

## Michael Johnson details meeting between Chief Mike Koval and Tony Robinson's family



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In a post on his Facebook page, Boys & Girls Club of Dane County CEO Michael Johnson detailed the emotionally wrenching late night meeting between Madison Police Chief Michael Koval and the family of Tony Robinson, Jr., just hours after one of Koval's officers shot and killed Robinson.

In the statement, posted Sunday, Johnson said he has watched Koval handle protesters with "respect and dignity," and that Koval

understands the "anger and distrust" that the shooting has sparked in Madison, particularly in the African-American community.

"Our police chief, Mike Koval, has certainly earned my vote of confidence and I appreciate how he is handling the aftermath so far," Johnson wrote. "I have been meeting with Chief Koval and offering advice and counsel, as he will undoubtedly face some tough conversations and decisions in the months ahead. He will surely need the community's support and prayers, as our city will be challenged as a result of this tragic incident."

Koval said in a press conference Saturday that "Now more than ever, we have to be committed to engaging," with the public.

"People need to tell me squarely how upset they are with the Madison Police Department, as many have," Koval said. He said that community trust with the department is "in a volatile place."

Tony Robinson, 19, was shot and killed during a struggle with a Madison police officer in a Williamson Street apartment on Friday evening. While the circumstances of the shooting are unclear, Koval has confirmed that the African-American teenager was unarmed.

Johnson said that at about 1 a.m. Saturday morning, he called Koval and asked him to join him in a visit to Robinson's family. Koval accepted without hesitation.

Johnson described an emotional meeting between the police chief and Robinson's grandparents. "Tony's grandparents were quite vocal, extremely concerned and understandably angry. Chief Koval apologized, and shortly thereafter they all prayed together. Tony's grandfather pleaded with the chief, asking him to 'please do the right thing.' Chief Koval responded by saying, 'I will.' That was a powerful and humbling moment."

As Robinson's death is investigated, Johnson said that Madison needs to keep the lines of communication open so that the city can collectively begin to heal. He closed by quoting

Robert F. Kennedy:

“What we need in the United States is not division; what we need in the United States is not hatred; what we need in the United States is not violence and lawlessness, but is love, and wisdom, and compassion toward one another, and a feeling of justice toward those who still suffer within our country, whether they be white or whether they be black.”

Here is the full text of Johnson’s statement (the candlelight vigil was held Sunday night):

"Message to Chief Koval, My Fellow Madisonians and Madison Police Department.

"First, let me say my deepest sympathy and prayers go out to the friends and family of Tony Robinson, Jr., in this very difficult time as they grieve his loss. My thoughts are also with the hundreds of police officers who serve and protect our streets, and the citizens of Madison. Our police chief, Mike Koval, has certainly earned my vote of confidence and I appreciate how he is handling the aftermath so far.

"I have been meeting with Chief Koval and offering advice and counsel, as he will undoubtedly face some tough conversations and decisions in the months ahead. He will surely need the community’s support and prayers, as our city will be challenged as a result of this tragic incident. Further, as a leader in the community, many African American boys are in my care and it’s important that I do what I can to ensure a similar incident doesn’t happen again.

"Over the last few days, I have watched Chief Koval and the Madison Police Department handle protestors with respect and dignity. His personal outreach to our communities of color has not gone unnoticed. I believe he understands the anger and distrust.

"On the night of the shooting, I called Chief Koval around 1 o’clock in the morning and asked him to join me and another community leader on a visit to the family of Tony Robinson, Jr. Without hesitation, he jumped in my car en route to the other side of town. He agreed that, as the Chief of Police, his immediate communication with the family was important.

"When we reached the home, Tony’s grandparents were quite vocal, extremely concerned and understandably angry. Chief Koval apologized, and shortly thereafter they all prayed together. Tony’s grandfather pleaded with the chief, asking him to “please do the right thing.” Chief Koval responded by saying, "I will." That was a powerful and humbling moment.

"Ultimately, a thorough investigation will be conducted by the state's Division of Criminal Investigation, and the Dane County District Attorney will then review that investigation. In spite of the divisiveness that currently exists in our community, I know that Chief Koval, along with his department, is committed to helping this great city of ours as we travel the road to healing. As long as our community keeps the lines of communication open, we can collectively begin to make sure that Anthony (Tony) Robinson, Jr.'s death is not in vain.

"Shortly before he was killed, Robert Kennedy shared these wise words of counsel in response to the loss of Martin Luther King, Jr.: “What we need in the United States is not division; what we need in the United States is not hatred; what we need in the United States is not violence and lawlessness, but is love, and wisdom, and compassion toward one another, and a feeling of justice toward those who still suffer within our country, whether

they be white or whether they be black.”

"I am calling on all young people, elected officials, the faith based community, law enforcement officials, YGB and others to join us tonight at the candle light vigil."