Stephen Kantrowitz

Citizens of a Stolen Land, a Ho-Chunk History of the 19th Century United States

November 27, 2023

Host: Stu Levitan

SL: Hello again, friends, and welcome to Madison BookBeat, your listener-sponsored community radio home for Madison authors, topics, book events, and publishers. I'm your host, Stu Levitan.

My guest today is UW history professor Stephen Kantrowitz, whose new book should be of special interest to those of us here in Teejop: Citizens of a Stolen Land, a Ho-Chunk History of the 19th Century United States, from the good people at the University of North Carolina Press.

If you are like most Americans with an immigrant background, you probably think citizenship is a good thing, because it confers rights and privileges. But for Native Americans in the 19th century, it was something quite different. It was a way to destroy their collectivist culture and ultimately steal their land. Until some Native peoples, notably the Ho-Chunk, figured out how to use citizenship and private property rights to reclaim land and preserve their identity.

The Ho-Chunk story in the removal era is one of both settler colonial violence and conquest, but also one of Ho-Chunk resistance, persistence, and return. It is a story Stephen Kantrowitz is very well qualified to tell. He is the Plaenert- Bascom and Vilas Distinguished Achievement Professor of History and an affiliate faculty member in American Indian Studies and Afro-American Studies here at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where he teaches courses on race, indigeneity, politics, and citizenship.

His previous books are:

1. **More Than Freedom, Fighting for Black Citizenship in a White Republic, 1829-1889**
2. **Ben Tillman and the Reconstruction of White Supremacy**

And of particular interest to me, he co-chaired with Dr. Floyd Rose, president of 100 Black Men of Madison, the Chancellor's Committee in 2018 that produced a very knowledgeable and nuanced report on the Ku Klux Klan on campus.

It was a pleasure to welcome Professor Kantrowitz to Madison BookBeat. Part one of our extended conversation aired on October 30th. You can find it in the Ward archives at wortfm.org.

We open part two with Steve explaining how he moved from studying the black-white dyad in the 19th century to researching the role that Native Americans played in that era.

SK: I had always known that there was something missing from my education. You know, I was maybe assigned a total of one book and one article in Native American history in the entirety of my graduate education. And that's not, I'm not blaming my advisors exactly. I'm blaming the profession for having really almost totally failed to integrate and account for Native history as part of U.S. history.

But when I started teaching at UW, I would try to bring Native American history and Native perspectives into classes, and it never fit. It was always contrapuntal. It was always in tension with the rest of the course. And I felt very frustrated by it. And I stopped trying really very much.

And then in the 21st century, especially in the 2010s, more and more of my colleagues began to look west, began to colleagues in Civil War, Reconstruction, mostly organized around black-white histories, began to look west and think west.

And what we found there was that the same thing you'll find if you pick up an American history textbook published before 2015 or so, which is you get to the end of the Civil War, and then you have a chapter on Reconstruction and a chapter on the West. They take place at the same time, but they have nothing to do with each other.

It's like a chapter on the coming of the Civil War, which is a chapter about abolition and pro-slavery and that conflict, and a chapter on Manifest Destiny. They sit next to each other. They've got nothing to do with each other. How can this be? It's the same nation. It's the same personnel. It's the same people. It's the same institutions. It's the same geographies. How can it be that we have kept these so segregated from each other?

And the answer is that Native American history is a fundamental kind of epistemological and existential challenge to U.S. history. It says, nope, somebody else owns this land. Somebody else lives on this land. And the empty space that the American map of the West imagines is not empty. But to take account of that, really to take account of that, is to call into question many of the foundational assumptions of that other Eastern-focused history.

To bring this back to Abraham Lincoln, we have one really powerful set of arguments and conversations about Abraham Lincoln. Was he the white man's president, as Frederick Douglass famously calls him at one point in the 1870s? Was he the great emancipator? Was he both?

Douglass actually did think he was both. How do we understand Lincoln's anti-blackness in relationship to his commitment to creating a non-racial nation? And in fact, at the end of his career, his willingness to put democracy over white supremacy, which is a choice that no other American president of the 19th century made. So that's a really fraught and powerful conversation, and one you could have all day about the value of thinking about Lincoln, about his worthiness as a president, about his meaning for American race relations

understood as black-white. Those questions continue. Scholars continue to struggle over that. I was just part of an anthology on this question.

But the question of Lincoln as a settler president, and a Lincoln who never imagined that any Native nation should stand in the way of U.S. expansion into the West, Lincoln who signs the death warrants for the Dakota 38 in Minnesota in 1862, Lincoln who signs the order expelling the Ho-Chunk from Wisconsin, excuse me, from Minnesota in 1863, that Lincoln never shows up in our account of this. That settler president is not part of our story because it's destabilizing.

The question of whether the value of a Lincoln statue can be argued about in terms of his legacy in the Civil War and Reconstruction and in relationships between black and white people and the American nation, a Lincoln statue on Bascom Hill is a monument to that. It's also a monument on the Ho-Chunk's highest hill to a member of the settler conqueror army. That's a complicated thing.

You're reading the bits about Lincoln in the book reminded me, oh yeah, this is why that statue is offensive to a lot of Native peoples. In terms of the overlap of the Civil War and the story you're telling, the Battle of Antietam happened during the Dakota Wars.

That's right. That's right. It's not an accident that the Dakota go to war with the U.S. when the U.S. is otherwise preoccupied. That's a strategic decision, and one similar to the kind of strategic decisions made by enslaved rebels, for example, earlier in the century to go to war with the U.S. when it's preoccupied and side with its enemies when possible, to make a coalition. In fact, there's a lot of rumors circulating around in Minnesota and Wisconsin in the 1860s that the Dakota and perhaps the Ho-Chunk have made an alliance with the Confederacy. I don't think that's true. I'm pretty sure it's not true. But it is interesting to think about Native people in the upper Midwest thinking continentally and strategically about the United States, their enemy, right, as engaged in a total war that's going to take its attention away and take its soldiers away.

How much did the presence and the future of Native peoples confuse and even befuddle the U.S. Congress when it took up the Civil Rights Bill in 1866 and then the 14th Amendment?

They really don't know what—Congress really doesn't know what to do with Native people. And in fact, when the Civil Rights Bill comes up in 1866, it's in kind of an emergency moment. The Civil War is over, slavery has been abolished, but Andrew Johnson has allowed former Confederates and plantation owners to return to governing their states on a white-only basis in the South. And those new state legislatures in the post-Civil War South are passing all of these laws that essentially turn the idea of African American freedom into a charade. It restricts them from moving freely, from owning property, from being anything other than low-wage farm laborers. And Congress can't let that happen. For the very first time, creates this category of national citizenship and endows national citizens with certain rights that will undermine those Black codes in the South and grant formerly enslaved African Americans all the rights of other Americans. To do that, they needed a definition of

citizenship that incorporates all of those former slaves as well as free Black people in its orbit. But when they come up with a definition, all persons born in the United States are citizens of the United States and of the states in which they reside.

The first question is, wait, do you mean Indians too? Oh, hmm, okay. How do we create a definition of national citizenship that says all persons born, but that excludes Native people? That's not an immediately obvious thing, right? Because the United States claims all of that territory. And if Native people are born in that territory, then aren't they American citizens? Well, that's not our intention. So how do we separate them out?

Okay, all persons born or naturalized except Indians not taxed. Taxing is thought to be a proxy for real estate ownership. And real estate ownership is thought to be a sign of being enmeshed in American society. And so Native people who are paying taxes can be understood to be sufficiently enmeshed in the US that, yeah, it's safe to make them citizens. But the rest of them, Indians not taxed, meaning Indians still under tribal government, are not incorporated as citizens.

So they think about this immediately and think they've solved the problem. But then they realize that they've got an even bigger problem, which is that nobody really understands the taxing power and its effect on citizenship. And if you literally say that if Native people are taxed, that they become citizens, then a state could decide to tax or not tax its Native residents and thereby make them or not make them into US citizens. And the whole point of the Civil Rights Act and later of the 14th Amendment is to establish federal supremacy over citizenship so that the states can't determine who is and is not a citizen. And so you can't let the states decide that through the taxing power. So you need to come up with another formulation.

So the 14th Amendment citizenship clause abandons that Indians not taxed framework in favor of subject to the jurisdiction, which is a little more capacious, which talks about the United States and its jurisdiction. But again, the problem there immediately emerges. Doesn't the United States really claim jurisdiction over most of what's now the lower 48? Doesn't it assert that it in fact owns or will soon own all of that? And doesn't that amount to a claim of jurisdiction? And therefore, haven't you again made citizens out of all the Native people in all that territory?

There are some senators who really think that that's what they've done in the 14th Amendment. And in fact, a couple of years after enacting the 14th Amendment, after it's ratified and becomes part of the Constitution, a senator from a Western state says, hey, wait a minute, doesn't the 14th Amendment make citizens out of all the Indians? And the senators aren't even sure. They have to panel a committee to go investigate the question and find out if they accidentally made all Native people into citizens. They decide that they didn't, but it's not clear.

I think my favorite part of the narrative is when this white supremacist senator from Ohio, to embarrass the radical Republicans during Reconstruction, emerges as the great

friend of the Ho-Chunk. And explain what Senator Alan Thurman did that would profoundly affect the Ho-Chunk future.

So Alan Thurman is a truly despicable white supremacist Democrat from Ohio. I mean, really like a proponent of race war and just a, he's as bad as Ben Tillman. But he's also an extremely capable politician, very good orator, very effective in Congress. He's actually the vice presidential nominee of the Democratic Party later in the century.

He notices that Wisconsin's Republican representatives in the House and the Senate are trying to get a bill passed to appropriate some money to expel the Ho-Chunk from Wisconsin. And they've been doing it for a couple of years in the early 1870s. And he says, well, hang on a second. On what grounds are you trying to expel these people? And they say, well, you know, they're unwelcome neighbors. They gave up all their land in earlier treaties. They've got no business here.

He says, well, just because they're unwelcome neighbors doesn't mean you can expel them. That's not a constitutional argument. And in fact, if they are no longer members of the tribe that went out West, if they don't accept the authority of the tribal leaders in that reservation, then they're not subject to its authority. They're not subject to its jurisdiction. And if they're not subject to its jurisdiction, then surely they are subject to the jurisdiction of the United States. And if they are subject to the jurisdiction of the United States, they're citizens of the United States. And you have no more right to expel them from Wisconsin than any other citizen of the United States.

He really sets the Republicans back on their heels, and he ends up kind of intimidating them with this argument sufficiently that they agree to the proposition that the Ho-Chunk shouldn't be required to leave the state, only encouraged to leave the state, and that no military force will be used to make them leave the state. And that's a crucial, crucial concession on the part of the removal proponents in Wisconsin and in Congress. Because once you take military force out of the equation, there is no force that can keep the Ho-Chunk expelled from Wisconsin. They want to come back, and they do come back.

You open the book in 1873 with a group of Ho-Chunk identifying themselves as, quote, the descendants of what was known in the year 1837 and subsequent as Dandy's Band. And they were petitioning the Federal Office of Indian Affairs to become citizens. First of all, tell us who Dandy's Band was, who Dandy was, and what his band was.

Dandy's Band were the people who and whose ancestors had followed a Ho-Chunk civil chief named Wakandja Heriga, or Roaring Thunder, who was known to Americans as Dandy or sometimes Chief Dandy. And he had been one of the most famous and effective resistant leaders of the Ho-Chunk during the removal era. He had only occasionally been forced west of the Mississippi River. And when he had been, had come right back and had established a series of different settlements in what's today Wisconsin, despite the presence of settlers nearby. And his group of Ho-Chunk people had been among the least interested in the American program of so-called civilization. They were living as Ho-Chunk people, speaking Ho-Chunk, pursuing the same economic activities, moving across the same

geographies, all within the limits of what settler civilization permitted, but still really living as Ho-Chunk people in the Ho-Chunk homeland.

And so what's really striking about this petition in 1873 is that it's a group of the Ho-Chunk people least likely to be asking for citizenship and to embrace so-called civilization, making exactly that demand. And so it raises the question, and as I got deeper into the research, continued to raise the question for me, what are they on about? Why are they making this claim at this moment, and what does it mean?

So did you conclude they did not really intend to assimilate and essentially surrender to the manifest destiny of settler conquest and in fact had something more clever and subtle in mind?

Exactly, exactly. That they had understood something really interesting about settler civilization, which is that its leaders didn't really have a clear grasp of the meaning of its own key words. They didn't really understand what they meant by civilization and how much of what parts of it were enough. And they didn't really understand the relationship between that kind of inchoate mess called civilization and the other thing called citizenship, which they thought they had well defined, but they really had.

What Dandy's Band deduced is that there were yawning gaps in Americans' understanding of both of these key words, of civilization and of citizenship. In the case of civilization, that Americans didn't know how much civilization was enough or what pieces of it counted the most and how much you had to show in order to count as civilized. And in the case of citizenship, Americans didn't really understand what they meant by subject to the jurisdiction. And so the descendants of Dandy's Band, as they called themselves, kind of walked through the gaps produced by those incoherences in Americans' understanding of their own key words. And as a consequence, defeat the removal process in 1874. And by 1875, they had a special piece of legislation attached to an appropriations bill that lets them take advantage of the Homestead Act of 1862 and to purchase real estate and become legal residents of Wisconsin, thus effectively in the eyes of Wisconsin citizens at least, becoming citizens of Wisconsin.

Were the Ho-Chunk unique in how they dealt with the whole citizenship matter? Did other nations figure this out?

So other nations appear to have figured out different versions of this in different ways. The Mascuaki people and some of the Potawatomi groups and some other groups in the Great Lakes and elsewhere do figure out bits and pieces of this.

And indeed, the key to the Ho-Chunk's success, which is if we own property, they can't remove us, is at the core of all other native groups that seek citizenship or that acquire it in treaties. That's their plan. It's just that in many of those instances, they're seeking to secure the lands that they're currently on, and those are the exact lands that settlers have their eyes on. And so there's an immediate conflict over their ability to keep those. And very quickly, settlers amass those, take them away.

In the Ho-Chunk case, they're able to make this pitch in a way that doesn't directly challenge settlers' interest in particular parcels of land. That is, they don't set themselves up in an immediate conflict over that. And I think that helps them considerably in this case. But also, I think there's a kind of political and even maybe constitutional exhaustion by this point. Because even the Wisconsin Republicans who really would like to get rid of the Ho-Chunk understand that there's a contradiction built into that, the one that Alan Thurman pointed to. And that is, they are actually being hypocrites. They are actually inconsistent in their own beliefs.

And I think on some level, this does play into their throwing up their hands, essentially, by 1875 and establishing the conditions in which the Ho-Chunk could really reestablish themselves as legitimate residents in their old homeland. So we get what appears to be a happy ending with these Homestead Acts and then the Act for the Relief of the Winnebago Indians in Wisconsin six years later.

And then the same government passes the Dawes Act in 1887, entirely abolishing landholding in common and stealing two-thirds of the native lands. How did that progression happen? Well, the thing is that the Dawes Act, it's possible looking from Washington or from Boston, where Dawes is from, it's possible to look at these two things, at the so-called Indian Homestead Act that lets the Ho-Chunk buy this land in Wisconsin, and at the Dawes Act as of a piece. Because they both imagine not collective landholding, not tribal ownership, but individual ownership as the end state and the desired end state of policy.

And so from a great height, these policies actually look compatible or even similar to one another. Now, the difference, of course, is that the Ho-Chunk navigated their way to this and seized upon it as a way of getting what they want without surrendering the rest of their autonomy and sovereignty. The Dawes Act is simply imposed from above in quite a brutal way, stripping native people of treaty rights, which in this case the Ho-Chunk didn't have at this point, treaty rights to land.

So actually, the two policies kind of fit together in a funny way. Of all the horrors inflicted on the Ho-Chunk, was there an episode that particularly outraged you more than others? Oh, boy. You know, the treaties, each of the treaties is preceded, 29, the big ones, 29 and 1832 and 1837, is preceded by acts of settler violence and official violence and brutality and coercion and intimidation. Those are really, really ugly histories. And reading about those and reading about the misery that then the treaties and the dispossessions that follow cause to huge numbers of Ho-Chunk people is really hard.

I think the one that I find the most grotesque in its just transparent unfairness is the exile of the Ho-Chunk bands in Minnesota in the 1860s following the U.S.-Dakota War, which is just a really crass concession to the hysteria that's been whipped up among Minnesota settlers about all Indians generally, and the Ho-Chunk simply bear the brunt of those politics and are expelled from Minnesota, banished, essentially, in the same way as the Dakota. The suffering that they endure on this forced march out to the Dakota territory, to this place

called Crow Creek, is really, really unbelievable. They freeze and they starve and they're assaulted on the way. The sort of climate of anti-Indian hysteria in the region is enormous and they're left more or less unprotected from it. And they suffer terribly once they arrive in Crow Creek. And they only really survive by escaping from there in canoes down the river, making alliances with friends among the Omaha in Nebraska and resituating themselves there by 1865. It's just a really, it's one in a series of really searing chapters in their history.

And again, we have our friend, the great emancipator to thank for that.

We do, we do. He signed the bill that expels the Ho-Chunk from Minnesota.

You mentioned Roaring Thunder. Who else in the narrative really impressed you?

There's another civil chief, a man named Wakandja Guga, Coming Thunder, or Thunder Returns. He represents a kind of a different part of the story in that he reluctantly goes with the bands of people who do cross the Mississippi with the US forces and are marched up into Northern Minnesota. The US, in fact, sees him as a potential ally, an intermediary, names him principal chief, whatever that's worth. But he doesn't take that on as a kind of badge of honor. He sees that as a way of inserting himself into the conversation about the Ho-Chunk's future and influencing agents and supervisors and officials in Washington. And he really pushed his back against all the projects of so-called civilization and removal that the Americans keep trying to impose upon the Ho-Chunk west of the Mississippi.

Finally, after playing this game of really trying to tack back and forth between cooperating and pushing back, in 1859 and 60, the federal government decides to break up the Ho-Chunk's current reservation in southern Minnesota, a place called Blue Earth, and to survey it and to allocate it to the Ho-Chunk individually, which they don't want. They want to have it kept as land in common. And when the government sends a surveyor onto the land, Coming Thunder gets his allies together and they stand in the surveyor's way and they won't let him onto the land. They grab his survey stakes and threaten to stick him with it unless he gets off the land. And then when they send the census taker to take a census of the tribe, which is essential for allotting a little land to them, he and his friends go into the stockade and shoo everybody out, get everybody out of the stockade so they can't be counted properly. And they prevent an accurate count from being taken. These are not, in the end, successful actions. They don't actually prevent the processes from unfolding. They do delay them pretty substantially. And it's just a sign of the kind of determination not to simply submit to these US policies that they understand are going to be and are so destructive of their relations to one another, to their common culture and their common idea of themselves.

You mentioned in the book that you have what you call a very limited understanding of Ho-Chunk culture and language, which I would submit is probably in the top percentile of non-native peoples. How has that understanding, however you define it, helped you understand the politics and the history?

So speaking with people in the Ho-Chunk language division has been really illuminating for understanding what words signify, what it means that people take on certain names and how to think about especially clan, not something that my culture has or that I think most non-native cultures in the United States have, but every Ho-Chunk person is born into one of 12 clans. And these clans all have names and identities and each of them has a particular social responsibility to the nation as a whole. So different clans are responsible for land or for security or for mediation or for water or for other essential elements of life in the Ho-Chunk world. And one of the really striking things about the sources from the 19th century, you know, the sources I've primarily been working with is that virtually no observer of the Ho-Chunk in the 19th century even understands that there's such a thing as clan. And yet it's a really central feature of the way Ho-Chunk people relate to one another and think about their relationships to the lands.

And it leads me to think that these colonial sources that I've been working with, you know, the Office of Indian Affairs and the territorial papers of the United States consistently miss the boat but consistently misunderstand what they're seeing in front of them. They don't understand how Ho-Chunk people worship, how they relate to one another, what their kinship structures are. So Americans are always, American officials and observers are constantly getting Ho-Chunk people's names wrong. They're mistaking one person for another because they think, but that's his son, not his nephew. And they've misunderstood completely how Ho-Chunk people are talking about their kinship relations. So that's been really helpful for understanding at least why the sources get so many things wrong and miss so many things.

So there's apparently room for a lot of new research in this field.

Absolutely. I will say that there are, of course, Ho-Chunk scholars out there. There are a few historians practicing, doing great work, Amy Lountrie, Renner Ramirez. There are also a number of Ho-Chunk graduate students who are pursuing this. And the work that Ho-Chunk people can do as scholars working from home, as the expression in the field goes now, is really incredible and can shed light on things that outsider scholar just can't.

And I'm thinking here of a graduate student in anthropology at UW, Molly Pollitt, and a graduate student in the School of Human Ecology, Josie Lee, who runs the Ho-Chunk Museum and Cultural Center up in Toma, both of whom can bring to bear on this history and on these questions, not just a whole different perspective, but a whole other set of questions and a whole other set of concerns that come from within the tribal experience, within the contemporary community and its shared understanding or contested understanding of its past.

And so one of the common threads in early reactions to this book has been, oh, really, thanks for writing this book. I really appreciate this book. I wish a Ho-Chunk person had written this book, to which I say, me too. And I can't wait to see what happens when a generation of Ho-Chunk scholars comes to these subjects and how they'll reframe them and how they'll reimagine them and how they'll answer them differently. And if 10 years from

now, the starting point is what Cantrell had failed to see was, I will have considered that this book to have been a great success.

You anticipated the next question, which was, had you faced any blowback either in your research or the marketing of this book as a white man of European descent writing about Native peoples?

Not blowback, and I would say concern might even be put it too strongly. The book has really, I mean, I say this with huge gratitude and maybe a lack of modesty, but the book so far has been received well. I expect at some point there is going to be some strong pushback on some part of this. I can foresee some places where that could be the case. I know there are things that I didn't do a good job with, but in general, the most serious charge against the book is that I'm not writing from the inside. And, you know, of course, I frankly confess that. You know, that's the nature of this book. And I understood when I decided that I was going to write it, that that was going to be a drawback of it. But I decided to do it anyway.

Well, what about your own internal understanding? In the years that you've been working with this material, has your understanding of the issues deepened over time or maybe even changed a bit?

Oh, quite a lot. I tell a story at the very end of the book, which is one of those moments where I realized how little I understood. And that was in a class about five years ago. I'd been teaching a freshman seminar in Ho-Chunk history, and it had attracted first semester freshmen, mostly honor students, but non-native students for the most part, and students with no previous knowledge who just thought the topic looked interesting.

And so I would do this exercise with them where I would get them to read some of the kind of early histories of the Ho-Chunk Nation and then plot Ho-Chunk history as a series of migrations, mostly forced migrations, across a map of the upper Midwest. And this had always been a really great exercise because the students have to assimilate a text and plot it on a map and think about where a story begins and ends, and it's a great kind of methods conversation to have in a history class, especially right at the beginning.

But in 2018, I moved this class to an upper level thinking I'd get some more advanced students, it'd be a little more fun, and maybe we'd get a little farther with it, and somebody would decide to go on and be a graduate student, whatever. I had grand ambitions in that way.

And instead what happened was almost no undergraduates signed up for it, but I kept getting phone calls and emails from Ho-Chunk tribal members who wanted to audit the class. And I didn't feel like I could say no, I didn't want to say no. So when the class convened, there were two undergraduates, a couple of academic staff members on campus, some of them Native American, though not Ho-Chunk, and about nine Ho-Chunk people. So it was a completely different classroom dynamic than I'd ever been in before.

And of course we had to have a serious conversation the whole first day about authority over knowledge and what each of us was bringing to the table. And I thought it went really

well. I was kind of proud of how this was going, how humbly I was approaching it, right? Little did I know.

The next week, so I give them the assignment to do this exercise with a text describing Ho-Chunk movement and a map and plot the map. And when we come back for the seminar the next week, nobody's done it. The two undergraduates have done it, but none of the Ho-Chunk tribal members have done their map. And I'm like, what did I get wrong here? What's going on?

And so I ask a couple of leading questions as teachers do, and I get nothing back. And so finally I pull out the map that actually does that work, that shows the migrations, you know, mostly removals, and the return of Ho-Chunk people. It's reproduced in the book. It's reproduced anywhere you'll find a modern Ho-Chunk history; you'll find this map.

And I say, well, what about this one? And they look at it, and finally, after a really painful silence, one of the women in the class says, I don't want to talk about this map. I want to talk about another map. I want to talk about the map of the places they told us never to go, and the stories they told us about why. And that kind of hangs in the air. That's a terrifying thing to say. And I was literally stunned.

And while that's reverberating in the air, the woman next to her says, I want to talk about the map of the places they told us to run and hide when they come for us. And it took a while. I won't say that I had this realization immediately, but what I came to understand about that moment was that they were telling me this map is saying that the story of Ho-Chunk history is a terrible history, which we overcame, and it is neatly wrapped up by the 1880s with this acquisition of private property and tribal and trust land in Wisconsin.

What they were telling me is that struggle against colonialism has not stopped, that we have been continuing to fight against the fight with sundown towns and hostile settlers and the dangers from both state officials, you know, black cars and social workers coming to take children, or vigilantes murdering people, assaulting women.

They were reminding me that colonization didn't stop in 1882 because the federal government provided a little bit of money that Ho-Chunk people could use to take advantage of the Homestead Act. That continues to be the kind of defining change in my understanding of the history here, is that colonization is ongoing and the resistance to colonization is also ongoing.

Did that affect the text of this book that we have before us?

I like to think that it did. I like to think that instead of wrapping it up as a story of heroic and sort of partly successful struggle, it points toward the kind of continuing dynamics.

And I've written a little bit at the end of the book trying to make some connections that I see between this history and other histories of what I call anti-citizenship, other histories of groups of people who may be formally endowed with American citizenship and equality, don't actually experience that. You don't have to take much of a tour through United States

history to see that working. The historian May Nye has this very useful phrase, the alien citizen, which she defines as people who are formally entitled to U.S. citizenship but are held to be racially ineligible to it.

And if we think about the deportation or banishment, not just of Mexican immigrants but of Mexican American citizens in the 1930s, if we think about the incarceration of not just Japanese but Japanese American citizens in the 1940s, and then we think about other deportations, if we think about rendition and Guantanamo Bay and the stripping of citizenship from people, we can see that there is still a struggle unfolding about what citizenship really means and whether people really are entitled to it and on what basis it can be really just stripped from them when a court or an administration or vigilantes take it upon themselves to say we're the real citizens.

I asked earlier about there being an aha light bulb moment when you realize the implications of citizenship. Was there an even earlier light bulb aha moment when you decided, oh my gosh, this is something I really need to look into, the whole topic of the treatment of Native peoples, primarily the Ho-Chunk here in our own neighborhoods?

Yeah, I mean, as we talked about a little while ago, I didn't start out anywhere near this field. I was a historian of really of white supremacy and then of Black activism in the 19th century. And I thought that's where my career was going to be and remain, and I thought that was where my interest was going to be and remain.

But I was actually standing exactly where I'm standing right now on the back terrace of my house on the east side of Madison with a couple of historians, including two specialists in Native American history, not usually the people I spent the most time talking with, but guests of my wife. And one of them said just sort of in passing, well, you know, this whole neighborhood is built on effigy mounds. And I thought, what? I knew there were the mounds down at Hudson Park, but the whole neighborhood?

And so I started just doing a little digging, and sure enough, there were hundreds of mounds on this part of the lakeshore at Lake Monona. And there were thousands in the region. There were tens of thousands. There may have been many more than that.

And what that told me suddenly is, you know, American history as I knew it, U.S. history as this little scrim on top of a much older history. And I guess I knew that, but I'd always thought of it in terms that American historians get taught to think of that, which is there's history, which is the nation state and its sequels, and there's prehistory, what happened before Europeans arrived. What a crazy distinction that is.

And yet I had sort of absorbed it as sort of just part of the air that I breathed as a historian. And what that comment did was dislodge that just ever so slightly and just couldn't stop pulling at the thread that had left dangling.

And so I realized, okay, so who built the mounds and who were their descendants? And that led me to the Ho-Chunk people. And then where are the Ho-Chunk? Well, there are Ho-Chunk people, in fact, right here, right now, always have been. And who are they and

what can they tell me? And that led to some conversations, some people who were extremely generous with their time and generous with my ignorance.

And yeah, one thing led to another. And what started out as just a little side trip, maybe I'll teach a class, maybe I'll do this and that, turned into an article, turned into two. And then I'm definitely not writing a book. And no, I can't do it. And I'm writing a book. And now I've written a book. And now I'm talking about the book. And here we are, you know.

In my neighborhood, the golf course is where the Ho-Chunk had their vacation summer area. So having done the lectures, written the book, learned a bit of the language, are you going to continue in this area or go back to the Black-White dyad?

I'm going to continue thinking and talking and teaching this area because I can't unsee what I've seen. I've never stopped teaching about and thinking about the Black-White dyad in America because it is one of the essential stories in understanding the complexity and the tragedy and maybe the promise of the country. Now that I've had this experience thinking about these ideas and talking with these folks, I can't do work that doesn't somehow embrace and include this part of the history.

So, for example, the big challenge for me has been, you know, I've got a class that I inherited called Slavery, the Civil War, and Reconstruction. This is part of that history. Am I going to rename the class now? I don't know, but I'm definitely teaching it differently than I did. I'm definitely now asking the students to think about why it is that the narrative of colonialism and of Native resistance doesn't feature in the way we talk about the Civil War, and what would happen if we asked it to feature in that story or asked the Civil War to feature in the other story.

As far as what research, what work I do next, I'm still in this kind of refractory phase after this book and hoping to get a chance to talk to a lot of people about the book and then see where that takes me. In recent years, I've been doing a lot of work in sort of public-facing history work with the report to the Chancellor on the Ku Klux Klan and then working with the Public History Project and now with the Center for Campus History, and then also with a project on campus called Our Shared Future, which is about the campus's relationship with Ho-Chunk Nation in particular and with the other First Nations of Wisconsin.

And so I think it's likely that whatever I do next is going to have a pretty substantial public-facing component in it as well and be more collaborative, less of the single-author historian model that I've pursued most of my career.

Well, and finally, as to the book, you use some very tough terms. I mean, not just calling Henry Dodge a regional warlord, but you use terms like extermination and genocide. Would it have been difficult to publish this book as written 30, 40, 50 years ago?

Oh, yeah. It's not really until the last 20 years, and that's generous, that scholars working in Native American history could publish and say genocide, even where it is transparently warranted, like in the case of the conquest of California in the 1850s. That is very, very clearly, meets any definition you want of genocide. But until a series of really thorough

works documenting that experience, scholars were either uncomfortable or unwilling to use that word.

I think, and of course, any strong word runs the risk of seeming like hyperbole. But I think we have to call what we see by their proper names. And one of the things I'm most proud of, weirdly, on the UW-Madison campus recently is that when the group coming up with the heritage marker for what's now called Our Shared Future on Bascom Hill wanted to describe what the United States sought to do to the Ho-Chunk in the 19th century, use the phrase ethnic cleansing.

And, of course, as you can imagine, there was initially significant pushback to that because it seems like just hyperbole or an inflammatory phrase, that kind of thing. But the people who wrote the text brought the chancellor, brought late Chancellor Blank, the definition of ethnic cleansing, and the United Nations definition of ethnic cleansing. And she looked at it, she looked at the history, and she said, OK, that's what that was. And so it's on the sign.

And that to me, in a funny way, that is the fearless sifting and winnowing there, right, with emphasis maybe on the fearless part. It shouldn't be so hard to call things by their proper names, but it is really hard because even those of us who came up studying, say, the relationship between African-American and white Americans in U.S. history have often approached that through a highly nationalist and even patriotic framework, you know, about the achievement of full citizenship, as we often say, you know, out of second-class citizenship toward full or equal citizenship.

But it's much harder to tell a story that doesn't just talk about shortcomings, but that casts, you know, the entire national project into a negative light. That's a tough thing to encounter and a tough thing to do. But I think unless we can actually take account of that, we're only going to be telling ourselves stories about the westward movement of the United States that are basically fairy tales designed to make us feel good about our ancestors and to soothe our consciences. But that's not a truthful history and that doesn't explain the world that we live in. So I think the more we can do to call things by their proper name, the better off we're going to be.

History without the bad stuff is just propaganda.

Exactly. That's what I just told my students on my syllabus this fall. It's interesting.

Well, on that note, I'm afraid that is all the time we have with Professor Stephen Kantrowitz. Again, the book is *Citizens of a Stolen Land, a Ho-Chunk History of the 19th Century United States.* Andrew Thomas will be your host next week with his guest, the poet Paul Tran, to discuss his well-received debut collection, *All the Flowers Kneeling*.

I'll be back. Well, I'm not sure when I'll be back because this is my last new show for the foreseeable future. It has been a great opportunity and privilege these past three years to share with you the conversations I've had with authors like:

- **Joyce Carol Oates**

- **David Maraniss**
- **Ben Sidran**
- **Alison Bechdel**
- **Andrew Maraniss**
- **Amy Nezumatatil**
- **Joel Selvin**
- **Joan Lester**
- **Carl Hiaasen**
- **Patty Lowe**
- **Fran Hirsch**
- **Charles Monroe Cain**
- **Dick Wagner**
- **Paige Glotzner**
- **Chad Allen Goldberg**
- **Jen Rubin**
- **Jordan Ellenberg**
- **Barrett Swanson**
- **Jennifer Chiaverini**
- **Steve Koss**
- **Rick Perlstein**
- **Danielle McGuire**
- **Daniel Evans**

and on and on. It has been a great privilege and I'm very thankful for the opportunity. What an education I've gotten, and I hope you enjoyed those conversations. But I'm on deadline for my new Madison history book, covering the period 1932 to 2006. So I need to step back from regular hosting until that's done. I may pinch hit from time to time and provide some best of episodes, but I won't be on the regular schedule until WORT's golden jubilee year of 2025. Thankfully, there's a whole Madison Book Beat team that is more than able to pick up the slack.

And if you are interested in maybe being among their number, please contact Chali. That's C-H-A-L-I at W-O-R-T-F-M dot org. So until we meet again, on behalf of news and public affairs director Chali Pittman, the aforementioned Andrew Thomas on the board, and all of us here at Madison Book Beat, I'm Stu Levitan. Thank you for joining us. Now as Ben Sidran plays us out with a little bit of *Little Sherry,* please stay tuned for Alex Walding White and *All Around Jazz.* You're listening to W-O-R-T, 89.9 FM, Madison. Listener sponsored community radio since 1975. Thanks for watching!