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Citizen Made Alien: Gender, Race, and Violence in the Politics of War

PRESENTED BY DR. LISA A. FLORES

On the evening of June 4, 1943, the streets of Los Angeles erupted. A group of 40-50 sailors, stationed in the area, came into the city and began what ultimately resulted in a week-long race riot that local and national media quickly named a “Zoot Suit War.” On that first night, the sailors, allegedly seeking vengeance for attacks by so-called “Zoot-Suiters,” mostly Mexican-American youth dressed in zoot suits, reportedly headed directly for Mexican-American neighborhood haunts—beer joints, theaters, restaurants, street corners—in search of the youth. In this presentation, I analyze dominant local and national coverage of the June violence to show how the circulation of threat invoked tropes of what I am calling a blackened violence in ways that layered both foreignness and racialness on Mexican American youth and that called for the legitimate violent containment of that alien threat.

Lisa A. Flores is Associate Professor in the Department of Communication at the University of Colorado. Her research and teaching interests lie in rhetoric, critical race studies, and gender/queer studies. Her most recent work examines historic narratives of immigrants and immigration, mapping an argument of race making, particular at the intersections of nation, citizenship, and labor.



**When: Friday, April
6th, 12-1:30pm
Where: C&J 119
Food & beverages
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