Jean Pfaelzer Talk Transcript

Shelley Fishkin: [00:00:00] Yeah. Okay.

Okay, well, welcome everybody. Uh, I'm really glad that you're here. Uh, I'm Shelley Fishkin. I direct American Studies. And this talk is co-sponsored by American Studies and the Lane Center for the American West. And, uh, I'd like to thank the, the staff who've been so helpful organizing this. An Nguyen, An, wave and give our thanks.

Thank you, An. And also Nancy Child and Corinne Thomas. Uh, and we're really glad that all of you are here with us as well.

Um, it's a genuine pleasure to welcome a splendid American Studies scholar, uh, back to Stanford, um, who's been transforming our understanding of the American West for decades. I say back to Stanford because Jean was part of the Chinese Railroad Workers in the North America Project, uh, and some years back was here for various, various events that we did. Um, before writing about Western history, Jean Pfaelzer, who's a professor at the University of Delaware, published two [00:01:00] books on American literature. And I suspect that her truly admirable ability to listen to, uh, hidden and forgotten voices of people, um, of enslaved people in her latest book is in part due to all the time she spent in literature and has helped make her a really excellent storyteller who makes those voices come alive for us. Um, those of you who are in the American West have already heard a lot about her award winning 2007 book, *Driven Out: The Forgotten War Against Chinese Americans*, which appeared on multiple Best of the Year lists, uh, including the New York Times, San Francisco Chronicle, and Choice.

Her latest book, about which she'll speak today, won a Hay Day History Award. *California: A Slave State*, and the book is, um, it's outside, the bookstore is here, they're happy to sell you copies, and Jean would be very happy to sign copies, uh, after the talk. Um, *California: A Slave State* forces us to get our heads around the fact that [00:02:00] the Golden State, known as the land of sunshine and promise, has also been a site of enslavement for native peoples, for African Americans, for a broad range of women who were trafficked, um, and for many others.

She looks at four empires over three centuries and teaches us how Spain, Russia, Mexico, and finally the U. S. all hungered for unpaid labor to work for fertile land in the State, and didn't hesitate to secure such labor by force. The

book tells also the story of resistance as well as bondage, documented in many slave revolts that took place in the State.

Pfaelzer has a BA from UC Berkeley, but we will not hold that against her. And she has a PhD from University College London. A public historian and commentator on American history and culture across the U. S. and abroad, she's lectured at the Smithsonian, the Library of Congress and universities in Austria, China, Germany, Netherlands, Spain and the UK.

She's also given testimony to the Congressional Truth and Healing [00:03:00] Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies in the U. S. and has testified in front of the Reparations Committee of the San Francisco Human Rights Commission. Benjamin Madley, the author of American Genocide, a book you've heard about in our course, uh, called California a slave state, a powerful history of California's varying systems of servitude.

And Philip Deloria, author of Playing Indian, a book we'll discuss in a few weeks, said that Pfaelzer's newest book offers a powerful revision of our state's past so we are very grateful to her for opening our eyes to dimensions of California history that most of us were only aware of in the most rudimentary ways. So, thank you, Jean, for joining us. It's a pleasure to have you.

Jean Pfaelzer: Uh, thank you. Okay, we're going to try this.

Um, thank you Shelly. Shelly and I have worked together in American Studies, and on the International [00:04:00] Committee, the Women's Committee, um, so many projects, the Chinese Railroad Workers Project. And so, I'm really honored to be welcomed here, to be welcomed back to Stanford. Um, I don't know how much Stanford I can claim in my background. My elderly brother went to law school here, maybe we'll sweep him into this too.

Um, today I want to talk about what Shelley introduced, which is, can you hear me, in the back? Yeah? What Shelley introduced. And what's been interesting to me as the reviews come in, about California's slave state, is that the reviewers are grabbing onto the slavery part of this story.

And the book is written in pairs of sites of enslavement and sites of resistance. So for every chapter of enslavement, there is a counter [00:05:00] history to how people held in bondage resisted. There were slave revolts I never heard of. I grew up in LA, Palms Junior High, Hamilton High, and then Berkeley. I got to work with, and 'cause I was a kid, I got to work with people like Henry Nash Smith and Kenneth Stamp.

So I was trained in the history of "the American West" and the history of human bondage. But I was unschooled. I never learned what I ended up finding over the past few years in working on this book. So, um, I want to do a sort of revisionist history of California. I know revisionist can be a very slippery term, so we're just going to pass over that and move on.

Um, but it does upend [00:06:00] certain assumptions about slavery in the United States. Um, in particular, the focus only on African American plantation slavery in the United States, on definitions of the West, and, I want to introduce some of the links between empire and slavery in California. And I also want to link the history of human bondage to the history of the environment.

And I know that people who are in the American Studies course are looking at water. And right now, as we're watching the dams come down on the Klamath River, um, which is going to eventually open the return of the salmon, which is both the spiritual and the protein of Native American people, especially in the north.

And it's gonna keep California water, um, where it starts up on the six [00:07:00] rivers, in Trinity and Humboldt County, and that will change California agriculture in the Central Valley, but all of that becomes linked, as we'll see, to human bondage as part of that story, and that's what I'm gonna focus on today.

Um, so I hope that we can bear in mind the dialectic of this story, um, the relationship between humans, and the land between empire and native people, between the various groups of people who were forcibly transported from their homes, either within California or, what I didn't know, brought to California in conditions of servitude, of various forms of unfreedom.

This map, which some of you who do American history may be familiar with. know of. It's the 1856 and then [00:08:00] 1858 famous Reynolds map. And it was this map that plotted the Civil War. As you can see, this is one of those what's wrong with this picture, which I'm sure many of you who know this better than I, um, the California is much too small.

California is much bigger relationally to the other areas, the other geographies. The gray area is where in 1858, and note that it in, in, it sweeps in Texas, where there were 200, 000 enslaved African Americans working by 1858 in cotton. Um, so the gray area is the acknowledged area of enslavement and, um, the pink area is the free area, which as you can see sweeps in California, which [00:09:00] I'm gonna argue for the next 45 minutes was not a free state.

And then critically important is the green area, which is the ones that was, that were the “territories”. And the issue of the Civil War, one of the core issues that the Civil War is what to do with the territories. Would they enter the United States, as in slave states or free states? And if we did this on the globe or a better map, they wouldn't look so big.

But they're big for a purpose, a political purpose, which is to focus that debate on how the territories were going to enter. The South always wanted to extend plantation slavery to the West. They knew that tobacco and cotton were horrible. They were crap for the land. The land was in terrible shape and the [00:10:00] economy, as probably many of you know, there was more money at the start of the Civil War invested in human beings than there was invested in land.

So, to extend it was definitely an economic pressure, and, the people who would run early California were slaveholders. The California Constitution, which is written right after the gold rush up that way, I guess in Monterey, um, was supposed to be a free, a freedom constitution. And we know that it wasn't.

And we know that the California Constitutional Convention, that had 40 white folks, 8 Latino representatives, the vote for the Constitution was published for a vote both in Spanish and in English, an acknowledgment that it's taken us 250 [00:11:00] years to kind of return to that language assumption about ballots, um, and, of those 40 white guys who were running the California constitution, the majority of them were slaveholders from the plantation South who had come West with enslaved African Americans. Remember the Missouri Compromise? One free, one enslaved. There was no state, which was a crap compromise anyhow, but there was no state to pair with California. But the union, the United States never intended that they would not admit California one way or another because every year, right after the gold one gold rush, 1. 5 billion in money of that time was going east, from California. [00:12:00] They were not going to let anybody else or let an independent entity have all that loop. And so with that money California could just wait the very vexed year for Congress to admit California as a state because it was going to. So that's what's wrong with this map. And again, it returns us to the north south dichotomy of slavery. It returns us to an African American narrowed image of people who were held in human bondage.

And it points us though, to the pressure for what would come next, even before the Civil War. People ask me, why did I write this book? And there were two things that happened that I couldn't ignore. [00:13:00] The first is an image, it's in Driven Out, we'll look at it in a little bit, of an enslaved Chinese prostitute kept in a caged brothel on Jackson Street, which would flow into Grand Avenue.

Um, Jackson Street was roads of caged brothels. And this is an image we'll look at of a little girl, um, looking out through the caged brothel, forced to solicit customers forced to have, to really to be raped for profit. Um, 20 times a day. I cannot imagine, sex 20 times a day, even in my youth. Um, and so that picture haunted me because I have two daughters and she was the age of one of my daughters while I wrote this book and the age of one of my daughters as I wrote Driven Out. So that was a shock to [00:14:00] me and I really delved into, um, with the help of the Beinecke library at Yale that has all this stuff it shouldn't have because it's too expensive to go to New Haven to read through those archives.

We can't send our students there. Um, it's just too costly. But they have incredible collections, um, there. And, the other thing that impelled me to write this book was a story in the Eureka Times Standard just a few years ago of a 15 year old girl whose name we don't know. She doesn't want us to know her name.

But the fact of so many enslaved people being nameless. something we need to think about and hold on to. But this 15 year old girl was in bad shape. She [00:15:00] was roaming the streets of Hollywood. She was a runaway, and two guys drive by in Hollywood, pick her up and drive her the length of the state to Lake County.

Lake County is inland from Humboldt, inland from Mendocino County. It's right above the wine country. It's hot. And the two guys were growers and they take her to their grow, which is pretty basic. It's just a few trailers. The money was going into plants and going into land. And they take her to their grow and they lock her in a crate.

And that's a photograph of the crate that they locked this 15 year old troubled, frightened, runaway girl in, and they drill two holes. And one is to hose her down. The other is for air. And they would let her out in August and [00:16:00] September to trim the buds, which have the most cannabis oil in them. And they let her out to trim the buds and to sexually service themselves, these two men and the other field workers in the grow.

Um, One day, they take her down to Sacramento, our state capital, and, they're going shopping. Lake County is very remote. And they're going shopping in Sacramento, and they rent a motel room, lock her in the motel room, and she sees a telephone and dials 911, and she frees herself. And the guys go to jail. And you can Google this case and there's reference to it in the book.

But I was struck by the horror of this story. But I was also struck by this girl who has been abused for eight months, and frees herself knowing exactly her fastest path to [00:17:00] freedom was to dial 911, and to get help, and to get the guys in jail. And those of us who have dealt with sexual assault in our families and with our students know this is not easy to do even now with the most sophisticated, well funded help. Um, and she on her own figures this out. So it was the image of this girl in Lake County, just miles from where, for maybe 40 years, I've shared a cabin in Humboldt County. Um, I bought that, kind of went in, as people did back then, I bought that cabin with lots of other folks.

And the Redwoods, where the Redwoods come down and meet the sea, is my second home, and it's where I wrote this book from. And so, knowing that Lake County was just down the [00:18:00] road, that the fight for the medical and then the recreational legalization of marijuana, a fight I supported. But what I didn't know was that the marijuana grows in the Emerald Triangle, which is now really a brand because, what is it, 37 states have legalized forms of marijuana.

So the Emerald Triangle is really just a brand. But I didn't know that the field workers were snagged at the border, because due to the supply chain, we need field workers right now, which we're not coping to, Mr Trump is not coping to, that our economy depends on immigrant labor and field workers who are being taken from detention centers, they're being taken from foster care, and they're being taken at the border. And, along where we see day labor. You know, which is in Palo Alto, it's [00:19:00] in Berkeley, everywhere we go, we see day labor centers, and a lot of those people are taken and never returned. So that sense of the present, and we can do the thing about presentist, and we know how to do that, but that sense of the present, of what was happening in a land that I truly love, and a state that I truly love, that where I was born and grew up, and went to school, um, and was educated, is part of this ongoing story of human bondage.

One of the things that I didn't know was that plantation owners transported, forcibly transported enslaved plantation workers across the plains in specially designated okay-for-slavery [00:20:00] and advertised as such, um, ads that this is a wagon train. If you wanted to bring enslaved people, join this wagon train and enslaved African Americans were transported either across the plains and many of them walked.

They walked from Mississippi or Missouri to California. And we know a lot of people walked because people brought too much stuff in the wagon trains, and the diaries. We see all of this furniture and family pictures. The big, heavy stuff, pianos dumped on the routes from the east to California, they had to get up and

over the Rockies and then they had to get up and over the Sierras and the oxen couldn't do it.

The people that were chosen, the African American people that they selected to take with them were [00:21:00] often skilled on, um, how to manage oxen, in blacksmithing, how to shoe the horses, and the women that were brought out were skilled midwives. And we know this from diaries that we found. This is an enslaved African American miner.

For those of you who've done this history, there is a series of photographs of people supervising him from wagons. He's doing that work. And then there, this was a long time. And there are people on the other side, white folks who are also mining. The slaveholders who came out didn't know, actually many people in the east didn't know what rough work gold mining was, especially after the big chunks of placer gold were quickly picked up and they're up to their waist in mud. They're sifting through for little slivers of gold, making a great deal of money while it lasted. But they [00:22:00] didn't really want to do that labor. And so they brought from their plantations, enslaved workers out across the plains, Or they took them over the Isthmus of Panama.

And there was no Panama Canal then. Um, so they would sail south to the Chagra River and then enslaved people would carry all the stuff through the jungles, up and over the, the mountains. *cough* Excuse me. And come down on the other side and wait with thousands of others from all over the world for ships to transport them up to San Francisco.

Hang on.

And that's how [00:23:00] men like this unnamed, enslaved African American man ended up in the gold fields. We believe he was around Auburn, which is one of the first stops. If you, if you're heading up Highway 80, Now, I just came down from there, um, to give some talks, but the snow is perfect. Um, so it's a time to take a weekend away from Stanford and play in the snow.

But Auburn was one of the first major gold sites to ship gold east. It was easy. It was on the way up. You didn't have to go deep into the Sierras, and I believe this this man was from Auburn.

When people doubt me, um, was there really African American slavery in California, I've got evidence all over the place, but this was an ad that [00:24:00] we would think we would see in a New Orleans newspaper, but it's from the San Francisco Herald of the early 1850s.

And he's kind of also taunting abolitionists, like, if you really mean to free this person, buy him. You know, it's a really nasty ad, but it's also very accessible evidence for slavery in California. And this image is in the book, and if any of you want to use these images, we can figure out the permissions so you can use them to teach.

The first slavery in California starts in 1769, and as Shelley says, this is also an empire story, and the first slavery in [00:25:00] California was when the Spanish invade in San Diego in 1769 with eight fanatical priests and a hundred soldiers. A lot of the soldiers who were, and this was a kind of Paul Revere thing, you know, one is by land, which was Father Junipero Serra, and, you know, two is by sea, and three ships come.

They sail from, um, Baja, California, bringing more soldiers. The Spanish soldiers did not want to come to California. This was a remote, dry, unknown territory where the Spanish were and where the Spanish soldiers wanted to be to the degree they were free was in Peru and Ecuador and Mexico in the silver mines and guarding enslaved workers, um, for the [00:26:00] silver mines.

And they were on the take. Um, to not abuse the tribal workers at the mines or just to be in that economy and get paid off in silver. There was no silver in California and, in 1769 nobody knew that there was gold in California. There were over 200 tribes in California. There was no big tribal nation in California.

There were at least a hundred different language bases in California. But, and there were no main history, because I keep being asked this, was there slavery within Native people and in the tribes in California? And there was none in the coastal tribes. There were people who were held captive, held ransom in an exchange.

Um, there were incidents of [00:27:00] somebody capturing somebody because they wanted to marry off their daughter. But not that these are pretty stories, but this was finite. There was no institutionalized slavery in the coastal California tribes. They did not know what was coming. And part of it is what those of you in Shelly's class will be looking at and are looking at was how fecund, how fertile the land was. You know, we all know that scarcity is a bad thing. Scarcity is a bad thing in relationships. It's a bad thing in international diplomacy. Um, and California was not a state of scarcity. There was deer and elk and um, um, roots and camarones and sturgeon and salmon and trout.

Um, and hundreds of tribal trade pathways where the tribes were in [00:28:00] touch with each other to trade goods, to trade transportation, but there was not

slavery in the tribes. Enter Father Junipero Serra with the missions, and they were going to copy the forms of enslavement that they had instituted in Peru, in Ecuador, and in Mexico, um, and transport it to California. What they wanted to do was, one, convert hundreds of thousands of Native Americans to Catholicism.

Um, and they're traveling with a papal bull, an order from the Pope, go do this. Um, and they're traveling with orders from the Spanish Emperor. What Spain wanted was, one, to have plantations, to feed the mines, um, the workers at the mines in South and Latin America because they didn't want to take Native people away from the task of mining.

And some of them were [00:29:00] not in fertile areas. The second was to stop the Brits who had control of Oregon from coming further south and invading out the California. And they wanted to stop the Russians. And I didn't know about the Russians, who have crossed the Bering Sea and they are seizing Alaskan native people for the sea otter trade and we'll get into that.

But Spain, who's been fighting it out with Russia in Europe for two centuries, um, knew exactly that the Russians were going to come down from the north with captive Alaskan native people for the sea otter trade and they wanted to stop them in their tracks. And they build the missions, 21 missions, at first 19.

The further, furthest most north mission is Mission Dolores in San Francisco. Um, the mission of our tears. [00:30:00] and the mission of our sorrow in San Francisco. And then when the Russians keep coming, the Russians are coming, the Russians are coming, and they add two more missions to the north of San Francisco in Sonoma County.

This is what the missions look like. For those of you who grew up or had kids in California, you probably remember the fourth grade mission project. Yeah? Um, you know, where you had to think up what to do with your kids so they would learn the missions and people built missions out of sugar cubes. Um, my kids grew up in DC, so we, probably not then because it was much too much fun, we built the Supreme Court out of sugar cubes. But in California, up until very recently, was the fourth grade mission project. And kids were taken to the missions. They looked like Taco Bell, Taco Bell looked like the missions. And this [00:31:00] is a late photograph because we know the camera was not, had not come into being and was popularized until what, 1845, around then, little bit later, so we know this is an after the fact picture of, of the missions.

But this is what the missions looked like. They were built by captive native people and Spanish soldiers who did not think that they had come to the Americas to build barracks and cathedrals.

Shelley Fishkin: Excuse me, maybe if you put the mic down rather than hold it so close, it might, we might avoid the feedback.

Jean Pfaelzer: Oh, I'm sorry.

Shelley Fishkin: No, it's okay.

Jean Pfaelzer: All right.

Shelley Fishkin: If you put it, try putting it up there.

Jean Pfaelzer: Well, we've moved it around a bit to get it, because you're also taping, so I've seen that. But if you can't hear me, or if I'm echoing, you really only want to hear this story once.

What I also didn't know, because I taught at UC San Diego for nine years, what I also [00:32:00] didn't know was that there were revolts at the Spanish missions. There were slave revolts at almost all the Spanish missions. The first one was in 1775. Where the Kumeyaay tribe revolted at being seized and taken into Mission, um, Daakala, San Diego Mission.

And the Kumeyaay lived on the coast, they lived on the mesas surrounding San Diego. Their people had been snared into going into the mission because they were starving. The first thing the Spaniards, and in thinking about the brilliant way the American Studies course has been organized, the first thing the Spaniards did was let loose their horses.

The California natives didn't have the horse. They let loose their cattle and their horses on Native American seed fields. And so the cattle and the horses trampled the seed fields. They urinated [00:33:00] and defecated on the seed fields. Without the horse, California natives didn't go far to hunt. And they hung out, they sat by the seed fields, and they planted these fields, and which of course undoes the notion that agricultural people or nomadic people are either more or less brilliant than other people, but they sat by the seed fields, waited for the deer and the elk and the bear to come nibble on the seed fields, hung out, and were able to supply.

Um, it was mainly men who were the hunters to supply their people with food. As soon, and like this is day one, that the Spaniards let loose the cattle and the horse on the seed field. They made the people, the native people surrounding the missions hungry. And they had to come into the missions on the wrong assumption that [00:34:00] the missions would supply them with food.

The Kumeyaay people surround Mission San Diego de Akala, and they burn the mission to the ground. They kill and slaughter brutally, and so you get a sense of the rage. Um, Father Jaime, who's on the ground in this later engraving, and they free the Kumeyaay people never to return to the mission. What I also didn't know is that at the missions in the central part of the state, Mission Santa Ynez, Mission La Purisima, Mission Santa Barbara, there were organized slave revolts that brought the mission system to an end, that contributed to its end.

And the missions were torched, the people escaped, they went into the Thule marshes, they were rescued by the Yup'ik tribes, and, freed. And they were [00:35:00] chased by then, California is controlled by Mexico, they were chased by the Mexican soldiers who tried to get their cannon into the marshes and ultimately they slaughtered the people they can reach, they burned the little fortresses they had built, but most of them go into the mountains and are led and saved by the Yup'ik people, um, only to die about 20, 30 years later from malaria, from contagion brought into the mountains by fur traders. This is a very popular postcard. It's still sold at the missions. And this is this Taco Bell image is what we were led to believe and what I was taught to believe as a kid that the missions look like. This is an image…

Student: What? You said you were made to believe that the missions are what?

Jean Pfaelzer: Looked like, [00:36:00] looked like, that, but they looked like that.

This is an image of the Alaskan natives, um, who were, here he is with seals. Bering in 1745, crosses what we now call the Bering Straits. It's that chain of islands, the Aleutian Islands. He crashes, and he dies but as his sailors spend that winter on the rocks, and they rebuild in May, because that's how long it took for the ice to melt that far north.

That the rocks where they spend this horrific scary winter are surrounded by the sea otters. So this also brings the environment and empire and slavery together. Bering sailors go back to Mother Russia. [00:37:00] with a thousand otter pelts and sell them for a thousand, I'm sorry, for $3,500 in then money each.

Amazing, amazing amount of money. I've been pretty much for the duration of this book using of a factor of times 30 to figure out loosely what things would be worth today. This is the, these little sea otters are what saves The Russian Empire and the Russian Empire sets up something called the Russian American Company and the decree, the charter of the Russian American Company says that the sea otter hunters, which it will take over, um, are entitled to 50 percent of the Alaska male population for five years.

Um, it was a deadly trade. The women are captured and only returned [00:38:00] for a special tax. And the money is going to the, um, both first independent and then government otter hunters. Um, and the picture is interesting if you have time to teach it or talk about it because it's marked at the top by the ship.

And the ship that brought Alaskan Natives down to California, um, when they have decimated the tribes, assaulted the women, held the women captive in return for certain numbers of sea otter pelts. When they decimate the coastal tribes and extirpate, word I had to learn, the sea otter, they turn right and sail down the coast.

They skip over what's now British Columbia and Washington because the Tlingit tribe is there. They're huge. They're militant. They won't let [00:39:00] them land. And they make their first landing up in Trinidad Bay about seven miles from my cabin. So that was one of these personal jolting moments of where it begins.

And they end up building Fort Ross. Now probably some of you have gone to Fort Ross. As I did when I went to Berkeley, you know, it's this Russian fort, it's beautiful, it's kept up. You know, sourdough bread, a bottle of wine, and some good Berkeley cheese, and they were these wonderful afternoons. I didn't know it was a slave plantation.

The Spanish wouldn't let them land, and they dump the Alaskan natives on the Farallon Islands. These rocky outcroppings. Um, beyond the Golden Gate Bridge, um, each of the Farallon Islands, because of all of the fish around them, are surrounded by sharks. And so it was very, [00:40:00] these are people who could kayak a thousand miles.

The kayaks are built by the Alaska Native women. I had the chance to travel with Alaska Natives in Alaska. and interview people and look at the archives. Um, and the archives are complicated because, um, the Alaskan Native people,

the Dena'ina, the Sapiak, were not literate. And so to record their stories is really an oral tradition.

And that trip was, the trips were stories in themselves. So they end up at Fort Ross and just very quickly, Putin, our Putin, believes he owns this chunk of California, which is Fort Ross. And this is really kinky, but Putin, when Fort Ross runs out of money, and this is according to Forbes magazine, which is not a progressive journal, necessarily, um, [00:41:00] Forbes magazine has found out that, and published, that when Fort Ross is out of money, they write Putin, Putin has invested in impressionist paintings that are kept in the basement of the Ritz Carlton in Paris.

And when Fort Ross needs money, they get in touch with Putin. I've met with his delegates, and they sell one of these impressionist paintings, and that's what keeps funding Fort Ross. And some of the administrative leaders, who are wonderful archivists, actually are on the I'm not gonna put it this way.

They are receiving Putin's money. And through the sale of these impressionist paintings, it's a bizarre empire story that goes on till this day. And as we watch Putin's influence now, um, suddenly he is back in the news, not just through Ukraine, but influencing the elections. I [00:42:00] think about that basement in the Ritz Carlton. And if anyone wants, I'll tell you the story of meeting with his peeps. The other thing that the Russians did was enslave the native Miwok, Pomo, um, and Pomo Kashia people. They really wanted to save the Alaska natives for the otter hunt. And so they enslaved the Pomo people to build Fort Ross and to grow wheat.

Any of you who know California, you're not going to grow wheat along the coast. Not going to happen, but the idea is that it would feed Fort Ross, but it would also feed the Russian American company up in Alaska. This is probably one of the most complicated and vexed and troubling images in, in my book.

Um, In 1850, even as Congress is still debating [00:43:00] whether or not to admit California as a free state, so we're not even a state yet, California passes the 1850 Act for the Government and Protection of the Indian, the 1850 Act for the Government and Protection of the Indian. And what it does, there was no labor force in California.

But as Ben Madley has written in An American Genocide, there was genocide happening throughout California, um, comes from the west, it comes from the east, it comes down from Oregon, and the genocide was pure settler

colonialism. It was burn the villages, let's open the land for farming and for ranching, really by settlement.

But first of all. the U. S. Military, working with something called the California Militia, has to kill the tribes. The women and Children are on the run. The 1850 [00:44:00] Act for the Government and Protection of the Indian legalizes the forced kidnap, sale and indenture of Native American people. It's reupped in 1860 to include the language that says parents do not have to sign off on the forced indenture of their kids.

And so, in Northern California in particular, but down to San Diego, there were enslaved Native Americans, mainly women and children, but not only, they're sold from the forts, from the reservations, from the jails, and just kidnapped and deposited along the road. These stories are transcribed, and I've just found them. I opened the book with one of them, but now I found more, that there are Native American slave narratives of people during the Works Project administration, very much like the slave narratives [00:45:00] of African Americans in the east. The biggest chunk is the, is held at the Library of Congress, but they're actually all over the place transcribed narratives of very elderly, formerly enslaved African Americans who agreed to have their stories told. And what I've discovered is that now we know, we know, I found Native American slave narratives where people wanted to have their stories told and they were transcribed. This was a Native American girl, and you can't see it, but it's a studio photograph.

Who would take or want this photograph? Who posed this almost mean, racist parody of a Madonna child image? Um, we're an interracial family. My daughter says, Mom, that's the whitest [00:46:00] baby I've ever seen. And, um, this is not her baby. We cannot find out, I can't find out, the cape that she's wearing. It was not a California native.

piece of clothing and I can't find the archives of the photography studio. This was taken in Sacramento. But what a painful, painful image. Um, the sexism, the racism, the biology of this image and the history of human bondage that's revealed in this image. It was collected by some of you who work in the history of photography.

It was collected by Peter Palmquist. who right before he died accidentally, um, sold his entire collection to the Beinecke. So if you're looking for visuals, um, I really recommend that, and can introduce you to the folks that helped me, um, find images that [00:47:00] we've never seen before. But this is the result, the immediate result of the 1850 Act for the protection and government of the

Indians that was going to give us a labor force, in this case, wet nurses and nannies. This is the image I talked of before, of the little Chinese girl. She looks to me, it's very hard to give her an age, but she looks to me like about 14 or 15. The highest price for an enslaved Chinese prostitute, um, was about $3,500, and that was for a 16 year old girl at the time.

Babies were also sold, sometimes for 75, and there was all kinds of garbage myths around these Chinese girls. Um, as I said, they had, they were forced to have sex about 20 times a day. They died of [00:48:00] brutality, they died of syphilis. But many of them, a surprising many of them, managed to run away, and they are some of the founders of the early Chinatowns in Marysville, in Eureka, in Northern California, um, when they managed to flee.

Some of them were just bought by their customers, um, Chinese men, um, the Chinese labor force in California is very gendered. Chinese men, as we now know from the Railroad Workers Project, that's verified it. Chinese men came free. They chose to come to California either as miners, like Mexicans, Argentinians, folks from the East Coast.

They chose to come to California for adventure, to mine for gold, and they actually got here more quickly than people who had to cross the plains. It was easier just to get on a ship and come here. Um, [00:49:00] Chinese women, except for the tiny percentage of merchant wives, came enslaved. They were kidnapped from Guangdong, Canton, and brought here.

They were sold at the docks in San Francisco, which I guess is that way. Um, they were sold from, under the supervision of the customs officials, which were controlled by then what's the IRS? The taxation and the customs officials worked hand in hand. They were strip searched on the docks.

There was a slave den. They were sold if they weren't sold or contracted for. They were taken into Chinatown and sold from these caged brothels that ran from Jackson Street, as I said, up to Grant Avenue, San Francisco. And I won't sing Grand Avenue, San Francisco. Smart choice. This is a picture I also found at Yale in the [00:50:00] Beinecke.

And this is typically not an immigrant pose. This was also an enslaved prostitute up in Eureka. And everything is wrong with this picture. No immigrant sent a pose like this home. This, at the time, this is Odeless. This is a highly erotic pose. Her legs are showing. What's also wrong with this picture is that she's got bound feet.

She was a daughter born into into poverty. She could not work. Um, Connie Young Yu, who some of you have worked with, um, remembers that her grandmother who had bound feet, um, crawled. That she couldn't, you couldn't really, you certainly couldn't labor, and the Chinese girls were sold, the madams of the brothels were Chinese merchants wives.

So the picture is erotic. What's [00:51:00] also weird about this picture is that the chrysanthemums are a Chinese image of purity. Why are the chrysanthemums there? Was this part of the advertisement? This is also a studio photograph. What was it for? Was it for a carte de visite? Was it for an image to sell her?

That could be just cheaply, by then, it's 1886, passed out on the street. Um, or did she choose to kind of protest, to put an image of purity there? Or was it to add to her sales value to her image? you can buy a virgin. We don't know. And we don't know what the scroll in her hand is for, but oddly the Chinese girl in the cage in the other picture is also holding a scroll.

This is from Carlisle Indian Boarding School, but the same thing happened at [00:52:00] Sherman. There were twelve Indian boarding schools in California and they were funded by something called the Outing Program. I had never heard of the outing program. I had the chance to interview the judge from the Canadian Supreme Court, Hugh Murray, and Murray was the one who really led the expose of the Canadian boarding schools in Canada, and we can talk about that more.

And he really encouraged me to look into the situation of the outing programs California, and this was a program across the United States in most of the Indian boarding schools. Indians were required to go to school. There were no schools on the reservation. And so the kids were taken. Many were, their parents tried to hide them from being taken.

And, this is, uh, picture [00:53:00] taken within hours of each other. It's the before and after where the kids were not allowed to wear their native clothing and the boys are putting these scratchy woolen kind of faux military garments. They weren't allowed to talk in their native languages and they weren't allowed to communicate with their siblings.

And in the case of Riverside, the kids were often far away from home. The Sherman Indian Boarding School was built. It was a deal. I will build a boarding school that looks like a mission. It's at the turn to the 20th century. It'll look like

a mission. It will attract tourists, and I will supply the new orange groves, um, the new lemon groves with labor.

And there were at each of the Indian boarding schools, something I've never heard of. which were called the Outing Matrons. And the Outing Matrons cooked the deal and they set up sending kids [00:54:00] from the boarding schools, um, into the fields. The boys went into the citrus fields and the girls were trained as domestic servants, um, or to work in the new hotels and the new tourism, um, of California.

This is a girls classroom. They're being taught to iron. These are tiny children, this is at Sherman, just down in Riverside, um, digging potatoes in the fields.

And this is also a picture from Sherman, where Sherman, it's in the Sherman archives and it speaks to the destiny of these children who are wearing numbers except for the, you know, written on the photograph, the little girl who looks in such tragic shape. But all of these kids look terrified. They look, you know, depressed [00:55:00] and terrified.

And the girls are dressed in clothing that reminded me of some of the cotton shifts that enslaved African American kids wore and women and then the faux military uniforms of the boys. I'm going to very briefly talk about convict labor because this is the birth of the carceral state. During the gold rush, there was a lot of very petty crime in California.

Every state has a state penitentiary. A corrupt guy named James Edsel is given an $100,000 contract to build San Quentin prison and the ownership of the convicts. The ownership of the convicts. Edsel takes the money and he builds prisons on top of the ships that had brought people out for the gold rush.

There are 400 ships in San Francisco Bay. [00:56:00] This is the La Grange. It's sold up to Sacramento. And that's a prison built on top of a ship that was brought out for the gold rush. And eventually, the legislature says to Edsel, stop sailing these prisoners around San Francisco Bay to put in the roads, to put in the sewage system or to rent them out to build mansions. Build the damn prison. And eventually he builds the prison in Marin County. If you've driven by, crossed, you know, the San Rafael Bridge, you've driven by, Marin County is not a good place to build a prison because it was very easy for the prisoners to escape. It's a peninsula, a very shallow peninsula.

It's not an island. And indeed, the prisoners escaped. And they're forced to work in furniture factories and jute mills at San Quentin prison. The jute mills

[00:57:00] were from, jute is like burlap. It was transported from Calcutta. So you've got a global trade here, much like the sale of the Otter fur, which went to China, so there you have a Pacific slave triangle, Alaska, California, Canton.

Here there's another slave route of the, um, jute being brought from India, grown on plantations, brought to California, and woven by prisoners at San Quentin, who are forced to stand 12 hours a day at the mills. weaving these jute bags to support California agriculture because wheat flies around. So it needed to be bagged before it could be shipped out.

And I could not stand 12 hours a day without talking in silence, without moving except to work with no free [00:58:00] time. And if you talked, you were tortured. And this is an image of early waterboarding, and this is what happened. Interestingly, they have, um, displayed an, an African American forced convict labor, laborer who actually talked while he worked.

Women are not supposed to cry at work. What African Americans, free blacks who came out to California wanted was the right to testify. There were four colored conventions in California. There were, as we now know through the work of, um, historian Gabrielle Foreman, there were colored conventions all over the United States where thousands of blacks, mainly free blacks, gathered starting in the 1830s up through the Civil War and then after.

There were four in California, three before the Civil War, [00:59:00] and I keep looking for the word freedom, or abolition in the minutes of the three California colored conventions. What they wanted was the right to testify. Because if you're a free black person and you're snagged under the Fugitive Slave Act, um, if you can't enter into evidence the fact that you're free and are carrying freedom papers either by birth or manumission, you're subject to be sent back to the South or sold into slavery in California.

There are 8, 000 of these petitions written, collected by free blacks. There were not 8,000 blacks in 1858 in California. So they were collecting signatures, people who were literate, people who could sign their name, from enslaved and free. [01:00:00] Blacks or formerly enslaved blacks and white people who are supporting them started by the colored conventions in Sacramento at the early A.M.E. churches in Sacramento and San Francisco, where the colored conventions were held, and it took them several years. And what they're petitioning for is the right to testify. And I know everything's available online now. You wouldn't have to go anywhere. But to go into the archives at Sacramento, and to just physically touch these files of these 8,000 petitions for the right to testify, and I just bawled, you know, of the courage.

And when I get discouraged now about what's going on and people say, and then there's your book. But actually it's my book that gives me inspiration when I turn to the heroism and the [01:01:00] strategy of bringing people together. You know, right now I kind of go back to the kids thing. Um, you know, here's the church, here's the steeple, open the door, where are the people?

And I'm looking for this, you know, here's the church, here's the steeple, open the door and here are the people. And it's this, as a person of a certain generation, um, in the labor movement, the civil rights movement, the anti war movement, I'm looking for the people, you know, right now. And, um, this is evidence that in California there were the people I want to end very quickly with human trafficking.

These were women in sweatshops. There were women and men. They're from Thailand, and they're in a sweatshop in South L.A. They're trapped for seven years. They're transported here to work in the sweatshops. One of them escapes. She draws a map. The [01:02:00] map is actually now at the Smithsonian that did an exhibit on these women.

They escape, and one of the women is terrified, and she sits it out in her community in L.A., and finally they encourage her, you've got to get this place shut down. And she sends the map, the map that's at the Smithsonian, um, and it defines all the different places where the trapped, enslaved, trafficked workers are held in South L.A., um, making the clothes that we all like to wear now, they were making casual, sporty, um, the sweat, the sweatsuits, and the casual clothes that were, that don't have buttons and buckles, all the clothes we like to wear right now.

This was a

Audience Member: what year was that picture, again? I mean what year was the sweatshop, uh...

Jean Pfaelzer: Ended? I think it was ended about 10 [01:03:00] years ago. I'd have to look it up. I don't,

Audience Member: This is recent…

Jean Pfaelzer: It's now, it's now. This was a guy who was a welder in Thailand. He's brought on the promise by a recruiting company to rebuild the Bay Bridge after the earthquake. What welder wouldn't want to rebuild the Bay Bridge?

He comes here. He is picked off the plane. He has a contract, thrown into a white van, taken down to LA to rebuild a Thai restaurant from the ground up. He's locked in a room at night with no furniture, no hot water. Um, and after the restaurant is built, he's forced to be a waiter in the restaurant, and a customer notices him and befriends him.

And they cook a deal where he and one of his pals are taken to the Buddhist temple in East L.A. where [01:04:00] they have gathered a bunch of trafficked Thai workers and they're freed and he sues. The owners go to jail and he wins about $60,000 and the right to work on the Bay Bridge. And he brings his family.

This is an image of a trafficked girl. This is a recent photograph. Um, one of the things, as we're trying to identify people who have been trafficked, is to look at tattoos, because tattoos right now are signifiers. This is a very obvious one, less obvious. And we're trying to work with police officers and health care workers who have close proximity to bodies, to children's bodies, and young adult bodies to identify tattoos.

Um, one to identify is a crown. Um, that's tattooed often on a female as a sex worker. And the book, my book ends with [01:05:00] the story of a woman who went by the name Elle Snow. I spent a lot of time with Elle Snow and she manages to free herself from the sex trade and she has been taught how to advertise herself in a magazine called Backpage.

Backpage is the sex trade magazine. Um, Elle wanted to go into, she wanted to be a lawyer, she wanted to start as a legal aide. And she didn't even finish high school. And trying to figure out how to get this girl into legal aid. My husband's a judge. We were thinking, we got, between us, we should figure out.

Elle is brought in to testify when they're trying to shut down Backpage. She walks the prosecutors through it on exactly how to post herself, what different sex acts were named as, in code or not so subtle code. [01:06:00] And they shut down Backpage, and the prosecutor offers her a job as his legal aid. And that's what she's doing now.

This is my favorite story. I'm going to end with this or one of my stories. This is Yokeleen. Yokeleen was an enslaved prostitute and she frees. She runs away. She's up in Sonora and she climbs the courthouse steps in Sonora, California, and she says, I need to write an affidavit. And Yogleen writes this affidavit that says, My husband, Charlie, is in jail.

Charlie is a sort of generic name for a Chinese man bestowed by white people. My husband, Charlie, is in jail, and this is to declare that I'm a free woman and no man may ever own me again.

Shelley Fishkin: so much, Jean, for a very illuminating and also [01:07:00] horrifying lecture. Um, we're open to questions.

Audience Member: I have a question.

Shelley Fishkin: Sure, you can call.

Audience Member: When you were talking about the

Shelley Fishkin: Can you, can you speak really loudly? Because the mic system is not working.

Audience Member: When you were telling us about the Taco Bell image and then the real picture, you were saying that the Spanish soldiers worked alongside the indigenous people to build it. You were saying that the Spanish soldiers didn't really sign up to come and build it, but then, but then something happened with the mine and then

Jean Pfaelzer: Um, the Spanish soldiers, um, some of whom were taken into the military, many of them from North Africa, um, Muslims who had ended up in Spain but are at the lowest tier of the Spanish military, are sent to South and Latin [01:08:00] America and what they think is going to happen to them is that they're going to guard the indigenous people working at the, at the mines.

They did not expect to be taken into Alta, Northern California, to build barracks, to build the cathedrals, the little churches, they're not originally big, and to, um, force Native Americans to build the fields that would feed the mission system, and, the hope, that doesn't work, is to feed the plantations in Mexico, the missions, they're already a chain of missions in Mexico, and to also feed the people, the miners free and enslaved working in Peru, Ecuador, and Mexico.

They... none of these people were skilled farmers. Eventually people would, tourists would talk about how [01:09:00] beautiful the orchards were, how beautiful the fields were at the missions. And, when the mission system comes to the end, because Mexico wants to give all that coastal land to wealthy ranchers and farmers.

So that's where you get the name Martinez, Barralesa, the big wealthy Mexican ranches. Um, Mexico and Sutter, John Sutter, who's a historian himself, um, driving here, I heard an ad for, um, go to one of the Sutter hospitals and the Sutter health care clinics, which people in my family have gone to. Sutter was a massive slave holder in the Sacramento Valley.

He realizes there's much more money in renting enslaved Native Americans out to all of his neighbors in the Napa Valley to start the vineyards and the agriculture. And, but he keeps 20 women for [01:10:00] himself, kept right off of his office. Sutter's fort that we think of, hmm, gold, discovery, all that, not the full story of Sutter.

His story is, is in the book. Um, but that's what happens to the mission land, is it gets distributed to wealthy ranchers. If you were white, you had to convert to Catholicism in order to be on the take from Mexico of this land. So that was a long answer to your question. Other questions? I know there are historians in the room who may want to take me on.

Go for it.

Audience Member: I just wanted to ask how, how you see your research changing the way California history is taught in schools?

Jean Pfaelzer: It's a really important question. Shelly asked how I see this research changing the way history is, California history, but national history. This [01:11:00] isn't, it's a global history and national history as well as in my view, a California history.

It is very, very hard to get, um, different works taught in the schools. And I feel like historians and people in American studies almost need to go there. And to meet with, there was a great effort, there's a parallel reading list, required reading list, in California of recommended books and required books.

Right now, already in California, books are being trashed and taken off of the shelves of libraries and from classrooms. It's not going to be an easy time to get a book like this added to the school board list. In California, it's controlled by the California School Board. Um, we know that our biggest problem is Texas, because they're the biggest marketer with the size [01:12:00] of Texas and the school systems.

They have undue influence on publishers. But, driven out, my last book, um, people working in Sacramento went to great efforts to get it on the optional

school, the optional textbook list. We never thought it would be required reading. Um, and he failed. Uh, somebody, um, Steve Yee who worked for the, um, school board in Sacramento went to incredible efforts to get it on the optional, you know, list so that teachers would know about it.

It's really, it's going to be very hard to get this story out. And I think, I'm hoping that PBS and NPR, um, historical societies. I just gave a talk up in Nevada City at a historical society, packed room, and I'd say half of them were teachers, you know, which I was so [01:13:00] glad to hear and to meet. And I know that they're not going to buy the book, the kids, but they can easily, we now know, download a chapter or two and get the relevant chapters to their students.

Um, it is critically important, I think, especially in this age of book banning. And if you go, if you Google almost on a weekly basis, what school boards in California are banning books, that it's, it's coming up more and more and more that California school boards and parents and PTAs are going to be buying this garbage of what can't be taught.

And, um, so I think for those of us who are educators and researchers or interested in the fate and what our kids learn and what they grow up to believe, getting to the school boards, it sounds very [01:14:00] kind of, you know, boring kind of work to get a book onto the school board list. But in my view, this is, these kids are our most important audience.

So thank you for that question. Other questions? Covered a lot. Yeah?

Audience Member: Yeah, I'm wondering what the gender issue was like in, like, San Francisco in the late, um, 1800s. You know, I assume a lot of young immigrant male workers were also in [unintelligible] prostitution rings.

Jean Pfaelzer: Yeah, I think that, well, you have to almost do it by race. Um, you know, what is the proportion of men to women? Um, by race. Um, starting with enslaved African Americans who come out. Um, men were chosen because they were skilled. They have learned skills on the plantation, um, such as [01:15:00] blacksmith, um, and caring for animals, animal husbandry.

Um, sometimes they were owned by the younger son, almost like the priests in England. What do we do with the kid? you know, hand him off some people and send them to California is my uninformed take about the younger sons who were sent out there all kinds of letters and diaries. So the proportion of and you have to look almost at a particular decade.

What was happening economically? What was happening with Jim Crow? Who is coming out? Who is choosing to come out? Obviously, with the 13th Amendment, the California whites, until it's ratified to sign onto the 13th Amendment. We didn't sign the 14th and 15th Amendment until the 1950s to sign onto it. We were not enthusiastic about the three most important amendments in terms of freedom in the Constitution.[01:16:00]

With the Chinese people, we know very exactly um, that during the height of the enslaved prostitution in the 1880s. We know that the vast, vast proportion of the women who came, I believe it's 97 percent of the women who came, come unfree. And 3%, the other 3 percent were merchants wives who were legally allowed to come.

We've just honored or commemorated the 1882 Exclusion Act. But before that is the 1875 Page Act. And it says “No woman may enter the country who is lewd or debauched”. And those are euphemisms for Chinese women. And so it would be idealist to keep enslaved Chinese prostitutes 1775 just as the freedom amendments are going through yeah. [01:17:00] Um, that the vast proportion of enslaved women, Chinese women who come in are prostitutes and they don't choose to be to come here as prostitutes. I've been looking into the court cases, and there's one in the book by a Chinese woman named Chui Lai, and Chui Lai establishes, well before the immigration debates now, birthright citizenship.

She is not given credit, which means if you're born in the United States under the 14th Amendment, you are entitled to be a citizen. You're not naturalized, you are born. birthright citizenship if you were born, and that's the children of these women. Now, I think the children of the enslaved prostitutes are interesting because I don't believe that a woman who has been raped 20 times a day is going to be fertile.

I think her chances of having syphilis, [01:18:00] of having injured organs is going to limit her fertility. But we don't know yet the lineage of the daughters of the, of the prostitutes. There's been really interesting research on the children of the prostitutes in India, and there's a great documentary on that.

Um, I think it's called Born into Brothels. Um, so we're learning more about the children of other countries, but that work is yet to be done. And I think, you know, people like Karen Sanchez Epler, Anna Mae Dwell, Anna Mae Dwayne, who are working in childhood studies, are really doing important work. So we find out the impact of this on children.

Yeah.

Audience Member: Thank you for a fascinating talk. Thanks. I'm very intrigued about the…

Shelley Fishkin: Can you speak so that the folks in the back can No,

Audience Member: I'm very intrigued about the Putin Hotel Ritz painting. [01:19:00]

Jean Pfaelzer: You know, that was one of these moments where you go, You know, when I heard about it and then read about it in Forbes, you know, it's like, really, you know?

And, um, so I had the chance to, I got to know Alaska native women and I met them through the research at Fort Ross. And then one of the ones was the one who took me, um, to visit with the elders up around Fairbanks and Kodiak. And, um, so I go with them and I had nothing to add to these women who were really trying to get Fort Ross to open the story and tell the story of the Alaskan natives who were trapped at Fort Ross, shipped to live on the Farallon Islands, part of this Pacific slave trade.

And so they asked me to come to this meeting in Petaluma. [01:20:00] And it's a showdown between Fort Ross, the Russians, um, the Pomo Kishaya and the Alaska Natives. And I have no legitimate reason to be there except maybe to add some academic creds to my friends, you know, um, the Alaska Natives. Um, and there is a Russian guy who we nicknamed the Moneybags.

And Moneybags was this little Russian guy is sitting there and the goal of the meeting is to get California Parks, who controls now the government money that goes into Fort Ross. We wanted to get the new woman at Cal Parks to include the story of the Alaska natives and the Pomo, Kashia and Miwa in the history of Fort Ross.

And what they're first asking for is to build a trail where there would be a headset. that [01:21:00] tells the other story because Fort Ross has got the sugar cookies and the aprons and the little boys with the wooden rifles. And you can go up there and see him running around and the cookies are great. Um, but that's not the story they wanted told.

And it's this new woman and she is listening to both Chief Reno, who's Pomo and then the two Alaska native women to get this story told at Fort Ross. And at the end of the day, Um, this was an insane meeting in some community room in

Petaluma, um, what we do, you know, as historians. And, um, at the end of the day, the woman from Cal Park says, it has to be told.

You know, this is persuasive history, um, the story needs to be part of Fort Ross, part of, part of California history, part of Cal Park's history, I'm on, and she sets up a series of meetings. At which point, [01:22:00] one of the Miwok women, sitting to my left, um, looks at Moneybags and says, I mean, it was such psychobabble, it was hilarious, she says, I'm sorry, this must have been a very difficult afternoon for you. And we're just all trying not to crack up. Like what political meeting ends with a Native American woman telling the Russian Moneybags that he had a bad day? I mean, it was such a great afternoon. So, um, that story is, is very much a part of it. And the trail is being built. The ability now to tell a story electronically, So, um, the Alaskan Natives can just hand a headset off to tell a counter history is happening.

Um, and one of the Alaskan Native women has just finished her doctorate at Davis, and so she's got her own creds for doing that.

Audience Member: [01:23:00] Yeah, so I've got a question.

Jean Pfaelzer: Can you belt it out? You're further away than you look.

Audience Member: Yeah, I have a question around, um, how actually questions of freedom and unfreedom are unfolding in relation to like educational institutions. I know you spoke a little bit about Indigenous education in the boarding schools. I'm wondering like what educational experiences Asian Americans, Latin Americans subjects may have had at the time in California and how that correlated to the slave, slave [indecipherable].

Jean Pfaelzer: Yeah, as a teacher, faculty member, I think it's a critical question because so much feeds through educational institutions. It's different for every group. With the Native Americans, there's the outing program. They did not get decent education. And when they start to, the parents are getting very good at hiding their children when the recruiters come onto the reservations.

Um, [01:24:00] and then the public schools start to get built on the reservations. In California, There is no designated treaty. There were 18 proposed treaties to give California Native Americans land. The Senate not only votes all of the treaties down, they literally vote to hide the proposed treaties to give Native Americans land.

So the reservations are really, really remote in California. Gambling has changed the finances of some of the reservations, a story in itself. Um, so that's the Native American story. It will come through the public schools. They are poor. They're underfunded. Some of them because they're one per reservation. The reservations are huge.

How to get your kid to school during the week. Who's going to put your kid? How's your kid? Become issues. [01:25:00] The Chinese Americans have the famous Mamie Tape case. Mamie Tape is half Chinese, half white, um, woman, and she files a case for Chinese kids to have access to the public schools. When the Smithsonian celebrated Brown v. Board of Education, we got them to include a plaque and the history of Mamie Tape, who wins her case that Chinese kids are allowed public education. Mamie Tape is fed up. She really doesn't want her kids to get that education. And, um, she actually sends her kids to a Chinese school, in, where there will be more kids like her kids and bilingual education.

So Mamie Tape's case, so it's different, but, um, people like Sanderson, who was one of the African American leaders in San Francisco and an educator is [01:26:00] starting schools for African American kids as soon as he gets to California because once people come out with women, then there's lineage, then there's kids, and an urgent need for, um, for schools for California kids.

Some of that story is in the book. It could have been a lot more, and I'm happy to talk with you and share any education archives I have if you want to pursue that because it's critically important. But don't lose the colored conventions, because those are, while they're not demanding education, those names are the early African American leaders in, in California - Mifflin Wister Gibbs, Peter Lester, Sanderson. Um, so, and, but, at the California Convention, there were not African [01:27:00] American women. Um, there were in some of the other states. And if you want to work through that, we'd put you in touch with Gabrielle Foreman, because she has work for you to do. And you'll meet some really cool people, including her.

Yeah?

Audience Member: Thank you. I'm from Germany, and we, in Germany, are really influenced by Oskar Schindler. Uh huh. I've never heard of her. Are there any people who dedicate their lives and put themselves in danger to free slaves?

Jean Pfaelzer: My goodness, yeah. The question is, as in Germany, um, people who helped, people who, and hid people from the Holocaust, um, you know,

who are those people, and they are, in every group of people who were enslaved, there were people who helped free them, or help them free themselves. Um, and there was an entire civil [01:28:00] rights movement for, that grew up in California, um, where enslaved blacks did not know when they came to California that they were going to run into a huge community of free blacks. My numbers are soft because, in the California tax rolls, they didn't list ownership of a person as property.

So that's one of the ways we know who was unfree, who was owned. Um, but there are so many papers, there are letters, there are diaries, there are accounts, there are newspaper articles. This is not as hidden in history as it should be. But there are incredible stories. The most famous one, um, because it made the news, was a black man named Archie Lee.

Archie [01:29:00] Lee was enslaved in California. He escaped time after time after time. He was not allowed to testify that his owner had gone back south and had said, you are now free. The owner goes back south and realizes the price of slaves in the South has gone up during the fifties, and he wants Archie back.

He hires a slave catcher, something we don't think of as a California institution, to snag Archie Lee. Archie is, he's just one of many, but Archie is snagged time after time, and the story of Archie Lee ends, um, with, it's a crazy story. He flees. He loses his case. I think it's case number five. The black community in San Francisco is waiting in the streets.

to [01:30:00] hear the final verdict of this case. And many of them were not allowed into the courtroom because it was allowed to testify or be in the courtroom. And Archie Lee is finally, um, denied his freedom in court, and his owner is sitting there waiting, and he takes him out to Angel Island. You know, Angel Island, the island in San Francisco Bay.

Um, it's where it was. It becomes an immigration station to ensnared Chinese people and Russians and Japanese people who are trying to immigrate to this country. Um, and he's hiding Archie Lee in a robo in a cove on Angel Island, waiting for a ship to come to carry him back to New Orleans because he's won Archie back. [01:31:00] There's another chapter, um, that one of the women, who is a leader in the free black community and a huge donor to all of these court cases, is married to a guy who's a cook on one of the ships and he's the cook on the ship that's going to carry Archie Lee back to New Orleans. And he tells Mary Ellen Pleasant that this is going to come down. And they rent the police tugboat from the police in San Francisco Bay, the free black community.

And they sail out to where Mary Ellen's husband says this transfer of this guy, who has been ruled unfree, is going to take place.

And as they're about to load Archie Lee from this [01:32:00] rowboat, the, and the free black community is waiting for this, and they snag him, they take him from the ladder, carrying him onto the boat, and take him back. to San Francisco because there's a guy who is working at the most low level black clerk for the court system who can sign on to this, says that Archie Lee should be freed and he's entitled to another trial.

And there is a final trial. Archie Lee is in fact free. His owner sneaks out And because he has now committed perjury by testifying that he legally owned Archie, he sneaks away. Archie is free. Mary Ellen Pleasant is waiting in her carriage for Archie so that he doesn't get taken again. And that night in San Francisco at the AME Church in San Francisco is a huge [01:33:00] celebration.

It's a Huey Newton celebration. Archie Lee is free. Archie's not going to show up because, you know, he could be snagged again and go through this again. But the entire free black community of San Francisco is there. This is 1858. A guy shows up from British Columbia and his name is James Nagel. Nagel runs the little ship that runs daily, um, between San Francisco and British Columbia.

It's got mail, it's got fresh goods, and he is carrying with him an invitation from James Douglas. James Douglas is the black, Caribbean black governor of British Columbia. And there's going to be a vote in British Columbia. Do we go with Britain or do we go with the United States? Douglas knows that Britain is a freedom [01:34:00] country right at this point, in 1858.

He really, as a black governor, wants British Columbia to be free. For He sends Nagel down to this party, this freedom celebration, with an invitation to African Americans in San Francisco to move to British Columbia, to Vancouver, and he offers them, anything 40 acres and a mule, he offers them 20 acres, the right to vote, the right to send their kids to school, and the right to safety.

And the deal, of course, is that they're gonna vote for British Columbia to go Brit. Um, African Americans in California are just fine, you know, with that vote. And in the three weeks following the freedom of Archie Lee, 800 free blacks from all over northern California take this little ship [01:35:00] called the Commodore and sail up to British Columbia, and most of them become members of a stay, and they build on Salt Island, which is, of course, native land.

We'll leave that story aside. But they take their 20 acres and their animals, and some of them, like Mifflin Whistler Gibbs, who's one of the first African American judges. The minute the war is over, he leaves his wife, goes to Oberlin, gets an education and becomes one of the first African American judges having sat out the Civil War in safety in Vancouver.

Archie Lee is with Mifflin Whisper Gibbs. They're the first ones to board the Commodore, and he spends his life in British Columbia and he, he makes, um, pickets for picket fences and sells them and [01:36:00] is safe and thrives in British Columbia. So, and that's just one of many, many stories of black abolitionists and freedom leaders.

There're more.

Shelley Fishkin: Thank you very much, Jean. Really appreciate it. And, um, if any of you would like her to sign your copies, to sign the book, she's available to be happy to do that.

Jean Pfaelzer: And I'm happy to answer questions.

Shelley Fishkin: Thank you all for coming and staying.

Audience Member: Thank you.

Jean Pfaelzer: Shelley booked two hours. I didn't think there was a chance we'd use it all.