



★ FORTRESS ON A HILL

Ep 64 transcript

Wed, 5/6 7:06PM • 2:24:31

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

history, guns, native, book, nicaragua, people, called, students, land, great, united states, university, started, day, thought, culture, central america, military, native americans, roxanne

SPEAKERS

Chris 'Henri' Henrikson, Danny Sjursen, Roxanne Dunbar Ortiz, Keagan Miller

Danny Sjursen

All right. Hey listeners, we are back again. One of the great things or not great things but silver linings of pandemic is that we've been pretty regular here on Fortress On A Hill. We've been doing great, great interviews, you know, on a weekly basis. Many of you probably listened to Chris Hedges and Bob Scheer. We just had Rebecca Gordon who will be that episode will release probably by the time you hear this, and, and now we are just super lucky to have Roxanne Dunbar Ortiz, the historian, just kind of longtime analysts and activists and we're really excited for this and we have so many more great interviews coming and the quality of guests has just really gone through the roof. So thank you so much, Roxanne, for being here.

Roxanne Dunbar Ortiz

Well, thank you for inviting me. I'm a great fan of your podcast.

Danny Sjursen

Well, you know, just before I introduce you, I was gonna say, when you indicated in our, you know, back and forth scheduling emails that you were a Fortress On A Hill listener. I think we were all three of us pretty stoked and flattered. We're all familiar with your work, I believe Kagan Is that right, was midway through the indigenous peoples history when I told her you're joining us.

Keagan Miller

I just started, it's so good.

Danny Sjursen

And it really is, it really is excellent. And we're going to talk about that and some of your other work. So let me just do a quick bio for those who aren't fully familiar with you. Roxanne is a historian first and foremost, author, memoirist and a speaker who researches a Western Hemisphere history and international human rights. She grew up in rural Oklahoma, the daughter of a tenant farmer and part Indian mother. She has been active in the international that's key international indigenous movement for more than four decades. And she's known for her lifelong commitment to national and international social justice issues. After receiving her PhD in history at the University of California in Los Angeles, UCLA, she taught in the newly established Native American Studies Program at Cal State University Hayward, and helped found the department's of ethnic studies and women's studies. And that really was a key period when when these sorts of programs were first really getting their Genesis. Her 1977 book *The Great Sioux Nation*, was the fundamental document at the first International Conference on indigenous peoples of the Americas, held at the United Nations headquarters in Geneva. She is the author or editor of several other books, including *Roots of Resistance*, a history of land tenure in New Mexico, and her two most recent works are *An Indigenous Peoples History of the United States*. loaded a disarming history of the Second Amendment both of which for equally if differently disturbing reasons feel particularly relevant to this peculiar and you know, tragic moment of ours. So while this short biographical summary hardly does her extensive work and fascinating life justice quite certain we're going to dig into much of that during this episode. So let me just say for now, thanks again for doing this Roxanne and it's a genuine honor to have you.

Roxanne Dunbar Ortiz

Thank you, thank you so much.

Danny Sjursen

Well, as always, I'm known as the more loquacious of the hosts, so I'll start us off and you know, we're gonna go in a lot of directions and do our best to to make this more than a Corona analysis like so much media and recording is today so you know, some of that reasonable some probably distracting, but some listeners might best know you for your work on Native American history. What you call indigenous history, especially you're doing so in sort of the People's History vein of Howard Zinn, who many listeners have probably heard of? So I'm quite sure you've been obliged to answer these sorts of questions a lot. But if you'll indulge me to start, can you tell us a bit about your background, personal scholastic journey and how you came to the vast and complex subjects of Native American or indigenous history?

Roxanne Dunbar Ortiz

Well, yeah, I came from if my destiny I think was not determined by my childhood. I was not supposed to become who I became, I think maybe I was, but I grew up in, as you say, in central rural Oklahoma. My dad was a sharecropper and tenant farmer. And also go go, a diesel truck. fueling the richer

farmers, the wheat farmers tanks for their tractors, and any other job he could get to support us. The way I grew up very poor on it was a poor community as such, it wasn't that unusual. I measured well by people having an indoor bathroom, basically, which we didn't. So and even electricity so it was a pretty harsh background, but I did have a history I inherited my father's father was a socialist I really liked your article Danny your essay on on Eugene Debs because my grandfather was a guest speaker and social Wow. voted for Five times. I never knew him. He died before I was born. But I heard in the stories from my father about him. My father was born in 1907. So he was very young during this period that he had, I think his dad sort of invested in him, you know, the stories because we add them. There was nothing in my schooling that would make me think that these stories were true. It didn't really matter to me. It was, you know, the story, this wonderful man. And I don't know if it'll ring a bell but he named my father. More your Heywood Carberry people.

Danny Sjursen

Often Big Bill.

Roxanne Dunbar Ortiz

Yes. Those are the names of the I ww founders who were on trial in August 1907. My father was born. So my just, you know, asking my father Tell me again about the names your name. So he would tell me the biographies of your boy your gardener and each of them are hardrock miners, his people and they were socialists. And so I I'm the only kid I was the youngest I was asthmatic, sickly a lot home a lot from school, and I was just a perfect listening post to my father stories. The old three older brothers and sisters are not interested. It took me years to prove to them that these stories were true, you know, documentation. So my father obviously he also joined the WWE they were very strong automotive very industrialized. On the 1880s oil was discovered It was a big oil patch, commercial wheat farming, coal mining, lots of immigrant labor and very wealthy bosses. It was it was like a little third world country with a dictatorship and all the press was controlled. So that's the circumstances. I grew up in my last year of high school, I left home. And I moved to the city to work and go to trade school my last year to become a secretary. But in that trade school, they also had a printing. Printing was one of their daily newspaper. And one of the one of the trades that you could actually choose this journalism. So I slipped out of secretarial into journalism, where all the cool people word and I met gay people for the first time. People who admitted they were gay and really kind of rebel. And it was a wonderful year experience it was. It was a very scary place. You know, I went from three people in my class. And now, so homework, these moms to 350 students in my class and 1000 students in school, and it was the days of juvenile delinquency and there were, there was actually heroin being pushed outside by was kind of scary and I was very, still very devoted Baptists girl. So it was very interesting, but it got in my mind to go to University of Oklahoma and study journalism. My dad told me that that's not a place for our people to go to College. No, I've got to go to University of Oklahoma. So I lasted a year there. It really was completely over my head. It was, you know, fraternities or the the big red football team never seen a football game before. We didn't have enough toys for a football school. And so I got married and, and married into a family of union carpenters, which was a great blessing. And they were also my father in law was a real civil rights activist. He almost single handedly integrated the carpenters union, Oklahoma in the 70s. If you say, well, it's already To be 5455. So we always had a lot of union people there and I was learning about unions and that whole history. They were all kind of New Deal. A new

deal Democrats. And that was hard for me to reconcile because my dad really did not like Musil. He said it was to save the capitalists and while he was really right, but better than, you know what we have now, but if he had to work for the WPA, you know, there were no farms to humiliated digging ditches, is very good at doing that at work. So I had a very different view of the office has really seen that people seem to have but I did really respect these people and I learned a lot from And I also they had my husband had friends who were Middle Eastern, he was engineering students. So the petroleum engineering students, many of them, the Middle East. So I met the Palestinian he told me about Palestine in years after the massacre. And I met Syrians and other other Middle Eastern students. So I became kind of internationalized in my my scope. And because so three years I did not. I worked and sent my husband to finish his degree and then we were going to move to San Francisco and find the beatniks. So we did that in the 1960s the beatniks that all dispersed and put it was, you know, it was a whole new world in San Francisco State. College. So that that's really the kind of, you know, peace work that brought me to be an activist but I was very lucky. I don't know what would have happened had there not been a gigantic movement building the civil rights movement could see on television all the time, you know, the the citizens and the South and the police, sheriff's beating up crowds of people and then the student activism really started it wasn't all bad active when I was at San Francisco State, but it was beginning to happen and then I I fell in love with history, one history course and decided that's that was my major and I had some good mentors. I Tell people younger people is going mystifying about agenda people that I after, after grade school, I never had all of my teachers and professors that PhD were white males. And so that was going to find mentors for all men at San Francisco space. And so that was there were in some fields and you know, music and all but certainly not history. So I, I got persuaded to go to UC Berkeley to be a graduate student. hadn't been my plan, really, but it was handed to me. Fortunately, the universities were all free at that time. So I went to Berkeley for a year and it was very European oriented of the university system in California had been designed in the 1950s to specialize their different graduate schools. And so I decided I wanted to do that in American history. I took a trip to Mexico and I have I have to understand something I got interested in imperialism as an undergraduate. And it was very kind of stayed European. It was interesting. I mean, I took God's word all about the younger class in Germany and thought that up to eventually to Nazi ism and German professors from Germany I was, you know, very, very rich, but it just wasn't what I was interested in pursuing. So I transferred to UCLA. I left my husband On the way we've married to young and he became very much an engineer and really represented me, you know, my pursuit was to be a housewife. And so I, I went to UCLA and did Latin America. I wanted to learn about imperialism. This is right after the incident after the Cuban Revolution. And so everything was kind of centered on that. And it wasn't a very radical program, but it was so obvious with studying the history with the talk about imperialism all because that's what was going on us imperialism in Latin. And so that then, you know, 64 to 68, is where I really became an asset for the for the, against the Vietnam War. We had a VA hospital right next door to us. UCLA and actually, you know, there's a lot of Ken Burns kind of lies about the about the anti war movement, there was no sitting on the turning, there was none of that is true and what we did was form actually a group of people to go and it was really gross. These kinds of wounds, you know, I mean, so many paraplegic or people with nothing but head torso, and they would hang them out on like clothesline channel and to fun to get some sun. So we will go talk with them unnaturally white feathers through their volunteers at home and learn about what went on here on them. So net a lot of returning the major hospital For the horribly damage all people so I think it

really went deep in our group which was very small. We started a we started a vigil in 1965 and there were only six of us, the EMI EMI partner, and another couple we knew and the guy who organized with the philosophy professors and it by 1967 that vigil had gone all the way down in probably the Westwood and around the federal building and circle and came back up on the campus. So just seeing that, you know, that kind of, I think that's what's different about vocals now. It's very Hard to see success, you know, actually building a movement. All right. So that's, that's kind of mine. You know, I didn't finish my PhD I revolted. I said, I don't want anymore. We started losing some of our battles. And I got disgusted with everything and took off and for five years, was a full time militant, went underground for a while and then did decide to go back and finish my dissertation. That's all I left and started teaching. Then the Native American movement is what I what really propelled me in 19 Seven Days 71 is when I actually I had to back up because I, I got interested in ethnic studies because history professor was hired on to Pocky. He is basically the founder of ethnic studies, Japanese white working class or an apple or first family. And so he wasn't his family wasn't relocated because they didn't. Hawaiian, Japanese, but he got his PhD in history at UC Berkeley. And he taught the first he did American history. The first course taught at UCLA in African American History in 1960s. And I volunteered to be his teaching assistants even though it was in us by then I was sr, graduate student I had passed my exams All I had was a dissertation. So I had first choice of who I wanted to ta for. And I said I want and so your prestige into ta will come along with the prestige of your professor. He was only an assistant. This first year I didn't care. I wanted to learn what's new. So in the first class that 500 students signed up for it was very popular. It was a very white campus at the time. It's a front row was filled with this very militant looking African men. And they, they came to check out and he passed, and then they asked if they could audit the class. So he did, he said sure. And they were Great, really enrich the class, you know, bringing up things and well, they fired on for that. So he went to Berkeley and started that study. But that was where that was the that was a seed planted in me. And so I ended up when I did, you know, go decide to go in the job market after I finished my dissertation, I took a job in Native American Studies. And I had already gotten involved. Someone you know, and then marketed the movement and then got more deeply involved. And living in San Jose, San Jose was very active. And so this was right after Forgive me. And there were a lot of criminal cases. So I got involved in the as an expert witness in submitted files, and That's what led me, you know, the great Sioux Nation was a documentation of one of those hearings to dismiss all the charges based on the suit treaty, about 300 misdemeanors and felonies. And so it covers two weeks hearing, federal court hearing and within the past, like 74. So then I was really deeply involved and out of that came to the international Indian treaty Council. Aim for that international school. So that is the main work I have done that got me involved with all kinds of international human rights work, especially with Central American refugees, and in the 1980s, many of whom were indigenous peoples, the Mayans Especially that 200,000 high end refugees in Mexico and other parts of the world. So that that international work really expanded what, what I was doing and thinking about writing on pretty much devoted myself. Well, I wrote a book called blood on the border, the more the concrete was mainly opposing the conquer war in Nicaragua. That was we really lost who lost very badly as the United States was adamant, you know. And it's really sad to say after a lot of successes movement that was a real, you know, a wake up call that this is the counter revolution that we're in now. Much harder. We're still.

Danny Sjursen

Yeah, you know this to this is really, I love backstories. You know, I guess maybe that's one of the reasons I got involved in history initially was that sort of narrative side. I'm really glad you brought up the American Indian Movement I was actually going to ask before you brought it up if that was, you know, just given the temporal kind of space. I was wondering if maybe that had an influence, and obviously it did. I grew up on westerns. You know, I was very much partially raised by my grandfather, great guy, New Deal Democrat, but you know, I mean, standard Patreon patriarchal sort of wild west cents, you know, so I grew up on John Wayne and, you know, I was a weird little kid. I remember one summer when I was maybe eight, I took every book adult books about Custer and the Little Big Horn out of the library in Staten Island, you know, so that was kind of my initial intro, but then I got somehow I think it was through watching actually sort of a fictional movie called Thunderheart. It's Val Kilmer. I got that's how I think that's how I first got exposed to the American Indian Movement, Leonard Peltier, and read his book and just a bunch of stuff. So that that was really eye opening for me because it was the first time and I think I must have been in high school. So as the first time I looked at things from sort of another angle, and in the old way of thinking that I had Native Americans disappear in 1890, right, they sort of disappear with the closure of the frontier. You know, if you're an academic, it's the Turner thesis. If you're a lay person, it's Wounded Knee or whatever. Same general timeline, but it was interesting and I also thought it was fascinating the way you brought up Central America. And because I think so many times it's really seen as discrete. You know, there's American Indians and then that's it right. And there's no connections to Native Americans elsewhere. So I think it's fascinating that you've taken a look at indigenous history, cross border. Right. And it seems like you did that well, before it was academic chic, to talk about Borderlands and transnational history.

Roxanne Dunbar Ortiz

Yeah, I think movements do that, you know, they take you to places that you that are far ahead of the academics of what becomes more popularized. So it's a great gift to be in movements. Not many people have that opportunity now, which is something we did have, you know, my generation was young. So we, you know, we think for the reversal and losing all time that we have figured out, you know how to have a boy boy movie, because it is the best way to get an education. Everything I know about. I never studied Native American cultures that was not interested in anthropology. I was interested in imperialism and our work and everything that I have learned about Native Americans and digitus people have been in the wilderness not eating, not eating. Well, there just weren't very many of them until native scholars started being produced. And there were when I got my dissertation 1974 there were three Native Americans, which they won't explore Native American doctors who are about 10 Native American lawyers, that's, you know, it started from scratch. And so the Native American Studies is really the most dynamic of the, of the different ethnic studies. Some have become kind of boring, you know, academic but Native American studies is that is still how many students and allies get politicized and find in academia. It is. We just had the 50th anniversary of the University of New Mexico. Studies I direct that program was three years in the late 70s. So I was asked to be the keynote at it as often asked for lectures, collectors, who there and a lot of them And then current students then it just, you know just being reminded that that and how it's still it's more militant now than it was even did. It was founded by they keep it focused students set it up, I threatened to burn down the campus and that time most of them weren't established in the first place. So we don't have that kind of permission, you know, that we gave ourselves as all time to you know, to do things this is we're talking on May 4

today and of course, the anniversary of the Kent State massacre for students being killed by National Guard protesting against the invasion of Cambodia, Cambodia, so I think that was a real that was a turning point. It really did work even though it was the uprising of driving across the country, I was actually on a speaking tour. And campuses were on fire that was University of New Mexico. Just fires all every OPC building for going has illustrations and most of the universities closed for the semester. Close. Gave it over to the National Guard because some faces army. It was the army as University of New Mexico City just driving through these cases, you know who were supposed to speak and it was so it was it seemed successful, but I think it it had the desired effect from the you know, from the government of welling, you know, for new people Coming in, that's a lot to ask. And you're going to get killed. You know, you have to worry about this you're going to get killed. They think twice, you know about just jumping in. So that was really the marker, I think. And then of course, a week later, same thing happened an all black University College in Mississippi Jackson State. So three, three students were protesting the war. So it you know, it was really good film. Cool down thing. And of course the the reagan device of Reagan in California already already had him for eight years. And that was, you know, he his view was Anna Barbara, and then the National Guard. There may be a lot of dead bodies, but

Danny Sjursen

it really is striking. And I'm going to ask you a little more about Reagan in Central America later. It's it's interesting that you mentioned how, in the short run, it seemed that the protest movement had so much power. But maybe in the long run the shootings again state the other repression and Jackson, they've just forgotten, you know, had this quelling effect. I think that that has really maintained itself. You know, I'm here at the University of Kansas, which is in Lawrence, it's kind of this you know, for those who don't know, it's kind of this like, liberal or today, you know, hipster Oasis and in red, Kansas, and in 1970, you know, after Kent State this place was on fire to right in the middle of Kansas, you know, I mean, the National Guard was here that was shootouts. I mean, there was shots fire, they shot the campus, there was a city wide purview. And then when we conducted another illegal action similar to Cambodia, not as intense, of course, where we, you know, assassinated Kasim sulemani of Iran. You know, I was keynoting, a rally out downtown four blocks from the university and we had 11 students, you know, total. And so yeah, I think it's It is a shame. The draft has something to do with that, though. Not everything. And it's a tough thing. But, you know, let me just have one more follow up for a turn over to my co host. And then on this Native American issue, you know, and I want to ask people about teaching. You know, as you may know, for a time I taught us history to freshmen or what we call plebes at West Point. Contrary to what a lot of folks out there might tend to think and I've said this many times in the pod the Military Academy for its legion of flaws, is a real University as much as it is an automaton you know, indoctrination center. For example, you know, to give a little bit of West Point faculty inside baseball you know, the history in the English departments for example were considered and even pejoratively labeled hippies, you know by the staff from the other subject areas you know and frankly there really are sort of liberal active duty army officers in the history apartment they're not as radical as maybe me and certainly not as you know definitely army rather than real world liberal but still a fairly remarkable thing you know, that said I think it would genuinely shocked some folks out there to know the sort of progressive and somewhat cutting edge you know, I was just out of grad school so cutting edge of story graphically speaking material that you know, I myself presented in the classroom but all that aside, the syllabus, the day by day subject lesson plan, was still set in stone for the American

History 101 course that I first taught which is probably very similar to what's out there across the country. There were only 40 lessons and we had to do this might be different from other universities, we had to do all of American history in a single semester to teach the breadth of that history. So when you take into account day one sort of housekeeping and a couple of test days, they were really only 35 or 36 teaching days. So, as such, the course, began essentially with Jamestown, and ended with Obama's election in 2008. Consequently, two things resulted, I think, one of the vast temporal history of pre 1607 indigenous peoples and even early Spanish colonization was erased. And to the most of us made a genuine effort to include their voices in agency, Native Americans really only turn up in sort of cameo roles sprinkled, you know, throughout certain what we would say, quote, relevant lessons. So that's a long lead up to what I think are a couple of difficult questions for you. You know, first, what precisely is lost in this teaching formula, which I think is still pretty good. vast and widespread and to you know, how would you recommend handling the subject of indigenous agency and voices you know, from a pedagogical standpoint in these required courses, you know where there's, it's a survey and there's limited space. How do we do it? What's the best approach?

Roxanne Dunbar Ortiz

Oh, really good question. First, every The truth is of loss. Of course. That's really what what is lost. You're right, even them. Even Howard Zinn's wonderful, paradigm shifting book, which was published in 1980. is extraordinary. It's never been really accepted as too radical for most historians. That even Howard and he was a friend of mine and I often talk with him about it that that he gets to the 18 nine a or more deadly massacre. Up until that time is very good, except you're in the Civil War. We're here, even though there is a Sand Creek massacre that get called mass execution of the Navajo course relocation is partially made an army captain to pack up and died in the minor desert concentration camp, but never as mentioned in any other civil war materials at the top. So he made that mistake, too, but he was very, very good on the initial genocide. And they kept that up pretty much under Jackson removal. And then he gets to the point is very, very thorough. And after that, there's nothing you know, until the current This last chapter which you kept adding into the last chapter, which is the movements like power with power, no power, women's liberation, civil rights, everything in the 70s maybe. And so I would ask him, you know, what happened to them, you know what happened? And hibernating, you know, what makes it seem like they were all died off and then they were resurrected. And he said, You know, I don't know how to write that history. He said that very sincerely. And, and kept encouraging me to so when, you know, he had published his book with Beacon Press, and I got a call from Beacon Press in 2008. And this wonderful editor that she was doing as well. visioning American history series and wanted Native American History of the United States, the first volume, and that Howard Zinn has felt like the head had suggested that I be divided. So I said, Oh, well, sure, almost as easy. And of course, it took me six years it was very, very difficult. Like, even for me, even though I wrote all this well to put it in 300 pages and go back 100 years of history of Native people in the Western Hemisphere and great civilizations. So I you know, it's it's really was a lot of work, but it was, I didn't have to do any research. I mean, everything is known. This is part of anything that's already No, it's not. It's, it's purposeful to because it's, it's, you know, that inconvenient truth that the US narrative it can't multiculturalism shifted at some point. But, um, actually the elements of the narrative of the founding narrative in fathers and you know, they're imperfect, you know, now it's what they call warts and all, no more polishing them, even though that's not really true. It's so true that in the application of the

founders, but teachers mostly have materials where they say this is flawed flaws that is like no more perfect But not getting two fundamental questions like what this effect of genocide have on the people who committed and and their and their progeny. And it's left out, you know, lately what is what is it Do you know to 20th century history between 1890 and excuse to not even deal with almost abandoned reservations and still today Native American reservations life is 27 years. You know, it's just incredible school situations situation and that there was a termination as you Typically traded companies all and it's not an it's not an easy lesson plan or what does that say about the United States? That right one, you know, and one of their excuses for allotting native land in 1880s dasa Sen das said, you know, greed is the basis of civilization and these people living communally, they will never, they will never do well until they learn to be selfish. And, you know, I have private property, and that was in a Navy, but they were saying the same thing with determination, you know, people living beautifully. And even on the left, you know, there's this there, it also doesn't fit the working class model as well. revolution in and so they ignore what settler colonialism is. And it goes to the mentality that everyone wants to be and rich and they certainly don't want to call them go working class, middle class and ask for aspiring. So all of these things being left out is just damaging every generation of children, I think, but I feel kind of hopeful of an indigenous peoples history the united states come out and young people's addiction last July. And although our work on it going on educators and teachers and all has been cut short, with the stay at home. We've continued it on Audible online, but it's very exciting. I had I purchased is a native woman from a portfolio in New Mexico Debbie Reese to do the adaptation. I knew she was the perfect person she she does a chancer project on for about 10 years now of analyzing every children and young people out for what is it? What How does it deal with American Indians called American Indians in children's literature? And she critiques it she has become the go to person for librarians and teachers for elementary, junior high and high school books and for regular people who don't want to damage their children but you know, think it's, you know, the NBN is uncovered as a high school story while the shoulder and So that notion is a perfect person to adapt it and this is absolutely wonderful book and it won every award. This is fine I'm encouraged it, it doesn't water down my thesis at all nothing is watered down it simply, we fashion you know lots of things and block summaries of things and questions that is, but everything is there is attacked and teachers are angry for it. It's just important. It's just it's really it really encourages me that the the desire is there and I was invited to the American Indian Museum in the gallery in New York. No, nothing you're wanting to see and invited me they had one in DC but Debbie says that one night is the one in New York every year. They They bring teachers together two to 3000. Locally, New England and jersey to learn new curriculum have a week long intensive thing. So they brought me as a keynote speaker spoke 1000 educators, every young people down, paid 12 teachers and some of them charter schools, public schools. And I couldn't believe the reception to one thing. The book was, you know, was required meeting before they came and how enthusiastic they were. So I, I it's too bad that you know, universities. Usually you think you get out of You know, kind of prison of the usual patriotic stuff and all you have to go through in public schools. And then you get to university and there's all this critical thinking and marks and you know, kinds of new things, but no, not with even as harder as I work in mind of university, State University, my whole career there. I don't feel like I ever covered in the history department. You know. They, the only thing other departments do is try to because our courses were so awesome. And there was a required course and also a very general model. A lot of things outside of our ethnic studies qualified for that. But we always had the best and it's still true, you know, the best percentage of students taking the classes and so they

would sometimes try to kind of steal one of our classes but then not have nothing a person in the future. They still only have one Native American teaching Native American studies there. So this is it's, it's a little different. Like I said, University of New Mexico, they've made a much bigger impact because they, it's a very densely populated area. The Navajo Nation is the largest nation and some students go to higher vision go to University of Arizona or some state. But many many come to university in New Mexico, and especially since you Studies was started so they have about 3000 students and that's a critical mass. They have a huge effect on the whole campus. And but the those are specific spots. I would say that upstate New York is Sunni's, the homeowners shoni have been very good about imposing themselves with all invitations to be a part of the curriculum since it's their church. And they are pretty powerful people. So I find people really conscious their pet really avoided but most of the country, including Oklahoma live on farms, which has, you know, the second largest population 60 different native nations. That was the relocation so 50 different native People from Eastern Mississippi people scores there, plus the people who are already there. And others be located the additional matches. So it's it's difficult there, they actually do have a governor now he's charity and he's just horrible Republicans. So universities, though should really be shamed for not doing better and history in history as you know, me. You know, having gone through a PhD in history and teaching history, are they the most conservative I was told at UCLA on taking Latin American history one of my fields of study to be these Spanish imperialism and I had One of the top scans, one of the top scholars in the Spanish history outside of Spain. He wrote mostly about the 20th century, but he was very knowledge, everything I've learned tons from him, but he told me my first meeting was on my softball committee that he did not think that women should be able to major in history or go to a doctor. So he just wanted to know that. That's, that's nice. Okay. And he really, when he gave the reading list to me for my oral dissertation, that's 3000 books. 3000 folks, most of them went for to do things. Normally MOSFET He did everything he could to get rid of me. And there were only four women in that department that had 650 graduate students at UCLA, more women. So it was and one Chicago Chicanos one at that time. So there is you know, a lot of a lot of integration of women's history and black history into this field but not not know that. It just changes the whole narrative of US history if you unless you really, you know, agree with it in ways that Horses done. But I don't know how we're going to deal with it at the university level as more and more native, Native Americans in the history field is very hostile to native nurse and I think in my case in pain as if I was a woman, but graduate students at the University of Oklahoma have been one was telling me why she dropped out, but she's in her first day. Two, after she's accepted, she want to major in history and in front of the whole group of new graduate students in history. The professor told her that you have to admit she's very obviously made as she's cheering These issues in a very, very dark, very traditional turkey family in Turkey, like, you think this would be a prime student, you know? And he said, You have to know one thing is you can't be a historian and be in India, you have to choose which identity. So that's not very welcoming for Native Americans to go into history a few have but they tend to go into one of the best known Native American historian is Jennifer Dennis savage is a very traditional family but she was brilliant and got her PhD at UNAM and when they really, really monitoring the history department. But she felt so alienated later that she actually quit and went to Flagstaff to the to the State University there, which is no majority of students. And so she actually stepped down. first couple of years of teaching career, and then she went to, she got recruited from Arizona State University, which had a pretty good, you know, has to be better in the Navajo Nation. But she was very alienated there too. So she got recruited back to and in preseason. They understood, you

know, nation, they offered more things they really needed person and she finally transferred to American Studies. So it's Very hard to get Native Americans to scholars, they're an English they're more more an anthropology that has improved American Studies, but history is just still I don't know what what do you think is a problem with history? I see it as you know, having this this European basis is very real century basis as you know, in the historiography and thinking that history is a you know, what a classic field that's absolutely necessary. And that, that in practice, it means different nations that they are what I call the keepers of the secrets rather than because they know all this stuff. I know. They know this not ignorant, you know, they do know it. But it's not good for the, you know, office licensure Junior. They all really think this. He said if history should be US history should be civic.

Danny Sjursen

Right? That was the whole consensus, a story and stick, for sure. So I'm going to shut up, finally for a minute and turn things over to Keagan for a moment. And then he I think he's got a little bit more to ask you about some present Native American stuff, and we'll kind of go from there.

Roxanne Dunbar Ortiz

Thank you, Danny.

Keagan Miller

Hi. Um, so, just to kind of round out my question. My grandfather is Umatilla, and I didn't really know him that well, but like, I like I live in Portland now. So I'm like a little closer to the reservation and I work in social work. So I work with a lot of Native American people right now with Native American veterans. And I grew up with, like, my family taught me a bunch of different folk stories from a bunch of different cultures. And so I grew up with this mindset of like a story is a story and it's a good one. And you know, so why not learn about everything. And it was nice because my parents really encouraged me to learn a lot more about Native peoples history in America. So while I was getting one side in school, I was learning another side of my own and all about the various different tribes out there and what they're doing and what they have done. And just it was really nice to like, get that other perspective other than that you white European Eurocentric viewpoint that we only get in US history. And I took a Native American cultures class my freshman year of college, at this small liberal arts school in Illinois, and I, the first thing that teacher says is write down everything you know about Native Americans. And so I just like, go off, and I start writing about the eastern woodland tribes, and the Great Plains tribes and the Southwest. And just like, the stuff that I knew, and I looked over, and I wondered, you know, what other people were writing, because most people were done after like, four or five minutes. And I, we go through the class, you know, and everyone is sharing their answers. And most people just said, that all I know, is the stereotypes. I know that they drink a lot, and they own casinos. And I was just like, oh, and so at the end of the class, we all had to pick a tribe to talk about and talk about their history, and, you know, to now everything that's they're facing now, and it was really cool to hear. This was more than just a freshman class. So there was sophomores, juniors and seniors in my class. And I had kids who are juniors At the end of the class being like, I can't believe I've gone through school for 14 years, and I'm just learning about this now. And I found that so like, frustrating, but also like, it was cool that like, I'm glad that at least people are learning this in this class. That's not very big, but at least, like some people are taking the term time to learn about it. So I just wanted to know I i've been reading

about how Native Americans communities are trying to deal with the virus. But I just wanted to know if you could expand a little bit for our listeners, what the response looks like. And also later on, I just wanted to talk about the federal response about for now, can you talk about what the how certain communities are responding?

Roxanne Dunbar Ortiz

Well, of course, it's really troublesome because the that first stimulus package I heard the doctor Bert actually say at the press conference that the first like \$2 billion was earmarked for Native American reservations and in urban areas. And that's how they're supposed to do things that's really, you know, through the treaties and all agreements and everything. And the Indian Health Service Center has had lobbied for that. And the native, the National Congress of American Indians, but to this day that was in that was in late March, to this day, there's Nero. Nero has gone to any native anywhere, it's just it's scandalous, but it's so they've had to fend for themselves. And as you know, the The reservations are purposely kept in conditions in which most people have to leave to go work and send money back to some of those little countries with remittances coming back so half the population, mostly young people live away and not always in great conditions either. But that means the most vulnerable people are legislate reservation. The rates of diabetes is just skyrocketing because of the horrible food that is available and places to the general population. I'm sure. White people in South Dakota also have high diabetes problems. Flour, white, sugar, fat and white everything you know and a lot of these are commodities from the government processed cheese and, and and white flour, guys and of course you know there is alcohol we can talk about that I see it as a like anthropologist Nancy Laurie who is excellent. The philanthropist anthropology who really got it. She saw Indian drinking as a longest protest demonstration in in history that it was a way of, of rebelling and I've seen that myself how quickly um, you know, alcoholism is a disease. It just isn't. It's not awkward. But a awful lot of Native Americans are not really alcoholic, they drink, but they're not alcoholic, and they can quit and start with Wounded Knee. Suddenly, everyone down in the tenderloin, all native people, they were up on the American Indian Center, which you couldn't enter if you were drinking. It's called sober packing blankets and all the syntactical indices. So, but nevertheless, a lot of alcohol is consumed and cheap alcohol and diabetes is an another diseases. Lower the stand of men to 47 choose. They don't even live long enough to get social security. Well, it's so in these kinds of condition and crowded places. The you know, the health centers and all that very illiquid is is one ICU unit they have to live people out to hospitals and anyone whose event I made event will always choose the Veterans Health Service because it's much better funded much better care. So, the, the situation is, especially in the Navajo Nation is, is pretty grim. I try to keep up with it every day. That yesterday or over the weekend when an eight year old young woman Navajo Miss Navajo totally healthy athletes. And she died, sheshe suddenly felt sick. And six hours later she died. And so that was that was a shock in the Red House family and who knows how many people live very, very conveniently in a Hogan might be 12 people or people live there or if it's hard to house and so, you know, people live communally extended families or family units together all the time. The are very hard to have the social distancing, and to just have the space to have social distances. So the spread is this is really great. So I there are a few other places that have been hard hit the plus was via in New Mexico was at first cases of virus. One problem with the pueblos is that the people are, you know, tourists are so fascinated local heroes and out in the country in the world, because they're so traditional as well have their apartments stored in the oldest

city states in North America, and still practice their, their religion and this underground and have many ceremonial days and police years so they have a constant tourism come in and it's become a part of their income, you know, for their welfare, and schools and your language programs of all They, they close the gate, put up signs, no visitors and people are coming in. So that I think has been leveled off. But it's still a lot of people stick and a lot of people take them out to Albuquerque and other hospitals are within that families have to be seen and I'm not sure about Oregon, I don't think it's been as hard as all those divisions here. And Washington. They got a handle on things pretty quickly in Washington early so I don't think that he got out so much to the reservations, although I think quite a few of the people in Seattle have a virus that I know of. So it's, you know, this lack of any kind of federal funds and of course, some comments Native Americans because he thinks the casinos made his own casino broke. He has to blame Indians or China or anything for anything he fails. So they kind of, I guess, cannot really expect and there's so little representation in Congress, there is, you know, three native people now that the democrats don't have much sway since I've been there in the Senate. And so there's really not a strong voice the National Congress of American Indians, you know, has really been on it and they send out I'm on an email list and I, they, they give the tallies and keep warning and I know that across the border, and In a few clicks nights have been pretty hard because there was that mass shooting up there 22 people killed quite a few of them and people were just getting dumped. The question is a virus

Keagan Miller

What size the government given any response as to why there is no money or where it is? Because I'm sure people are asking but it's just really frustrating that this has been in the news for a bit now and people like there's still no response as to why they haven't given the money. Or what the holdup is.

Roxanne Dunbar Ortiz

It's just um but you know, after no years of...of experiencing the federal government observe if the federal government of behavior coordinated people, if it's always an enigma, you know, this even the I mean, there was finally a lawsuit and all the billions and billions of dollars that the federal government has had cheated. They all be all the people who were on allotments there. were under trust, but they so the government was supposed to be handling all those problems and we're not. So and and the American Indian Movement on March on Washington in the fall of 1972. Go to the Bureau of Indian Affairs. At that time, nothing was computerized. They were in there for five days. So they started reading everything. And then they boxed everything to get out mess, actually what they went present to the United Nations. The first meeting was office boxes, material, just incredible malfeasance and corruption in the Bureau of Indian Affairs. So it hasn't, you know, it's been somewhat indigenized with the red power movement, but there's it's never been that it got somewhat better in the 80s and the 90s. The Clinton administration is not bad. If it was planned for partner with Wilma Mankiller, the president of the charity nations are prominent person and but with since 911, and you know where everything goes to so called national security, and just the gutting of look at the CDC, you know, a new book totally gutted. I knew that from the you know, during the research on, on on guns, were any fun looking into the health, aspects of gun violence was cut from the CDC. And then I looked to start reading further, you know, a couple years ago and everything was getting better. So, this, you know, all of these and then in the billions and billions of they go to the The defense budget has all the universities Now, the

only way they can get grants is through the Defense Department. So everything's getting knowledge revised and then they're not going to give any of that money. Okay. So it's just, I guess, you know, the, the pipeline to the reservations have been so cut off and, and, and, and reservation, you know, Native people have come to be more self sufficient with the casinos. They've been able to build roads in schools and language programs and but they, they can't, you know, feel money and only, you know, only the places that have a big tourist attraction like in New Mexico, Southern California. New England really benefits that much to do some big projects, but they can't build Whole Health System. They're not the Indian Health Service this therefore, that was an institution that was guaranteed by by treaties that were made that in exchange for land sessions that had certain social services that would be provided in perpetuity forever and ever Is it the possibility of federal government, but it's so minimal and they do the best they can. I've met so many doctors and nurses working in other remote places under conditions but with a with a with a crisis like this. They really are helpless.

Keagan Miller

So, if noting all the problems that you mentioned, I just wanted to ask if you were a benevolent dictator, what, what steps would you take to kind of start to rectify some of these issues?

Roxanne Dunbar Ortiz

Well, the first thing is to transfer all of public land so called public land lands held by the federal government state, back to their, their owners, you know, whatever tribe they belong to when they were taken in legally without treaty. That's why the federal government you know, there's all this pressure to Mormon ranchers and the guys with guns that now lower Why, you know, they, they don't respond to them and privacy. I mean, they lease that they cannot sell federal land under their own laws because there's no sweetie they don't own it. They don't really own it, they just possess it. So they can't sell it and it should be returned including a national park. You know, and this should be a main call for all for food justice activists in the United States this return of land and, and then to to create a proper self determination. Vote Amala or Guam or for Puerto Rico had the right to those that have independence or some Some state of autonomy and relationship, Commonwealth. And those, those are the big things that have to be done for it ever to change and for many people to be able to choose. flourish, as you know, as civilizations. And I think it's in the interest of all people in the United States that they'd be able to see how people who work collectively and here Here are people who own casinos, but they own them collectively. And they use that casino movie, casino money for public housing for schools. It doesn't go into any one personal topic. And I think there's one native millionaire besides his father. On the side on Route 66, some place for stopping duckies for something like a Native American billionaire, if there's the culture so strong, you know, and definitely shattered in many ways, but some of the elements of, of respecting the land, and being a part of the animal world and plant world and being cognizant of that is are things that people need to learn if we're going to save the planet. And so this native knowledge is being suppressed or squelch, because it's hardship it hurts everyone. You know, it's it's a visual, everyone. So I know that's a big thing, but I think Nope, there's no patchwork it can be done we'll change the situation. settler colonial for some still existing law Neol ism and admitted Jews still still existing by here or not and of course Puerto Rico and Guam will also be self determined and they're in much the same position as, as native people and so these colonies of the United States definitely decolonization is the only thing that will really change it. So, I think in shorter term, I mean

those is that you know, like the over arching those are the demands equal the fundamental demand Now what step by step how to get there. And this would take, you know, mass movement, Native people can do it. It would take. So that's one reason why the general education is so important that once people learn this, why would it be onerous for me to have to go to Grand Canyon and have it be completely controlled by the habit of supervisees love it is rather than the natural process. Why Why would that the burden to me Yeah, maybe during their ceremonies or something or close the days who say, no visitors, but is that just the martial arts? So, I think even you know, recently I've been interacting a lot with the National Park Service people I know In 2014, someone told me they saw my book and indigenous peoples history, the United States in National Park Service. You know, those little stores they run, and I didn't believe it. It is Atlanta in Atlanta. So I went out there and there was interesting. And then it turned up in Sacramento in a national park service. So I then investigated and the whole National Park Service was stocking that book in their bookstores. So I thought, well, that's interesting. So then I got invited to meet with some people that want to be out at the 50th anniversary last November. And that's the city Oh, and in the ones around here, and it was just before we had to go and lock down and had this meeting down the Presidio, and these young people, a couple of natives fossa itself is about 40 of them. They are all for transplant. They know, you know, they actually know just from their work that these are Native American sacred sites that they are running themselves and and they want it to be restored. So that was an interesting an interesting new thing that I simply was not aware of the younger people who've been recruited to the National Park Service, like no jury, I can tell you, I don't they have different ideas than in the past. So I know that sounds big but we got to think big because the small things are not working.

Chris 'Henri' Henrikson

Hi, Roxanne. It's Henri. My my turn in this To give you some questions here. So I'd like to start by reading a quote of yours discussing American gun ownership and its connections to America's history of settler colonialism. Quote, the violent appropriation of native land by white settlers was seen as an individual right? In the second amendment. That long intergenerational violence struggle to take the land is why descendants of those mostly Anglo and Scots Irish settlers today believe they are the authentic Lords of the United States and should govern a quote a kind of blood right. a firearm slung over your shoulder or a nine millimeter browning tucked under your belt creates a sense of amplified power without which you feel naked and vulnerable. Guns are awesome. They are also beautiful objects that are addictive. So some We deal with here on the podcast is you know not just the the the military's appetite for for hardware for weaponry but the civilian gun culture and how absolutely ingrained it is right now at this point in our history. I was wondering if you could tell us a bit about your own experience with firearms and elaborate on the history of firearms as it pertains to the US specifically concerning white supremacy and settler colonialism?

Roxanne Dunbar Ortiz

Yeah, well, my own experience growing up there were guns everywhere. They were certainly not a few that I'm in a military home but they were mainly rifles, rifles, your your guns and and shotguns. Very few sidearms. I remember many people didn't have you know, expensive obviously didn't have money for these things but one thing which I I told them before I wrote loaded on and did a lot of research on something I was kind of already on to it and this is People's History The knighted states that nothing in

the United States is a it's not just about you know, it's about becoming jaded. And, you know, making that press release place. Last of the Mohicans where the Indian hands over. America, people bite size seven On now, and that makes Native Americans. And so because they mystify native people as hunters, which isn't really true mighty percent of Native people in the whole Western Hemisphere are farmers and fishermen. hunters and they mystified in their own Daniel Boone, I grew up with my mother had some of the original lineage but then I found out that almost all Scots Irish and he was Welsh but in the, the Butler's on the land at movies who died in Missouri and Missouri that was the trap and the Myfather sizes, Scots Irish and my dad used to say, but we were the dad of Irish, black Irish, as of what does that mean? You know, we didn't like the Irish Catholics. You know, he he had been taught by his while there is not a great thing to be proud of. But that, you know that colonization of Ireland by searching by the Calvinist policy is still a hot spot. I am not settled for that situation. So, those are the people who were the main settlers who were fighting for land, you know, that basically in the colonies. settlers could take the land drives the native people out and good coats didn't have to be called in or even The Virginian or you know, other colonial militia. It was just taken and then it would be ratified as part of the colony and they got to the Appalachians stop and had to make a revolution to keep going because the British put a stop to it with a proclamation 1763 but the Daniel Boone idea of him is that he was in for crack over he was a failed businessman. He never really made it. I and he was kind of typical of these of these families, you know, they kept moving, they kept losing their land, they would take it, they would do the killing. They would do the keeping the native people out and then some big Enter with common push them out, or they couldn't compete for say they didn't have ash in order to buy enslaved Africans and compete, they couldn't compete with the plantations. So they either had to just raise food or feed them by just used to print. The whole thing was plantation agriculture all the way up even to New York. And so, they the idea of going into the dental boom going into photography and he was a he was a fourth grader, we were pulling all the lever, you know, either but they didn't shoot them like trap them, you know, they they traps and then they would come back. So the whole idea was a business enterprise. The deer skins as well that's how, you know buck for \$1 and eastern Pacific. Western Pennsylvania, they taught their skins were buck buck skins. And that's how the dollar be about that was the currency. So it was all commercial, you know, it was just not matter. So just as entry living off the land is completely commercial. So under the column they said had to be because they had to send money back to the corporations that own the colony and to the crown. But when it was independent also they this was all commercial. So they So anyway, I this Hunter, you know, my brother's hunting and all the men in the area hunting. I thought was, I mean we did eat the meat. My mother hated it. She would not even touch the wild days. She was smart enough to kidnap my dad was a squirrel and possum, rabbit. But we didn't have to because we had chickens. You know I'm living wild, but I think my dad was infused you know with this idea he had been a cowboys and working cowboy on the one on one of the biggest commercial ranch on Osage nation. And I think he in our case, he quit school and he became a cowboy and he always wore cowboy hat boots. And so even though he was cool, and a sharecropper and all he could have this mythical image of himself, so he always took, you know, rifle shot down or both with him anywhere he wants something awesome to shoot at It was a big, but it was a big problem on my house. Most of the women also shot they usually did target shooting. And some of them did. But women also, you know, like to be good with guns. And my mother was the opposite. She was an orphan. She has a very, had a very tough childhood. They're never going to choose a foster home. She was in a juvenile facility, that she could get out on weekends. And that's all

true that my father but she really hated guns. He was horrified. And it was there were always arguments about that. As my brother settled, especially my oldest brother who was 16 or was very volatile, very hazy. The chair to basically target shooting and he went into the military after that. Always the guns, but it was a big fight all the time. And so I think what kind of deal was made between my mother and father's that she got the girls and he got the boys that my sister and my mom have anything to do with the gun. She also didn't like horses. She didn't like anything about any of that. Yeah. He actually raised corporate horses and skinny like dogs and he has dog hunting dogs and so there was always this lit but I pretty much took guns for granted completely and When I left I didn't the family I never even knew that they were being passed down at all in urban people and I don't remember. It could be they did and I just didn't notice they are so used to guns in the river. But then when I got, you know, when we were, you know, but then just going underground as a political group was the repression that means the FBI after some of us went to Cuba, and that the FBI put out things that needed trained visuals and there were hundreds of hundreds of people who went to Cuba on these work brigades and no one is trained in arms but But this Did you know bring the excuse for either trying to discredit us to even kill us or put us in prison? So our answer to it was, you know, getting guns to protect ourselves. We even had to plan on calling them threatening firebombed all and other also Cuban exiles who had terrorist groups at the time. So we started training ourselves in door find some you know and then it It didn't really dawn on me till later but when I look back I think of those how we went from being out in community everyday organizing and Organizing rally meeting...

Chris 'Henri' Henrikson

So, so you've lived the the full spectrum of owning guns from starting off as a kid going out shooting in the woods. Later on seeing how cheap and abundant they are being able to stockpile them easily and having people missing misinterpret why you own them and what you might use them for.

Roxanne Dunbar Ortiz

Yeah, I think it you know it did do some looking for Texas. I have I mean I they were so what's the one thing Louisiana had no gun laws at all the only laws federal laws were interstate interstate commerce. There was no limit on how many guns you can have or how much ammunition of any kind there were just there was nothing on the book whatsoever. So it was so easy to and that's how most of the states are Louisiana I think was probably the the most gun friendly state at that time. That's not why we moved there. But it is a reason for staying underground there. But what was what was interesting to me after you know, after a while, after a couple years that we've had become, you know, with guns can To...to bring attention to themselves all the time you have, as you know, this takes care of coil that's what I remember from my childhood is my dad and my older brother oiling and cleaning them every day, you know, get the guns out and clean them the smell of the oil and if that's you know, it became more about the guns and also putting them in safe places. We even started reloading shotgun shells, but we got the gunpowder reloading. So yeah, um, but I, I didn't, I didn't never figure all that out until later, actually when I was at writes a book on the Second Amendment, I did understand what the Second Amendment was about. But I hadn't thought of it you know, I would tell that story of my, of what that chapter called gun love, but I do think the guns can can be addictive in it, at least in our society where individuality is so long and ended people and every man for himself and no for good so you can take care of yourself. That is done. They come in a necessary part of that sense of empowerment. And then it becomes kind

of addictive. It's just, you know, only 30% of the US population owns even was done which is Really interesting because most of them again and that 30% if you break it down 67% of them are white men. And also 40% are deaf. And so we kind of know how to look at it as, as a not a general general social problem or issue or fact. But it's 30% for these, who are these 30% this is something I really got interested in exploring. What you know this this part of it comes from, you know, the early 20th century onward. cowboys and Indians movies and gun slinging. And then I have a chapter on the Confederate guerrillas you know, which is really interesting because I grew up with, you know, my heroes were Jesse James, the James brothers, younger brothers. These gangsters, you know, the outlaws and Bill star because here's a woman. They were all Confederate girls. They were all my childhood heroes was the Confederate guerrillas. And here I was, I didn't even know that was 15 years old area races already on or civil rights and I didn't even know what to do with them, but he got transformed by Hollywood, you know, and just erased the backstory, so that he was just, you know, the way that they shut up. Anti slavery people in Kansas is riding fast on horses with six, seven shooting into home people that became the signature of cowboy Indian riding or firing a pistol aside on rifle. Indians always had rifles. So I think it's, you know, personally I just didn't really become I was really against gun laws because I don't think prohibition necessarily works and I still don't think it works. I mean nothing ever happens. The one thing that it that that shooter in Las Vegas had. They think they found all his guns now I think the 60s weapons he had high powered weapons and not one of them was was illegal they were all legally but he you know, he probably any possum in several states including California but would Corporation do anything and I still you know I I taught gun rights gun control people come to my talks about about the book and they always think that that I will be on the side of you know gun control but and of course the NRA but as I see it you know it's really not about money in our a money they have. They have \$30 million dollars a year, their, their budgets. That's just nothing for lobbying. They basically just monitor Every elected office in the country, it's much easier now electronically. And they put out there are, you know, Rei clubs in every missing corner of the country, it's a grassroots thing, you know, and motivation is going to change that probably is not probably the full 30% many of those people are one gun, the average is nine, nine guns per person. So that's, you know, that's hoarding. Definitely do think you need to shut down for self defense. You don't need nine of anything. So it's, um, it is, you know, it's the, it's in the it's deep in the culture, but it's deep in that culture that we now see. Every day unfortunately, of all that Trump has given permission to the forest. It was just you know, exploiting, it was quite the opposite. I'm stupid. So hopefully exotic and endangered animal. But he's, you know, he instead he's not interested in the self. So it's just, you know, for him as his little army has. So I think the militarization has increased the attraction for guns increased militarization, as always, I think we don't consider enough of deeply. military culture goes back to the very beginning of the colonies and how settler colonial works. Where the sets are calling us arm. There's a really good description of from the early 1800s. Let me just read that really short. It's a man named Joseph Dandridge is a minister and early settler in Ohio. Right after independence. Right? He went to be a minister there. So it wasn't. You know, he wasn't familiar with his culture, but it was. early settlers on the years of this country were like Arabs of the desert of Africa. And at least to respect, every man was a soldier. From early in the spring, late in the fall was almost continually in arms. Their work was often carried on by parties. Each one of them had his rifle and everything else belonging to this world. These were the positive in some simple place in the field. A Sentinel was stationed on the outside of the fence. So that on the least alarm the whole company repaired to their arms were ready for combat in a moment. But of course, you know,

what were they surrounded by rounded by people whose land they had this and we're trying to get it back or are not expand farther. So you take that and you multiply it by 300 years moving across the continent in this way. That is a very risky culture. So I think that's why people, you know, 70% of the population when their questions and polls say that they're for gun control, but that's Say the same 70% of the movie is not the same 70 70% say that they think the second amendment should be respected. Of course, what I have to say about the Second Amendment is it should be abolished because of its racist content. That is a, you know, it was put in the constitution by them, you know, really, because there was no way to take the continent which we already had map saying that's what they wanted to do. The founders plus that they had plan was to get to the Pacific Ocean and also take Mexico and it will be maps in the Northwest Ordinance. The Continental Congress, that that's what their plan was. There's no way they could build enough armies to to take off That land pretty densely populated up to the Mississippi River with native people and then beyond that, people and there's just no way they could possibly do it. So they had this. They made that choice. The British made it in establishing colonies of that variety of colonialism that's rare. But it it. It exists in Canada, New Zealand and Australia. There's other NGO colonies, the Spanish bodies so successful they implement in Argentina and Chile. But it's genocidal. You know, they have to get that land they have to wipe out or remove the people already living here. That's the The Armed citizenry has to exist to do that. And armies can't really couldn't really. They never figured out how to fight it good native peoples love warfare. Moving out, they used counterinsurgency simply wiping out villages burning this good stuff. That's the only and so that also developed into the Army's culture is no surprise you know that an insurgency book was updated during the Iraq war and lost occupation so the militarism is very deep and you know, having located isn't myself They just an example of a kind of unconscious militarism. Not something obvious, although many of my generation did start going around and arms and all the zillion authorization. So I think some of it you know, some of the most of the veterans who come back from us wars are the least likely people who do in love with militarism, appliances, it's more important what you all are doing and organizing veterans because they've seen the results of it. And if they do gain a consciousness of of it and you know, really be powerful for

Danny Sjursen

Well it's it really is interesting how as we always talk about Empire comes home and but also how culture and history within institutions like the military have this both Native American and then also rugged frontiersman, facet to it. You know, I was in the cavalry, which is really just another word for, you know, motorized or foot reconnaissance. But, you know, all of our history, like almost all of our mythology centers around the Indian Wars, more so even the Civil War. I mean, we were the old we were the old Stetson hats. I mean, a lot of people don't realize that all the helicopters in the US Army are named after a variety of Native American tribes, but even just sort of the the language employed by military officers and politicians right in, in Vietnam, and again in Iraq, you know, Indian country, hostile territory, all this language and then Of course, the gun ownership really just just plays into it. This this notion of rugged individualism, a civilization a civilizing mission. You know, I'm even so generous with your time but I'm going to close out with you know, one final question that's appropriate to my dorky nature but, you know one of the places where we've seen gun culture or at least the use of an armed populace, right, the infusion of weapons just really take a society apart with a lot of foreign backing was in Central America. And so, as I regularly Joke's on the pod, you know, I like to do a fair amount of

cyber stalking of our guests prior to their appearances, although I promise there's nothing nefarious, but what interests me is sort of scholars and public officials past activism, we've talked a lot about that already with you, the subjects or issues that catalyze them decades before we got to chat, because I think that's the foundation and of course, I happen to find something that works To my own side interests, you know, most of the better. But, you know, as you mentioned in the 1980s, you traveled to monitored. You know, we're just an observer of the Nicaraguan civil war in Central America, as you mentioned Reagan earlier and this topic to me was the crucial region, and the most obscene axis of the sort of now canonized, you know, St. Ronald Reagan's foreign policy. It was certainly the bloodiest. So for most Americans who know anything at all about the US role in Nicaragua to say nothing of you know, El Salvador, Guatemala, their knowledge likely stops at the vague term or phrase, Iran Contra, you know, a sort of poorly understood, political cultural touchstone that it's become, yet the CIA backing training and arming of the Contras in Nicaragua. And, you know, support for the literal priest and nun murdering Salvador and right wing regime resulted in 10s, if not hundreds of thousands of deaths. So you know, some might shrug all that off as either necessary to defeat communism if some people still think that way or dismiss it as as mildly interesting, long past history for dorks like, like me, but I, of course reject that. And so as we see, at least, at least in the post second term Obama era, it seems that the shift of US military activity worldwide, including in Latin America itself, has gone from conventional troop occupations that we saw in the George W. Bush administration to more like bombing Spec Ops, raids, and most importantly, dishing the dirty work to local regional proxies. So with all that being said, I want to know how you think finally about your 1980 Central American experience today, specifically, you know, your key takeaways from that work and then what is its relevance and, you know, feel free to tell me if I'm stretching or playing crazy, but what is its relevance for today and America's foreign policy future moving forward?

Roxanne Dunbar Ortiz

Yeah, well, we see at the bottom border for, you know the results of all those wars, the refugees. Almost all of them now are from Central America, and children in cages all around the country. And yeah, so these revolutions, you know, of course, you probably know that the United States has been meddling in Central America ever since the Central American Republic as such, became independent and aged 30 it became independent as a federation of the whole as most you know, on long history go to and into Mexico, you know, just the big house alarm on later but it was a huge To carry Federation and it only lasted 23 years because both the British and the United States what imperialism, you know, what was US and British imperialism especially as good at and focus on is is segmenting people's think the whole Southeast Asians you know more was to make sure that there wasn't Federation and thank you know by millions of people so Central America they broke it down but it's always had this this and and then they each became separate Banana Republic you know competing with each other or the US or world market and the same with the Caribbean you know they did that also on the century breaking it down into those are the emotions, tropical foods and aluminum oxide competing against each other. So that's how you know and karelas really works to not allow any kind of sprouting up in the powerful sub region of the world that might be influential. So clearly Central America was, you know, never left alone by the states, they occupied Nicaragua three different times. This was always in ring for invading time fishing Northeastern Nicaragua and meddling in the affairs of all American countries. So that you know when they came up to the Kennedy administration, supposedly reforming relations with Latin America.

They offered the aid for development, development aid, and male took it except anymore. I've had experience of all those El Salvador they. So what the Kennedy administration did well, okay, then if you don't do something development, you're going to lose a lot of knowledge. Okay, based on the dictatorship, and you know, and most did both. Because if the poverty, then we're just going to be a revolution, you know, you got to create the middle sectors, the middle didn't Latin America, or the middle sector in a revolution so that they meddling. There were attempts at revolution of course in Guatemala, which is cool. largest populations before America. They had a peaceful end to peaceful transition from dictatorship to a democratically elected president who was in followed by another elected president and the United States fomented a coup to overthrow democracy. That was horrible paper after another. And in Nicaragua, they never even got close to that kind of democratic situation they after the sandy no the first sentence instances on Dino five United States and broke them out actually. We went into, you know, to actually create an economist known about Eastern Nicaragua, that would be socialist and of course he was assassinated. Some also family takeover. So in each one of these cases, you know, the nn Salvador they simply massacred all of the thought, you know, all the native people, except those who hid out and change your clothes. If you speak their language anymore, now people have sold Sonata and they were the base apparel boom, no, Marty's guerilla army. suppressed and locked down. So in the 50s, after Guatemala, it looks really bleak. But in Nicaragua and in Guatemala, another another resistance movement under Churchill Lima rose, he was a he was a lower rank army officer who was really within the military. He took a bunch of archery people with him. So it was a very militaristic fight. But again the US intervened and put it out. So the one that that started really having some...some possibilities with the Flm and and it started in the in the 50s. Really, you know, it began in the 50s and started building and slowly You know, the university students and into the turn hard under a dictatorship many of them were imprisoned for the entire time of the senate needs to fight like almost four pages prison but dental Ortega isn't. So they were able to you know Carter was very you know he he had a perception of how they wouldn't be able to govern. So why not pull out, pull out the dictator everyone in the world hated him by them the most such a child person in all 56,000 people out of 1.5 million people still but the senate needs to say Actually, I can attest to the fact that they didn't know how to get on. But they were learning, you know, they were learning as they did it. And they were very sincere. They brought in every international institution. So for those of us who know the, you know, international things that they can't go to any country unless they're invited. And so they invited everyone who UNESCO with their language program, the, the refugees, UNHCR, and Nicaragua started taking a lot of refugees. They have a lot of Guatemalan Mayan refugees and also Salvadoran refugees. And so they, you know, they had this international scope anyway, and they this of course, is the courage to fail In a Salvador. and the different there were five different groups in Guatemala have been formed the unitary political front. So yeah, so I went down first in 1981. Because they were distributed to the south in that Northeastern zone. You know, it works. This is Tisha Segal ended. And we had a method, you know, an international they came under some of the Moravian missionaries. They some also kind of just turned that area over to the melodious missionaries and the other American missionaries. And so they weren't really bothered that much by the Somoza regime, although they were poor. You know, dependent on fish, canaries often trician and horrible conditions of life. But they had some, you know, the reagan actually been to university. So there were, you know, classes, educated doctors and lawyers. So they came to our first international meeting 77 suspicious because the symbols and they had their own organization now for me so. But after the Sandinistas

came in, they really didn't know. The ones in the United States did there was a very large Nicaraguan population has population practical Nicaraguan disease that was in the Mission District. They were, you know, they had come for jobs and the United States didn't even require papers. from Nicaragua and there were a lot of skilled workers so it was a it was a, a way of getting rid of any militancy president knighted states and we're going to the US Army, then gets the GI Bill told us, we had to fill with sentiments the North America center, all during, you know, a guerrilla fight in the 70s. And then afterwards, most of them went back to work and some of them also in the present. And so I had a you know, I had a deep interest, I knew them they were friends and lovers born in the United States and spoke perfect English. So, you know, there was a easy affinity for solidarity from the United States that formed over and the other parts Central America. But just some disturbing incidents out album. On the Caribbean coast, there's a call the other coast. The group had formed around a leader who, you know, were anti communist, you know, they Moravian raised that not only jellicle communists. And so when the Sandinistas came in and started trying to reform policies and some of the things they had done in the ease, they were a little clumsy about it because they didn't know the culture well, and probably trusting them Arabians too much more than we should have. put things in their hands, and they were, you know, disrupting everything with deterministic That was very obvious to me, by the way that I got invited down to my friends who were formerly been in San Francisco to and had gotten very involved in the American Indian Movement. How we knew most of them were very involved. And the Carlos Fonseca from the mountains, you know, had sent a letter to Wounded Knee expressing solidarity with the 73. So there wasn't really a benefit. So what I went down first to check it out, see what I could ascertain. You know, this too. I didn't know the mosquito culture that well or the area into Central America. But just to you know, get a get a sense of, of what I didn't know really well. We're evangelicals, because that was But that's it, I didn't know very well. So it wasn't hard to figure out what they were trying to do. And because they thought they would come to us, they told me a lot of things, you know, that they thought I was on their side, and I just listened in that note. You know, and they were working already with the State Department, Reagan's State Department. They made a huge deal out of fighting communism in Nicaragua. And it was, it was pretty amazing. I, what we were up against, you know, fighting that propaganda that was coming off they actually formed a publicity department voted happy candidates in charge of a devoted to opportunity against assignment. It was just me focused on the mosquitoes and claimed that the Senate nice mosquitoes and the thousands who only 70,000 mosquito people population total in Nicaragua and Jean Kirkpatrick announced from the she was UN ambassador in the United Nations, like the feminists who say kill 200,000 students that weren't even that and and, you know, I I wouldn't change I kept going down there to check out things because I didn't know what was good, all the stuff, for sure. But I would go down and I would ask these the people who supposedly had been killed, they often work across the border and hunter and rescue camps. And so it was it was really to see that up close and also to be in a war zone with us warships off post off the coast, you could see them Caribbean and their warplanes buzzing you know, I pushed him and ever then under attack by the United States, you know to see a little bit but it feels like and it's terrifying. You know. So it was it was it was really really impossible to us really wants something and wants to devote itself to destroying a country of 2000 people who can't keep them from doing and That's the you know, very sad thing to see. Now, what's interesting is the senate a system back in power during the George W. Bush administration and the US wasn't looking very closely, what was going on, and they're not exactly like the old Flm they cannot be but they have they built some institutions. One is the land reform

and the collectives that still exist. They developed Via Campesina, which is an international peasantry or sensation. It's in every every circle country now, and it's still based in Florida. So the when the first unaccompanied children came from Central Nazca and 2000 Well, under Obama Second term I don't know if you remember but it was a huge huge 10s of thousands and thousands of on a company's children in Central America not one of them was not one and in this last two years of the caravans and all not one single Nicaraguan because they've been able to do what they did was they didn't create socialism, but they did almost totally destroy and income inequality. So kind of every one of you know, more or less for some for others that they have food sovereignty problems in Nicaragua, and, and no game. You know, until two years ago, when the US unleash, the Salvadoran games go down. And like the overflow, they were not successful. It caused a lot of damage but it really shows that Nicaragua is now listed with Venezuela and Cuba Nicaragua, as well as the twice the tyranny. By What's his name?

Danny Sjursen

Oh by Bolton, of course, yes. Well, you know, it's so much what you said is fascinating, you know, two big points. Well, first of all the the Bolton Troika thing I love the enemy idioms that we peddling so much. In fact, it's fun though because sometimes as a historian you get to see like a very much a Back to the Future sort of effect whereas, you know, Reagan and Nicaragua and his terrorist Murder Inc group of five, which no one remembers that he I mean, he used models language you think that Trump would have taken that on? But you know, it's it's it's really incredible as is what you said, which is, if the United States wants something, you know, even though it tends to lose its bigger wars since Second World War, if it wants something, it can achieve it with enormous firepower. And yet one is left hoping or wishing that we would use that power for greater ends or more ethical ends. And it just, of course, is generally not been the case. And a laboratory for that of you, as you've noted, has been Central America, which is our backyard as we like to say as our admirals repeatedly say who command and as Imperial pro console's southcom. So this is really just all I think, incredibly relevant. I think that America, the Empire doesn't go away it just more it changes clothes, and so you know, getting bogged down in a rock Afghanistan that's out of style for a while, at least. And so I think we'll see a lot more of this proxy warfare, which stays under the radar, but is often bloodier or at least as bloody. And again, for a laboratory, it's hard to find a place better than Nicaragua, El Salvador, Guatemala, just say nothing of the Arab world. So this is really great stuff. Well, well, Roxanne, we've kept you for quite a while and I'm so thankful for your time. I mean, I know people are busy and struggling in all kinds of different ways. I will say I think that we did a pretty good job of making the episode not all about Corona, although we hit some inflection points that are necessary. So as we wrap up is, is there anything you're working on now or someplace that you would point or direct our listeners to to catch your existing work?

Roxanne Dunbar Ortiz

Well, I am working on a book so you know, the isolation is not too bad for me because the book was overdue. It is about the border, you know, the Central American refugees and the wars and in general about this whole idea that the United States is a nation of immigrants. So I...I am working on that as much on my mind. But another thing I've been really thinking about I met a Iraq vet against the war. A representative up in when I was in Washington State, who was about it was about four years ago and he put an idea in my mind, I had never thought of before about the how we should start thinking about how the military could be transformed the US military because it's very hard to think of getting rid of it

completely or just reducing the budget. You know, I mean, Even if it were half of what it is now, it could still destroy almost any country in the world of the whole world. And he was talking about you know, repurposing the military for the time ahead who are going to be suffering, you know, climate catastrophe. And already there, you know, huge numbers of refugees everywhere. I just written today's paper, there are 3 million Afghan refugees in Iran. And so there are Afghan refugee refugees everywhere and, and it's only beginning the climate refugees that are going to come so I, I hope thinking about that, too. I know how widespread it is. And you know, that little group there that small group of a rock that's against the war, we're taking it on, and I haven't checked back with them, but it's really in my mind, it came to mind. You know how How nicely the military did perform. I was, you know, I said, Oh, no, when the tsunami happened, and Indonesia and you know, the offer, you know, straight Lago and all the US military really played a very good role in, you know, in that catastrophic condition using their warships. And so I did you know, I mean, that was before, but I thought back to that, and how, how I think people in the military would really prefer that to having to kill people. I don't know, maybe that's a dreamy thing, but I don't know if you thought about it, but I hope you will.

Danny Sjursen

Well, absolutely. And we're both Henri and I are members of the Iraq veterans against the war, which now calls itself about face to allow, you know, the veterans of Afghanistan and other sundry wars and but you know, that this is an important topic. I mean, we saw the HMS column For the naval ship go to New York City, you know, with limited effects, but it's still kind of a symbolic move. And and I do think that there's aspects of the military that are efficient and effective and could be better purpose. And I think this is this is a key thing, because as you pointed out, you know, it's hard to imagine spending more money for less output than we have post 911 you know, fighting these brush fires that we largely create, but the reality is that climate crisis and pandemic and everything associated with refugees, these are the existential threats moving forward, and no amount of aircraft carriers, as I said, on the radio in DC this morning, counting our aircraft carriers is not necessarily going to solve them that you know, you can't count dollars spent on defense for outputs on protecting us from the real threat, right, which is, which is a global collective threat. So we're thinking about it. I'm gonna write more about that. It and I'm so glad you brought it up. But uh, well Roxanne, thanks so much. We'll close out here and I hope we can do this again because I feel like there's a million directions going and when you complete or near complete or the book comes out for publication, your next work, then we're definitely going to do another episode if you're willing.

Roxanne Dunbar Ortiz

Great. Thank you, Danny. Thank all of you. It was really great talking to you.

Chris 'Henri' Henrikson

Thanks, Roxanne.

Danny Sjursen

Great. Talk to you soon. Bye.

Roxanne Dunbar Ortiz

Yeah.