



GiGi's Playhouse, Boys and Girls Club Demand Netflix Remove Special of Comedian Who Attacked Kids With Down Syndrome

By *David Dahmer* - Feb 1, 2018

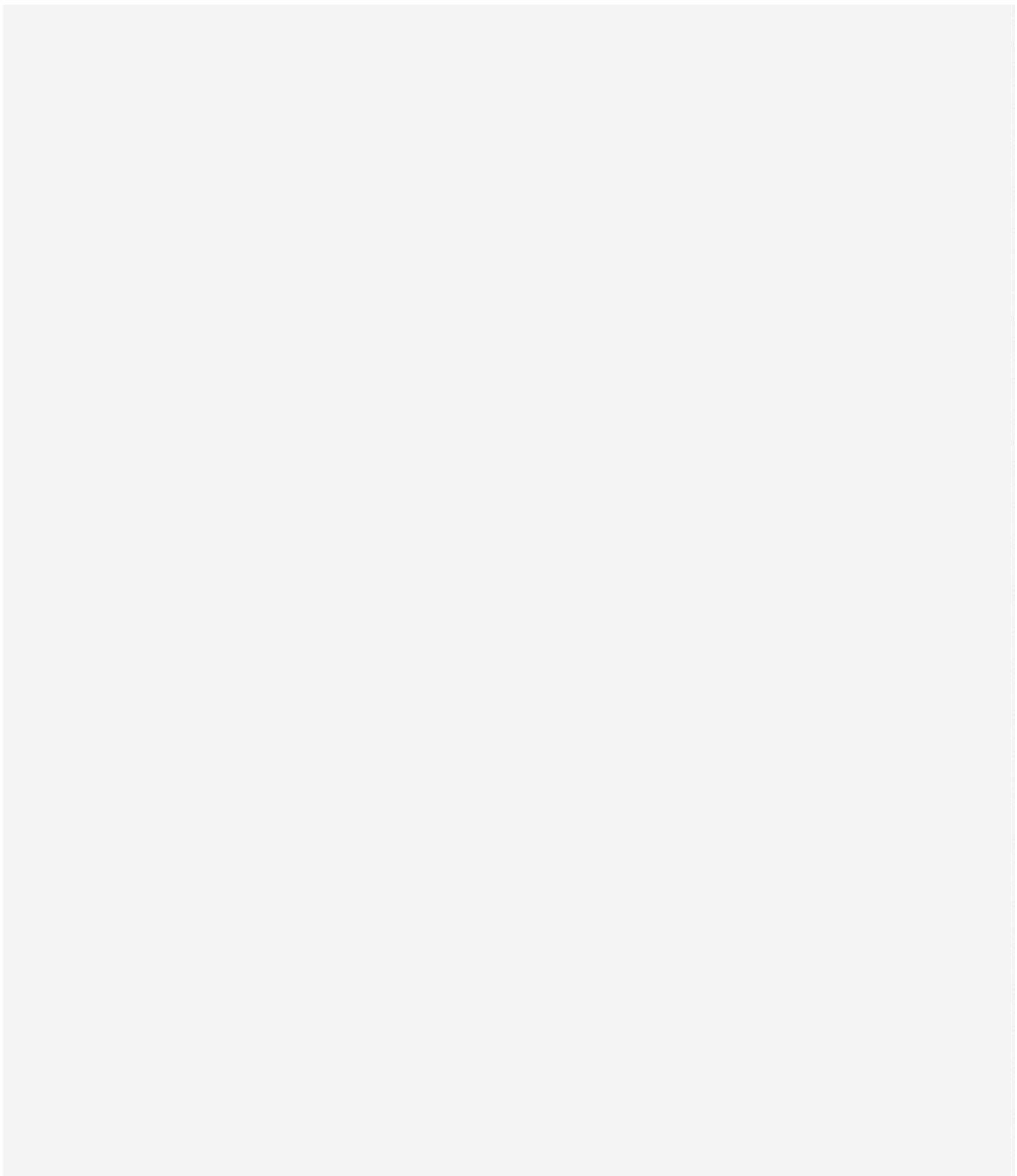
"Netflix, you owe our community an apology and to this so-called comedian ... I saw your Instagram post and the fact that you can continue to think that this is some kind of joke ... they now have a 350-pound black man standing with them," said Michael Johnson, CEO of Boys and Girls Club of Dane County, referring to comedian Tom Segura. "And I'm telling you, we are not going to accept this garbage that you are putting out in our community. We will not allow you to hurt our babies. These are some of the most powerful and talented people I have ever seen."

At a press conference at GiGi's Playhouse on Madison's east side Jan. 31, Johnson was one of the many speakers who came out strong against a recently added comedy special on Netflix that is sparking a movement among families of people with disabilities, especially those who have Down syndrome.



Netflix is facing calls to censor a new comedy special which features alleged "hate speech" against people with Down syndrome. In his Netflix special "Disgraceful," Segura has sparked outrage this week for his blatant, continual use of the word "retarded."

"I called this press conference after hearing about what this so-called comedian has said," Johnson told the crowd. "This kind of behavior ... this kind of tone ... is unacceptable and when you think about whether it's the civil rights movement where people discriminate and say hateful words, we can either choose to utilize our voice for something good or we can choose to be quiet and accept this behavior that's unacceptable."



Thirteen-year-old actress, model, and advocate Abigail Kaiser spoke at the press conference.

Nancy Gianni, founder of GiGi's Playhouse Down Syndrome Achievement Centers, says that they are under unexpected attacks on their families as a result of the comedy special.

"Everybody knows about the situation that is going on with Netflix and the hatred that is being spread. The bottom line is that we cannot change this comedian, his prejudice, his hatefulness, and the way he talks about individuals with Down syndrome, but we can change Netflix from spreading that hatred to the world, to our children and to our youth," Gianni said. "Letting people think it's OK to bully people with Down syndrome is completely unacceptable."

Gianni founded GiGi's Playhouse after her daughter, GiGi, was born with Down syndrome 13 years ago. The organization works to change society's perceptions about those who are different and to foster acceptance for people of all abilities. GiGi's Playhouse provides free life-changing therapeutic, educational and career programs for 80,000-plus people throughout the country.

"People with disabilities are the largest minority in the world and they are also the largest minority in this country," Gianni said. "Why is nobody sticking up for us when people attack our children?"

Thirteen-year-old actress, model, and advocate Abigail Kaiser speaks about the need to be kind.

Segura recently responded to the uproar caused by his slur on social media by making it worse.

“Hey @netflix please don’t take my special down. That’d be so retarded,” he said.

Ann Moffit and Nicki Vander Meulen, members of Madison’s Board of Education, both spoke to the crowd at the event.

"When people try to defend using the 'R' word, they want to make you feel bad when they are the ones who've said something offensive," said Moffitt, vice president of the Madison Metropolitan School Board. "Tom Segura has taken this offensiveness to a whole new level. He makes it clear that he's talking about people with Down syndrome and he thinks its hilariously funny. Netflix appears to think the same."

Moffitt says that her perspective comes from being a mother of a child with a disability and her work with children with mental health and behavioral health needs.

"One thing I see across all of my roles is how incredibly important it is to be kind," she said. "Our kids face so much adversity in a world that doesn't have much patience when their gifts and their needs don't match up with other people's expectations. People label our kids and stigmatize them and sometimes the adults who are supposed to have their best interests at heart are responsible."

At time of publication, Over 87,000 people have [signed a petition on Change.org](#) trying to convince Netflix to remove the special.

"Contact Netflix and tell them to take that garbage off their platform because we deserve better," Johnson said. "We are going to encourage people not to use that platform if they don't do what's right.

"I am proud to stand with these young people and their families and I want to encourage Netflix to take down that disgraceful video," Johnson added. "They are beautiful people. They are our people. They are smart young men and women that live in our community."

Written by [David Dahmer](#)

A. David Dahmer is Publisher and Editor-in-Chief of Madison365.