

REMEMBERING RACHEL: CONFRONTING ILLEGAL SLAVERY IN WISCONSIN THROUGH COMMUNITY-BASED LEARNING (CBL)

Eugene Tesdahl History, UW-Platteville

My study suggests that a community-based learning (CBL) approach empowered students to leave the classroom in favor of cemeteries, archives, and museums to confront difficult topics. In Summer 2019, six undergraduate students in Wisconsin History forced their campus, community, and state to face the ugly truth of illegal chattel slavery in nineteenth-century Wisconsin. Students examined the lives of Rachel, Maria, and Felix, three African American people whom Platteville founder John Rountree illegally enslaved in the 1830s. Students worked with community partners to restore and repair Rachel's (circa 1854) gravestone, in the Rountree family burial plot, in Hillside Cemetery in Platteville, Wisconsin. Students and community partners wrote and installed an exhibit on African American history in the Grant County History Museum, Lancaster, Wisconsin. Student reflections revealed that this hands-on approach permitted students direct application for their learning in their community and increased their enthusiasm for the urgency of history.

