

ANOTHER VIEW OF THE RIOTS, DAILY NEWS, JUNE 11, 1943.

Manchester Boddy, editor and publisher of the *Daily News*, offered another view of the “Zoot Suit Riots” by maintaining that Californians have “an affection for his fellow citizens of Mexican ancestry....” He attached to his “Views of the News” a letter from a Mexican American mother who described the negative effects of prejudice against Mexican American children in the schools and who appealed to her fellow Californians to, in the aftermath of the riots, show “the warm feeling of friendship that exists here for citizens of Mexican ancestry—as well as for Mexican nationals who are living among us.”

All general rules, including this one, are false. Nevertheless there is one that has held true in so many situations that it deserves consideration. It is this: “Out of every evil comes some good.” Certainly it applies to the current zoot suit trouble.

Police and court records prove that only a ridiculously small percentage of the local Mexican population is involved in the so-called “gang” demonstrations.

The vast majority of local Mexicans are just as distressed over the unfortunate brawls as is any other section of our citizenship. More so, in fact, because the admitted activities of a few irresponsible Mexican youths cast reflections on the many who are not in the least involved.

Every true Californian has an affection for his fellow citizens of Mexican ancestry that is as deep-rooted as the Mexican culture that influences our way of living—our architecture, our music—our language and even our food.

There are those who fear that the current trouble will cause a permanent strain on this friendship. In our

opinion just the opposite will be the case. That is the good that will come from the admitted evil.

Today we received the following letter:

“Dear Mr. Boddy:

“Being a subscriber of the *Daily News*, I have been reading about the so-called ‘zoot suiter.’ Being the mother of four children, I want to express my feelings.

“My children and myself are of Mexican descent, born and raised in this country. We are 100 per cent Americans. My oldest son is serving our country and the youngest is about to join the United States navy.

“In this morning’s paper the so-called ‘pachucos’ are called Hitler’s agents. To that I am expressing my belief. This racial discrimination they have in schools is where the youngsters’ pride is hurt and hatred is started—always being called Mexicans. In schools there are all nationalities, but only Mexicans are called by their ancestors’ blood. There are Irish, Jews, English, French, Swedes, etc., but as long as they are born in this country they are

Americans. Why not those of Mexican descent? They are treated as rare specimens. My two girls and my young son are going to high school. Yesterday, the principal had an auditorium call just for Mexicans. These youngsters resent the way they were taken out of their classes. ‘All Mexicans report to the auditorium,’ with emphasis on the ‘all Mexicans.’

“My children were in tears when they told me. ‘Mother, how do you think we felt, being the only Mexicans in a class and having to walk out. Everybody stared at us.’ ‘These youngsters naturally are hurt, and hatred gets the best of them.

“If the principal of this school had called everybody to the auditorium, those of Mexican blood would have understood, and would not have felt like they were all hoodlums.

“If you care to publish this you are welcome to do so. Many Mexican mothers feel just like I do but are afraid to express their opinions. Thank you.”

Excerpted from “Views of the News,” by Manchester Boddy.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

1. Note the blame put upon the zoot suiters for the riots by editor Manchester Boddy, despite his statement that not all Mexican Americans were gang members. How does this contrast with the Mexican American mother’s analysis of the situation as arising out of racism sanctioned by the schools against Mexican American youth?
2. Consider the Mexican American mother’s mention of the newspaper calling the zoot suiters “Hitler’s agents,” in light of the *Los Angeles Times* news pages and their pairing of the riots with allegations of Japanese American disloyalty.