

VARIETY

# Madison leaders call for new policy after offensive costume

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MADISON, Wis. — Black community leaders in Madison are calling for a "zero tolerance" policy for racism on the University of Wisconsin campus in the wake of an incident involving a football fan who wore an offensive costume to a game.

The costume worn Saturday involved what appeared to be a President Barack Obama mask with a noose around its neck, the Wisconsin State Journal (<http://bit.ly/2fyZoCA>) reported.

According to officials, security officers asked the fan to remove the noose in the game's first half. However a photo taken by the Wisconsin State Journal from the third quarter shows the fan wearing the noose once more.

"This is not just about a noose — this is about this culture of complicity that allows the best of us to walk around and be terrorized," said Tutankhamun Assad, founder of the Mellowhood mentoring program.

University administrators have condemned the costume, but have also supported the decision by stadium staff to not throw the fan out. They also said he was entitled to exercise his freedom of speech rights.

Boys and Girls Club of Dane County CEO Michael Johnson wrote in a Facebook post that university officials plan to have new policies in place to address such situations by the Nov. 12 home game. Johnson said the group is still working on the specifics.

Some community members believe minority students face broader problems on campus and have criticized university officials for how the incident was handled.

Prior to the incident the university had launched several programs aimed to improve the racial atmosphere on campus, stemming from high-profile incidents that led to protests last spring.

John Lucas, a spokesman for the university, said officials are "interested in continuing the conversation" for more policy changes.

The costumed man hasn't been identified. It's unclear if he's connected to the university.