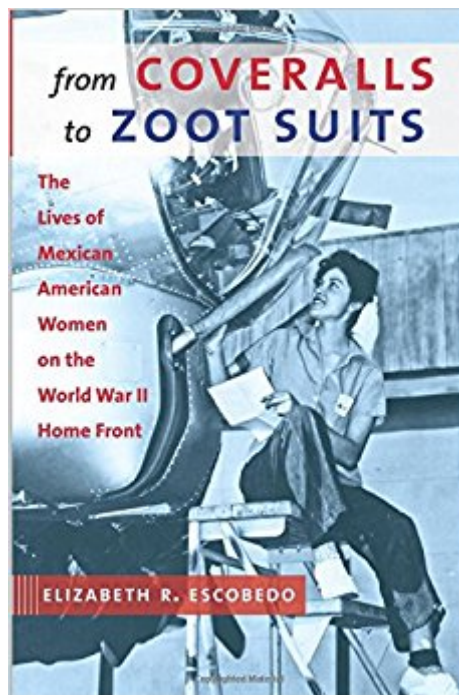




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# From Coveralls To Zoot Suits: The Lives Of Mexican American Women On The World War II Home Front



## Synopsis

During World War II, unprecedented employment avenues opened up for women and minorities in U.S. defense industries at the same time that massive population shifts and the war challenged Americans to rethink notions of race. At this extraordinary historical moment, Mexican American women found new means to exercise control over their lives in the home, workplace, and nation. In *From Coveralls to Zoot Suits*, Elizabeth R. Escobedo explores how, as war workers and volunteers, dance hostesses and zoot suiters, respectable young ladies and rebellious daughters, these young women used wartime conditions to serve the United States in its time of need and to pursue their own desires. But even after the war, as Escobedo shows, Mexican American women had to continue challenging workplace inequities and confronting family and communal resistance to their broadening public presence. Highlighting seldom heard voices of the "Greatest Generation," Escobedo examines these contradictions within Mexican families and their communities, exploring the impact of youth culture, outside employment, and family relations on the lives of women whose home-front experiences and everyday life choices would fundamentally alter the history of a generation.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Well written with an impressive use of firsthand accounts, including oral histories and interviews. . . . Escobedo does a wonderful job sifting through the evidence to bring to light a previously neglected subject. Scholars of twentieth-century American history, Mexican American history, World War II,

and American race and gender will find this book valuable for its examination of how Latinas were able to maneuver through previously held biases and stereotypes in order to improve the world around them.--Southwestern Historical QuarterlyA significant contribution that has recovered the experiences of Mexican and Mexican American women during World War II.--H-Net Reviews[A] well-written, thoughtful work.--Western Historical Quarterly[A] deft examination of the simultaneously liberating and limiting wartime experiences of Mexican American women.--Register of the Kentucky Historical SocietyA superbly researched and written book. . . . [Escobedo] draws heavily on oral histories and archival documents, and her use of photographs from the Los Angeles Public Library makes for an attractive presentation. . . . Highly recommended. All levels/libraries.--ChoiceA solidly researched and well-written perspective.--Minnesota HistoryA rich and multifaceted view of Mexican American women's lives in Los Angeles in the 1940s and 1950s. . . . Fresh and exciting.--Women's Review of BooksEscobedo's book still expands our understanding of race, community, and identity in new and important ways that speak to both the significance of the period as well as larger concepts, such as how everyday practices can also be viewed as examples of political experiences or cultural practices.--Southern California QuarterlyAn excellent read for those wishing to understand the roles of women in the 1940s from a perspective not often revealed and how these experiences have influenced the young women of today.--Journal of Family & Consumer SciencesEscobedo's detailed work leaves no doubt that the distinctive experiences of Mexican American women form a powerful lens through which to view U.S. history more generally, particularly the history of World War II.--American Studies JournalEscobedo has written a fine addition to an ever-growing body of work on Mexican Americans during World War II, in the tradition of the culture-conscious social historians George Sanchez and, especially, Vicki Ruiz.--American Historical ReviewEscobedo has produced an exemplary study, a ground-level microhistory that speaks to larger issues and would work well in both undergraduate and graduate courses.--Journal of American History

This book transforms Mexican American and women's history. Escobedo shows how ethnic Mexican women involved in community organizations exhibited a 'Mexican American' consciousness earlier and every bit as meaningful as the Mexican men who have dominated other histories. Her treatment of wartime defense workers and the 'bad girls' of the Pachuca subculture radically expands our knowledge of Mexican American women's experiences during World War II.--Matthew Garcia, author of *From The Jaws of Victory: The Triumph and Tragedy of Cesar Chavez and the Farm Worker Movement*Escobedo presents a rich analysis of the World War II

experiences of Mexican American women. . . . Her thoughtful book engages with the most recent scholarship to make a significant contribution to the field.--Eduardo Obregon Pagan, Arizona State University  
Drawing on an impressive range of archival sources, oral narratives, and historiography, Elizabeth Escobedo draws you into the social worlds of young Mexican American women, especially those who were Rosie the Riveters by day and pachucas by night. Intelligent and captivating, this superb study significantly advances our understanding of Mexican American women during and after World War II.--Vicki L. Ruiz, University of California, Irvine

The book was an excellent historical look back at Mexican American Women, primarily living in Los Angeles, California during World War II. The book was so easy to read and understand...I couldn't put it down. This subject is very interesting to me as a Chicana and it helped me understand the development of our culture in the US. This would be a great book for students in Latino and women studies.

An excellent read for anyone interested in history.

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