

## **EPISODE 4: “Rushing Toward Home” TRANSCRIPT [FINAL] w/ Citations**

**ALEXANDRA PASQUALONE:** Hey, it’s Alex. If you’re just starting with this episode, go back and listen to episode 1. Things will make more sense.

**KACIE LUCCHINI BUTCHER:** So...Alex, do you know any sorority chants?

**AP:** Hmm...Umm “Be [claps] Aggressive...[claps] Be-e-Aggressive [claps].

**KLB:** Isn’t that a cheer chant? Like from *Bring It On (2000)*?

**[SOUND BITE FROM *BRING IT ON*]**

**AP:** Yeah...clearly I don’t know any, but I did spend my first four years in Madison on Langdon Street sandwiched between sororities and fraternities.

**KLB:** Ohhh, that must have been...interesting.

**AP:** Yeah. Friday nights were *active* to say the least. Some of those houses though were gorgeous. I actually regret not asking for a tour from one of my neighbors. I can’t imagine the bathroom situation with that many girls though. Growing up, I shared a bathroom with my two sisters, and I am often surprised we all made it out alive.

**KLB:** Sounds like you’d have to “be-e-aggressive” to get a turn.

**[RIMSHOT SOUND]**

**AP:** I see whatcha did there.

**KLB:** Yeah, not my finest moment. Anyways...

**[THEME MUSIC]**

**AP:** From the Rebecca M. Blank Center for Campus History, this is *Reorientation*, a podcast exploring the history of UW–Madison you won’t get on your campus welcome tour. I’m Alexandra Pasqualone.

**KLB:** And I’m Kacie Lucchini Butcher

**AP:** In episode four, we’re taking a bit of a detour. Most UW students will spend their time in Madison living in dorms and rental apartments... and navigating the challenges that come with

those. But there are also alternative housing options that students have carved out for themselves.

**KLB:** A Greek house or a residential co-op will definitely provide a different college living experience. But....how do they actually work as housing?

**AP:** Who's welcome in these environments? Who gets left out? And do these alternatives actually work to solve any of the persistent housing problems that UW students face?

## **[MUSIC]**

**AP:** So we've talked about the history of pre-and-post-war dorms... and the private rental market around campus. But like we said in the intro, there are these other housing options that developed alongside those big categories. You just don't necessarily think of them primarily as housing.

**KLB:** Take Greek life for instance. What might pop into your mind is something out of a movie... parties, and crazy pledge rituals, and matching outfits, and parties.

**AP:** And of course, the mansions... beautiful brick buildings with big Greek letters. But it's also housing to thousands of UW students.

**KLB:** Dozens of women or men in a house, social pressure, the freedom of college life... It feels like a recipe for disaster, but somehow it works (for the most part). But what is the history of Greek housing in Madison?

**AP:** So during the late 1800s, a lot of male UW students belonged to fraternal organizations—guy clubs—and these groups started building chapter houses on land they purchased close to the university.<sup>1</sup> A lack of residence halls at the time meant these fraternities filled a dire housing need. But beyond just a room to live in, the houses gave students more freedom to choose where they lived and who they socialized with.<sup>2</sup> To this day, those things remain primary concerns among students.

**KLB:** For folks unfamiliar with Madison, the main Greek neighborhood is Langdon Street—curving up along the lakeshore right off the center of campus, and lined with ornate mansions. Many of today's fraternity and sorority houses originally belonged to wealthy Madison

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<sup>1</sup> Kristin Czubkowski, "Go Greek Again! Greek Life Turns 150 Years," University of Wisconsin-Madison News, May 2, 2007, <https://news.wisc.edu/go-greek-again-greek-life-turns-150-years/>. Established in 1857, Phi Delta Theta was the first of Madison's fraternities. Less than 20 years later, Kappa Kappa Gamma was established as the first sorority on campus.

<sup>2</sup> Kristin Czubkowski, "Go Greek Again! Greek Life Turns 150 Years." Arthur Hove was also a former assistant to the chancellor and provost.

families of the early 1900s.<sup>3</sup> So does it cost a family fortune to live in one of these gorgeous spaces?

**AP:** It turns out the pricing isn't as high as you might think. Across the 13 sororities and fraternities of the 2022-2023 academic year, new member dues averaged to about 1200 dollars. For the same year, the room and board per semester equaled about the same price per month...1200 dollars.<sup>4</sup> On its own this cost is fairly reasonable when considering the meals the come with it. There are however a ton of hidden costs.

**KLB:** If you've spent any time on sorority Tiktok...(I have) you've seen the dancing in matching outfits and rooms decked out like upscale apartments. These are not the spaces of college dorms in years past.

### [TIKTOK SOUND BITES]

**KLB:** Add to that the cost of fundraisers, socials, and events, it's not cheap and certainly not sustainable for students on a budget.

**AP:** Beyond the individual costs, there's the bigger question of owning and operating these houses, because they're not university-run like the dorms, and they're not a business run by a landlord or a management company.

**KLB:** According to UW's website, chapter houses are owned and operated independently.<sup>5</sup> The University's Office of Fraternity and Sorority Life oversees Greek organizations. But depending on the house, some combination of alumni, volunteers, and the national Greek letter organizations are in charge of running these spaces.<sup>6</sup>

**AP:** To get an idea of what it takes to get one of these Greek houses up and running, look at one of the newer ones at UW. The Pi Lambda Phi fraternity has been operating on campus since the 1980s, but they were only able to establish a permanent chapter house a few years

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<sup>3</sup> "Madison Homes," UW Archives and Records Management, <https://www.library.wisc.edu/archives/exhibits/campus-history-projects/the-brittingham-family/madison-homes/> Some of the houses that Greek life reside in are formerly owned by the Brittinghams, a prominent Madison family of the early 1900s with a significant investment in properties around campus. A house on 211 Langdon Street was one such home of the Brittinghams. After living there between 1897 and 1901 it later transformed into housing for Kappa Phi Gamma, Phi Sigma Kappa, and Kappa Psi. By the 1940s it was transformed into a non-Greek female boarding house. Similarly, the Brittingham's 640 North Henry Street home, was once the location of many social gatherings held by the family. By 1915, the same structure housed 23 young men as part of the Alpha Delta Phi's who presumably held "social gatherings" of their own.

<sup>4</sup> "2022-2023 Panhellenic Association Primary Recruitment Financial Information," UW-Madison, Fraternity & Sorority Life, <https://fsl.wisc.edu/documents/2022-2023-panhellenic-association-primary-recruitment-financial-information/> The exact pricing is \$5,172.00, roughly \$1,293 a month.

<sup>5</sup> "FAQs," University of Wisconsin Madison, Fraternity and Sorority Life, <https://fsl.wisc.edu/membership/faqs/>

<sup>6</sup> "FAQs."

back.<sup>7</sup> It took significant fundraising and support from alumni to both purchase and renovate the chapter's three-story home.<sup>8</sup> So, as a form of campus housing, Greek life ain't cheap, either for the organizations or for the students.

**KLB:** And, even if you *can* cover these costs, you first need to earn your spot.

**AP:** Getting in is no easy feat. Rushing is a commitment... of time, effort, money. It can be tedious and stressful and not everyone gets in.

**KLB:** That's not even to mention discrimination. Greek life saw significant enrollment in the mid-20th century as veterans returned from World War II and U.S. universities boomed.<sup>9</sup> But while some students found a welcoming space among members, Black and Jewish students often faced harassment and discrimination from these groups.<sup>10</sup> It wasn't until 1960 that UW leaders enacted an official policy requiring all university-approved housing to remove discriminatory language from chapter charters.<sup>11</sup> But it took a full 14 years for the last clause to be removed.<sup>12</sup>

**AP:** And this didn't end discrimination in fraternities and sororities.<sup>13</sup> In fact, if anything, efforts aimed at curbing discrimination sparked more insidious attempts to exclude certain communities from accessing Greek life and the housing that comes with it.<sup>14</sup>

**KLB:** Over the decades, Greek organizations have consistently argued that as membership organizations, they have a First Amendment Right to the freedom of association.<sup>15</sup> University restrictions over recruitment, activities, and other social events might violate this right, meaning Greek chapters have the final say who they choose to accept. Essentially, 'we have a right to pick our own friends.'

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<sup>7</sup> "Pi Lambda Phi," Image, University of Wisconsin-Madison Archives, <https://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/MWM2NPZG2EA7E8Q>. Imagine in the UW-Madison archives suggest the group was present and active on campus as early as the 1960s; however, according to the "About Us" page on their WI Omega webpage, the organization dissolved in 1967 and due to Vietnam War riots. By 1983 a group of men reestablished the chapter on campus. See "About Us," Pi Lambda Phi-WI Omega, <https://wisc.pilambdaphi.org/about>.

<sup>8</sup> Shawn Mahoney, "UW-Madison Buys House," Pi Lambda Phi, Nov 30, 2022, <https://www.pilambdaphi.org/news/uw-madison-buys-house/>

<sup>9</sup> "Student Life," University of Wisconsin-Madison, Sifting & Reckoning, <https://reckoning.wisc.edu/student-life/index.html>

<sup>10</sup> "Student Life."

<sup>11</sup> "Student Life."

<sup>12</sup> "Student Life."

<sup>13</sup> "Student Life."

<sup>14</sup> "Student Life." Reports have cited racially-themed parties as well as use of racist and bigoted slurs by Greek life on campus, contributing to such insidious means of ensuring certain groups feel less welcome in Greek life spaces.

<sup>15</sup> "Greek Life: Know Your Rights!," FIRE: Foundation for Individual Rights and Expressions, <https://www.thefire.org/sites/default/files/2023/03/FIRE%20Guide%20for%20Greek%20Life%3A%20Know%20Your%20Rights.pdf>; See also, Samuel Strom, "Freedom of Association," FindLaw, Aug 2024, <https://constitution.findlaw.com/amendment1/first-amendment-freedom-of-association.html#:~:text=What%20is%20the%20Right%20to.Intimate%20association.>

**AP:** So in a sense, Freedom of Association acts as an acceptable form of discrimination masquerading as freedom of speech protection.<sup>16</sup>

**KLB:** Exactly... because anyone looking at the demographic makeup of chapter enrollments at Madison can easily see that recruits seldom reflect the broader diversity of the university... or even the State of Wisconsin.

**AP:** Such exclusion has led to the formation of Black Greek letter organizations and cultural-based fraternal organizations. Unlike predominantly white chapters, these groups offered a safe space for non-white students who faced such discrimination. Even so, Greek life problems persist. A 2019 external review reported BGLOs continued to find Langdon a difficult place for them among predominantly white fraternities and sororities housed there.<sup>17</sup>

**KLB:** And there's another issue...hazing. While prohibited in several states, humiliating initiation practices continue to play a part in some Greek letter organizations.<sup>18</sup> In 2019, UW-Madison suspended a fraternity for hazing violations.<sup>19</sup>

**AP:** And even for those who don't experience these outdated initiation rituals, sometimes the living standards for new recruits aren't all sunshine and rainbows. Sleeping porches or 'cold rooms' are common among larger schools such as Purdue and Indiana University. And they are as crappy as they sound... military-style barracks where rows of bunk beds are placed on porches, attics, or in basements and residents are subjected to dark, cold conditions.<sup>20</sup> Madison's climate helps to mitigate these hazardous spaces, but these "cold-rooms" speak to the ultimate problem of Greek life... its restrictive space.

**KLB:** With limited room and only so many chapters, it's *impossible* for Greek life alone to supplement housing shortages. There needs to be other options.

**[MUSIC]**

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<sup>16</sup> For examples of connections between Greek life and exclusionary policies see Jayla Butler, 'Founded on the principle of exclusion': In Greek life, the harm to marginalized communities runs deeper than individual actions,' Student Life, July 28, 2020, <https://www.studlife.com/news/2020/07/28/founded-on-the-principle-of-exclusion-in-greek-life-the-harm-to-marginalized-communities-runs-deeper-than-individual-actions>

<sup>17</sup> "Student Life."

<sup>18</sup> For more information about the problems of hazing on college campuses see Justin, Klawans, "America's hazing problem and why nothing seems to change," *The Week*, July 23, 2023, <https://theweek.com/education/1025117/americas-hazing-problem-why-nothing-change>

<sup>19</sup> "Alpha Sigma Phi fraternity suspended by UW-Madison for hazing violation," Fox47, February 23, 2019, <https://fox47.com/news/local/alpha-sigma-phi-fraternity-suspended-by-uw-madison-for-hazing-violation>

<sup>20</sup> Kate McGregor, "Why Do Sorority Houses Have 'Cold Rooms'? Inside the Bizarre TikTok Phenomenon," *House Beautiful*, October 9, 2024, <https://www.housebeautiful.com/lifestyle/a62555253/sleeping-porch-sorority-cold-room/>

**KLB:** Alright, other options. How about dozens of students living together in big old houses near campus, sharing meals, socializing, having parties... It's not a dorm or a private apartment.

**AP:** Ummmm... wait... didn't... didn't we just...

**KLB:** No, this is totally different. I'm talking about co-ops! Housing cooperatives!

**AP:** Co-ops, like the hippy grocery stores... but housing?

**KLB:** I mean... basically yeah. Very broad strokes. In housing co-ops, residents own shares in the corporation that owns the building they live in. This means they have some say over things like maintenance and property decisions. And residents are responsible for day-to-day operations: cleaning... budgeting... supplies... house rules... in some cases shared meals.<sup>21</sup> This means co-ops are often way more affordable and tend to stay that way over time. And they address some of the other housing hurdles people struggle with in Madison, like dealing with landlords and the housing insecurity often associated with rentals.

**AP:** For all these benefits, co-ops tend to fly under the radar as far as student housing goes. They don't have the same sort of quintessential college-y cache as Greek life. But co-ops have been part of UW's campus for almost as long. And throughout the university's history, they've been especially important in providing both housing and community for people who weren't always welcome in those "traditional" (read: white, christian, male) college spaces.

**KLB:** In Madison, cooperative housing started to gain traction in the 1910s and '20s.<sup>22</sup> Many of the early co-ops were organized around certain majors or interests. Some of the first women's co-ops were for German and French language students—*La Maison Francaise* anyone?<sup>23</sup>

**AP:** Ooo lala!

**KLB:** But by the '40s and '50s, students were already clearly thinking about co-op houses as alternative housing options to fight discrimination and exclusion.

**AP:** In the early 1940s the World War II draft emptied campus of most of its male students, leaving male co-op houses sitting vacant.<sup>24</sup> In 1943, a group of female students saw the

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<sup>21</sup> "Housing Cooperative Overview," National Association of Housing Cooperatives, Washington D.C.

<sup>22</sup> "Property Record: 228 N Charter St. Architecture and History Inventory," Property Record Wisconsin, Historical Society, <https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Property/HI95423>

<sup>23</sup> "Property Record: 228 N Charter St. Architecture and History Inventory." The Charter Street house was one of several women's housing cooperatives in Madison of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Others included the Deutsches House or German House in 1914, the Mortar Board House in 1915, and in 1918, the French House or La Maison Francaise. By 1919, consolidation of the Mortar Board House, Blue Dragon House, and A.C.A. Cottage house resulted in the Tabard Inn in 1919. Charter House and Anderson House formed in 1921, La Casa Cervantes or Spanish House in 1923, and the Fallows House in 1924.

<sup>24</sup> "History of Cooperative Housing in Madison, WI."

opportunity to turn one of those buildings into the Groves Women's Co-op, the first interracial women's cooperative at UW.<sup>25</sup> As Virginia Wicks, one of the Groves' founding members put it:

**[OLD-TIMEY VOICE]**

*"The house is open to any girl on the campus. We are particularly anxious to relieve the housing situation by removing the bars of discrimination. We can't win the war unless we win it on the home front as well as the fighting front."<sup>26</sup>*

**KLB:** And Groves residents *did* face a war of sorts as they dealt with pushback from parts of university leadership and Madison community members. One university dean initially worried such a progressive space would foster radical thinking. And she may not have been wrong exactly... a decent portion of members in the 1940s identified as communists.<sup>27</sup>

**AP:** But other complaints were just racism. Some of Groves' Johnson street neighbors took issue with an interracial co-op. During a community meeting, the neighborhood declared the "mixed living space" a "nuisance" and pushed to have it removed.<sup>28</sup> Their efforts, however, were unsuccessful.

**KLB:** As we've talked about in earlier episodes, housing discrimination was *rampant* in Madison in the mid-20th century. But by the early 1950s many of UW's co-ops had carved out a small but important niche as a refuge for minority students.

**AP:** Groves House in particular had just a wild amount of remarkable women from different backgrounds during this period. Marie Cochrane, a Black student, lived at Groves in 1951. She was an experienced teacher, assistant instructor in the English Department, and a PhD candidate who later completed a Fulbright Fellowship at Oxford.<sup>29</sup>

**KLB:** Nineteen-year-old Japanese-American Carolyn Konoshima served as house president and arrived in Madison after enduring life in an internment camp during World War II.<sup>30</sup>

**AP:** And Adela Kalvary came to Groves in the 1950s after receiving sponsorship from two campus co-ops.<sup>31</sup> She was a Polish student whose mother and relatives were killed in the Holocaust. Kalvary was a member of the Polish underground and survived a slave labor camp

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<sup>25</sup> "Property Record: 228 N Charter St. Architecture and History Inventory." In the late 1980s the Groves House eventually relocated to Gorham street and currently goes by the name Hypatia House.

<sup>26</sup> "History of Cooperative Housing in Madison, WI."

<sup>27</sup> "History of Cooperative Housing in Madison, WI."

<sup>28</sup> "History of Cooperative Housing in Madison, WI,"

<sup>29</sup> Gwyneth Roe, "Feature Story," University of Wisconsin News Service, June 28, 1951,

<https://search.library.wisc.edu/digital/ASKB7VZGKGZ6XS8V/pages/A3ZTHYCKDKWO7W86>

<sup>30</sup> Gwyneth Roe, "Feature Story."

<sup>31</sup> "University Housing: Groves Women's Co-operative Housing," *Society News*, University of Wisconsin News Service, Nov 15, 1951

working 12-hour days in a munitions factory.<sup>32</sup> She has this quote that kind of sums up what these co-ops meant to residents like her at the time:

**[OLD-TIMEY VOICE]**

*“This is the first place where I have learned about tolerance. I didn’t have much experience with that before. Here I learned how a group can live together without hate or prejudice and where people accept you without trying to convert you into something you are not.”<sup>33</sup>*

**KLB:** But beyond these admirable sentiments, co-ops have long been an accessible housing option for another reason too: they’re cheap! Around the time that Adela Kalvary and those other women were living at Groves, rent per semester added up to a whopping 70 dollars for a single room and 65 dollars for a double.<sup>34</sup>

**AP:** Okay wait... per semester?

**KLB:** Yeah! It’s crazy right. That’s less than 20 dollars a month for rent. And for another 6 dollars and 50 cents a week you could buy lunches and dinners every day but Sunday at the nearby Green Lantern Eating Cooperative.<sup>35</sup>

**AP:** But like we mentioned earlier, one of the things that keeps co-ops cheaper than other types of housing is that they come with responsibilities. Weekly cleaning and upkeep, regular meetings to deal with house business, elected officers... And not to cast blanket aspersions on college students, but these are college students...

**AP:** There’s a great oral history recording with a woman named Sandra Kroll who lived in the nearby Zoe Bayliss Student Housing Co-op in the ‘50s. She recalls dealing with her cleaning duties:

*“I was assigned for three weeks in a row, because of some foul up, a job that I didn’t particularly care for that and that was emptying the garbage, getting rid of the garbage at the end of the hallway of each floor, and the third time it was assigned I neglected it on purpose because I had protested and it hadn’t done any good... and so this was the form my protest took.”<sup>36</sup>*

**KLB:** As punishment, Kroll temporarily lost her nighttime *going-out* privileges. Yes—women had a nighttime curfew of 9:30 or 10 o’clock... because 1950s things...

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<sup>32</sup> Gwyneth Roe, “Feature Story.”

<sup>33</sup> Gwyneth Roe, “Feature Story.”

<sup>34</sup> Gwyneth Roe, “Feature Story.”

<sup>35</sup> Gwyneth Roe, “Feature Story.”

<sup>36</sup> “Interview with Sandra Kroll,” University of Wisconsin-Madison, Oral History Program, <https://ohms.library.wisc.edu/viewer.php?cachefile=Kroll.S.452.xml> Kroll’s maiden name was Kanuitsin during her time in school.

**[SANDRA KROLL VOICE]**

*“Apparently the theory in those days was if you keep the girls in then the guys can’t get into any trouble...interesting.”<sup>37</sup>*

**AP:** Okay, so real quick, what about co-op housing at UW today? Those antiquated curfews aren’t around anymore. But the basic ideas are pretty much the same: building community... keeping prices down... taking out the trash.

**KLB:** The main cooperative housing organization in Madison is a nonprofit that currently owns 11 houses in neighborhoods near campus.<sup>38</sup> Accessible housing for everyone is still a core part of the mission. The houses’ websites talk extensively about social justice and providing welcoming spaces for people of different backgrounds and identities.

**AP:** And rent is still comparatively very cheap. Last year, rent for a single room at Sandra Kroll’s old co-op, the Zoe Bayliss house, was listed at 560 dollars a month. Or as little as 255 dollars a month for a quadruple room... utilities and internet included.<sup>39</sup>

**KLB:** That’s especially crazy when you realize that the current location for Zoe Bayliss is in one of those old brick mansions on Langdon Street, right next to all the fraternity and sorority houses.

**AP:** But about that... it’s worth going off on a quick tangent. The Zoe Bayliss Co-op only moved to that Langdon Street spot a few years ago... after the university decided to bulldoze their old building. Bayliss was one of the few co-ops in Madison that operated in a university-owned building. And it did so for almost 70 years. But in 2021, UW leaders announced it was coming down to make way for a new humanities building.<sup>40</sup>

**KLB:** Angela Maloney was the house president at the time. She told the *The Daily Cardinal*:

*“It was frustrating because they talk a lot about wanting to support affordable housing, but then, when push comes to shove, they don’t seem to take that opportunity seriously. They just care about their master plan and what they can do with the new building.”<sup>41</sup>*

**KLB:** Members protested, and organized, and eventually they found their new building. So happy ending here. But it could’ve just as easily gone the other way, and been one more example on a long list of housing choices in Madison that are disappearing.

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<sup>37</sup> “Interview with Sandra Kroll.”

<sup>38</sup> “Madison Community Cooperative (MCC),” Foundation for Intentional Community, <https://www.ic.org/directory/madison-community-cooperative-mcc/?srsltid=AfmBOopRJPMtMe81b4Bd3ItDy5y016J2pEYteoUjmJlyqyJAVb3YJdDk>

<sup>39</sup> “Rates,” Zoe Bayliss Student Housing Cooperative, <https://zoebayliss.wiscweb.wisc.edu/rates/>

<sup>40</sup> Mary Bosch, “UW-Madison Evicted its Last Student Housing Co-op. It Survived Anyway,” *The Daily Cardinal*, November 9, 2023,

<https://www.dailycardinal.com/article/2023/11/uw-madison-evicted-its-last-student-housing-co-op-it-survived-anyway>

<sup>41</sup> Bosch, “UW-Madison Evicted its Last Student Housing Co-op. It Survived Anyway,”

**AP:** That's part of the reason we just spent a whole episode talking about alternative types of housing, even though the vast majority of UW students will never live in a co-op, or a fraternity or sorority. They're not for everyone. Greek life is expensive and exclusionary. Co-ops can be crowded and funky...and they come with the chores.

**KLB:** And neither of them are anywhere near big enough to solve Madison's housing woes. But in a landscape where housing keeps getting more homogenous and inaccessible... where options keep disappearing, these *are* options. They work for some people. And if we take a look at *why* they work, maybe folks in charge can use that info to find more alternatives that work for more people. Otherwise we run the risk of UW students (and faculty and staff) having no housing options at all. That's on the next episode of *Reorientation*.

**[MUSIC]**

**NAMA PANDEY:** You can find a full teaching guide for this episode on our website at [campushistory dot wisc dot E-D-U](http://campushistory.wisc.edu).

Reorientation is written by Kacie Lucchini Butcher, Alexandra Pasqualone, Nama Pandey, Taylor Dickson, and John K. Wilson. He also produced and edited this episode.

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