

AY 24-25



Center for Campus History
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

Year In Review



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About Us

The Center for Campus History (CCH) officially opened on July 1, 2023, but it grew directly out of four years of work as the Public History Project, a limited-term initiative commissioned by Chancellor Emerita Rebecca M. Blank. The Project's mission was to uncover and give voice to the many groups across the university's history who experienced and challenged discrimination and exclusion on campus.



Since becoming a permanent center, the CCH has sought to continue and grow that mission, working to expand and enrich UW–Madison's historical narrative by centering the voices, experiences, and struggles of marginalized groups.

That work has taken many forms over the last two years, from new archival research to classroom visits. We published new pieces of student and staff research, collaborated with other campus groups on public-facing projects, developed new curricular materials, and much more. Consider this **Year in Review** a sampling of what we've been up to.

To learn more about the Public History Project and its continuation as the Rebecca M. Blank Center for Campus History, visit our website.

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Research and Writing

The Center for Campus History team has been hard at work in the UW Archives planning, writing, and researching. This year we continued to publish new research in *Siftings*, our digital publication of staff and student writing. Highlights included [“Building the Southeast Dormitories: How UW’s Postwar Building Program Unleashed Relentless University Expansion in Madison”](#) by Siobhan Ryan on the history of urban planning and expansion at UW, [“Driving Change: The Legacy of the Women’s Transit Authority”](#) by Andrea Linsmeier on the history of women’s safety and empowerment at UW, and [“Remembering Rice Paper: The Artifact After the Obituary”](#) by Vincent Kim on UW’s first published media made by and for Asian and Asian American students.

In addition to written projects, our team of dedicated student researchers has continued archival, academic, and oral history research in partnership with the UW Archives on topics surrounding the history of UW traditions, campus labor movements and demonstrations, the Black student experience on campus, and many more.

To catch up on *Siftings* research you might have missed, visit the [Research](#) section of our website.



Collaboration

Beyond research, the Center's dedication to public history means we are committed to forging relationships and collaborating with other campus organizations and communities.

During the 24-25 AY, we were happy to partner with the Chicane/x & Latine/x Studies Program (CLS) as they prepare to celebrate their 50th anniversary in 2026. This past spring semester CCH Assistant Director Taylor L. Bailey and student researcher Karla Martinez conducted over 30 interviews with CLS alumni, students, community members, and current/former staff and faculty on their relationship to CLS and their hopes for the next 50+ years of the program at UW. Stay tuned for more information as the 50th celebration nears.

In partnership with the UW–Madison Committee on Disability Access and Inclusion (CDAI), the Center completed a multi-year project proposal for a historical marker acknowledging former university President Charles Van Hise's involvement in eugenics: a discriminatory pseudoscience that sought to eliminate groups of people with traits considered "inferior." The plaque was installed in early 2025 in the lobby of Van Hise Hall.

CCH Director Kacie Lucchini Butcher and CCH Assistant Director Taylor L. Bailey continued their collaboration with PBS Wisconsin on the *The Look Back* – an original series made for young learners that explores eras from Wisconsin's history through artifacts.



Events and Outreach

Collaborating with departments, offices, and units across campus has always been at the heart of the CCH's work. From guest lectures to cohosting events, we've had a busy year of making the history of the university available, accessible, and useful to the campus community.

In AY 24-25, the Center visited:

37 classes

1,100 students

12 depts./units

1,300 faculty/staff

In the spring semester, the Center was proud to partner with the Office of Multicultural Arts Initiatives to bring Andrew Carnegie Medal winner, Windham-Campbell Prize recipient, and MacArthur Genius Hanif Abdurraqib to campus. The event was incredibly well-attended by students, faculty, staff, and the Madison community.

Beyond campus, CCH staff engaged with other scholars and public historians to inform our work. In April, the CCH team attended the National Council on Public History (NCPH) Annual Meeting in Montreal.



Curricular Resources

There have been several exciting developments with our curricular resources and educational materials. One of our largest undertakings was updating our website to better align with the Center's educational mission. The older "resources" page is now our "education" page, which features a new user interface that is easier to navigate. Each of our educational products now has a distinct homepage, and all products, modules, and guides now include descriptions.

We continued to create educational content and published three new teaching guides. The guides on [nonviolent protest](#) and [divestment campaigns](#) are standalone, while a third [guide](#) complements the Center's blog post "Driving Change: The Legacy of the Women's Transit Authority." We also created teaching guides for each episode of our [Reorientation podcast](#). Every guide includes discussion questions, recommended secondary sources, readings from guest commentators, and primary sources related to the episode.

The CCH also continued collaborating with institutional partners to create unique lesson plans, update curricular offerings, and bring primary source material into the classroom. We consulted with a group of scholars studying Indigenous land dispossessions and helped organize their educational resources, which we also host on our website. We partnered with the Go Big Read to create discussion questions for *James: A Novel*, and developed a [teaching guide](#) about the history of the Antebellum era to contextualize themes from the book.

To access all of the Center's curricular materials, visit the [Education](#) section of our website.



Reorientation Podcast

In October 2024 the Center released the inaugural season of *Reorientation*, an original narrative podcast that takes a deep dive into facets of UW–Madison’s history using archival research and interviews with experts and scholars.

Season 1 explored the history of campus policing from the early days of campus watchmen to the professionalized, fully deputized police forces that universities employ today. Scholars including Davarian Baldwin, John Sloan, Grace Watkins and others guided listeners through untold stories in the university’s past, from midcentury gay student purges to responses to 1960s and 1970s protest movements and up to recent tensions between students and campus police.

The first season of *Reorientation* received positive feedback from faculty, students and community members, and has reached 1,500 listeners to date. With the success of the first season, Season 2 is set to be released this fall 2025 diving into the fraught history of student housing in Madison.

To listen to the *Reorientation* podcast, you can visit the [Podcast](#) section of our website or stream it wherever you listen to podcasts.



Looking Ahead

The past year has brought about a multitude of social and cultural changes. You may have heard people state that we are living through “unprecedented times.” But most historians will remind you of this Mark Twain quote, “History doesn’t repeat itself, but it often rhymes.” In many ways, unfolding world events are eerily similar to other “unprecedented” historic events dating back millennia. To quote a CCH favorite, James Baldwin once said, “You think your pain and your heartbreak are unprecedented in the history of the world, but then you read. It was [books] that taught me that the things that tormented me most were the very things that connected me with all the people who were alive, who had ever been alive.”

As the world continues to change, and as history itself is under threat, we know that our work at the CCH is more important than ever. Our commitment is to continue fighting tirelessly to make the history of the university not only accessible but useful to our campus community.

Facing budgetary uncertainties means that the CCH is rethinking many of our projects. But we are not abandoning the multitude of seeds that we planted for projects and collaborations. We will continue our important work. We hope that you will join us.

Contact Us

Engaging with communities, both at UW–Madison and beyond, is the core of the Center for Campus History’s work. We’re always looking to hear from you, whether it’s a history question, an invitation to present or an idea for collaboration. You can contact the Center on our website, campushistory.wisc.edu, or at centerforcampushistory@wisc.edu.

Don’t forget to follow us on Instagram ([@UWCampusHistory](https://www.instagram.com/UWCampusHistory)) and if you want updates straight to your inbox, subscribe to our [monthly newsletter](#).