

# The Power of Colorado River Stories

**Dr. Sara Porterfield**

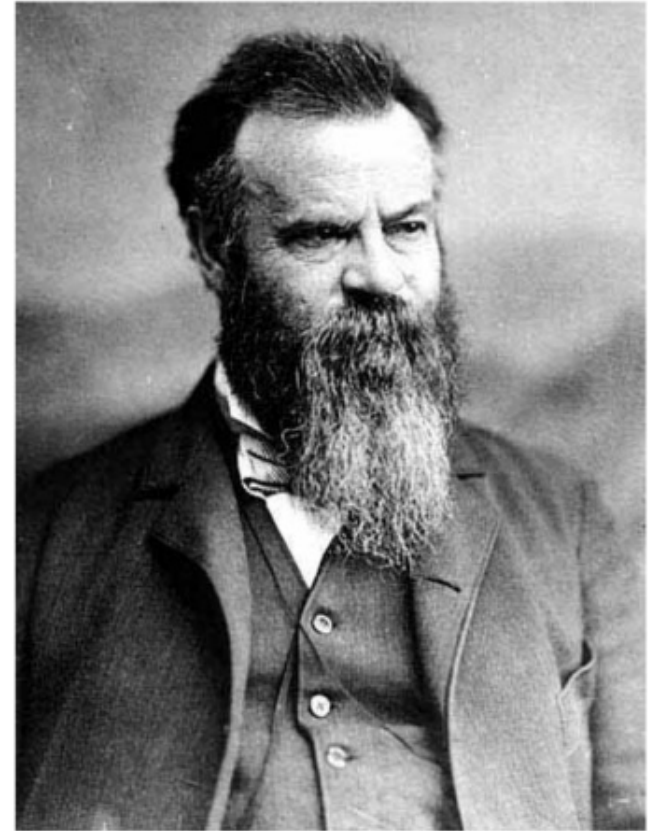
Owner, Tributaries Consulting  
Boulder, Colorado

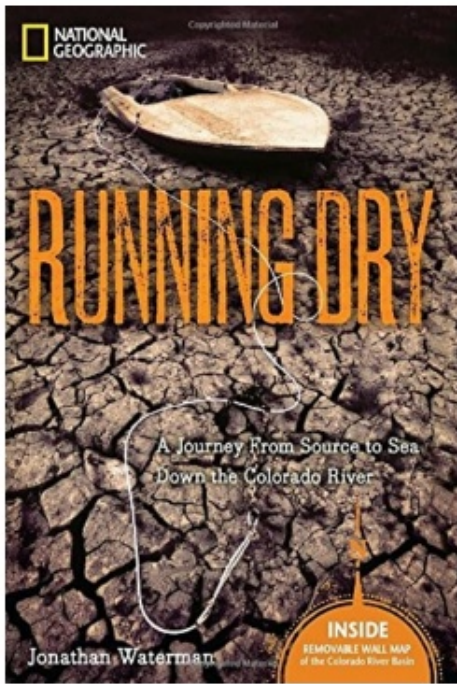
**Dr. Adrienne Kroepsch**

Assistant Professor, Environmental Governance  
Colorado School of Mines

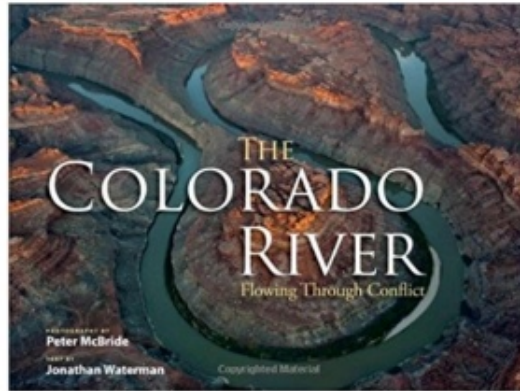


# John Wesley Powell



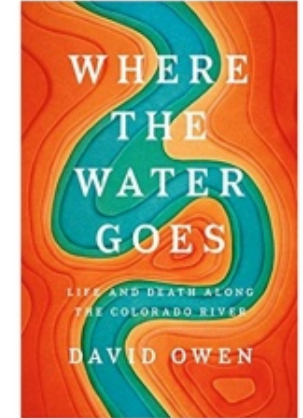
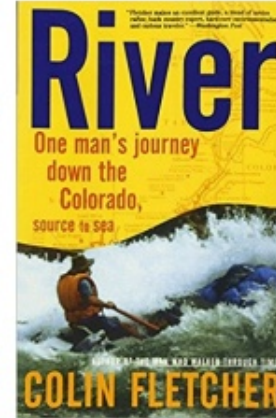
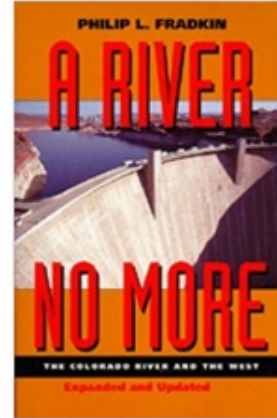
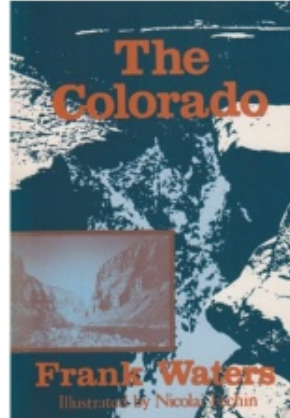
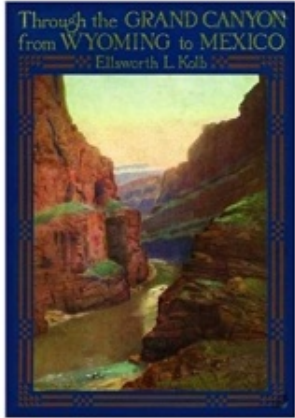


2010



2012





2010-2012  
Waterman, et al.

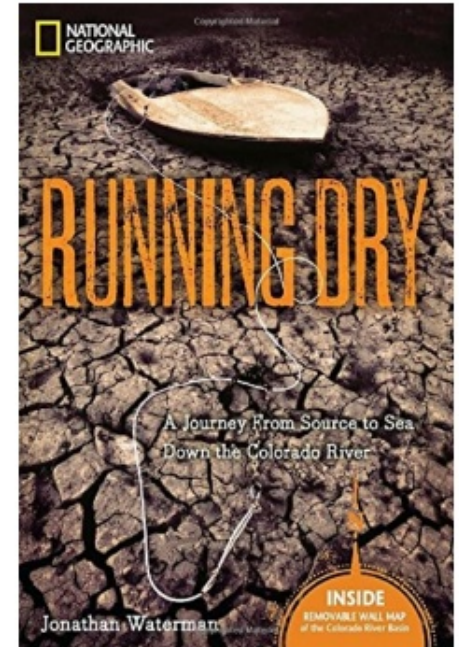


# Stories do work.

Analytical work

Political work

Material work

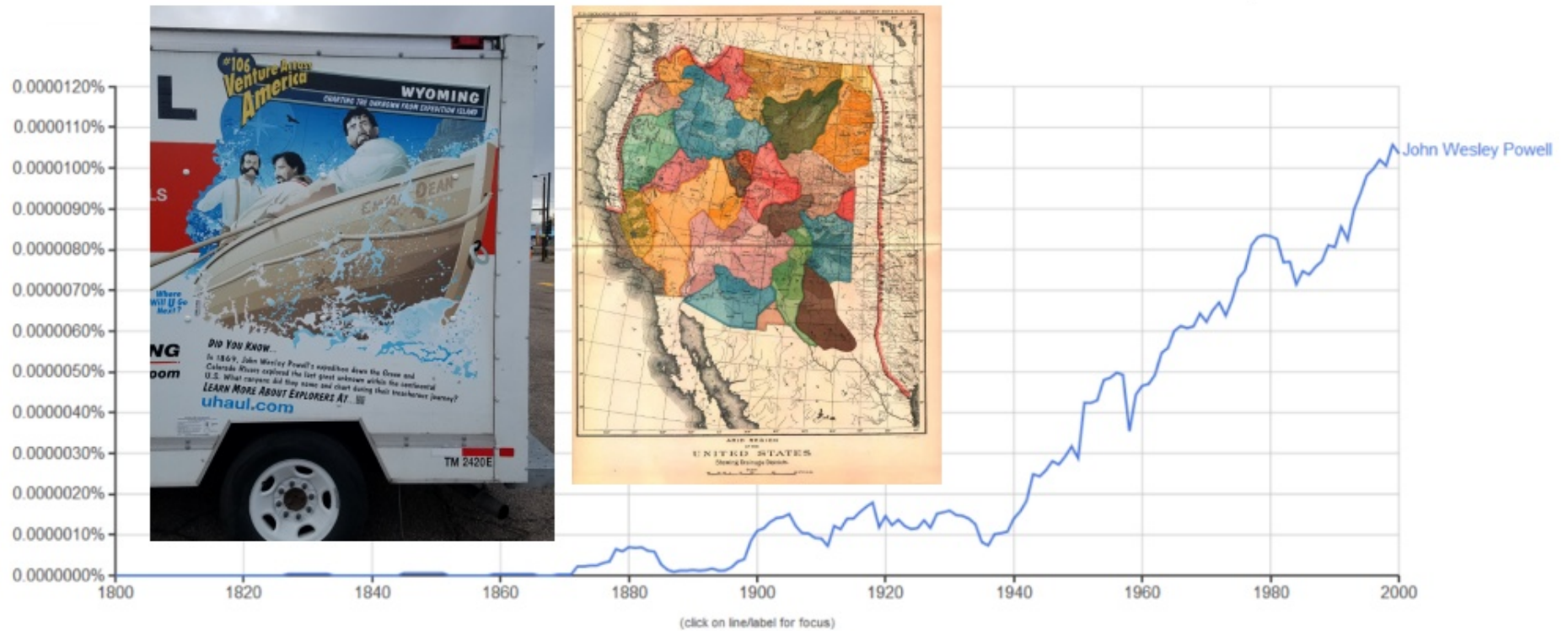




# A Few Questions to Ask of Stories...

- 1) WHO: Who is telling the story?
- 2) WHY: Why are they telling the story?
- 3) WHAT or WHO does the story include/exclude?
- 4) WHAT: What are the effects of telling the story?

# Powell as Adventurer, Powell as Prophet





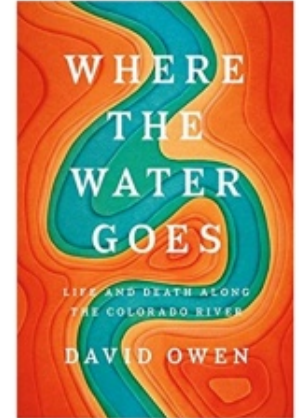
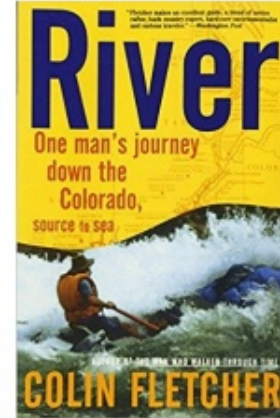
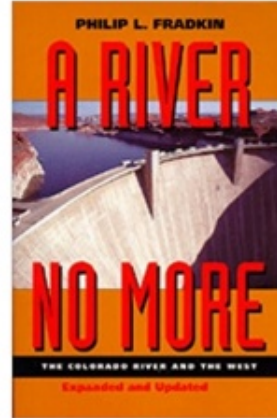
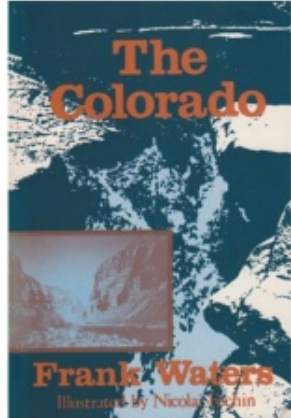
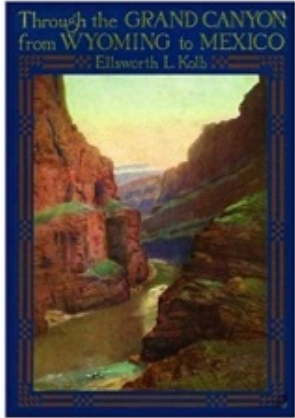
# Implications of Powell's Story

- To whom was it "The Great Unknown"?
- Makes the dominant voice of the Colorado River white, male, and colonial
- Creates and perpetuates a black and white story of good v. evil

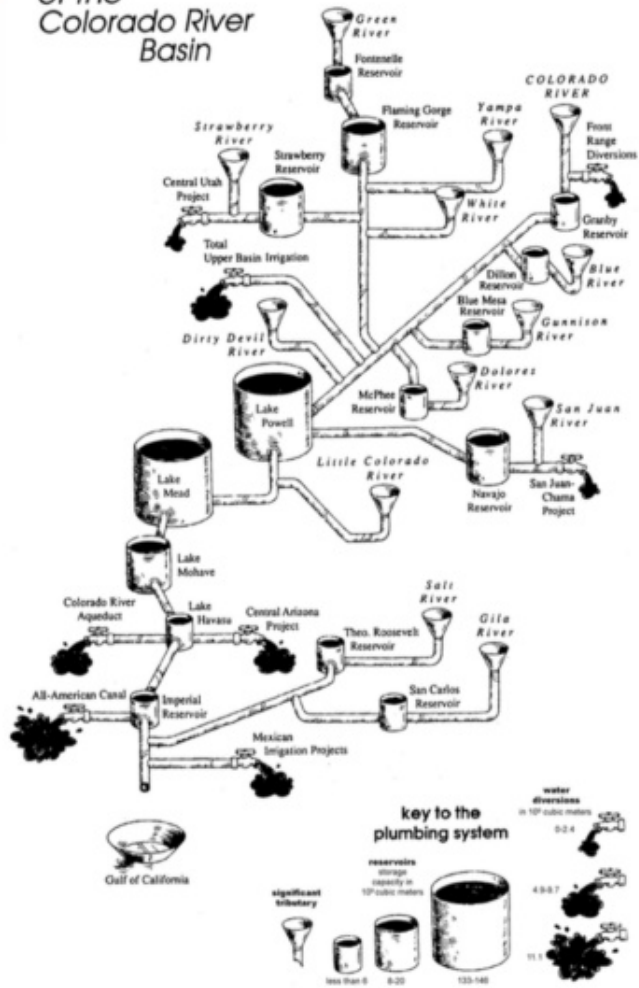




2010-2012  
Waterman,  
et al.



the **plumbing**  
of the  
Colorado River  
Basin




Upper Basin



Lower Basin



Mexico

An aerial photograph of a person in a blue kayak on a vibrant turquoise river. The river is surrounded by dark, rugged canyon walls. The text "Remains of a River" is overlaid in large white font, with "source to sea down the colorado" in a smaller white font below it.

# Remains of a River

source to sea down the colorado



# Implications of the Source-to-Sea Stories

- Furthers Powell narrative limitations regarding representativeness/diversity
- Colorado River problem-solving stories don't fit the structure
- Assumes the most important Colorado River transect is the main stem of the river





# Storytelling Moving Forward

- Elevating a broader range of voices from the **past** and the **present** makes room for broader range of voices in the **future**
- The number of mediums and platforms for telling and sharing creative river stories is **growing rapidly**, and many are free of narrative gatekeepers
- These two things combined create the **space** and provide the **tools** for exploring new narrative frameworks that draw insights from a range of perspectives and forms of expertise

Thank you.



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Questions?



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