



Dane County's Boys and Girls Club CEO calls UW's response to offensive costume "soft"

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MADISON (WKOW) -- A local community leader says UW-Madison isn't doing enough, after a student was seen wearing an offensive costume at Saturday's Badger football game.

Boys and Girls Club of Dane County CEO Michael Johnson says he's not pleased with the university's response to an offensive costume shared on Twitter, showing President Obama in a prison garb with a noose around his neck.

"It represents terror, and for us to allow something like that to happen in public should not be tolerated," said Johnson, whose calling on the university to do more than just release a statement. "Immediately afterwards [the incident] have somebody who can go out and publicly go out and talk to students, talk to the press."

In their statement, sent Saturday night, officials called the costume "repugnant" and "counter to the values of the university", but says it was "an exercise of the individual's right to free speech." The individual donning the costume was allowed to stay during the remainder of the game after "he complied" with UW Police to take off the "offensive parts" of the costume.

But Johnson says the costume was an act of "hate speech"

"If I was in charge of the stadium operations, he would have been ejected, period," said Johnson.

UW-Madison Chancellor Rebecca Blank released a statement Sunday reminding students that the incident shows "the work still being done to build a stronger and more inclusive campus community."

Still, for activists, like Johnson, that "inclusive community" won't happen unless minority voices are heard.

"We have to be brave, we have to be bold, and when people do things like this we have to speak out."

While officials from UW would not comment further on the incident, they tell 27 News that UW Chancellor Blank will speak specifically about the issue at 8pm tomorrow during a diversity forum.

To learn more about the Diversity Forum, you can visit these links:

<http://today.wisc.edu/events/view/99903>

<https://www.ohrd.wisc.edu/Catalog/Default.aspx?CK=53688>

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