New Perspectives in Transcontinental Railroad History: An Interview with Laura Dominguez

Eleanor Mahoney

ABSTRACT
This interview reflects on recent efforts by the National Park Service (NPS) to commemorate and interpret the Transcontinental Railroad. Themes explored include public memory, community engagement, and the potential role of the humanities in NPS research and education initiatives.

In July 2025, Laura Dominguez completed a two-year National Park Service (NPS) Mellon Humanities Fellowship. Her position focused on the history and interpretation of the first US Transcontinental Railroad. Completed in 1869, the railroad stretched roughly 2,000 miles from Council Bluffs, Iowa, to San Francisco, California. Two corporations—Union Pacific Railroad Company and Central Pacific Railroad Company—oversaw construction from each end, with the lines meeting in Promontory, Utah. Lauded as a technological and engineering marvel, the Transcontinental Railroad immediately became a tangible symbol of the United States' growing economic, political, and military strength.

For well over a century, official accounts of the railroad's initial construction, as well as its enduring after-effects, presented this as an uncomplicated, celebratory story to the American public. This dominant narrative erased alternative, less-triumphant perspectives from most historic sites, including those run by NPS. The distinctive, far-reaching experiences of Indigenous Peoples, including widespread violence and dispossession, received little attention among non-Native historians, interpreters, and site managers until recently. Likewise, only lately did the perspectives of the railroad's workforce, especially those of the thousands of Chinese workers whose labor largely built the western section of the line, move primarily from scholarly discourse into mainstream public conversations.

In 2019, Congress passed the John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act (Dingell Act). This bill, coming 150 years after the Transcontinental Railroad began operations, offered NPS a unique opportunity to reflect on its own role in shaping the memory of the railroad and to expand the depth and breadth of information offered at national parks. Specifically, the Dingell Act called on NPS to submit a detailed report of "alternatives for commemorating and interpreting the Transcontinental Railroad," to include (among other requirements) a historical assessment of the railroad as well as a list of possible recommendations for enhancing research, education, interpretation, and public awareness. The drafting of the historical assessment, which necessitated widespread public engagement, would ultimately form the basis for much of Dominguez's work as an NPS Mellon Humanities Fellow. In this interview with Eleanor Mahoney, Dominguez reflects on the experience of working as a scholar at the intersection of public humanities, public policy, and academia, on a project that called for reparative memory-making at a moment of national upheaval and change.[1]

Eleanor Mahoney (EM): For close to two years, you served as the NPS Mellon Humanities New Perspectives in Transcontinental Railroad History Fellow. That's a long title—and a broad mission for a postdoctoral fellow! What first drew you to this position when you saw the job announcement posted?

Laura Dominguez (LD): My academic training is in the history of the North American West and Ethnic Studies; I didn't arrive at the NPS as an expert in railroad history. A couple of things really drew me to this topic and to this fellowship. I have a background in historic preservation, and a lot of my scholarship looks at the intersections of history and heritage conservation. In other words, I study how people make meaning out of the past and express their attachments to places. I am especially curious about how communities at the fringes of settler

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colonial societies in the American West have contested mythic narratives and patterns of erasure over time, as well as how they assert their own interpretations of history and preserve their own stories, places, and cultural practices. The fellowship invited me to better understand how the NPS was grappling with a topic that is so mythologized in US history and tied to the idea of national exceptionalism.

EM: Can you explain the idea of mythic memory-making a little more? Why is it so important to challenge or contest these mythic narratives? And how do you think this relates to the work of the National Park Service?

LD: A lot of my work is premised on the idea that history in and of itself is part of the infrastructure of settler colonialism in the United States. The stories that the US tells about itself—especially those that White settlers and their descendants tell about themselves—justify the taking of land, the attempted extermination and replacement of Indigenous Peoples, and the exclusion of many other people. It all depends on a particular rewriting and accounting of history. I'm particularly critical of the historic preservation movement and public history as helping to reinforce myths of American history about who owns and inherits the land, who has the rightful connection to the land, who is most productive on the land, and who has a right to belong in a particular place.

My scholarship focuses on Southern California, particularly because of the place it holds in the imagination of the US and beyond. For centuries, the region has represented a place of the future, a place that people can project their hopes and dreams onto. My own study of reparative memory-making and place-keeping in Los Angeles—the ways that racialized peoples conserved their heritage as a form of healing and as an expression of power and joy—is indebted to generations of scholars

Frances Flora Bond Palmer, "Across the Continent: Westward the Course of Empire Takes its Way," 1868. Palmer's artwork encapsulates the post-Civil War expansionist fervor that swept across the West, where the locomotive and the promise of "progress" divided Native Americans from White settlers.

and community storytellers who have opened our eyes to the violence undergirding the fantasy of California's past (including, but not limited to, the genocide and enslavement of Native Californians, the suppression and exclusion of immigrants, and many other forms of discrimination and erasure targeting Mexican, Black, and other communities). In one form or another, we can always find storytelling embedded in those practices of removal and displacement as justification.[2]

Similar processes inform official or leading memories of the Transcontinental Railroad (and by that, I mean the stories enshrined in public lands, museums, historical societies, and popular culture). The nearly 2,000-mile-long road is a major physical expression of Manifest Destiny from the second half of the 19th century. It gives shape to the stories the US promoted after the Civil War: how the newly reunified North and South could find common hopes and dreams in the West, and how that land was going to help heal the nation. To this day, we celebrate the railroad as a technological feat and a symbol of the ingenuity of American capitalism and of financiers and engineers. It has become an emblem of the genius of the American experiment in a lot of ways.

EM: I'm struck at how national parks were playing a quite similar role as the railroad in national myth-making in the years after the Civil War. Have you noticed that too?

LD: Absolutely. Both national parks and railroads were part of the larger, westward colonial project during and after the Civil War, and both relied on erasure to advance a national story. They were premised on the idea that Native Americans and other marginalized communities were invisible or expendable.

Like the railroad, parks were a way for the US to promote national unity and identity and to seize and reimagine Indigenous lands as "public lands." Early park advocates claimed that those lands were pristine, untouched swaths of wilderness, which ignored the deep, ancestral, and (often) migratory relationships Indigenous Peoples held with them.

We can make similar observations of the first US Transcontinental Railroad. For generations, mainstream public discourse and scholarship minimized the fact that the Pacific Railway Act (1862), which enabled the construction of the road, extinguished the rights of Native Americans to their traditional homelands. That law, championed by President Abraham Lincoln, upended decades of treaty-making that affirmed Native sovereignty.[3]

Public memory also erased the labor responsible for the railroad, especially the experiences of skilled immigrant workers. Tens of thousands of people—mostly men, but some women—reshaped the land and laid the track under very difficult circumstances. Although the two railroad companies employed many different groups of people (including Civil War veterans), Central Pacific recruited thousands of Chinese workers to construct the most difficult sections of the line through California. Untold numbers of them lost their lives or suffered serious injuries during their service. Within two decades, many of those same men and their kin were targeted for violence and exclusion from the US. They remained anonymous in most historical documentation and interpretation.

Both national parks and railroads have inspired a fair amount of awe over the last century and a half. But for far too long, those celebrations occurred at the expense of the people whose stories are at the heart of our most significant places.

EM: Going back to an earlier comment you made about not having done extensive research on railroads before coming to this project, how do you think that perspective shaped your work?

LD: I think that was an advantage. I began my fellowship by asking a lot of questions and leading with curiosity. I came in with an open mind about what different people wanted me to know about the Transcontinental Railroad. Not only was I digging into the full scholarship for the first time, I also had opportunities to listen to railroad worker descendants, to Tribes, to NPS staff, and to other people with strong attachments to or knowledge of the railroad. Their interpretations of railroad history naturally differed. As we entered the early planning stages, I felt a strong responsibility to hold the "both/and" of this topic while amplifying those stories that the prevailing accounts had most ignored.

I'm trained in relational ethnic studies, which means I look for ways that the meanings assigned to racialized peoples are forged through relationships rather than in isolation.[4] This approach allows us to see hidden connections among different groups of people across space and time (e.g., Native Americans and Chinese Railroad Workers). I found it helpful in understanding the historical processes that shaped and stemmed from the railroad, like dispossession, exclusion, subordination, and erasure. We examined many themes and categories beyond race, of course, but this methodology was one way that we refocused on people over infrastructure.

Chinese railroad workers in the Sierra Nevada Mountains (Placer County, California), ca. 1877. They are likely performing maintenance and repair work on the original transcontinental line.
SC3628, NORTHEASTERN CALIFORNIA HISTORIC PHOTOGRAPH COLLECTION, MERIAM LIBRARY SPECIAL COLLECTIONS, CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, CHICO

EM: I want to ask you about working with the NPS. How did having a humanities scholar on the team change the project's trajectory?

LD: I think it really comes back to the scholarship and the evolution of the NPS on the topic of the Transcontinental Railroad. In 2019, Congress passed the John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act, in tandem with the 150th anniversary of the completion of the railroad. That legislation called for the NPS to study, interpret, and commemorate the history of the Transcontinental Railroad.

This was an opportunity to re-evaluate NPS's interpretation around the railroad, particularly at Golden Spike National Historical Park (GOSP). Much of the storytelling was intertwined with myths and triumphant narratives. It wasn't very human-focused but instead was more concerned with meeting an audience that was passionate about the history of trains. Now we had an opening to make the topic relevant to more people.

My host team wanted me to establish a scholarly foundation for new interpretation, to help the agency better understand how recent historical research recontextualizes the railroad, especially through the lens of Indigeneity, labor, and the environment.[5] I wasn't there just to fulfill a contract (i.e., to complete a set of deliverables and move on). I was invited to be a thought-partner in a long-term planning process. My mentors empowered me to speak the hard truths that might challenge long-held beliefs. To the best of my abilities, I wanted to recognize the sincerity of our existing audience and to assume that everyone on our team wanted to co-create a program that would illuminate the complexities and contradictions of railroad history. We were all on a journey to better understand the meaning

and legacy of the railroad, and I think we all shared a commitment to honesty and thoughtfulness, even though we had differences in approach.

I spent the first six months of my fellowship doing my homework—reading, meeting with scholars, partners, and NPS staff, reviewing archives and digital humanities projects, etc. Those early, slow months were a gesture of good faith to all of my collaborators. I was committed to speaking from a place of knowledge and curiosity—not to redo and erase—but to repair, expand, and move forward.

I learned from my NPS colleagues that access to historical scholarship is often uneven. Park interpreters rarely have the capacity to dig into the scholarship themselves, to understand how it's changed over time, what it means, and how to distill it down. Our project team needed someone who could linger with the material, synthesize it, and highlight the topics and themes that would most resonate with a broader public. They also needed a scholar who could translate research across NPS divisions (including interpretation, park planning, and administration).

Over time, I observed a tendency to lean on the idea that Transcontinental Railroad history was "complicated" without elaborating on the nuances further. This is indeed hard history, but we owe it to the public not to shy away from what makes it complicated. The team needed someone who could pull at those threads and name the events and developments that produced so many contradictory meanings. In the end, that's where I found my niche. If we could hold many truths at once, we could craft a bold and expansive vision for a national program that would build relationships with key communities, satisfy the requirements in the legislation, and provide the public with memorable learning experiences.

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EM: So, how did you and team ultimately address the use of terms like "complex history" or "hard history?"

LD: This was tricky. On the one hand, we all had to acknowledge that this is hard work. Railroad history stirs up strong emotions, questions, and attachments. It means different things to different people. I wanted to be sympathetic to the fact that it can be challenging to sit with the discomfort of encountering new information and to find the right words, especially if you are really invested in a particular version of the story.

But I also found that words like "complicated" or "complex" allowed folks to sidestep stories of land theft, colonial violence, and racial discrimination. These were defining features of the railroad project, not one-off instances. Some were reluctant to name specific wrongdoings or confront enduring generational trauma on the grounds that these topics were too negative. I think underlying fears of political backlash, losses of volunteers and other long-time constituents, and concerns about alienating traditional audiences were motivating factors. Plus, once you name the events, it's hard to justify telling the story in the same, narrow ways. Wherever possible, I encouraged my colleagues to use active and precise language in our discussions of the railroad's historical significance and interpretive themes.

At the same time, the history of the Transcontinental Railroad is exceedingly complicated. Take, for example, the relationships that Native Americans had to the railroad. We determined that it passed through the traditional homelands of more than 90 federally recognized Tribes (and there are likely more). Their experiences were far from monolithic. During our Tribal listening sessions and through conversations with the Office of Native American Affairs, we heard stories of certain Tribes or communities who found employment on the railroad (e.g., Pawnee Nation), or used it to preserve spiritual practices like the Ghost Dance while facing pressures to assimilate (e.g., Northern Paiute and Western Shoshone). As their lives transformed in the wake of conquest, many Native people took part in the railroad economy and embraced it as another form of mobility at a time when the US closely monitored their movements. These stories emerged in first-person testimonials and also appear in scholarly literature.[6] Yet they also coexist with stories of heightened militarization, devastated foodways (including the mass slaughter of bison), environmental destruction, and the rise of the reservation and boarding school systems.

Often, I observed that histories of adaptation were lifted up to counter histories of violence, as if we could not hold space for both. We heard time and time again from the people who came to our listening sessions that this project was an exercise in accountability. NPS needed

to acknowledge generations of harm associated with the railroad, especially if the agency hoped to collaborate with Tribes and descendant communities.

I continued to advocate for a relational, entangled approach to our storytelling as a counterweight to the euphemisms. This challenged us to be both localized and specific in our interpretation, to look at unique experiences of different people in distinct places along the line and to explore their interactions with one another (rather than siloing them off).

For example, if we look at the lives of Chinese railroad workers and the Paiute peoples in the Great Basin, they had a very different set of relationships to one another and to the railroad than perhaps the Pawnee, Lakota, and Irish workers did in the Plains. There are so many subtle, yet incredible instances of how Chinese workers and Paiute peoples had cultural exchanges with one another. They maintained a shared appreciation for plant medicine. They learned each other's languages. They traded with one another and intermarried. The names of Paiute women appeared on the Central Pacific Railroad ledgers alongside Chinese men, and they were known to supply the workers with berries and other goods. There is so much more to learn about the encounters of early Chinese migrant workers and Native Americans, and the railroad is the thread that knits them together. But we have to be careful about drawing universal conclusions from this evidence. If we look to the east, Plains Indians had vastly different encounters with Union Pacific workers and the Army soldiers who fortified them.

EM: The emphasis on local and place-based history is so important and something that NPS often does very well. But how do you keep that emphasis when your project area covers 2,000 miles? Is it even possible to develop meaningful interpretive themes for such a large landscape?

LD: We knew early on that the success of the Transcontinental Railroad program depended on the strength of our partnerships along the route (and beyond). In the spring of 2024, I was invited to join the team working on the program's foundation document, which NPS uses to establish a baseline for park planning and management. We were tasked with (among other things) drafting statements of significance, identifying interpretive themes, and documenting fundamental resources and values. NPS is accustomed to writing definitive, declarative sentences about why a resource matters, what we might learn from it, and what is most important about it. We struggled to capture the full nuances of this history in succinct statements, especially given our promises to co-create some of the content with Tribes and descendants. It was a real rhetorical challenge. In the end, I think we found ways of conveying the paradoxical nature of railroad history and memorializing our intentions to work with partners to develop additional language (in the spirit of "nothing about us without us").

EM: Can you say more about collaborations with community partners and their impacts on the project?

LD: During the first six months of my fellowship, I had the opportunity to convene a working group on the Transcontinental Railroad through the National Council on Public History, in collaboration with GOSP's first full-time historian, Dr. Jonathan Fairchild. It brought together a cross-section of experts and project partners who came from public history, cultural resources, and academia, as well as members of the Chinese Railroad Workers Descendants Association (based in Salt Lake City).

It was really challenging to achieve equitable participation from descendants and Tribes at this early stage. This was a real learning moment for me, coming from academia and non-profits, where you can communicate and build relationships with community partners independently. Now that I was working in partnership with a federal agency, I had to follow nation-to-nation protocols for Tribal consultation, which was a much more formal process than I was used to. I worked closely with Melissa Castiano, then the Tribal liaison in the Intermountain Region, to develop a historically informed methodology for doing Tribal consultation that was specific to this project.

We felt it was essential for the project team to have a baseline understanding of 19th-century Native America and how the railroad impacted Tribal sovereignty, culture, homelands, politics, foodways, migration patterns, and more. Our role was not to claim expertise, but to convey our respect for their histories and a willingness to learn. In addition to building trust, these insights helped shape our engagement from the beginning. It takes significant time to send communications through the proper channels, to establish contact with Tribal leadership, and for the Tribes to identify who they would like to represent them in these conversations.

Unfortunately, the process did not align with the timeline for the working group, and ultimately we did not have any Tribal representatives as members. This was a source of tension and unease for many of the other members, myself included. The railroad fundamentally violated

Tribal sovereignty, and it felt like we were replicating past transgressions by having these conversations without them in the room. At the same time, the nation-to-nation framework exists in recognition of their self-governance, and it was essential that we respect the Tribes' needs for receiving and responding to the project on their own terms.

Despite the challenges, the group did a phenomenal job of illustrating to the NPS why we needed to center the stories of the railroad that live in people. The long-standing focus on engineering and infrastructure was not unique to the NPS. Trains are exciting and awe-inspiring to a lot of people; they are great objects for activating historical imaginations. So how do you use them as a bridge to community heritage? We also heard a call to place the rich body of recent railroad scholarship next to traditional and descendant knowledge, and that the NPS could lead other public history institutions by example. One of the group's members put it really eloquently: "How do we situate different ways of knowing side by side, so that they don't get in the way of one another? How do we keep from privileging one form of knowledge over another?"

EM: Are there other examples you could draw from to guide this work, whether inside or outside the NPS?

LD: The NPS has done this before. Ari Kelman's writings about the Sand Creek Massacre Historic Site reveal how the NPS and Tribes came to a place of shared authority, allowing Traditional Knowledge, historical scholarship, archaeological investigations, and other forms of expertise to shape park planning and interpretation. The recent anthology *National Parks and Native Sovereignty: Experiments in Collaboration* offers some additional case studies.[7]

In the case of the Transcontinental Railroad, there are many groups with inherited, often discordant knowledge. Among Chinese railroad worker descendants, a lot of that knowledge is still being recovered; it exists on two sides of an ocean. As we know from the work of Gordon Chang and his colleagues at Stanford University, cultural silences surround those stories, and many descendants are on their own journeys of learning and connecting the dots in their families and extended community networks.[8] NPS could play a meaningful role in their efforts by elevating their discoveries and amplifying the meanings they give to the past.

The working group embraced the words "braided" and "entangled" to describe the storytelling goals. Those words resonate with a relational approach to historical research.[9] The group urged us not to separate our interpretation by ethnic or cultural group, but to look at how and where their experiences came together and influenced one another. I was so heartened to see how the framework spurred the project team's imaginations and excitement for this period of American history.

The working group also previewed something that we would hear in our public and Tribal listening sessions during the summer of 2024, that there was an opportunity for this program to be reparative. As I've described, that idea is at the heart of my own scholarship and practice.[10] I heard multiple constituents from different backgrounds and experiences share that "repair" needed to be a central value for this program, that the NPS had an opportunity to speak truth about the railroads' lasting harms and the federal government's role in perpetuating those harms. If handled with care, there was an opportunity for healing. But first we needed to work through the resistance to naming what was "complicated" or "complex" about this history and find the right forms of interpretation to carry those messages forward. To me, that meant the agency prioritizing equitable and sustained relationships and honoring the needs of the people who hold the stories.

I now truly appreciate the value of having a humanities scholar in the room shaping program development and collaborative processes from the start. I was able to help craft a methodology shaped by historical knowledge.

EM: Looking back on your experience as a scholar bridging academia and the public humanities, what insights do you take away from the fellowship?

LD: I now truly appreciate the value of having a humanities scholar in the room shaping program development and collaborative processes from the start. I was able to help craft a methodology shaped by historical knowledge. To ask, how does the history and legacy of the Transcontinental Railroad affect how we design this program; how we build relationships; how we identify the areas that need repair; and how we set up our interpretation going forward?

I can share an example of how this worked in practice. Before the NPS withdrew from the fellowship program, we recorded a pilot oral history interview with two Chi-

nese railroad worker descendants based in California (Maxine Hong Kingston and Michael Solorio), as well as historian Dr. Sue Fawn Chung (University of Nevada, Las Vegas). Dr. Chung was very involved in crafting the foundation document as well. It was great to have another external historian in that process, bouncing ideas off one another, and working through some of the resistance we encountered.

We saw the interview as an opportunity to explore how we might juxtapose different ways of knowing and remembering the history of the railroad for public audiences. We invited three people with distinctive experiences and wisdom to sit together within a single conversation and unpack the meanings they carried from the lives of railroad workers, including their own ancestors. In many ways, it mirrored the process that animated the entire project.

The final product takes viewers behind the scenes of how history is made—how we weigh and interpret evidence and how we find significance in stories. Maxine and Michael shared intimate family stories—holding up artifacts and photographs—and spoke about what the lives of their ancestors have meant to their families over the last 150 years. And then, at the same time, we had a renowned scholar responding to their stories to contextualize and ask questions that led to deeper understanding. For me—as the interviewer—it was a powerful display of the work of history. It showed how a scholar receives information and uses their training to interpret meanings that can coexist with other traditions.

To revisit the topic of myth-making and bring our conversation full-circle, one of my goals for my fellowship was to demystify for the public how we draw conclusions as historians and why scholarly debates are important. This came up during the foundation document process, when there was some disagreement about a particular topic or interpretive approach. I remember saying to the team, "This is a chance to convey to the public that there are lots of different ways to interpret that story. We can show that open, informed disagreement about the past is healthy for us and for our democracy." There is no single narrative or meaning that can encompass a topic as enormous as the Transcontinental Railroad. What a gift to wrestle with all of those conflicting legacies during this moment in history with these incredible collaborators.

ENDNOTES

1. Dominguez thanks her NPS hosts, Angela Sirna and Ardrianna McLane, for their extraordinary mentorship and support of honest, historically rigorous storytelling. The fellowship was indebted to the wisdom and collaboration of many others inside and outside the agency, including Jonathan Fairchild, Madeline Hsu, Justin Henderson, Poppie Gullett, Skylar Bauer, A. Dudley Gardner, Laura Ng, Melissa Castiano, Susan Johnson, Clay Hanna, Caiti Campbell, the members of the Transcontinental Railroad Working Group, and many others.
2. Influences include Genevieve Carpio, *Collisions at the Crossroads: How Place and Mobility Make Race* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2019); William Deverell, *Whitewashed Adobe: The Rise of Los Angeles and the Remaking of its Mexican Past* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004); John Mack Faragher, *Eternity Street: Violence and Justice in Frontier Los Angeles* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2017); Claudia K. Jurmain and William McCawley, *O, My Ancestor: Recognition and Renewal for the Gabrielino-Tongva People of the Los Angeles Area* (Berkeley: Heyday Books, 2009); Kelly Lytle-Hernández, *City of Inmates: Conquest, Rebellion, and the Rise of Human Caging in Los Angeles, 1771–1965* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017); Natalia Molina, *How Race is Made in America: Immigration, Citizenship, and the Historical Power of Racial Scripts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013); David Torres-Rouff, *Before L.A.: Race, Space, and Municipal Power in Los Angeles, 1781–1984* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013); and *Past Due: Report and Recommendations of the Los Angeles Mayor's Office Civic Memory Working Group* (Los Angeles: Huntington-USC Institute on California and the West, 2021).
3. Triumphalist accounts of the Transcontinental Railroad include: Bernice Gibbs Anderson, "The Driving of the Golden Spike: The End of the Race," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 24:2 (Spring 1956): 149–164; Stephen E. Ambrose, *Nothing Like It in the World: The Men Who Built the Transcontinental Railroad, 1863–1869* (New York: Touchstone, 2001); Wesley S. Griswold, *A Work of Giants: Building the First Transcontinental Railroad* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1962); Carlos A. Schwantes and James P. Ronda, *The West the Railroads Made* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008); Robert M. Utley and Francis A. Ketterson, Jr., *Golden Spike: A National Historic Site* (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, 1969); and John Hoyt Williams, *A Great and Shining Road: The Epic Story of the Transcontinental Railroad* (New York: Times Books, 1989).
4. Natalia Molina, Daniel Martinez HoSang, and Ramón A. Gutíerrez (eds.), *Relational Formations of Race:*

Theory, Method, and Practice (Oakland: University of California Press, 2019).

5. Key works include: Ned Blackhawk, *The Rediscovery of America: Native Peoples and the Unmaking of American History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2023); Gordon H. Chang and Shelley Fisher Fishkin, eds., *The Chinese and the Iron Road: Building the Transcontinental Railroad* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2019); Ryan Dearinger, *The Filth of Progress: Immigrants, Americans, and the Building of Canals and Railroads in the West* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2016); Pekka Hämäläinen, *Lakota America: A New History of Indigenous Power* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019); Mark Fiege, T*he Republic of Nature: An Environmental History of the United States* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2012); Manu Karuka, *Empire's Tracks: Indigenous Nations, Chinese Workers, and the Transcontinental Railroad* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2019); Alessandra La Rocca Link, *The Iron Horse in Indian Country: Native Americans and the Railroads in the US West* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2025); Daegan Miller, *This Radical Land: A Natural History of American Dissent* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2018); Barbara Voss, "The Archaeology of Precarious Lives: Chinese Railroad Workers in Nineteenth-Century North America," *Current Anthropology* 59:3 (June 2018): 287–313; and Richard White, *Railroaded: The Transcontinentals and the Making of Modern America* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2011)
6. See, for example, Karuka, *Empire's Tracks;* Hsinya Huang, "Tracking Memory: Encounters between Chinese Railroad Workers and Native Americans," in *The Chinese and the Iron Road: Building the Transcontinental Railroad,* ed. by Gordon H. Chang and Shelley Fisher Fishkin (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2019), 179–193; and Alex Ruuska, "Ghost Dancing and the Iron Horse: Surviving through Tradition and Technology," *Technology and Culture* 52 (July 2011): 574–597.
7. Ari Kelman, "Ripples of Memory from Sand Creek," *Parks Stewardship Forum* 39:3 (2023): 461–473; Kelman, *A Misplaced Massacre: Struggling over the Memory of Sand Creek* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012); Christina Gish Hill, Matthew J. Hill, and Brooke Neely, eds., *National Parks, Native Sovereignty: Experiments in Collaboration* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2024).
8. Chang and Fishkin, *The Chinese and the Iron Road*; Chang, *Ghosts of Gold Mountain: The Epic Story of the Chinese who Built the Transcontinental Railroad* (Boston: New Mariner Books, 2019).
9. See also the work of historian Yesenia Navarette Hunter: "From Single-Stranded to Braided Histories of Race and Ethnicity in the Southern California Quarterly," *Southern California Quarterly* 101:1 (April 2019): 34–44; "Entangled Histories of Land and Labor on the Yakama Reservation in the 20th Century" (PhD diss., University of Southern California, 2022).
10. See, for example, Dominguez, "Memory Makers: Tracing Race, Heritage, and Repair in Los Angeles, 1781–2012" (PhD diss., University of Southern California, 2023); "Settling the Ghosts of Old Chinatown: The Ta Chiu Festival in 19th Century Los Angeles," *Southern California Quarterly* 106: 3 (Fall 2024): 231–278.