

March 12th, 2024

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# THE BUTLER CENTER

## NEWSLETTER

### PASIFIKA HOSTS STAFF APPRECIATION DAY



The Pasifika Student Collective (@cc.psc), in collaboration with the Butler Center, hosted a staff appreciation lunch for the Sudexo team here on campus. Drawing on Hawaiian and Guamanian concepts of hospitality, appreciation, and family, the student celebrated the Sudexo janitorial staff for all their hard work and for making our campus a beautiful and comfortable place. A lunch from Roots Cafe was served and the students handed out handmade candy Leis to celebrate and honor the staff. The Pasifika students described this as an opportunity to say *mahalo* for the continued labor & care of our Sudexo team!

# THE FIRST DESEGREGATED HOUSE IN KALISPELL AND OTHER SHORT STORIES OF WOMEN'S HISTORY



**By Thecla Shubert**

Happy Women's History Month! In honor of Women's History Month I wanted to share a few of my favorite extraordinary stories of ordinary women. My research has specifically been focused on railroad towns in the Pacific Northwest. In particular, Kalispell Montana is a statistical hotbed of women's history.

We tend to think that women historically didn't work until WWII when Rosie the Riveter paved the way for them to enter the workforce. However, this is undeniably false. Women have *always* worked - whether by choice or for subsistence, whether in the home or outside of it.

In Kalispell, Out of a total population of 2,526 that was enumerated in 1900, 57 women were heads of households on the US census. 63% of women were employed. This is particularly significant because the US census took intentional measures to try and erase women with unconventional or "unusual" (read as unfeminine) occupations. Census enumerators were also instructed not to list women as heads of household unless there were no other options and studies show that in 1900, only 11.9% of women who were the primary breadwinners for their households were listed as the head of household. Therefore, it is unique to have sources that so readily acknowledges the roles of women in the community and workforce.



Furthermore, in small railroad towns, women were particularly empowered *and* required to adopt nontraditional roles - including head of household or unique occupations - because the men in the community typically led transient lives working on the railroad and were absent from their communities for long periods of time. With all this in mind, I'd like to share the extraordinary stories of three ordinary women who appeared on the 1900 Kalispell census.

### **Ella Webber - The First Desegregated House in Kalispell**

In 1900, Kalispell was still a mostly segregated town. 32 black individuals living in town and they all lived on the poorer west side of town, unless they were employed as domestic servants on the wealthier eastern side of town. The twenty Chinese men (there were no women present at the time) who lived in town were less geographically segregated and some, like Chin Sing who owned Glacier Park Restaurant on Main Street, operated well-respected businesses. It is difficult to tell exactly how many Japanese people lived in Kalispell at the time because they almost universally lived in boarding houses and the owners often did not provide accurate or complete information to the census enumerators. However, many Japanese men lived in Kalispell and were employed by the railroad. Only two had private residences, and both worked not as laborers but as interpreters for the railroad. All other Japanese residents lived along the train tracks on the north end of town in boarding houses. With one exception, boarding houses were segregated into white boarding houses or Japanese boarding houses.

The exception was a boarding house owned by Ella Webber. Ella Webber operated the only desegregated boarding house in Kalispell that housed both white and Japanese people. However, this is not her claim to fame, and in truth, not a single historical document that I have found recognizes her for this contribution, except the 1900 US Census itself. What Webber is remembered for is her contributions as a nurse. Webber founded the first hospital in Kalispell, providing an alternative to the often crowded Whitefish hospital in the next town over. She traveled broadly to get ideas for the hospital and helped fund the hospital by selling "free hospitalization" subscriptions to local families. The hospital opened in 1896 and the first trustee board was composed completely of women. In 1904, a large donation was made to add an expansion to the hospital. Later the hospital operated a training program for new nurses.

Today, the hospital is still standing at the corner of 4th Avenue East and Center Street, although it's since been converted into apartments.

### **Alice Clark - An Investor in Her Own Right**

Alice Clark was born in Michigan to tenant farmers and was the youngest of eight children. She was the only one in her extended family to complete high school. Sometime before 1870, Alice married William Clark. The couple moved to Kalispell and had two children, Buelah and Gordon. William died tragically in 1897 after the train he was working on was swept from the tracks in the Marias Pass by a small avalanche. Four years later, Alice married William's brother, Thomas Clark, and the couple moved to Spokane where Thomas continued to work as a railroad engineer.

Alice was a well-educated woman and was involved in coordinating several social organizations, including an Eastern Star group, a Daughters of the Nile (a spin-off of the Shriners), and a Karnak Temple (a Knights Templar group). She also ran a Chautauqua group for adult education that studied the French Revolution.

Perhaps more notably, Alice Clark was an investor (or a capitalist as it would have been called at the time). In 1900 she was listed as head of household while living with Thomas, her mother-in-law, and her children. Her occupation was listed as capitalist. In 1901 she was one of just over 100 people to pay for than \$100 in taxes to Flathead County. In 1922, Alice and Thomas sold a real estate investment for \$4500. When Thomas died the Clark estate was valued at \$180,778, which included \$170,000 in stocks. I could speak at great length about Alice's life, but for the purpose of this article the most important fact is that Alice Clark, a woman of humble beginnings, managed to live a lively society life and conduct herself as a successful capitalist. She, like all of the women mentioned here, was an ordinary woman with an extraordinary story.

### **Nora Sherman - A Funeral Home, Piano Shop, and Seven Children**

William Sherman came from the West to learn to be an undertaker from his brother who ran Sherman & Reed Undertaking in Butte, Montana. William met and married Nora in Butte. Then in 1903, they moved to Kalispell to start their own undertaking practice. They bought a building at 338-340 Main Street. The upper level became their home, the ground floor was a mortuary and piano shop, and the basement was the embalming room. Nora Sherman had seven children.

Nora Sherman also worked alongside her husband in the undertaking business. After his death in 1912, Nora took over the business completely. In 1916 Nora became the first licensed female undertaker in Montana. She would have received bodies from both the Big Blow Up fire in 1910 and the deadly Cascade Avalance/train wreck that happened the same year. She was the organizer of a committee of women in the undertaking business that attended a state conference in Helena in 1919. The two other members were Hazel Davis, who presented a paper entitled "The Woman Assistant's Part in the Undertaking Business," and a Mrs. J. Forkenbrock who presented a paper entitled "The Wife of an Undertaker." In 1920 she became the first woman in the United States to run for the office of county coroner. It is somewhat unclear whether she won the election or not, but given the lack of news coverage surrounding this, it is likely she did not. She ran again in 1934, but unfortunately, records of the coroner election results do not seem to have been preserved.

Nora's children (including her oldest daughters) went on to continue to the family business after she passed away.

## STUDENT SPOTLIGHT



### **Latra Demaci**

she/her

**Feminist and Gender Studies**

#### **What is your role at the Butler Center?**

International Students Peer Mentor

#### **What are you studying and what do you want to do after CC?**

I am currently doing my Thesis Blocks! Very excited to walk graduation in May and then hopefully continue my last semester through a semester-abroad in London.

#### **What is one interest you have outside of school?**

I love watching TV shows with my roommates!

#### **What does ADEI work mean to you or why did you get into this?**

I started working for the Butler Center in my sophomore year as a Project Assistant and I just loved programming and organizing events. At the time, Diellza and I, Lead Intern and beloved co-national at the time, saw a real gap in community building events for international students. Therefore, we hopped on a journey rebranding ISI, the international students initiative, into what is now ISEP, a comprehensive program of peer support and community building!

#### **What is one thing you'd like to see changed about CC or our local community? and/or what is one cause you're passionate about?**

I really wish the student body leaned on opportunities to build community. Especially for freshmen, it is so important to have a community to lean on and that can at times be hard and confusing.

**What is one fun fact people might not expect about you?** Honestly, my only flex is that I am good at packing!

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

**Annual  
BIPOC Student  
Lunch  
With Economics  
and Business**

Thursday, April 4th. 12:30 pm  
RTD Lounge - Worner 2nd Floor

The Economics & Business department invites all CC BIPOC students to attend the annual BIPOC student with department members (Celeste Diaz Ferraro, Michelan Wilson and Aju Fenn). Come chat with us, give us your feedback, learn more about the department and what department has been up to. All feedback is strictly confidential and will be anonymized. LUNCH PROVIDED!

Brought to you in collaboration with the Butler Center and the Department of Economics and Business

Plus - follow us  
on Tiktok and  
instagram  
**@butlercenterCC**

Join our  
team! Apply  
by 3/27/24

## APPLY FOR STUDENT POSITIONS



### Cultural and Identity Programming Intern

Work with:

- Heritage month events
- Table Talk
- Behind the Masc



### Peer Mentor

Work with:

- Student Success School Program
- Queer and Trans Collective

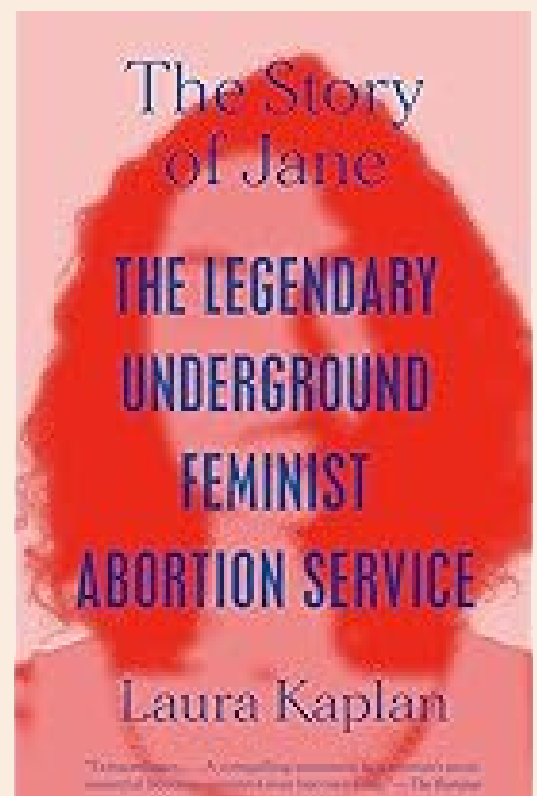
## WEEKLY PAIRINGS - BOOK RECOMENDATIONS

### Women's History Month



Svetlana's Alexievich *The Unwomanly Face of War* (one of Thecla's all time favorite nonfiction books!) is an absolute must read for Women's History Month and also just in general in life (it's really that good!). Alexievich, a famed oral historian, writes about the forgotten women of the Russian army who served in a variety of positions from snipers to nurses. Her ability to tease out deeply intimate histories helps craft a book that shares the many different facets of life in wartime - from having to wear men's underwear and oversized boots, managing periods on the field, to falling in love, looking death in the eye, and dealing with the social stigma of operating in a hypermasculine world. Experts agree that Alexievich's work is outstanding as she was awarded Nobel Peace Prize in Literature in 2015, "for her polyphonic writings, a monument to suffering and courage in our time." Kirkus Reviews called *The Unwomanly Face of War* "Essential reading full of remarkable emotional wealth." Overall, this is a heartwrenching intimate account of WWII that will make you cry and leave you inspired. Alexievich has a unique talent for gaining the trust of her interview subject and for producing unparalleled personal and moving accounts. She excels in bringing the pain and triumphs of history to life.

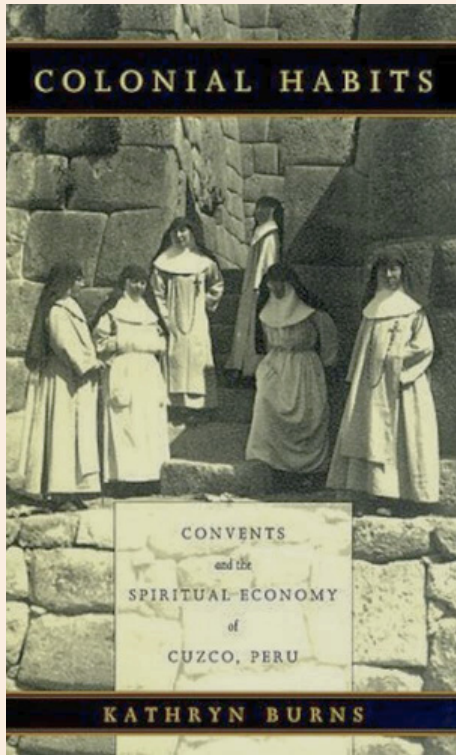
Written as a first-hand account from community organizer Laura Kaplan, *The Story of Jane: The Legendary Underground Feminist Abortion Service*, tells the story of the underground Chicago abortion network - code name "Jane." Between 1969 and 1973 a group of determined women provided low-cost abortion referrals and even learned to provide abortions themselves as part of this underground operation. The women involved faced dangerous charges, and at times had to destroy evidence to protect the identities of the women and doctors they worked with. This book speaks profoundly to the modern day when, after the reversal of Roe v. Wade abortion clinics have once again had to offer services to smuggle women out of dangerous domestic situations and pro-life states to get them the care they need. Kirkus Reviews says *The Story of Jane* is "invaluable to organizers, feminist historians, and anyone concerned about contemporary threats to personal liberty."





## WEEKLY PAIRINGS - BOOK RECOMENDATIONS

### Women's History Month



**Colonial Habits: Convents and the Spiritual Economy of Cuzco, Peru**, (Another one of Thecla's all time favorite nonfiction books!) is a seminal work by Kathryn Burns. We typically think of nuns as submissive and reclusive, but the Catholic church and its monastics played a vital role in the colonialization and subjection of the Incan and Andean people. Based on original archival research, Burns' work explores the important role of nuns in Cuzco - from making loans and owning property to controlling women and enforcing Spanish gender expectations. Of particular note, Burns details how these convents helped perpetuate the cultural and biological hegemony of the Spanish colonizers. When Spanish men first took control in the Andes, they had relationships (both consensual and nonconsensual) with Indigenous women. *Mestizas*, born of these relationships, were viewed as powerful pawns in the scheme of colonialism. *Mestizas* were kidnapped from their Indigenous mothers and forced into convents where they would be trained to be culturally Spanish until their fathers made them profitable Spanish marriages. But, Burns, notes that women also used "spiritual callings" as a way to escape the influence of their fathers and assert some sort of autonomy. Therefore, Burns' work reshapes our understanding of colonial and spiritual women to be far more complex and nuanced. The Journal of Women's History calls **Colonial Habits**, "Imaginatively researched, logically organized, and intelligently constructed" while the Journal of Latin American History calls it "Meticulously researched and exquisitely written."

Women have always worked, but that history is often forgotten, especially when it comes to Black women. In **Sex Workers, Physics and Number Runners: Black Women in New York City's Underground Economy**, LaShawn Harris endeavors to bring to light this overlooked history. Specifically, she looks at the history of Black women operating in underground economies - including sex workers, physics, and number runners for gambling enterprises. Harris pulls from a variety of sources including prison records, newspaper accounts, and period literature. Her work explores both the occupational identities of these women and their newfound independence as well as the dangers associated with these illicit careers. **Sex Workers, Physics, and Number Runners** is almost universally lauded by academics and book reviewers alike. Choice Magazine says it "reclaim[s] the voices of African American women lost in the margins" and the Journal of Ethnic and Racial Studies says, "This text goes a long way to articulating the major role that Black women informal workers played in contributing to the wider American economy in the early twentieth century, further challenging taken for granted conceptions of Black womanhood, and gender role expectations." This book is an emerging and unforgettable read in the realm of women's history.

