



Written by [Veronika Kyrylenko](#) on August 9, 2021

Ancient Rock Removed From UW-Madison Over “Racism” Claims

The “cancel culture” has just claimed another victim. This time, it is a supposed two-billion-year-old rock from the Precambrian era, located on the premises of the University of Wisconsin-Madison (UW-Madison) that was claimed to be a “painful symbol of racism to generations of students,” so it was removed from campus.

Chamberlin Rock, which used to rest atop Observatory Hill, is named after 19th-century geologist and former university president Thomas Crowder Chamberlin, whose work centered on glacial deposits and who was considered the country’s leading glaciologist, according to a bio on the university’s [website](#).



YouTube

The university [reports](#) the Wisconsin Black Student Union, in partnership with the Native American student organization Wunk Sheek, led an effort to remove the rock from campus because of its derogatory nickname containing “N-word” used in a 1925 *Wisconsin State Journal* [article](#).

Even though UW-Madison historians [stated](#) during the November 2020 Campus Planning Committee hearings dedicated to the issue surrounding the boulder that they have not found any evidence that the racist term used in the disputed article was used in any other capacity by the university, it noted “the Ku Klux Klan was a pervasive presence in the Madison area in the early part of the last century and that people of color were often mocked in minstrel shows at campus facilities and in campus satiric periodicals that were dehumanizing to students of color.” According to UW-Madison historian Kacie Butcher, no evidence of the “N-word” being used was found because of poorly organized state archival records, not because it wasn’t used.

One of Butcher’s colleagues, Aaron Bird Bear, even claimed that “the rock interferes with equal educational opportunity for all and creates a sense of harm and a sense of unwelcome to certain aspects of the student body.” Craig Berridge, a head of the department of psychology, along with many other academics present at the meeting urged the committee to remove “all symbols of racism” in the name of “inclusivity,” “if that means some of us need to suffer some small inconvenience.”

Back in November, the Committee unanimously [approved](#) recommending the boulder be relocated off university property to a location on or near the National Park Service’s Ice Age Scenic Trail. University Chancellor Rebecca Blank [approved](#) Chamberlin Rock’s removal in January 2021, but the school also needed approval from the Wisconsin Historical Society because the boulder sat within just 15 feet of a Native American burial site. In addition to that, all Native Tribes of Wisconsin needed to be notified and given time to provide input. On August 6, the “racist” rock was finally [removed](#), to the relief of the “woke” students’ organizations. The university [reportedly](#) paid about \$50,000 to move the 42-ton rock,



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with the money coming from the Chancellor's office. The plaque honoring Chamberlin has been removed from the rock, which will no longer be referred to by this name but rather known simply as a glacial erratic.

Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs Lori Reesor [praised](#) the students' courage to challenge such an important issue. "It took courage ... to bring this issue forward and to influence change alongside UW's Wunk Sheek student leaders." Reesor stated that in the midst of "demands for justice" following George Floyd's "murder" last summer, the students required to see "change" on campus, and they applied themselves to make it happen. "While the decision required compromise, I'm proud of the student leaders and the collaboration it took to get here," the Vice Chancellor added.

UW-Madison senior Nalah McWhorter, who served as president of the Wisconsin Black Student Union during the 2020-21 academic year, [expressed](#) her satisfaction with the rock's removal. "It was very meaningful for me to be there and to see the process all the way through to the end," McWhorter said. "It was about a year ago that we released our demands and met with the chancellor and explained to her why those demands meant so much to us. It was a powerful moment today to see this demand come full circle," she said on the day the monolith was excavated out of the university grounds.

McWhorter was one of those activists who insisted last June that not just Chamberlin Rock be removed from UW-Madison, but also a statue of Abraham Lincoln. McWhorter [argued](#), "Just because Lincoln was anti-slavery, it doesn't mean he was pro-black." She added that in one of his campaign speeches, for example, Lincoln said "that he believes there should be an inferior and superior, and he believes white people should be the superior race." The university declined to remove a statue from campus. While admitting some of the president's actions may appear "flawed" 150 years after they were made, Lincoln is widely acknowledged as "one of our greatest presidents, having issued the Emancipation Proclamation, persuaded Congress to adopt the 13th Amendment ending slavery and preserved the Union during the Civil War," [noted](#) UW-Madison Chancellor Rebecca Blank.



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