PUBLIC HISTORY PROJECT ANNUAL REPORT

PREPARED BY
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The UW-Madison Public History Project recently finished the first year of research. In that time, we have worked tirelessly to uncover and give voice to the histories of discrimination and resistance on campus—a task which seems more urgent and necessary than ever. As I reflect on this past calendar year, I am impressed by what our small team was able to accomplish. Facing a global pandemic which shuttered the archives and interrupted all of our daily lives, our students found ways to complete research, engage with the community, and present their research publicly. In response to the murder of George Floyd at the hands of police, many of us took to the streets to protest injustice in our community. Our students, even while protesting, still found time to research the history of racism at UW and to draw connections between our current moment and the past. They did all of this while pursuing degrees, a process which is time consuming, stressful, and physically and emotionally challenging. I am inspired, not only by the research our students have completed this year, but also by their dedication to the difficult work this project aims to accomplish in the shadow of this unprecedented historical moment.

This report details only a small amount of research our students were able to complete. We have uncovered stories of hate and violence, stories of hope and resilience, stories of struggle and protest, and stories of community and collectivity. Their work gets us closer to understanding the complex and immeasurable ways our history continues to affect our present.

While archival research is a critical component of this work, much of the history we aim to uncover is not documented in the archives. Because of this, and understanding the need for socially-distant work in the face of the pandemic, our students focused upon conducting oral histories with students, faculty, alumni, and community members. Not only do these oral histories work against the incomplete records available in the archives, but they also allow us to understand history more intimately from the perspective of those who experienced it, particularly those marginalized in traditional histories.

As a team, we have worked hard to engage with our community through class visits, public presentations, and digital engagement platforms like our blog and Instagram account. Yet, we know the work of community engagement never ends. We also know that engaging with our community in traditional face-to-face interactions will not be possible for the foreseeable future as we aim to protect ourselves and our community from the pandemic. We remain committed to sharing our research with the campus community and providing opportunities for the everyone to meaningfully engage and provide critical feedback on our work. To do so, we plan to create and participate in a series of digital lectures, online public presentations, and listening sessions to deepen community engagement and to provide space for community participation.

Following the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Tony McDade, Ahmaud Arbery, Elijah McClain, and countless others, and the continued national uprising, we feel a renewed sense of purpose and a heightened sense of responsibility to do this historical work. As much of the current public conversation focuses on the national history of racism and white supremacy in the United States, we feel it is important to consider our local history within this national framework. How are our histories of racism in Madison, Wisconsin affecting our community today? It is incumbent upon each community to investigate, to reckon, and to imagine and enact forms of historical justice. That is the purpose of this project. We remain dedicated to doing this difficult historical work to support our campus community in the fight for justice and liberation.

In Solidarity,

Kacie Lucchini Butcher
Public History Project Director
YEAR AT A GLANCE

450 HOURS | 110 CUBIC FEET
Graduate and undergraduate student researchers spent over 450 hours researching in the archive and accessed over 110 cubic feet of archival material.

111 VOLUMES
Student researchers read 47 volumes of the Badger Yearbook and 64 volumes of The Daily Cardinal, covering research topics in the 1900s, 1910s, 1920s, 1950s, and 1980s.

91 INTERVIEWS | 164 HOURS OF AUDIO
Student researchers for the project completed 51 oral history interviews, with a total 112 hours of audio. In partnership with HIST 136: Sports, Recreation, and Society, undergraduate students completed an additional 40 oral history interviews with current and former UW Athletes, with a total audio of 52 hours.

OCTOBER 1947; IRIS RAYMOND ALEXANDER IS EVICTED FROM UNIVERSITY APARTMENTS FOR DATING A BLACK MAN. CONSTANCE FELTON IS EVICTED FOR SUPPORTING HER. NEWSPAPER ARTICLE FROM THE MILWAUKEE JOURNAL, COURTESY OF THE UW ARCHIVES.
Over the past calendar year, the Public History Project’s History Corps, comprised of undergraduate and graduate student researchers, combed through the archives to find the stories and histories about UW-Madison that are often neglected. Here are some of our findings.

Graduate student Emma Wathen spent the Fall 2019 semester researching the history of disability on campus. She was able to document the experiences of disabled people at UW, including the many instances of resistance and protest undertaken by disabled students fighting for their place in the university. She also found materials focused upon administrative policy changes following the passing of the Americans with Disability Act (ADA) in 1990. Her research helps us understand the experiences and the struggles of people with visible and invisible disability in our campus community. She detailed the experience of one student’s fight for accommodations in her blog post “Access Denied: Brigid McGuire vs. The University of Wisconsin-Madison,” now available on our website.

Undergraduate student Asher Bernick-Roehr spent the Spring 2020 semester researching the history of the UW-Madison Police Department (UWPD). He was able to document the complex relationship between the UWPD, the Madison Police Department, the University, and the UW-Madison community of students, faculty, and staff. His research was particularly challenging as records detailing these interactions are scarce. His research helps us to better understand why these archival gaps exist, and how these lost histories affect our communities’ understanding of the history of policing on campus.

Graduate student Angelica Euseary spent the Spring 2020 semester researching the 1988 Madison Plan, and its predecessor the Steering Committee on Minority Affairs Report from November of 1987, colloquially known as the Holley Report. She was able to document the process by which the plan was implemented, its immediate reception in the UW community, and its early effects upon the campus. She was also able to complete numerous interviews with administrators, faculty members, and alumni who helped to create the Holley Report. Her research helps us to understand the impact of administrative diversity initiatives and how intent does not always line up with policy outcomes. Angelica also researched the history of racialized violence against Black women on campus and shared her personal experiences in her blog post “Are Black Women Safe at UW-Madison?,” now available on our website.
Graduate student Edward Frame spent the 2019-2020 academic year researching the 1969 Black Student Strike and its effects on the campus community. He examined the history of Black student resistance on campus prior to the strike, the organizing that led to the 1969 strike action, and the effect it had on students, faculty, and alumni. He was able to interview multiple strike participants, including some who were expelled for their participation, about their experiences. His research helps us to understand the power of student protest, the organizing and activism needed to form and sustain a movement on campus, and the life-altering consequences imposed upon those who dare to resist the status quo. To read more about Edward's research, you can read his blog post “The Rise and Fall of “Ethnic Centers” at UW-Madison (1968-1974),” on our website.

Graduate student Dustin Cohan spent the Spring 2020 semester researching the history of the Chicana/o Latina/o Studies Program at UW. He examined the early student organizing of La Raza Unida, a group of Chicano student activists, the rising political support for the program across the state of Wisconsin, and the eventual establishment of the program through legislative means in 1975. His research helps us better understand the struggle to establish ethnic studies programs, and the importance of these programs to students, faculty, and community. To read more about his research, look for his upcoming blog post “Surviving Conditions and Competing Visions: The Fight for a Chicano Studies Department,” on our website.

This is only a small example of the research we have completed which covers over 150 years, highlighting the experiences of diverse racial and social groups, disabled people, and the LGBTQ+ community. In the coming months, we will publish research detailing the history of blackface and minstrelsy on campus, the history of LGBTQ+ resistance and protest, the history of the UW-Madison Police Department, and the experiences of Hmong students, alumni, and faculty at UW-Madison. All of this work gets us closer to understanding our communities’ history of racism, exclusion, and resistance.
WHERE WE GO FROM HERE

Researching and uncovering the history of UW-Madison is only the beginning of this work. We are committed to providing multiple ways for our campus community to engage with this history and begin the difficult work of reckoning. Here are some of our planned project outcomes.

**Physical Exhibit**

The project will culminate in a physical history exhibit to be displayed in a central campus location during the Fall of 2022. The exhibit will showcase archival research conducted by project researchers, as well as oral history interviews, photos, videos, newspaper clippings, and ephemera. Exhibits are naturally limited by their size, square footage, and visitor attention. We will not be able to tell all stories we have uncovered in the physical exhibit. Yet, we are prepared to present a wide-ranging view of the histories of discrimination and resistance at UW-Madison. Additional narratives will be available on the digital exhibit website. A physical exhibit will allow the campus community to engage with this history in a way that is informative, engaging, and interactive.

**Archival Research Database**

In partnership with the University Archives and UW Libraries Digital Collection, the project will create an online, searchable, taggable database of video, images, documents, and other materials archiving non-majority experiences of the campus. This database with compliment the digital exhibit website so that visitors can access archival documents as they explore the research presented. It will also serve as an online repository for future researchers who may wish to delve further into this complex history.

**Curricular Materials**

The project will produce educational materials including lesson plans that translate the project’s findings into lecture and seminar activities that help our students engage with the complex history of their community in the classroom. As the research of the project is ongoing, it is difficult at this point to identify the curricular components most appropriate for various campus units. Some possible educational outcomes include adaptable course curriculum for diverse units across campus and orientation materials.

**Digital Exhibit Website**

In partnership with University Marketing, the project will create a digital exhibit website that allows visitors to interact with archival materials, listen to oral histories, watch project videos, and reflect on the complex history the project has uncovered. The digital exhibit will engage members of the UW-Madison community who may be unable to physically attend the exhibit and/or who may not wish to revisit campus, but still want to interact with the project research. The website will also allow us to provide additional histories that may not be able to be displayed in the physical exhibit.
WHERE WE GO FROM HERE

Campus and Community Engagement

The project will provide opportunities for campus and community members to “talk-back” to the history, the project itself, or particular topics within it. Below are some of the possible opportunities for campus and community to engage with the history explored.

Interactive Feedback in Exhibit

The physical and digital exhibits will provide a space for visitors to “talk back” to the history explored and engage more deeply with the content.

Lecture Series

The project will organize a lecture series focused upon the themes displayed in the exhibit. These lectures will offer an academic analysis of the themes presented and allow the campus community to engage collectively with the content. We hope to partner with the Wisconsin Union Distinguished Lecture Series, the Center for the Humanities Lecture Series, and the Department of Diversity, Equity, and Educational Achievement to bring nationally known scholars to campus. The lecture series will also feature speakers from UW-Madison and the Madison community who can speak more intimately to our local experience.

Identity Based Group Discussions

The project will partner with various experienced facilitators to host identity-based discussion groups that allow people to process difficult histories.

Framing document

The project will produce a final written product that summarizes the research findings of the project (ca. 10,000 words) to be put online and in the University Archives for access in perpetuity. This written product will adhere to the more traditional academic output of the institution and allow future scholars to access our sources, analyses, and findings. A formal or official history book about the University has not been written since the 1970s, leaving the last 50 years of history undocumented in one central, accessible location. This written product will begin to address this issue.

We know that this may not cover the totality of outcomes required of this project. As more research is uncovered, and as we consult further with the UW-Madison community, we may find the need for additional project outcomes beyond those listed here. The project remains flexible to this community need. We are committed to allowing the campus community to engage with this history in a multiplicity of ways.
While archival research is an important aspect of the Public History Project, it is not the only way that our student researchers research the past. In fact, many of the stories we seek to tell are not well-documented in the archives, in student newspapers like The Daily Cardinal, or in administrative documents. In an effort to work against this archival erasure, our student researchers conduct oral history interviews with students, faculty, alumni, and community members.

Oral history is an essential tool for historians and for the Public History Project. It helps us to capture individual experiences, understand how people feel the larger forces of history, and record and document these experiences for future generations. Knowing that archives, including those at UW-Madison do not fully and completely document the experiences of marginalized communities, we view oral history as one of the only tools at our disposal to capture this history.

Over the past year, our History Corps researchers have completed 51 oral history interviews, with a total 112 hours of audio. We have interviewed former university administrators about important policy decisions. We have interviewed alumni about their experiences on campus with racial discrimination, their work as campus organizers and protest leaders, and how their experiences at UW shaped their lives. We have interviewed current and former faculty members about their research, their activism on campus, and how they support their students in the face of racism and violence on campus. We have interviewed current students about campus climate, their experience with racism and micro-aggressions, and their work to advocate for change on campus in the face of violence. All of these interviews allow us to more deeply understand the history of discrimination on campus while giving voice to those who have experienced and fought against it.
Uncovering the voices of the oppressed and marginalized is not necessarily a reckoning. Presenting racist history does not dispel racism. What we do with this history is where the real work is begins. What we do with this history will define the type of campus community we aim to be. And in the long run, what we do with this history should not be up to the project director or individual administrators, but should instead rest in the hands of the campus community. Researching, uncovering, and documenting histories of racism then is merely the beginning of a long journey towards creating an equitable future at UW Madison.

Understanding the histories of discrimination and resistance at UW-Madison will be an important first step for many in our campus community. Yet, many others have long recognized the history of racism present at UW-Madison. The conversations about our history of discrimination – new and ongoing – are an important part of historical reckoning. We do not need to wait for a full picture of the history of racism at UW-Madison to begin a discussion about how our history is affecting our present. This is why we are committed to continuing the work of engaging our campus community throughout every stage of the Public History Project.

This past year we had the opportunity to engage with community members through class visits, public presentations, and digital engagement platforms like our blog and Instagram account. While the pandemic has hindered our ability to do this engagement face-to-face, we have found ways to meaningfully partner with student groups and stakeholders through digital methods. During the week of April 27th, the project collaborated with Black Cultural Center (BCC), the Latinx Cultural Center (LCC), the Asian Pacific Islander Desi American Student Center (APIDA SC), to create online engagement events that provided information about the Public History Project and allowed graduate students to present their research to the public. The project also collaborated with the McBurney Disability Resources Center and the Associated Students of Madison (ASM) to present "Disability History at UW" for #UWCelebratesADA30.

We remain committed to engaging with our community partners and stakeholders by participating in digital engagement events until in-person events are safe for ourselves and our community. We are schedule to participate in digital campus events and visit courses throughout the Fall of 2020 and are in the process of developing a series of digital events for the Spring of 2020.

Is there an event you think we should present at? A class you'd like us to visit? Please contact us at publichistoryproject@wisc.edu.
Archival Research

In the immediate aftermath of the closure of campus and the University Archives, graduate and undergraduate researchers shifted research priorities to emphasize modes of research best done at a distance, and adjusted the semester final products taking into account limited archival access. Prior to the closure of the archives, many student researchers had already digitized hundreds of documents and were able to finish the semester by using these materials to complete their research. However, many of the histories the project works to uncover are not yet digitized and cannot be accessed remotely. As such, pieces of student research are incomplete. In their final reports for the semester, researchers highlighted research questions that have gone unanswered; further archival material that needs to be accessed; and individuals to be interviewed for future oral histories. These reports will help guide research initiatives in the future, and hopefully minimize the time needed in archives for future student researchers.

Oral History

Prior to the closure of the archives, student researchers tailored the number of oral history interviews conducted to their individual research topics. While some histories are well suited to conducting oral histories, with people who are living and able and/or willing to be interviewed, other histories pose more challenges. After the closure of the archives, graduate and undergraduate researchers shifted their focus to conducting oral histories. Many of the oral history interviews conducted prior to the pandemic were already completed at a distance, and most of the tools and technologies needed to conduct oral history interviews were already available to our student researchers. This created a natural opportunity for our students to shift their focus toward conducting oral history interviews. Researchers found that individuals were easier to contact and schedule interviews with and that interviews were longer in length. The project gained additional oral history interviews due to the pandemic.
While the project was never meant to be a complete history of discrimination and exclusion at UW, and while the project outcomes were always flexible to community need, the project has always had a clear objective - to recover the voices of those who faced discrimination, to document the histories of exclusion and resistance, and to continue a conversation about the university’s history and its effect on the present. The loss of valuable archive time due to the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the project’s ability to uncover and give voice to these histories. It has also impacted our ability to collaborate with our community and to engage them in shaping this project.

A project of this magnitude and importance merits careful, considered, and detailed research, planned and built in collaboration with community and campus stakeholders. This crisis has damaged our ability to do that. Yet, this project remains a crucial part of the conversation about how UW can build a more equitable and just campus community. After assessing the project losses due the pandemic in collaboration with our Advisory Committee, the Public History Project has decided to pursue a one-year extension that will allow us to complete more archival research, conduct more oral history interviews, and give us the time to more deeply engage our campus community.

We believe that the cumulative effects of this loss warrant an extension. We also know that UW-Madison faces financial challenges as a result of the pandemic. The Chancellor has confirmed her initial financial commitment to the project. To account for the costs associated with an extension, the project will seek additional funding through strategic partnerships and grant funding.
The project is advised by a Steering Committee comprised of faculty, staff, students, and community members who consult with the Project Director and student researchers on essential operational issues like community engagement, research goals, educational outcomes, and long-term legacy projects. Our current committee members are:

Stephen Kantrowitz | Committee Chair
Plaenert-Bascom Professor of History

Cindy I-Fen Cheng
Professor of History and Asian American Studies; Director of the Asian American Studies Program

Christy Clark-Pujara
Associate Professor | Department of Afro-American Studies

Daniel Einstein
Historic & Cultural Resources Manager | Campus Planning & Landscape Architecture

Noah Weeth Feinstein
Associate Professor | Department of Curriculum and Instruction

Brenda Gonzalez
Director of Community Relations | UW-Madison

Demond Hill
UW-Madison Student

Gabe Javier
Associate Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs, Identity, and Inclusion

Omar Poler
American Indian Curriculum Coordinator | Teacher Education Center

Dr. Floyd Rose
President | 100 Black Men of Madison

DECEMBER 1989; PROFESSOR JOE ELDER ADDRESSES THE FACULTY SENATE DURING A VOTE TO SEVER UNIVERSITY TIED WITH THE ROTC DUE TO EHIR DISCRIMINATORY POLICY ON SECUAL IDENTITY. PHOTO COURTEST OF THE UW ARCHIVES.
FOLLOW OUR WORK
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To follow along with new research and archival findings, follow us on Instagram.

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@UWPUBLICHISTORYPROJECT

To learn more about the history we are uncovering and to read student research, visit our blog.

WEBSITE & BLOG:
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GOT ANY QUESTIONS?

E-MAIL US AT
PUBLICHISTORYPROJECT@WISC.EDU

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