

was not a criminal but rather a regulatory matter” (124). The U.S. Supreme Court agreed with the Cabazon in its decision issued on February 25, 1987. Gordon further details how, after the Cabazon case, a coalition of Cahuilla, Luiseno, Serrano, and Kumeyaay tribes negotiated tribal gambling compacts with the State of California. The coalition was met with anti-Indian discrimination from state regulatory representatives but succeeded in creating compacts through political maneuvering, despite ongoing challenges from Las Vegas casino interests. Gordon argues that this coalition-building is reminiscent of the resistance and advocacy tribes have used to refute settler colonialism and violence. “As tribal gaming has grown, so has the economic and political influence of native nations across the United States, and, in particular, California” (139). Cahuilla advocacy is central to the history of the tribal gaming movement.

While there is much to admire about Cahuilla Nation Activism, the book’s central theme needs to be expanded, something the author readily admits. While Cahuilla sovereignty is foregrounded, settler perceptions of California Indians is often front-and-center in the narrative. The Cahuilla and other California Indian peoples were not merely changing the perceptions of settler society, but explicitly asserting self-determination and sovereignty, something Gordon addresses. The book argues that “collective cognitive dissonance and decreased direct experience can create an environment where certain myths, like the demise or assimilation of native peoples, can thrive” (75). While I agree with this point, I disagree that California Indian people merely needed to be near settler societies to avoid the worst of colonization, or that nearness changes racist attitudes toward Native people. More oral histories with Cahuilla people, allowing the Cahuilla voice to shine through, would have strengthened the author’s central thesis and argument.

Despite these weaknesses, Cahuilla Nation Activism is a good starting point toward understanding the tribal casino movement and its early origins in Southern California. The book situates the Cahuilla experience in broader narratives of Spanish, Mexican, and American colonization and contemporary debates surrounding tribal gaming. Gordon does an excellent job of detailing broader U.S. Indian policy in the context of Cahuilla gaming history. “The Cabazon Band of Cahuilla Mission Indians’ victory before the Supreme Court affirmed the right of native nations across the United State to operate gaming facilities” (118). Framing gaming within the broader tribal sovereignty and self-determination movement uplifts the Cahuilla and neighboring tribes’ advocacy of and commitment to economic and political freedom. The book’s descriptions of tribal solidarities and resistance movements make it a powerful read.

Brittani R. Orona

#### NOTE

1. Jack Norton, *Genocide in Northwestern California: When Our Worlds Cried* (San Francisco: Indian Historian Press, 1979).

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Terri A. Castaneda. *Marie Mason Potts: The Lettered Life of a California Indian Activist*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2020. 367 pp. Hardcover \$45.00.

Marie Mason Potts, a Mountain Maidu woman from the northern Sierra Nevada mountain region, was one of the most influential and heretofore understudied Native

Californian activists of the generation leading up to the Red Power movement. Among many other things, Potts was a writer, editor, teacher, interpreter of California Indian and Mountain Maidu histories and culture, exhibit curator, museum consultant, and activist. Terri Castaneda's *Marie Mason Potts: The Lettered Life of a California Indian Activist* helps shed light on Potts's important story, while effectively tracing her formation into an activist and national figure in Native American politics and cultural preservation. As editor and publisher of the groundbreaking *Smoke Signal* newspaper, published between 1948 and 1978, Potts left a voluminous record of articles and editorials covering a broad spectrum of topics related to Native Californian history, culture, politics, and activism. Her experience curating museum exhibits on Potts and her life's work uniquely positioned Castaneda to sift through Potts's copious writings to produce an intimate portrait of her incredible and influential story. As Castaneda points out, Potts "is perhaps the only Native California woman born in the nineteenth century whose life and subjectivity are so thoroughly documented by her own hand" (3).

Potts's life intersected with important movements and moments that are critical to understanding Indigenous Californian experiences and history. Castaneda traces Potts's early life: her family's displacement from their ancestral homelands in the northeastern Sierras, her education in off-reservation boarding schools, her narrow avoidance of epidemics that impacted many in her extended family, and her marriage and motherhood, showing how these early life experiences laid the groundwork for the activism and writing that would eventually become her life's work. Potts's introduction to activism came about through her work with the initial formation of the Federated Indians of California (FIC), an organization born out of mobilization around California Indian land claims and the Indian Claims Commission (ICC) in the 1940s. As principal editor and publisher of *Smoke Signal*, Potts was perfectly situated to serve as FIC publicity chair.

While her initial activism arose out of her conviction to fight for just compensation for stolen lands, Potts would eventually lend her efforts to an amazing array of issues and struggles. Castaneda does a fine job of articulating Potts's passion and perseverance, observing that the "ghostly presence of colonization impales itself upon the long arc of Indigenous histories and traditions but does not obliterate them" (151). The book provides important insights into the various movements and organizations associated with Potts. In addition to her work with the FIC, Potts worked with such organizations as California's Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) and the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI). Her activism eventually led to her participation in the 1969 occupation of Alcatraz, which proved to be the key moment in the formation of the Red Power movement. As Castaneda observes, Potts "pioneered California Native journalism as a cottage industry and mode of grassroots activism well ahead of the 1960s underground and alternative press" (279).

One of the strengths of this book is its inclusion of Potts's own voice, including reflections on her formative experiences that reveal Potts's critical mind and her disarming use of humor. Like many Native youths of her generation, Potts attended off-reservation boarding schools, including the infamous Carlisle Institute. While many studies have looked at the assimilationist and frequently traumatic aspects of these boarding schools, Castaneda is able to show how the young Potts navigated these institutions while

learning about the shared experiences of other Native children and sharpening her academic skills. As Castaneda points out, “scholarly calls to transcend generalizations about boarding schools and alumni are not denials of profound suffering, death, and intergenerational trauma. They are challenges to discern distinctions” between individual boarding-school students and their families, as “parents and children occasionally deflected its corrosive potential, navigating its presence *as* families and its possibilities *for* family” (42). In adding nuance to existing scholarship on boarding schools, Castaneda is able to demonstrate how Native students like Potts were able to harness their experiences and education for their own purposes. It is this ingenuity and resiliency that helped propel Potts forward to become such a dynamic activist, as she drew on “the academic knowledge and confidence wrested from her boarding school education to educate and empower California Indian people” (128).

While the strength of the book is the presence of Potts’s wit and humor, the slight downside is that, when the focus drifts away from Potts, her absence is notable. This is seen in the fourth chapter, which focuses on the FIC. This chapter is necessary to help show the history of Native land claims and litigation over the unratified California treaties and the preposterous governmental “attempts” to rectify these injustices. Although this period was crucial in Potts’s transition to activism, serving as the FIC’s starting point and the launch of the invaluable *Smoke Signal*, the welcome candor of Potts’s voice is conspicuously missing here (apparently, Potts’s writings did not include her personal insights about this period). Fortunately, these Potts-less interludes are brief.

The majority of studies of twentieth-century Native American activism focus, understandably, on the Red Power movement of the 1960s and ’70s. This has resulted in a relative dearth of studies on activist people and movements of earlier decades. For those wanting to learn more about the roots of the Red Power movement or to gain greater insight into the national politics of Native American activism in the earlier part of the twentieth century, this book is an essential resource. As Castaneda herself surmises, Potts’s “lettered Mountain Maidu life emerges as representative of Native women’s experience at the turn of the last century,” yet her life was also distinctive, “a portrait of Native exploration and agency exercised within and across multiple, interpenetrating domains of indigeneity and settler colonialism” (280).

Martin Rizzo-Martinez

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Sherry L. Smith. *Bohemians West: Free Love, Family, and Radicals in Twentieth-Century America*. Berkeley: Heyday Books, 2020. 408 pp. Hardcover \$28.00.

No one can question the radical credentials of Charles Erskine Scott Wood and Sara Bard Field, two early twentieth-century free love advocates who carried on an open relationship for more than three decades while participating in a range of West Coast social movements, such as labor activism, free speech, and women’s suffrage. In the words of their chronicler, Sherry L. Smith, “they offer extraordinary insight into the lived experience of their era—a perspective of American radicalism on a granular scale” (xiv). And yet, in