Professional Review Feedback

Dr. Ariela Gross, John B. and Alice R. Sharp Professor of Law and History at the University of Southern California Gould School of Law

Dr. Gross attended Harvard University for her Bachelor of Arts degree in History and Literature and later earned her JD from Stanford Law School as well as a Master's degree and PhD from Stanford University. She is the author of three books: *Double Character: Slavery and Mastery in the Antebellum Southern Courtroom, What Blood Won't Tell: A History of Race on Trial in America* and *Becoming Free, Becoming Black: Race, Freedom, and Law in Cuba, Louisiana, and Virginia*. Her second book "What Blood Won't Tell" received the 2009 Lillian Smith Book Award, the James Willard Hurst Jr. Prize, and the American Political Science Association's award for the best book on race, ethnicity, and politics.

See attached letter

Dr. Tonika Orange, Director for the Culture & Equity Project, UCLA Center X

> Dr. Tonikiaa Orange serves as the Director for the Culture and Equity Project and as the Assistant Director for the Principal Leadership Institute at UCLA Center X. Her work focuses on providing professional learning opportunities to educators on culturally responsive and sustaining pedagogy and supporting educators in developing the skills necessary to facilitate conversations around culture and race. She is a former math and science teacher and principal of a k-8 school in Los Angeles. She teaches Theories of Curriculum and Instruction and School Leader as Researcher in the Principal Leadership Institute in the Graduate School of Education and Information Science at UCLA. Her commitment to education spans over 25 years.

This is incredible. You all did a wonderful job. It is backed by factual accounts, verified, you all used multiple resources to tell a story, etc. It is very thorough. It should be used in class at school. It is a strong recollection of Bruce Beach. I was captivated by the history.

I don't have anything to add. After you present to the board, can I share your work with our History/Ethnic studies department?

Dr. Gaye Theres Johnson, Associate Professor of Chicanx & Central American Studies Affiliate, African American Studies UCLA

I deeply believe that she claimed and named herself when she signed "Willie," and that her loved ones called her by the name she claimed when her son called his own mother by the name they knew.

I have several older family members with men's names. They're all endearing in the Black community.

Peace to all of you, sending you big light and gratitude for the work you're doing,
Gaye

Daryl Brook, Facilitator & Coach, UCLA Center X Culture & Equity Project

Thanks for reaching out to us. We both really appreciated having the chance to read this exceptionally detailed and thorough account of the history of Bruce's Beach. I found myself compelled to read the whole thing in one sitting. I think you did a great job locating and documenting the facts of the story from a wide variety of sources. As a former middle school teacher I would love to have a document like this a resource for students. I can't say I have any specific recommendations. What a great source to draw from not just to teach history, but also to teach about perspective and bias in reporting.

USC Gould School of Law

ARIELA J. GROSS
John B. and Alice R. Sharp Professor of Law and History

June 4, 2021

To: Manhattan Beach City Councilmembers
FR: Ariela Gross, JD, PhD
RE: City of Manhattan Beach History Advisory Report

The Manhattan Beach History Advisory Report details the specific history of Bruce's Beach, a resort owned by a Black couple in the early 20th century, providing a recreational haven for Black Angelenos who had few points of access to the public natural resources that make Southern California so special. Bruce's Beach was one of a few, but certainly not the only such enclave of Black landowners in the region. These enclaves became targets for white neighbors' hostility in the aftermath of World War I. The campaign to eject Black beachgoers that culminated in the condemnation and taking of Bruce's Beach was part of a broader campaign of racial cleansing across the United States. In California, that campaign took many forms, from the legal (zoning, racial covenants, and later, "urban renewal") to the extralegal (cross burnings, threats, bombings, and even large-scale massacres). It was precisely in those communities where some Black ownership was briefly allowed to exist – the borderlands between Black and white – such as Manhattan Beach and the San Fernando Valley, where these conflicts occurred. So-called "sundown towns" were not born overnight. Although some towns, like South Pasadena, were founded as sundown towns and succeeded in keeping out Black residents from the start, others, like Manhattan Beach, became white towns by pushing out Black residents who had a foothold there. Indeed, there were several places in the LA area where Black people could own property, even near the beach, where similar condemnations of Black-owned property took place – Santa Monica is another one. This was just one of the legal mechanisms available to those who eschewed the more violent tactics of the Ku Klux Klan.

The Manhattan Beach History Committee, composed of laypeople interested in excavating this history, have done a tremendous job within the constraints of a pandemic. They were able to build on the definitive history by Alison Rose Jefferson (UCSB PhD, 2015), Living the California Dream: African American Leisure Sites During the Jim Crow Era, winner of the **Los Angeles City Historical Society's Miriam Matthews Ethnic History Award** for exceptional contributions to the greater understanding and awareness of Los Angeles history. In addition, they relied on interviews and research conducted by Robert L. Brigham in his Master's thesis, "Land Ownership and Occupancy by Negroes in Manhattan Beach, California." However, the Committee went far beyond reliance on the secondary sources, scouring newspapers, census records, titles and deeds, court records, manuscript paper collections, and all other available primary sources to corroborate the oral histories. In the majority of cases, they were able to find evidence to corroborate these sources; in cases where they were not, they were always careful to make clear which aspects of the story depend on a single witness. This is precisely the way historians use such sources, and their

University of Southern California
699 Exposition Boulevard, Los Angeles, California 90089-0071 • Tel: 213 740 4793 • Fax: 213 740 5502 • agross@law.usc.edu

use of evidence accords with the standards of the field. The history they have written is not only careful and judicious, but it tracks closely with everything we know about the history of Black landownership and Jim Crow in Southern California.

I am well qualified to judge the merits of this history. I am trained as a historian and a lawyer, with a PhD and JD from Stanford University, and I have been teaching the legal history of the United States, as well as the history of race and the law, for 25 years as the John D. and Alice R. Sharp Professor of Law and History at the University of Southern California. I have written three well-received books on the history of race and the law, including What Blood Won't Tell: A History of Race on Trial in America, winner of multiple awards. I have also researched and written several essays on the history of race in Los Angeles County, including battles over housing and civil rights. I have attached my cv as well.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any further questions.

Best regards,

Ariela J. Gross

More historical context would be useful, and preferably not in an addendum at the end. Ideally, you could integrate more context into the “timeline” itself. This is, after all, far more than a timeline, it is your telling of the story. This is especially important because the gist of the criticism from the (I assume) conservative critics is that you’ve taken this history out of context, and the specific context is that MB might have been bad, but other cities were worse! This hardly seems like a defense one wants to ride a lot on, but why not go ahead and tell (or summarize) that story? Briefly sketch the state of Black life in LA County in the early 20th century. Probably the two most useful books for you would be Richard Rothstein’s The Color of Law, and Josh Sides’ LA City Limits, the first couple of chapters. Rothstein summarizes all the legal mechanisms for keeping Black people from homeownership – the earliest two being zoning and racial covenants, both of which came into play here.

The text is somewhat inconsistent about capitalizing “Black,” and also uses “Blacks” as a noun, which I would discourage. I would change those to “Black people” and regularize the capital letter.

Although the Birth of A Nation may have been one of the inspirations for the second Ku Klux Klan in Atlanta in 1915, I don’t think that’s the entire explanation for its rise in the 1920s. It doesn’t seem necessary to attribute direct causation, and given the focus of your story here, Birth of A Nation seems like a distraction. I would talk more about broader trends. The 1920s were the beginning of the Great Migration, and the era of race massacres like Tulsa and Rosewood, and the passage of the 1924 Immigration Act.

Ariela Gross | **USC Gould School of Law**

John B. and Alice R. Sharp Professor of Law and History

University of Southern California | 699 Exposition Blvd, Los Angeles, CA 90089-0071

Tel: 213-740-4793 | Fax: 213-740-5502 | agross@law.usc.edu | www.arielagross.com