

AT: Welcome to the Infinite Women podcast. I'm your host, Allison Tyra, and today I'm joined by Serene Bennett Williams and Kristen Kelly, founders of Women's History in High School, which advocates for, as you can probably guess, increased women's history representation in US schools. So why don't we start with the barriers that are keeping these stories out of our schools in the first place?

SBW: There is no federal legislation that says that students have access to accurate history, civics. So everything is decentralized at the state level. I just came from a workshop last week. I was at the Constitution Center, an incredible workshop on Reconstruction and 14th Amendment, and there are teachers like myself from California, teachers from Oklahoma, Florida, Texas, and what we are able to teach in the classroom is wildly different because the curriculum is determined at the state level. So what Kristen and I are hoping to do is create a national curriculum that is supported by the College Board, which is the closest we can get to national curriculum that is inclusive of women. I was working last week with teachers from Oklahoma and Florida who are not allowed to teach about anything related to sex and gender. So for example, we all teach AP US Government. Teachers are not even able to talk about Supreme Court cases, for example, that have to do with LGBT rights. They're not even allowed to tell students facts, basic facts. Meanwhile, California, we have the opposite law.

AT: I mean, it's just insane because I think we can agree there's a difference between not requiring that something be taught and actively saying you are not allowed to give your students accurate factual information that arguably impacts their lives. That's just insane, but that's also Florida.

KK: It's not just Florida. We get a lot of this in California too. Even private schools, the parents, not even the parents, a lot of people, they'll record you without your consent. There's a lot of book banning, them going through your summer reading, them going through any and everything that, and I'm going to name it, Turning Point suggests and flagging teachers. And then they'll put those teachers on TikTok and they'll put out those teachers on social media and they'll just straight dox them. So there's very warranted fear, one for losing your job, but also for public slander and social media bullying.

AT: Well, it's not just social media. I would be genuinely concerned for my safety at that point.

KK: A lot of people are. We know a lot of professors and a lot of teachers that genuinely are. The big thing that we always get is like, "oh, well, is this woke curriculum? Is this woke curriculum?" And we're like, "one, I don't know what you mean by that, but two, women aren't 'woke.' They're just women. It's 50% of the population, like the curriculum itself." There's so many conservative women in the curriculum because conservative women were part of history and are still part of the political landscape. And we teach about them because that is fact, right? So it's not a matter of woke or not. It's a matter of reality. And we get that all the time, like, "oh, you're launching this in this very high, tense situation. And we're like, "it's actually in a lot of ways, a bipartisan meeting ground." Because in these states like Montana, Wyoming, Tennessee, these are places where women historically have had more rights than the coastal elites, right? Tennessee is the one that ratified the women's right to vote. Montana women had voting rights way earlier and these pioneer women, these cowboy women, they had a huge historical legacy. And that should be celebrated, it shouldn't be about "woke" or not. It should be about, access to information and real history.

AT: Well, and when we're talking about teachers specifically, there are also educator biases that they bring into the classroom as well. So some of this is also coming from the teachers themselves.

SBW: Yeah. You know, it's interesting. I had a long conversation with a teacher from the Midwest last week, who we were talking about the Supreme Court case, Masterpiece Cakeshop. And I explained it to him the way that I teach it. And he explained to me, he actually had no idea how the holding of the case even worked. And

it made me realize that the state laws are not just impacting the students, they're also impacting the educators. Educators can't get professional training on the LGBT issues, gender, sexuality, the basic law. I mean, we're just talking about precedence here. We're not talking about anybody's opinion or anything, but if they can't understand the basic law, how could their students understand?

AT: So what was that court case? Because I don't know that court case.

SBW: Yeah. So, well, I'll just share a little bit about the conversation we had. So I was asking other educators, do you teach about levels of scrutiny? Which is the way that the Supreme Court, based on the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment, allows discrimination. So if an issue has strict scrutiny, like race, religion, it's harder for a state to discriminate. Gender, sexuality, or gender/women's issues, for example, has intermediate scrutiny. So sometimes you can discriminate. And then LGBT rights has rational basis review, the lowest level of scrutiny. So sometimes you have a case like the Masterpiece Cakeshop, where you can have somebody's religious liberty, which is strict scrutiny, versus LGBT rights, which is rational basis. Those are in conflict. Religion will win because of strict scrutiny. I just had this conversation with a teacher. We were just chatting. And he said to me, "I had no idea how any of that worked. And thank you for explaining that to me." And it really hit me that, "wow, in California, we talk about these things all the time." There's no issue in the classroom. Students are hungry for this kind of information. But the state laws that, you can't have books in your classroom, you can't have PD (*professional development*) on these things, has really hindered a lot of educators' understanding of these precedents.

AT: I think you're also touching on the bigger issue here, which is if we restrict teachers' ability to teach and we restrict what kids can and cannot know, we are limiting their ability to think critically, to understand the world, to be open-minded and empathetic. These are all major deficits that they are forcing on students.

SBW: Yeah, I think to me, it's a clear violation of the Equal Protection Clause. I mean, I think if you're living in Florida or Oklahoma versus California or New Jersey, you're getting a completely different education. You're learning completely different facts. And that is not equitable. I think there's a really interesting constitutional issue there. I mean, I don't see the Supreme Court hearing that case, but I do think that students have a case to be made, that they have the right to have equitable access to education. And in our mind, the closest to national education is the College Board. So our campaign aims to create the first standalone AP women's course. We've decided to make it history. We've had a lot of support from the College Board, which is wonderful, including the Director of Curriculum, Trevor Packer, has been very encouraging. And I feel like that's the closest we can get to a national mandate.

AT: All right, so for anyone who's listening who's not American, could you explain what an AP class is and sort of the process here? Because when you say, "oh, the College Board is supportive," I'm like, "okay, so why isn't this a done deal?" So can you just sort of explain how all that works?

KK: So the College Board in the United States is an accreditation, well, there's many facets, but as far as what we're concerned here, is it's for Advanced Placement courses that students take in high school and gain college credit for. And then it's actually international through IB programs and through most high schools. As far as, and I'm going to name it too, they've been amazing, but there is bureaucracy as with all things. So right now they've approved the notion of an AP women's history class, but we have to get 250 high schools to give an endorsement letter and a hundred universities to give an endorsement letter so that this will count as college credit in the university level. And this is why Serene said we chose to keep it history because in the United States, teachers have accreditation, right? And you get accreditation based on the course that you teach. So it's a little tricky in, you have to have, and the states are different on who accredits social sciences, that's why we didn't call it women's studies, right? Because it'd be accessible to which teachers? We have a

lot, and this is very real, like even for Serene and I's generation, we didn't learn about women until we went to undergrad. And it's because we sought to learn about women in women's studies, minors, or majors, right? Most people, if you name drop any of these things, they've never heard of it. So that's terrifying to people that are going to think they're going to teach it, right? So that's another thing when we're talking about the AP, it would be a standardized curriculum. They would give training to teachers, internationally wide, and they would provide the materials. So it's a really supportive, already laid out standard of rigor and academic curriculum.

SBW: So in the United States, there's a course called APUSH, AP United States History. It's widely taken. Lots and lots of high school students take APUSH. So we are modeling our campaign on APUSH and we're calling it WAPUSH, Women's AP US History. It's been hugely successful that a lot of students take it for college credit and as their survey course in high school, and most universities, if they get a three or four or five on the exam on a five-point scale, they earn college credit. So we are modeling our course after APUSH as well as after AP African-American Studies that was just introduced. It is now being taught nationally in the United States. The curriculum for that is run through something called a CED, a course and exam description book. If you're going to teach an AP class, you get a binder that has all of the curriculum and then you make a promise to the College Board you're qualified to teach the course and that you will teach all of that curriculum. So we are in the process of writing a CED course and exam description book for women's history course. We're publishing some of this information, we have already online and our goal is to have it eventually be adopted by the College Board but then also for teachers to access if they just want to include women in their own classrooms.

AT: And so just for context, I took APUSH when I was in high school, so did my older brother. So APUSH has been around for at least 20 years. I mean certainly longer than that because I don't remember it being like new and exciting when my brother was taking it. So the fact that we're so far behind in the sense that that one has been around for so long and we're just saying "hey can we maybe talk about the women" is insane to me. But I feel like it's also important to point out here that even if it does get approved, it is up to the schools whether or not they decide to offer it. So you need a qualified and interested teacher, you need supportive administrators and school boards. So even if you do clear that massive hurdle of just being able to have it as an option, you're still going to get those state and local issues that we were talking about earlier.

SBW: Right, you know our goal is to do a pilot within five years and we know it would be small initially. A lot of teachers are hesitant about teaching about women, especially if you look at our curriculum, there's a lot of information on women's bodies. I don't think you can teach a woman's history course without talking about women's bodies, state regulation of women's bodies, things like that. That makes a lot of teachers nervous. What we would love to see, the College Board does amazing training for teachers. They're called APSIs, AP Summer Institutes. So we would love to see some APSIs roll out over the next few summers about getting teachers trained, more comfortable about teaching about women, also talking to male history teachers. A lot of people who teach U.S. history are male. It's totally fine for men to teach about women and learn about women and I've been following this through the AP African-American Studies. The College Board has done a beautiful job of rolling out that course. It's wildly popular. The students have been really hungry for information. I also want to share a very positive aspect of the College Board with APUSH. When you took APUSH, it was probably nearly all men and in the last few years, APUSH, the College Board has made a promise that it is now 50 percent women. When students sit down for that three and a half hour exam, at least half of what they're being asked is about women's history. I think that's a very positive step.

AT: I mean it does feel like that should be a given. I love that they did that, but I think there's very much people out there who, if they hear something like that, they think it's unfair because they see 100 percent male as the default. You know, "how dare you foist women's history on us?"

KK: It's interesting we always get the question, "what is the boys experience in your class?" Because we've

been teaching this really for, I don't know, 10 years because we're in a private school and it allows us to. The boys love it and to the point now where we bring boys when we present to be like, "what is your experience in this class?" And it's an interesting flip. Have you ever asked a girl what her experience their whole life learning about men is? No. They find it interesting. The stories sell themselves. And we also talk about how in history, you don't really actually learn it, I mean you do, but unless you see yourself in the narrative. You need to see yourself implemented. That's why it's so important that most of these AP classes are female-dominant. There's a lot of females in the room. A lot of girls are taking these classes and if they don't see themselves in the story it's a great, they're taking it in but they're not really engrossing themselves in it. So that's kind of the argument too, is you teach the audience in front of you and that audience in front of you is increasingly female right. So they deserve to learn about themselves and their contribution to the American narrative, to the global narrative. I teach AP World History and it's actually way worse in AP world history. So whereas Trevor Packer is really working for parity in AP US, AP World, literally you learn about foot-binding. There's like three named women. There's like nothing and that's not, it's actually, like reality's fault in a lot of way because women weren't literate for, you know, so it's hard to get written materials to study the written history and the written voice. But that's another work that we're gonna pick up as soon as we kind of get our footing and get this going with the WAPUSH class. Like we're not going to just stop at WAPUSH. We're going to go for world history and we're talking to teachers in a school in Tokyo to help launch that as well and make a transnational feminist push for AP World History as well.

AT: Well, don't call it feminist because people will freak out.

SBW: I realized that this summer. So I am an AP reader so I go in the summer and read the exams that students take and I was at the AP reading in Utah in early June. And I presented, they have a professional night and I presented our project and I passed out cards that said my name and then "feminist civics educator." And one of the teachers who was so kind and very complimentary about our project said, "I'm fine with that but my state's not." She was from the Deep South. She's like, "you're not gonna help make a case for this course if you're explicitly saying it's feminist." I appreciated that advice. I thought that was very helpful advice. Sometimes I get so into my California bubble where I can say feminist no problem and then I have to realize how different that is perceived in different parts of the United States. So yeah, we made new business cards that we passed out at the conference last month.

AT: And earlier you had said, "we wanted to specifically start with women's *history* because it sounded like that felt safer than just like gender studies." Because I do feel like you would have gotten this pushback from the same idiots who want to take like this children's book that has penguins but the penguin has two daddies out of school libraries and the ones who are freaking out about critical race theory. I feel like they latch onto buzzwords and like critical race theory. I feel like it's very much how you present it helps get it through the door for a lot of people if you're not triggering them.

KK: Right absolutely we are very tentative to buzzwords we're very tentative to and the curriculum is all published. It's all on the website, you can link through all that the handouts, all that. And we're very tentative toward including that to not anger towards the safety of teachers in those states where this is a very real reality to their livelihood. We purposely, and it's interesting because we were talking to AP African-American Studies teachers who were at this conference and how they have to do it because of all the pushback they've gotten from that course. And we've modeled this campaign after that, except for we're grassroots. They were scholars down that created AP African-American Studies and we're literally, we're just teachers right? Teachers up you know. So we're the first ever to do that, like it's not coming from the bureaucrats and scholars down. It's coming from the people in the classroom and the students up. So we have to tiptoe very very lightly around that and be very mindful of our current dynamic. And to be honest, and Serene says, I cannot say that we have gotten any pushback like about it at all it's been like we have cohorts in Georgia, we have cohorts in Arkansas of students

working on this, we've cohort in Florida. And it's been nothing but celebration and in a way, Allison, it's been like a cold drink of water for a divided government, like something that everybody can be bipartisan on because everybody has women. One thing that we did get at that one conference actually from the other side and it was because we're out of the Bay Area so it was at the National American Historical Association we were presenting and somebody said, "I don't like you using women. You need to say female- presenting or female at birth." And we were like, so this is exactly why we're not doing women's studies because actually these women identify as women. So they don't identify as female at birth. Like Pauli Murray didn't even identify as that right. So we're actually calling them what they identify as. So we don't want to get into the muddy water with this on any side. We want it streamlined so we've been very mindful of that.

AT: And the idea of trying to sort out historical figures' actual gender is just a freaking minefield of, this person presented as male but we don't actually know how that person identified in the context of, maybe they presented as male because they wanted to fight in a war, live on their own without being harassed, be able to open a bank account - all of these things that you couldn't do as a woman. And we just have no way of knowing unless you have like the diary of Anne Lister which, my understanding is that there's no indication that Anne Lister identified as male. It was just, "I like pants." And so I completely appreciate and respect gender identity but this is something that I have on my website as well, is a lot of the pages have disclaimers if someone was potentially trans, if someone was potentially non-binary, I have a note that says I respect people's right to express their own gender identities but we do not have the context. And also it gets to the point where you're like, we just need to call this something short and like I can't call my site Infinite People Identifying/Presenting As Female. It's a bit cumbersome, shall we say.

SBW: Yeah, I think we need to know our audience. I mean we're talking about you know 9th through 12th grade students most of which have never studied gender and sex and sexuality and things like that. So we want to make it accessible to students. And I mean I've been following the situation with the Olympics with the boxer and as I've been following this horrible situation, it's really made me realize the vast majority of Americans have very little understanding of sex and gender and intersex and trans people who've always existed in the United States. And just watching this terrible discourse play out has been so obvious to me that our students are now hungry for that information, so they're getting it on TikTok and through social media and things like that and they are not getting it in the classroom. So I think calling it women's history, it's grounded in documents. If you look at our curriculum, it's extensive primary sources and secondary sources by scholars and things like that. So we don't want to get bogged down in fighting over "what is a woman" and things like that at the high school level and so we want to call it women's history but if you genuinely study women's history, you go back to you know 18th century and you're studying Public Universal Friend and genderless beings and it gives you such a robust understanding of sex and gender and and things like that through a historical lens.

KK: And through intersectionality like when we talk about the Native Americans' two-spirit, that's a big thing too. And that's validly part of American history, with the Lakota and all of this. So where do you include that? Those are Americans, they're Native Americans. So that when we talk about this, we're like, "no we tell the truth when it when it is historically accurate and culturally accurate." It's in those it's not like we erased those aspects of American history. We're very excited to talk about them but we put them in the context in which they have portrayed themselves.

AT: And so just for context for anyone who's not familiar with the boxer at the 2024 Olympics situation, the Algerian boxer Imane Khelif is a woman. She I believe may have slightly elevated testosterone levels but, assigned female at birth. This is not a trans person, this is a cisgender woman. And since we're naming people JK Rowling in particular I believe started this by saying "oh a *man* beat a woman," meaning like actually punched her and made her cry, because she punched her in the nose and sometimes that elicits a tear

reaction. There's also the racial aspect of a non-white woman hitting a white woman and accusing women of color as being mannish and so there's a lot to unpack there and I agree like that is, I feel like gender studies is not the same as women's studies but they've been conflated because there is so much more to discuss around gender than there was, at least in the public discourse, say 50 years ago. Obviously non-binary and trans people existed long before that but we weren't really talking about it as much. But so it is interesting how people just conflate anything about women with more complex gender conversations.

KK: Yes and we are a hundred percent trying to navigate those waves as they come in and they're actually coming in from both sides. So the goal is to make this course accessible and to teach students, one, what they want to learn. That's the other thing, we're in a generation where the students are taking, they don't have much trust in institutions and why would they, right? So particularly after this post-COVID classroom, what that looks like we're all rebuilding internationally. And these students have agency. They're struggling with literacy because of the iPhone. So we have to meet the students where we are as teachers and that's through engagement and dialogue. So as much as these archaic institutions are trying to tell students what they can and can't learn, it's going to be interesting to see how the students react to that because they have an off button. Like the minute that they smell any kind of distrust or unauthentic or non-factual truths, they just shut it right off. So that's a big thing with our course as well. It's not just, how do we navigate the divided government but it's also how we engage our students where they are and have them to continue to love to learn, to see themselves in the learning, to feel engaged and and for them to learn truth.

AT: It's also important when we're talking about they don't necessarily trust adults, which is fair. I don't trust adults and I am one. But when we look at where they are getting their information, it's not just I believe Serene mentioned social media and obviously there's a *lot* of misinformation on social media but I saw something the other day where a teacher was recounting an exchange with a student where the student just said something that was just like ridiculously inaccurate. And the teacher says, "well where did you get that?" And the kid had gotten it from AI, I don't know if it was Chat GPT or something similar, but they had asked a question to the internet which they thought they could trust and the AI-generated response, which as we know those are often not accurate. And so this kid is getting just absurd information but that's what they trust. And so I feel like as teachers you're also having to fight not just the disinformation, like the people who are actively lying to kids for ideological reasons, but also whatever craziness is circulating the internet.

SBW: I have a lot of thoughts on this. We're in the heart of Silicon Valley so we've had lots of PD around AI and its use in the classroom. I'm very hesitant about it. I think the job of the teacher is to teach students to think critically and I think the classroom time, the classroom space is sacred. And they can Chat GPT at home and they can do those things but when they're in the classroom. I think it's important to have dialogue. I think teaching critical thinking - I've done PD this summer with educators, I've been watching educators use Chat GPT and it's really been eye-opening to me of, "wow so we're in a whole new world where not just the kids are using this, the educators are too." And I think what we totally lack is a meaningful conversation of the ethics of this. And all the PD sessions I've been in, I've been in a lot this summer. I keep hearing Class Companion, lots and lots and lots of teachers have been talking to me about Class Companion which is a Chat GPT AI program that automatically grades student work so teachers don't have to grade it. I really have not been in any conversations about, "is that good for kids?"

KK: And so I speak out at these conferences. I speak out publicly and ask them about, where's the code of ethics? Because there was one brought up at the AP conference about a program that does avatars. So the teacher would give a lecture and then you'd have to consent to your face, voice and likeness. And it would give the student a recording and you'd have an avatar for lectures at home. Then they have access to your face and voice and all the things that Hollywood is protesting about. But the minute that you bring this up, there's always some VC funder there that will immediately give you some psychological thing that they paid millions of dollars

that shoots you down. It's like a go-to, like "we know that this is how it goes. We know that AI spreads misinformation. We're focusing on the positives here." And it's like a shame element of it, like "you're not allowed to ask about ethics. We know it's unethical but we're focusing on the positive." So it's like a silencing mechanism, which is even more terrifying. And it's happened to us because we're in Silicon Valley, in the heart of all of it, like literally started in a hotel down the road from our school. It's all we'd here and it's been now, what two years, Serene? Since like, our PD is no longer like, "here's how to engage students in classrooms here's the right curriculum. It's big VC people coming in and justifying AI use. And as teachers, we're combative, we're like, "you're gonna break democracy." And they don't, you're not allowed to talk about that. Like they silence immediately and then of course the teachers keep saying it like, "no you're gonna break democracy, what about the wealth gap?" And they keep shutting it down. It's a little scary and to be honest with you, and speaking of women's issues for me, I'm gonna tie this directly in to sexual harassment, sexual assault and doxing. And this is already going on in that Louisiana case with the court reporter, where they took her face and they put it on a pornography. And that is a very real thing in a way that it'll be weaponized towards sexual abuse that no one wants to address. And it's like, "are you kidding me?" So AI is terrifying. We as a principal don't use it at all our course, for our curriculum, nothing, even though from every side we're getting pressure to use it. Like I just wrote 14 rec letters today and everybody's been like, "I cannot believe you're writing them by hand and you're not using AI." And I'm like, "these kids work so hard." The thought of doing an AI rec letter to like Harvard and MIT is horrifying to me. But most teachers, they're like, if you can't beat it join it mentality.

AT: Well the moment you said "this will provide recordings of our voice to students," all I could think was how much that opens up deepfake potential (SBW: Uh-huh.) and next thing you know, a kid is claiming that like you said something horrendous because they were able to use that sample of your voice to create a fake recording and it just makes it impossible to know what's real and what's not. And that's the larger problem that we've been talking about. So when we're talking about, we're starting with women's history but the biases that are seen in classrooms go way beyond history, obviously. Like even children's workbooks have shown gender biases where like you'll have a math book where it's talking about, "this boy is working out and this girl is going shopping." And looking at the disparity in who writes the books that we make kids read. So obviously as you said this is a bigger project. This isn't going to stop with WAPUSH. It is going to keep going. So in your dream world where you have endless time and energy to make all of the courses that you want a reality, what is your fantasy list?

KK: My fantasy well and I can only speak to social sciences and I was a religious studies teacher, that's how I started. And I would love to see a transnational movement through education of learning about not just women in American history, not just women from a Judeo-Christian background but from a diverse, like where are the Hindu women? Where are the Buddhist women? Where are the Muslim women? What does Islamic feminism have to say to this? Where are the movements on the ground in Animism, in Shinto, in Korea? My heart has always been in transnational history, transnational feminism. So that's my goal, is to start in America because we're American and then really move to find documents and find women's presence. Even if you don't have the written voice, the oral tradition voice. That's my wish and we've been starting to dabble in that a little bit on the website and we're going to continue to build that out as we go along.

SBW: I'd also love to see seminar courses, semester-long seminar courses that students can opt into. Lots of schools are already offering these, but I would love to see that nationwide, that all students have access to taking a semester of women's studies, women's history in some way at their school. I would love to see a national course on women and the law. It's been really apparent to me that most people have a very poor understanding of the US Constitution generally. In the United States, we don't spend enough time on civics education. There's been a really significant decline of civics education. There's lots of groups that are bringing it back. which is awesome. They're doing amazing work - Constitution Center's fabulous, iCivics. And I would

love to see students have access to a course on women in law. Women are not mentioned in the Constitution so it takes extra effort to explain how they're protected by the Constitution and anytime I've taught that to students - I've taught it for decades now - they find that really fascinating.

AT: And so when we're talking about what you are specifically mentioning in the classroom, as you said earlier the AP US History is now meant to be 50% female but you're also threading women's history and women's issues into other courses that you teach, on top of the required curricula. So you have that as a baseline and as an instructor, you are then choosing to say, "oh but also here's more information than what I am required to tell you." And so when we're talking about educator biases, this is one that I am completely on board with. So can you tell us a bit about how that works in the classroom?

KK: Well first of all, as any teacher, we all teach to what we know. And we know women. We are women, but we have also studied women. And Serene and I, let me give you some context - the reason we started working together is we would lament, I was teaching gender and religion and she was teaching women's history. And we would lament how there was no textbooks, especially for me, and how I was taking my graduate school materials and distilling it down. It's hard for the kids to read - this was like 15 years ago almost. And we were like, we should have a combined course and we should teach religious studies and women's history. And from that on, we started building binders for materials. So an additional, like here's the Combahee River Collective, here's all these materials about women, Anne Hutchinson and antinomianism and this ideology of pragmatism that starts with this Puritan woman. All of these things, we started to just literally create a little reader like you would in a graduate school class and adding it. So that's kind of in a practical way how we've done it. So we literally say, here's the textbook and here's in-class materials. And we read them out loud together as a class too, because a lot of this, it doesn't land or they don't understand the words. So the practicality is, yeah it's a bigger lift but it's a passionate lift. And teachers have this thing called affect, meaning like the students when they're learning, you get this light, this energy that you and then you're energized. So when that's happening, it's this beautiful, passionate, authentic moment in the classroom of lightbulbs going off particularly in girls' but also boys' heads that then illuminate us. So that's how practically we've been doing it now for almost 15 years.

SBW: For example I teach AP US Government and then AP Comparative Government, which in many schools is a semester course but I teach it in a year. So I'm able to weave in stories about women's political history consistently. I've done that for years. Kristen and I have co-taught these classes together and now we're just trying to take the materials that we've done in the classroom and make them publicly available. And we just presented at the AP conference to teachers of AP US Government because in AP US Government, there are 14 Supreme Court cases required - none of them have to do with women. And there are nine foundational documents required, and none of them are written by women. So at a minimum we were sharing with teachers, "here are some documents about women. Here's some court cases. We've put together Power Points and handouts and things like that." And the students found the case law fascinating and so we've been trying to make the case in addition to the course on women, we've also said the College Board should require Supreme Court cases and documents written by women.

AT: And so obviously I love everything that you're doing at the high school level but we also know that kids start internalizing gender stereotypes before they even get to kindergarten. So by the time you've got them at 16, 17, 18, the ages that they're usually taking AP classes, that's a lot to unlearn. So what would you recommend for teachers and administrators who are working with younger students?

KK: So we present with middle school teachers that have been using the middle school materials, as far as they go into gender studies. And it's interesting, I'm a Girl Scout troop leader and for their Bronze Award, I had them analyze middle school textbooks and the presence of women versus men. And the ratio as they were doing their hours. And to be honest with you, in the public schools, at least in California, there was a lot. There

were a lot and more than in my AP World textbook, my AP Gov textbook. And it was interesting to see like, “oh you actually, it's not just like ‘hey here's Women's History Month.’” At least in California in the textbooks, women are present in a lot more ways than in my high school textbooks. So I definitely think we should hit it younger. That's definitely part of our tasks and our dreams to get. And we've had this conversation, remember years ago when we were at Notre Dame, right, Serene? Get it in TK. That was also triggering with the like, “oh you're pushing your agenda upon tiny children.” That's a huge thing. But as far as history and teaching women's history, it's very accessible in middle school. It's very accessible in elementary school. I learned about five women my entire K through 12, Helen Keller and Harriet Tubman, like we all know the same five women. The kids want more women. They want more people. They want more stories. So I think it's doable and I think in a lot of places it's being done. Again going back to Serene's argument about states versus federal. It depends on when and where and how and the teacher in front of you and if they themselves know it or have an interest in it.

SBW: Yeah, I think it's essential and I wish I was a highly skilled early childhood educator, which I'm definitely not. And Kristen I have been at conferences with very, very gifted early childhood educators who are committed to including women in the K-12 classroom and I've seen them do beautiful work. So it's not something that I feel like I have a particular skill set on, but absolutely it's essential that it should be introduced at a much younger age.

AT: I also, as I've come to study women's history deliberately rather than just, incidentally you learn things, I've also been really surprised by how much is left out of the story. So like you mentioned Harriet Tubman. I don't remember learning that she fought in the Civil War and she was a soldier after she was working on the Underground Railroad. With Marie Curie, I would say is another one that we all know. The Nobel Committee didn't want to give her her first Nobel Prize. Her husband and another man who was really influential in their field went and fought for her and they said, “no no you have to give this to her as well, because she's an equal partner.” Or Helen Keller promoted eugenics. Coco Chanel was a Nazi. I keep bringing that one up, because every time I see like that little kids' book with like “Coco!” and I'm like she was a Nazi! Why has everybody forgotten that she was a Nazi? But this depth of people's stories and the idea that they're not just one thing, that they're not just a bullet point. They are a story and I think that's something that does get lost a lot when we're teaching history, based on my own experience of “okay, memorize these dates and names so that you can regurgitate them on a test, but we're not giving you the context.” And again I not speaking to how you teach. I'm speaking to how I was taught. But I feel like there is very much this sense for a lot of young people that history is boring because the way that we are taught history is often boring.

KK: Yeah we talk about this a lot too, that history needs to be taught without a filter. Like, stop face-tuning history. And I joke like that but like you know what's interesting and what a good thing about the students in front of you is they're gonna Google search everything you say. So there is no faking it. There is no, “oh I'll pull some random fact” - they're fact-checking you constantly, which is good. So when I teach World War I and I talk about the Burberry trench coat and how it was innovation of trench warfare and all this, I then talk about like fashion impact of Chanel and how she was a Nazi 'til her dying day. She was trying to get the Jewish patent off of her perfume, she was trying to send them to Auschwitz - she was horrible. Helen Keller, we talk about that. We also talk about Margaret Sanger and the complexity around Planned Parenthood being a form of eugenics put in poor people's neighborhoods, and her speaking at KKK rallies and these types of things. And at least where we are and we have the benefit of this, like if we don't teach about that, you get the hand. Immediately the hand goes up somewhere where they're going to check you so hard. So that's in a way where I love this new generation of, “we're not just going to be indoctrinated.” That's also a Bay Area, I understand that. But I a hundred percent am for teaching real history. Being from Philadelphia, I talk all the time about how UPenn publish the paper that George Washington would do vivisection on his enslaved peoples and rip out the teeth that were straight for his own dentures, and that was just published. These are things I wasn't taught but

UPenn just published it. So it's like, yes he was our first president, he was a revolution, he had all these amazing things. He also was a kept man and was supported - he's a trophy husband - by his wife's money. So the trophy husbands of history - so was Muhammad with Khadija in Islamic history. That's all true. You know what's funny about this, is whenever we talk about that, that's what the students love because they view this as historical gossip even though it's true. And they get like this like, "oh we're talking real now. So it's interesting if you want to like hook your kids, say Coco Chanel's a Nazi. Say the truth, that Margaret Sanger talked about eugenics and here's the warts. Talk about the warts because the warts are like those little hooks. Because that like validates your authenticity as a teacher and an educator.

AT: And I think we're getting back to that question of, young people don't trust adults because adults lie to them. They sanitize things and so when you are honest with them, that switches that paradigm. And I should also note when I talk about my experience learning history, I remember at least one teacher, I think it was my sophomore year of high school. He had basically been hired as a track coach but they also needed him to teach. And so I don't think that teaching history was actually his primary focus and he basically just taught us straight out of the textbook. And we were talking about the Byzantine Empire because it was world history and he said that this was the only successful theocracy in world history, which of course is not true. But that's what the textbook said. And so I, being the nerd that I was and am, raised my hand and said "okay but what about Henry VIII? Because he created the Church of England" - I love that you're both nodding at me and it's really giving my like teenage nerd heart, "like yay the teachers approve!" He did not. So I raised my hand, I asked about Henry VIII, "he created the Church of England, he was the head of state - isn't that a theocracy?" And he just got this kind of stunned look on his face, because he had no response. And he just said "we're not going to talk about that right now" and kept going. And then my best friend, who was the same kind of nerd as I was, he said the same thing because he clearly doesn't learn and she raised her hand and said, "okay but what about Henry VIII?" because we were both obsessed with this guy who kept murdering his wives. And he lost it, he's like "we are NOT talking about that right now!" And she was telling me this later and I just laughed because I had the context that she didn't. But it's that kind of thing where you've got someone who clearly doesn't actually necessarily know what they're talking about and then just dismisses you when you challenge them on it. And I think that's a very big and important difference between, I feel like if you got faced with "oh but what about this," I feel like you're the kind of person who would be like "I'm not sure let me fact-check" and get back to you and that's what we need more of instead of this, "I am in charge here and you will do as I say."

KK: This is an interesting thing, like I literally say "I don't know" more than anything else at work. You have to be secure enough to be insecure or you do not resonate. And students do not expect you to know everything, we're humans. So the minute you lie and get busted or you shut down and are outed for being not knowing and then you show that, instead of just embracing that you're learning in a classroom together, and actually every teacher learns more than they teach in a year, at the end of the year right. So it's a journey together and it always is. The amount of things I learn every year that I didn't know, because my education was not complete. I did not learn about myself in school. None of that. This is a new frontier for all of us - the kids in the classroom, the teachers teach in the classroom, the people writing the curriculum, the College Board launching the curriculum, the podcasts talking about it. And we have to be very real in, we're shaping it and we're gonna learn as we go and it's an all-hand-on-the-deck, crowdsourcing type of experience and the more the merrier with accurate history. And if I don't know it, I'll go read about it and that's what a lifelong learner is.

SBW: So it happens every day. Every day in the class, students will ask an interesting question about, like recently I had a student ask me, she was looking at the Constitution and she was in article two on the president and she saw that it said "he." And she said, "well if it says 'he,' *can* we have a woman president? Would we have a court case challenge?" And I was like, "what a fantastic question. I don't know." It happens every day and I think it's so true what Kristen said about, you just have to be comfortable enough with the unknown and there's some things that we don't know, open questions and then facts and teaching now, just like Kristen said

they're fact-checking you in live time. So being honest with students is so important. The other thing that I noticed, I have two teenage daughters who are on social media and reading TikTok and things like that. They're coming in, they're asking really nuanced detailed questions on sex and gender that I don't know and they're using language that I don't know and I think that we need to really meet kids where they are. Teaching media literacy is so essential and it's changing so quickly. Yeah that's a big part of our course too, is wrestling with with questions about people in history that we don't know.

KK: I'd like to say, and I joke that it's really like an entitlement to think that you know everything because no one does and the minute you think you know everything, you stop learning right. So I talk about that, that that's a huge ridiculous absurd privilege that's inaccurate as well.

AT: And one of the things that I love about learning environments, especially when we're talking about history and sociology and that sort of thing is, there is always a connection. So when you mentioned this student who is saying "it says 'he,' does that mean women can be president?" There was actually a court case in Canada called the Persons Case which I don't know if you're familiar with this, but basically five women who became known as The Famous Five - they were all eugenicists; that's not relevant but we have to mention it. It was called the Persons Case because they took it to the Canadian Supreme Court and challenged whether the word "persons" applied to women in the context of "persons who are eligible to be senators." And the Canadian supreme court said, "no, women are not persons." And so they appealed it to the Privy Council because at this point Canada was still part of the UK empire and the Privy Council had to say, "no, women are people." And so that was the highest court in the land at the time but the Canadian supreme court said, "no, women are not people," so your student might find that interesting. But this is the thing when when we're talking about any question you might have about the state of being human, there are stories about women that relate to it. So in addition to what we've already discussed, what are other solutions that you would like to see or that you are seeing in terms of positively changing how we teach children about women and women's history?

SBW: So I've been really impressed with the work of Dr Wendy Rouse. She's a professor of history and teacher programs at San Jose State University. She's also a prolific author and she works with the History Social Science Project through UC Berkeley. There's one through UC Davis. They're close to our area, but they publish their curriculum and teacher resources online, and teachers nationwide use them. So I think that work has been really, really impressive. So we've gotten a lot of support from teachers, which is wonderful, a lot of teachers that want to teach the class, a lot of teachers that want to bring it to their school but we haven't gotten a lot of support from scholars. So I would love to see increased partnership of women's historians. We've had words of support sent to us, which is wonderful, we've published them on our website. But we haven't had a really strong connection between scholars and K-12 teachers. So I would love to see an increased partnership between the people that are writing the books, also people like yourself that are writing the books, and then people like me that are teaching them.

AT: To find out more about the campaign and what you can do, go to womenshistoryinhighschool.com and I'll also include the link in the description. Join us next time on the Infinite Women podcast and, remember, well-behaved women rarely make history.