Mexican sentiment. He demonstrates instead that a variety of pre-existing stresses, including demographic pressures, anxiety about nascent youth culture, and the war effort all contributed to the social tension and the eruption of violence. Moreover, he recovers a multidimensional picture of Los Angeles during World War II that incorporates the complex intersections of music, fashion, violence, race relations, and neighborhood activism. Drawing upon overlooked evidence, Pagan concludes by reconstructing the murder scene and proposes a compelling theory about what really happened the night of the murder.

Smart, insightful and evocative. - "Australasian Journal of American Studies"Smart, insightful and evocative.a -- "Australasian Journal of American Studies"[A] masterful volume. . . . One of the most comprehensive and authoritative accounts of both the Sleepy Lagoon murder and the subsequent trials and of the Zoot Suits riots of the early 1940s. . . . Succeeds admirably." -- "Latin Americanist""Smart, insightful and evocative." -- "Australasian Journal of American Studies" Full of flavor. . . . Pagan's book . . . provides insight into a time many overlook. You don't have to be Mexican, or Latino, or even a Californian to care about this story.--HispanicMurder at Sleepy Lagoon does more than sharpen the edges of a well-worn story. . . . It also serves as a superb case study of the myriad factors that have influenced the course of race relations in the United States. . . . Pagan has constructed an impressive study of modern American race relations that should resonate beyond the fields of Los Angeles and Mexican American history.--Pacific Historical This is a vital and pathbreaking book. . . . Obregon Pagan tells a good story, providing perhaps the best extant discussion of the facts underlying the Sleepy Lagoon murder. His scholarship is nuanced and careful.--Journal of American HistoryPagan does a wonderful job of making the 1940s come alive, while providing the kind of research base that we would expect from any good social history. The book deserves a wide readership.--American Historical [A] masterful volume. . . . One of the most comprehensive and authoritative accounts of both the Sleepy Lagoon murder and the subsequent trials and of the Zoot Suits riots of the early 1940s. . . . Succeeds admirably.--Latin AmericanistThis is a superior work. Pagan succeeds in using the Zoot Suit Riot as a lens by which to illuminate a forgotten slice of American culture and race relations during the 1940s. This is an important contribution to our understanding of race relations in WWII America.--David Montejano, University of California,

Berkeley A fine addition to western and Chicana/o historiography. The varied and unique sources on which this book is based ensure that it will be a standard by which to judge any other studies on this subject.--*Western Historical Quarterly* Smart, insightful and evocative.--*Australasian Journal of American Studies* A brilliant and ultimately persuasive effort to explain the function of music and fashion in shaping how Americans see themselves, then and now. . . . Pagan has made an important and illuminating contribution to [the] body of [Chicano] scholarship.--*Los Angeles Times Book About the Author* Eduardo Obregon Pagan is associate professor and chair of the Department of American Studies at Arizona State University West.