

Madison community leaders travel to Milwaukee amid unrest after police shooting

• PHOTO BY MICHAEL JOHNSON

Boys and Girls Club of Dane County CEO Michael Johnson takes a selfie Sunday with some young men who accompanied a group of Madison community leaders in going door-to-door in Milwaukee to encourage teens to stay at home. Milwaukee residents clashed with police officers for a second night after an MPD officer shot and killed a 23-year old armed suspect in the Sherman Park neighborhood.

Madison community members traveled to Milwaukee Sunday following an officer-involved shooting on the city's north side Saturday, encouraging neighborhood residents to stay safe and supporting the victim's family.

[Caliph Muab'El](#), of Breaking Barriers Mentoring, in addition to Boys and Girls Club of Dane County CEO [Michael Johnson](#) and Mellowood Foundation president [Tutankhamun "Coach" Assad](#), mobilized a crowd of several hundred to reach out to neighborhoods near the incident.

"We would warn people to stay in the house make sure to keep their kids safe and not be in the streets creating disorder, so that they could be safe and so they would make it out of the whole situation alive," Muab'El said.

A [second night of unrest](#) continued Sunday night in an area known as Sherman Park, the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel reported, with protesters throwing rocks, bricks and glass bottles at police, shots firing and a shooting victim taken to a hospital in an armored vehicle.

As of Sunday, the Journal Sentinel [reported](#) at least six businesses were set on fire. Three of those were destroyed and three suffered heavy damage.

"My heart is there with them and we are there with them in solidarity," said Muab'El, who grew up in Milwaukee.

After walking through neighborhoods, the community leaders returned to the site where Sylville Smith, 23, was fatally shot after he refused to drop a gun loaded with 23 rounds, according to [Milwaukee police](#).

"The overall message was that we as a people cannot continue to create havoc in our own environment and to create the brokenness that we see and perpetuate that brokenness by not staying in a unified front and by turning against each other, killing each other and not implementing the order of love instead of hate," Muab'El said.

Both Muab'El and Johnson expressed concern over the events in Milwaukee resembling what happened in Ferguson, Missouri, and Baltimore. After being in Milwaukee, Johnson said he doesn't think that will happen, but added "you never know."

Muab'El was more skeptical.

"Milwaukee is our neighbor and they're not far from us," Muab'El said. "If we don't get our affairs in order here, I just fear we'll look like Milwaukee in the the coming years."

Johnson said the group's door-to-door efforts targeted teenagers and young adults. About 50 younger individuals joined the group to connect with residents their age who are affected by what has been a national narrative on racial disparities playing out in their own community.

"If anyone is going to talk to this generation of kids, it's going to be their peers," Johnson said.

Assad said he was humbled to be around "conscientious" and "galvanized" youth in Milwaukee.

"I was reinvigorated by just watching them take charge of what they do and be the caretakers of their own destiny," Assad said. "In this particular space of challenged incendiary talk, anger, angst and concern, they carried themselves in such a leadership paradigm."

Assad said he decided to serve in Milwaukee, with intentions to return Wednesday, to communicate to youth that there can be an effective way to express anger.

"I would challenge Madison's black community, Madison's so-called black leaders, true and commercially pointed, let's start learning how to work together instead of always attacking the efforts," Assad said, citing what can be an "unnecessarily divisive" black leadership community in Madison.

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