

Youth and Unity Summit on Sunday follows one in Ferguson

9 HOURS AGO • BY [SAMARA KALK DERBY](#) | [WISCONSIN STATE JOURNAL](#)

In a matter of weeks, the Boys and Girls Club of Dane County has put together the type of event that usually takes months to pull off, the organization's leader said Wednesday.

The free Youth and Unity Summit 2015, taking place Sunday afternoon at Memorial High School, will feature interactive workshops, a pep rally, and a youth town hall meeting emceed by Bow Wow, the rapper who hosted BET's former signature music show "106 & Park." The day will end with a "Unity" concert.

Michael Johnson, CEO of the Boys and Girls Club, and other leaders in the black community have been advocating for a peaceful response when Dane County District Attorney Ismael Ozanne announces whether any criminal charges will be filed in the March 6 fatal shooting of 19-year-old Tony Robinson by Madison police Officer Matt Kenny. Robinson was black, Kenny is white.

"Before the DA makes his upcoming decision ... we're bringing in national celebrities, showcasing performances by young people in the community and workshops by community leaders," Johnson said.

Johnson, backed by many sponsors, enlisted John Suggs, 33, to help organize the event. Suggs, who previously held Johnson's position at the Boys and Girls Club, is now based in St. Louis and has put together similar programs in other cities.

Suggs' most recent youth summit was in Ferguson, Missouri, where months of unrest followed the police shooting of 18-year-old Michael Brown.

Madison "seemed to be an appropriate destination to bring some healing, and to help bring some awareness and empowerment to young people here who we felt needed it," said Suggs, who has spent the past two weeks visiting Madison-area high schools to get input for the summit.

UW-Madison professor Gloria Ladson-Billings will hold a college readiness program at the summit, and attorney Stan Davis will lead a session about how young people should engage with law enforcement.

Robinson's mother, Andrea Irwin, also will address the group, Johnson said.

Registration is booming, Suggs said. A week ago 100 were registered. As of Wednesday, it was “581 and counting.”

“If there’s any place to show the country how to bounce back from tragedy and really understand what unity is about in the midst of tough times, it’s this county and this city,” Suggs said.

Johnson, along with Dane County NAACP President Greg Jones and the Rev. Harold Rayford, president of the African American Council of Churches of Greater Madison, also have put out a [public service announcement](http://go.madison.com/robinson-psa) (go.madison.com/robinson-psa) advising people on how to respond to Ozanne’s decision.

“We want young people’s voices to be heard, but we also want them to continue to demonstrate peaceful intentions,” Johnson said.

If you go

What: Youth and Unity Summit 2015

When: 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. Sunday

Where: Memorial High School, 201 S Gammon Rd

Cost: Free

Online: youthandunity2015.com

PSA: <http://go.madison.com/robinson-psa>