MAY 7, 14, 21, 28
12-2 PM ET
Trains, Texts & Tits
Sex Work, Technology and Movement
May Jeong & Gretchen Soderlund
Hacking/Hustling
bit.ly/32F01wZ
Hacking//Hustling is a collective of sex workers, survivors, and accomplices working at the intersection of tech and social justice to interrupt state surveillance and violence facilitated by technology.
Agenda

1. Introductions
2. Community Agreements
3. What are we talking about this month?
4. Setting the Scene: 1800s - 1920
5. Our Experts Share!
6. Questions & Answers
7. At 1:30 EST/10:30PST we’ll switch to an open conversation (not recorded)
Community Agreements

Bring in your histories & speak from your own experience.
Be committed to each other’s collective learning and growing.
Be open to learning.
To not share pirated work, including books, pornography, and any other art form.
To respect the diversity of our identities which, particularly for the purposes of this conference means not assuming the identities of organizers and activists for whom sharing every element of our lived experience is not always safe — which also means no deadnaming or doxxing (in other words do not share someone else’s personal information without consent)
Prioritize care for ourselves and each other.
Practice not using ableist language.

We are all on a journey towards liberation. Take care of yourself and each other.
Presenters and Hosts

Gretchen Soderlund, (She/Her)  May Jeong, (She/Her)  Moderator: Kate D’Adamo, (She/They)
Sex Workers, Early Adopters
Sex workers adapt to being pushed out of existing space or leave looking for something new, become early adopters, shape a space that is welcoming and accessible, and then are regulated out.
1: Trains, Newspapers and the Birth of the Modern American Sex Trade

Next Week: Magazines, Backpages & Obscenity

May 21: Digital Stimulation: Sex Invents the Internet

May 28: FOSTA, 230 and Digital Gentrification
Setting the Stage:
1800 - 1920
Setting the Contexts

- The Context of Movement
- The Context of Technology
- The Context of Social Upheaval
Movement: Westward Expansion (1820 - 1900)

- Westward Expansion of the United States
  - Manifest Destiny, 1845: The idea that the US should colonize the Americas, spreading Democracy and capitalism
  - Gold Rush: 1848-1855, brought 300k people to CA/West
  - 1870s: The beginning of the huge expansion of the railroad

- Colonization
  - Indian Removal Act, 1830; Sand Creek Massacre, 1864; Red River War, 1874; Little Big Horn, 1876; Wounded Knee, 1890
Movement: Urbanization

- Industrialization
  - Offers economic opportunity drawing people to cities
  - Independent movement of women from rural areas, smaller communities

- International Migration
  - Highest periods at Ellis Island, 1903-5, Angel Island in CA
  - Changing racial demographics of immigrants
Social Upheaval: The Invention of Race

- The “end” of chattel slavery (1865), Reconstruction (1877)
  - Federal troops leave the south in 1877
  - Chattel-slavery relationships morph into peonage, debt bondage, and convict leasing
  - The Invention of Whiteness

- Colonization
  - Erasure of Indigenity, creation of a “Historical” myth
  - Rise in literature around kidnappings, violence enacted by indigenous men

- International Migration from Asia, Eastern/Southern Europe
  - The Page Act of 1875, Narratives of anti-Asian racism
Social Upheaval: Changes in Women, Family

- Industrialization, Movement offered new opportunities
  - Women could earn their own living, even meager
  - Families which relied on unpaid femme labor were in chaos
- Changes in Social Dynamics and Morals
  - Rise of the temperance movement, which was tied to the Suffragette movement
- Growing fears of inter-racial relationships
- New Media means new voices
New Technology

- Physical Movement and Mobility: Trains, ships and early automobiles
- Information Technology: Mass media, newspapers, printed books
- Entertainment: Phonograph, Early movies
- Economic: Industrialization, Mechanized agriculture
Forms of Sex Work

- Street-based workers
- Charity Girls, Treating
  - Urban areas with low-paying jobs
- Brothel-based workers
  - Legalized in many locations, highly racialized
  - First brothel law (we think?) was Lorette, 1857, banning brothels from being on the first floor of a building
- Burlesque dancers and other scantily clad dancers
Sex Work Shifts the Global Landscape
“After the Patriots owner made two trips to Orchids of Asia Day Spa, where a half-hour “massage” costs $59, he was charged with soliciting a prostitute. What happened next was not what anyone expected….”
“On January 24, 1848, miners found gold in Coloma, fifty miles east of Sacramento, but it wasn’t until May 29, when a local newspaper published an editorial about a country “resound[ing] with the sordid cry of gold! Gold! GOLD!,” that the California Gold Rush began....”
Technology No. 1: Immigration system
Ah Toy
Clay and Kearney: San Francisco Chinatown

- Ah Toy sets up shop on Clay and Kearney streets in what is now Chinatown
- Neighborhood later became known as the Barbary Coast, the red light district
  - Vice status came from the fact men and women of different races and classes intermingled
- Ah Toy set up a 4’ x 6’ shack and began servicing minors, becoming the first recorded Chinese prostitute of the Gold Rush
Within five years, Ah Toy established herself as a prominent madam.

Opened brothel on Pike Street (present day Walter U Lum Place)

As now, San Francisco then was racially segregated
  - Ah Toy hired Chinese women to work for her, mostly servicing sailors or laborers, for 25 cents

“Exotic” atmosphere and the cheap rates of the Chinese establishments attracted many patrons, both white and Chinese.
Technology No. 2: Courts
Timothy Dwight Hunt

- First clergyman of the Bay Area, Timothy Dwight Hunt, did not arrive until October 1848 from Honolulu.
- Though their power would diminish with the closing of the frontier, women, and women of color, prospered—for a time.
Technology No. 3: Orientalism
Ah Toy in court

- During the trial, Ah Toy wore a bonnet, an apricot satin jacket, and willow-green pantaloons.
- Her hair was in a bun, and her face was whitened using rice powder.
- When the judge asked her to produce evidence, she left and returned with a porcelain bowl filled with brass shavings.
- Said to be the “finest looking woman I have ever seen,” according to Charles Duane, who was a “fixer” for California Senator David Broderick.
Ah Toy in court

- Albert Benard de Russailh wrote in his journal at the time:

“The Chinese are usually ugly, the women as well as the men; but there are a few girls who are attractive if not actually pretty, for example, the strangely alluring Achoy, with her slender body and laughing eyes.”
Taiping Rebellion and Opium Wars
Tax Acts

- the cubic-air law, which prohibited residences with less than 500 cubic feet of air per person;
- the sidewalk ordinance, which made basket-carrying across the shoulder a misdemeanor;
- the queue ordinance, which instructed that hair of prisoners be cut within an inch of scalp, aimed at humiliating Chinese men who, for spiritual reasons, wore their hair in a type of a topknot.
Committee of Vigilance

ARMS MEMBERS OF THE 1856 COMMITTEE OF VIGILANCE
Venereal disease
Donaldina Cameron
Many white women, perhaps including Cameron herself, were motivated by a sense of moral superiority,” according to Hirata. “The more they saw Chinese women as helpless, weak, depraved, and victimized, the more aroused was their missionary zeal. Saving the Chinese slave girls seemed to have become the ‘white woman’s burden.’
The Page Act and Chinese Exclusion Act
Ah Toy in retirement
Korean War Brides
Atlanta massacre of March 16, 2021

Donations to Red Canary Song.

https://www.redcanarysong.net/
Questions for May & Gretchen
Resources to Explore

- [Video] Adam Ruins Everything: How Prostitutes Settled the West
- [Video] Beyond White Slavery (Jessica Pliley)
- [Book] Unbound Feet, Judy Yung
- [Book] Haunting the Korean Diaspora, Grace M. Cho
- **Yellow Slavery: Asian Women as Perpetual Prostitutes**, Journey to the West Podcast
Next Friday, 12pm EST

The Backpages, the Mail and the Obscene
Thot Scholar Stephanie Kaylor
Let's Chat!

Feel free to turn on your camera (we’re done recording) and join us to debrief, chat and connect.