

EPISODE 6: “Who gets a say in safety?” TRANSCRIPT [FINAL] w/ Citations

KACIE LUCCHINI BUTCHER: Hey, it's Kacie! If you're just starting with this episode, go back and start with episode 1. Things will make a lot more sense.

[OVERLAY: Audio from COVID news clips 2020]

KLB: OOPS! We probably should've given you a little content warning. Today we're taking you back.. Or in a way forward... to a date a little closer to the present. 2020. A year for the history books and the headlines. A year a lot of us would probably like to forget.

SIOBHAN RYAN: Don't worry, we won't be talking about COVID-19 or sourdough starters or sanitizing your groceries. No, we want to remind you of some *other* unprecedented events from that year — the rise of one of the largest protest movements in recent memory. That's where we're starting our episode today.

[OVERLAY; Black Lives Matter protests, May 2020]

KLB: On May 25, 2020, George Floyd was murdered by Minneapolis police. Within hours, the footage of his gruesome death spread across the internet like wildfire. Protests broke out in response — first in Minneapolis, then New York, and Portland. And then they spread to nearly every major US city... including here in Madison, Wisconsin. On May 30th — only a few days after Floyd's death, thousands gathered at the State Capitol to protest racism and police brutality.

SR: As the sun set on State Street that evening, what was a day of peaceful protest erupted in turmoil. Around 6pm, officers from the Madison Police Department, the Wisconsin State Patrol, and the UW Police Department lined up in riot gear to clear protesters off the streets. Around 150 demonstrators remained. Police began firing pepper spray at the crowd and some protestors retaliated by throwing plastic water bottles, rocks, and chairs at police.¹

KLB: Things escalated from there. Some protesters broke windows and vandalized property. And police responded with force. They pushed through crowds, knocked people down and started using a *lot* of tear gas. In fact, Madison Police Department officers used more of the chemical weapon over the next three nights of protests than they had in the previous 16 years combined.²

¹ Alice Herman and Scott Gordon, “Scenes from a day of rage, tear gas, and collective power,” *Tone Madison*, June 1, 2020, <https://tonemadison.com/articles/scenes-from-a-day-of-rage-tear-gas-and-collective-power/>; Dylan Brogan, “Peaceful protest, then pepper spray,” *Isthmus*, May 30, 2020, <https://isthmus.com/news/news/peaceful-protest-then-pepper-spray/>

² WORT News Department, Jonah Chester and Chali Pittman, “In 2020, MPD deployed chemical weapons in record amounts,” January 14, 2021, <https://www.wortfm.org/in-2020-mpd-deployed-chemical-weapons-in-record-amounts/>

SR: So, all this is to say that the police response to these protests was notably heavy-handed. And it rightfully raised a lot of questions as the community reckoned with the events in the weeks that followed. At UW-Madison, one of those questions was ‘Why were university police there?’

KLB: The protests had occurred *off campus* during the summer break. So what was UWPD’s involvement? Did *university* police officers use tear gas on protesters? What other support did they provide to the Madison Police Department?

SR: In September 2020, UWPD’s then-Chief Kristen Roman provided some answers. UWPD had responded to the protests in a “mutual aid” capacity, she said. Campus police officers had used pepper spray but no foam or rubber bullets or tear gas. And, quote, “UWPD did not supply MPD – or any responding agency – with pepper spray or other chemical agents.”³ But UW-Madison students were not satisfied with this response, and questions lingered.

KLB: The death of George Floyd brought renewed attention to calls for police abolition. To be clear, police and prison abolition is a decades-long campaign. Prominent scholars and activists have written extensively on the idea of a future society in which police and subsequently prisons do not exist... that they are *abolished*.⁴ Their work – alongside this protest movement – brought more attention to questions about the role of police in our society.

SR: As students at UW–Madison and other universities across the country returned to campus that year, they turned these questions on their own institutions. What is the role of police on a college campus? If any? And what is the true definition of public safety?⁵

[INTRO MUSIC]

KLB: 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 Kacie Lucchini-Butcher.

SR: And I’m Siobhan Ryan. This season, we’ve explored how campus police became what they are today — full-service law enforcement agencies employed by educational institutions, including here at UW–Madison.

KLB: In our sixth and final episode, we’re asking what UWPD’s presence means for both the University and the broader Madison community today. Why do we still have UWPD? Whose interests do they serve? And what does this mean for everyone else?

³ Kristin Roman, “Setting the Record Straight,” UWPD Chief’s Blog, September 22, 2020, <https://uwpd.wisc.edu/setting-the-record-straight/>

⁴ For more reading on police and prison abolition, we suggest beginning with the writing of Angela Davis, Ruth Wilson Gilmore, and Mariam Kaba.

⁵ For more information on the “Cops off Campus” movement at US universities, see Mary Retta, “The Cops Off Campus Coalition’s Abolition May Is Underway,” *Teen Vogue*, May 11, 2021, <https://www.teenvogue.com/story/cops-off-campus-abolition-may>

SR: Whose safety is neglected or compromised when sworn officers are employed to protect a single institution? What happens when they police beyond that institution?

KLB: And what would it look like to imagine a future of campus safety without campus police?

[TRANSITION MUSIC]

DAVARIAN BALDWIN: [...] So if we look at the kinds of arrangements that police – campus police departments have with their cities. Many of them have these memorandum of understandings that allow them to police far beyond the main campus.

SR: This is Davarian Baldwin.

DB: Yeah, hey, I'm Davarian Baldwin, professor of American Studies and founding director of the Smart Cities Research Lab at Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut.

SR: For over a decade, Davarian has investigated what he describes as the, quote, “increasingly parasitic relationship between universities and [...] cities.”⁶ His most recent book, *In the Shadow of the Ivory Tower*, argues that universities are spoiling urban life. And he says campus police play a huge role in enabling this, as agents of what he calls “extraterritorial expansion.”⁷

DB: So for example, the University of Cincinnati, where Sammy DuBose was shot by campus police, had an agreement with the city to police directly off, a few blocks off campus. But then beyond that, the University of Chicago, as you mentioned, they have an arrangement where they can police wherever there is going to be a campus building projected to be built.

DB: Then by extension, Yale University campus police has jurisdiction over the entire city of New Haven. The University of Wisconsin police have jurisdiction over all of Dane County. And then the University of California police have jurisdiction over the entire state. So just to give you a couple of examples of what I mean here is the degree to which these institutions and their policing or private security or semi-private security forces have the capacity to, set the terms of land use, and behavioral control far beyond their educational footprint, i. e. the main campus buildings.

⁶ Davarian L. Baldwin, *In the Shadow of the Ivory Tower: How Universities Are Plundering Our Cities*, First edition (New York, NY: Bold Type Books, 2021)

⁷ Davarian L. Baldwin, “Just Protecting the University Property’: Campus policing as Extraterritorial Expansion,” in *Cops on Campus: Rethinking Safety and Confronting Police Violence*, ed. Yalile Surriel, Grace Watkins, Jude Paul Matias Dizon, John J Sloan III (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2024), 33-40.

DB: They're armed and have this jurisdiction as authorized by the state. And so this is what I mean by extra territorial expansion. It's a cute way of just talking about how their very presence, beyond the campus, sets the terms of land value, of quality of life, of behavioral standards, far beyond the physical, intimate territory of an educational institution.

KLB: The 2020 Black Lives Matter protests were an unusual case in their scale, but they highlighted an everyday reality — that police have a huge impact on the communities they exist in... and here in Madison, UWPD regularly polices on *and* off campus.

SR: So, what were campus police doing supporting city police in an off-campus protest during the summer break? The answer is actually simple. UWPD has mutual aid agreements with other local law enforcement agencies, which means city police, for example, can call them in to assist with situations outside their usual scope as campus police.⁸ Remember, UWPD officers are deputized and have jurisdiction over all of Dane County; this is the *same authority* as City of Madison police.⁹

KLB: And as a “*mutual*” aid agreement, the inverse is also true — UWPD can call in other law enforcement agencies to back them up when the going gets tough. We saw this in action in May 2024, when state and local police helped UWPD clear the student encampment on Library Mall.¹⁰

SR: For all intents and purposes, this makes UWPD another “layer” of policing in the city of Madison; an additional police department in a city that is, frankly, already rife with police.

KLB: While this plays out most visibly during big events like protests, it’s happening on a smaller scale every single day.

SR: The vast majority of UWPD’s interactions with the public involve non-university affiliates. People who have nothing to do with the university. These interactions are everything from traffic stops and citations to arrests.¹¹

⁸ Kristin Roman, “Setting the Record Straight,” UWPD Chief’s Blog, September 22, 2020, <https://uwpd.wisc.edu/setting-the-record-straight/>; UW–Madison Police Department, “Policy 2.1: Jurisdiction and Mutual Aid,” revised February 7, 2022, <https://uwpd.wisc.edu/content/uploads/2020/11/2.1-Jurisdiction-and-Mutual-Aid.pdf>

⁹ “FAQs,” UW–Madison Police Department, <https://uwpd.wisc.edu/about-us/faqs/>

¹⁰ Becky Jacobs and Allison Garfield, “Police descend on Gaza war protesters at UW-Madison, begin arrests,” May 1, 2024, https://captimes.com/news/education/police-descend-on-gaza-war-protesters-at-uw-madison-begin-arrests/article_894600d8-07be-11ef-b7d9-633717689644.html

¹¹ “Equity Dashboard,” UW–Madison Police Department, <https://uwpd.wisc.edu/equity-dashboard/>

KLB: Let's look at traffic stops. UWPD made 3,671 traffic stops in 2023; three quarters of the people stopped were not affiliated with the university.¹² On average, that means UWPD stopped over 10 drivers every day, but 7 or 8 of those people have no connection to the university. So what's the deal?

DB: On campuses, substance abuse, sexual assault, petty theft, run rampant. In many cases, crime statistics are higher on campuses than they are in surrounding neighborhoods. So let's just be clear about that. But if you look at how they under-police campuses, --- campus police under police campuses. They, in moments of substance abuse, they shuttle students to the hospital. They do the things actually that, things we should say they should do, right? Health treatment. But then for the similar crimes or similar actions, they over-police surrounding neighborhoods that are either black and brown or poor or just non-university affiliates. So the point here is that campus policing is not about policing. It is about brand management. Because if they were to actually police the same way they poli--- If they were to police campuses the same way they police surrounding communities, it would demonstrate, --- and no university wants to demonstrate this, --- that you have a campus full of white criminals.

DB: Now I'm not trying to substantiate the idea that some of these actions should be named criminal. But if we're going to say these actions are criminal off campus, then we gotta say they're criminal on campus. So I'm just like trying to establish some parity here.

DB: So the point is, it's a very different sociopolitical, cultural dynamic for similar behaviors and activities because it's about brand management. Because what they, when they over-police surrounding neighborhoods, the message to parents, to tech investors, to real estate developers is that this area is safe and open for business. That is the messaging, and that is the role of police, to demonstrate that it's safe, by under-policing campuses and over-policing the surroundings.

SR: It's not just that campus cops police non-university affiliates *more*; they also police them *differently*.

DB: Yeah, sure. So, we, we, we know, and this has been, evidence has demonstrated that many universities engage in what's called a, --- what University of Chicago activists called a two-tiered policing system. And what this means is that when a campus affiliate, a student or a staff member, but primarily a student --- if a student and a city resident commit the same infraction, more than likely the student will be sent through to the dean of students, will go through a campus adjudication process. Whereas the resident will go through the criminal justice system for the same infraction. So this is what we mean.

¹² Ibid.

KLB: The disparity is stark in UWPD's arrest figures. In 2023, the department arrested 211 people. 94 percent of the people arrested were not affiliated with UW. And the statistics reveal alarming racial disparities. Madison's population is less than 7 percent Black, but one third of the people UWPD arrested in 2023 were Black.¹³

DB: So, the point that I'm making here is that even with a public university that's vested with being responsible for the state interest, with the public good, in the day to day practices, they're engaging in racial profiling. They're engaging in a policing that protects the criminality of the campus and over-polices the *perceived* criminality of non-university affiliates.

SR: Obviously, racial profiling is a huge problem in policing; we're not trying to suggest it's unique to campus police. But it's hardly surprising that such injustice arises when officers are empowered to police *everyone*, but are employed primarily to protect the interests of the university... to protect and make *certain* people feel safe.

KLB: And it's weird, right? Why *should* campus police have such broad powers beyond their institutions and the people affiliated with them? The answer might be this simple — maybe they shouldn't.

SR: This season on *Reorientation*, we've tried to better understand campus police. From private detective forces, to night watchmen, to quasi-police turned full-blown police with statutory powers, the project of campus policing at UW–Madison and elsewhere is relatively new... and frankly *experimental*.

KLB: We've questioned if campus police are a different type of police ...maybe even if they are a better type of police. But the simplest truth is that they are *just more police*. Their primary gig is protecting the university, but if they get called in by the city, they'll bust up a protest downtown just like any other police.

SR: What we've also questioned... and found much harder to answer, is whether campus police make our university a safer place? The answer is complicated because it depends a lot on who you are... your race, your age, your gender presentation, your affiliation or non-affiliation with the university... but it's also shaped by university priorities and the decisions high-level leaders make in funding and directing the UWPD.

KLB: So what can we do? Is there an alternative to campus police? What would that look like? Even raising the question – what would life look like without police? - can cause a string of breathless questions. What happens when a crime is committed? What if there is a violent event? Who will respond? On campus, we're often told we need campus police to prevent and

¹³ "Equity Dashboard," UW–Madison Police Department, <https://uwpd.wisc.edu/equity-dashboard/>

respond to sexual assault, or to be the “good guys with a gun” in the event of a mass shooting... But does it really work like that?

DB: Policing does not prevent crimes. It reacts to crimes. It names crimes. So when it comes to a campus, and ---I've written about this in the Chronicle of Higher Education and places where I've called for police abolition. I'm gonna be fully transparent. I mean, I can't hide from it.--- if we understand what actually prevents crime, food security, housing security, trauma care, healthcare.

DB: Look around, look around this campus. What better institution is better equipped to engage in actual community safety more so than a university or college? Hospitals, housing, trauma care workers, nursing students, medical students that could intern, that could do their clinicals by replacing armed police and doing the actual work of community safety.

DB: We are the best --- meaning universities. I'm a university professor. We are the best equipped to engage in what I understand police abolition to be more so than anyone. And the data demonstrates that it would reduce or increase, it would increase safety. It would increase safety more than anything, especially ramping up armed security forces.

DB: The data bears this out in every way and yet the response has always been crime, more police. It has never worked.

SR: Davarian and other police abolitionists aren't suggesting we abandon public safety. It's the opposite.

KLB: They imagine a city – or in this case, a university - that reinvests in services that promote community wellbeing and by extension safety. Investments in expanded housing, food pantries, low cost medical care.

SR: It's interesting to think about the fact that, the University of Wisconsin, for instance, provides free or funded by student segregated fees, but free health services, food pantries, other kinds of services that would lead to the reduction of policing. those increased safety. Sorry. Yes. Those services are provided only to students, but policing...

DB: ... extends to everyone. That's right. I mean, the, the, the discrepancy in that or the design of that is very telling that, especially as a public university, But let's be clear. I want to be clear about this. Every university in this country only exists because of a state charter, public or private.

DB: Universities have come into existence to serve the state. And so with that in mind, these facilities you'd mentioned before, the amenities or the goods of food pantries and

other things and healthcare only being available to students from a state university, and then the only amenity available or the, the primary amenity available to non-university affiliates is the police speaks volumes.

KLB: Here at the University of Wisconsin, you will most likely know – or have at least vaguely heard of – the Wisconsin Idea. It's central to the fabric of the university and it shapes much of the university's identity internally and externally. The Wisconsin Idea asks the university and all its faculty, staff, and students to support the state, the nation, and the globe. It asks us to take the important work done here and expand it beyond our own walls to benefit others. It has produced life saving medications like WARFARIN and impacted scholarship and policies on everything from poverty and healthcare to agriculture and politics.

SR: With that in mind, how can we re-envision public safety here at UW-Madison? What could it mean for other universities... other cities? Other states? And what exemplars exist that may hold clues for us? Grace Watkins, who you'll recognize from previous episodes, is a PhD student who studies campus police. She has some thoughts on that...

GRACE WATKINS: Yeah. It's a hard question to answer. One of the themes we've been returning to is this idea of campus police being taken for granted as part of the inherent fabric of the university and that they need to exist to ensure student safety.

GW: So it is really powerful to turn to the example of other countries that have similar sized universities that don't operate with full-service campus police departments, and that, you know, they're still standing. They are able to manage without that. Maybe another direction to take that question is just reflecting on all the different services, student services, that campus police have co-opted and kind of, that they brought under their domain. In the kind of aftermath of the student protest movement, they had a real crisis of legitimacy, perceived legitimacy, and students were frustrated with the way that they cracked down on the protests, and so there was this big PR push, where they were trying to adopt a softer image, many universities.

KLB: This is true for UW-Madison as well. As we discussed in episode 5, UWPD only gained its current statutory powers in 1973, after years of clashing with students over issues from the war in Vietnam to the Black Power Movement. At the same time, the department received large funding increases to hire more police and staff, all in an effort to gain legitimacy with students.

GW: But during that period, one of the longest standing legacies of that period of soft image promotion and PR campaigns was that they really wanted to be involved in first aid and ambulance services. They really wanted to be involved in, you know, minor bike and car repairs, and things where they would--- They're pretty explicit about this in kind of internal meetings, that they wanted to be seen assisting students and promoting a student-oriented service image.

GW: Safe walk programs, walking students at home at night. And so there's a way in which there's all these things that campus police are involved in that can exist separately from campus police. They don't have to be the ones operating it.

GW: So, I'm always really struck by different examples of students organizing to kind of duplicate or replicate those same services and running those things themselves, like safe walk programs at night, and rejecting the campus police version of those services. And I think one of the underlying force of those student efforts is to say that this doesn't need to be conducted by the police.

SR: Think about your friends and community. What are you already doing without the police to keep each other safe?

KLB: Have you ever walked a friend home from the bar, worried that they were walking alone at night? You've engaged in a safe walk service. Have you ever helped a stranger fix their bike? It probably didn't require police. Have you ever watched someone's laptop in a library or coffee shop while they ran to the bathroom? You've maybe helped to prevent a theft. In big and small ways, we often take care of one another. The police aren't needed to do this... and often, as we've demonstrated this season, they can make a situation less safe.

SR: Asking the question – can there be a future without the police? – feels scary. Because as Grace mentioned earlier, on campus and in our society, police are so enmeshed in our world that they can feel unimpeachable, like they are so central to society that it's impossible to see how we could live without them. But we need to ask the tough questions. The safety of our community – of *all* of those in our community – depends on it.

[OFFICIAL OUTRO MUSIC]

SR: You can find a full teaching guide for this episode on our website at [campushistory dot wisc dot E-D-U](http://campushistorydotwisc.edu). That includes links the policing statistics we talked about.

KLB: *Reorientation* is written by me, Kacie Lucchini Butcher, Siobhan Ryan, and John K. Wilson. He also produced and edited this episode.

KLB: Additional help from Amaya Boman, Taylor Bailey and Dan Berman. Special thanks to Sean Johnson.

KLB: You can subscribe for more episodes wherever you get your podcasts.