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[00:00:02] **Speaker 1** I know you're in a perfect storm.

[00:00:04] **Speaker 2** Right?

[00:00:05] **Speaker 3** Yeah. All right.

[00:00:10] **Speaker 2** Good afternoon, everyone. And thank you for coming out today on such a short notice. But I believe it was imperative that the Legislative Black Caucus called this press conference due to the urgency of what's happened over the past week. And I want to start off my remarks marking that December 10th, 2023, marked the seventh and 75th anniversary of a universal Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The document highlights that every person, regardless of race, color, religion, sex, language, political beliefs, national or social origin, property, birth or other status is entitled to basic human rights. I think it's appropriate to start off this press conference stating that it is because somehow, ironically, our state is moving in the wrong way morally. We already know that the UW Board of Regents will be taking a vote today that could potentially flip the initial decision that happened Saturday, turning down the decision that would harm efforts around diversity, equity and inclusion. So the question. Presents itself. Why? Is there now a flip? We have to state the truth. The truth is what sets the path on the right way. And though it hurts, it helps all of us to grow. I'm sure that there are concerns about self-preservation. There have been threats by legislature, Republicans in the Senate and in the Assembly that some of the regents may lose their seats. And so let's be perfectly clear here. This deal is part of a systematic racist deal, and it is discriminatory. It's discriminatory towards students, faculty and staff of color because their experiences should never have a price tag. It should be borne out on what inclusion looks like on our campuses. There should never have any type of political pressures to change how our educational institutions operate. Our educational system should be a place where everyone should learn from everybody. You know, there's diversity in our stream. And it's when we learn from each other the differences that we have. That's how we grow, that's how we mature, that's how we make our state better. And that's how we better ourselves. But what's very alarming is that people went to such great lengths to making sure that this deal could potentially happen today. And with that being said, I want to make sure that I give space for my other colleagues to speak. And at this time, I'll bring up Representative Samba, who was our vice chair of the Legislative Black Caucus.

[00:03:37] **Speaker 3** Thank. Good afternoon. My name is Campbell Baldé. I represent Assembly District 48. Like the President said, we are gathered here today to talk about the EEI and what the regions are about to do. So the United States of America is a unique country like no other country in the world. The reason why I am here as an immigrant is based off of the principle on the week this country has been operating for the last 400 years, and that includes diversity. Inclusion and making sure that everybody has the freedom to live in this country without fear of. I did not come about out of nowhere. And it cannot disappear from our vocabulary because one set of a political party feels like it should. It is all our responsibility to make sure that this country. Does not lose its foundation. The reality of slavery is real. There was slavery. The reality of being a gay person in this country is real. The reality of being a minority person in this country is real. So if we do not institute things that would help us all of an equal playing field, then this country is going downhill. And it is all our responsibility, whether we are politicians in the media, the public, to make sure that. The founding principle of this country remains. We are losing our democracy in a way unimaginable. The exact cultural war that has been happening around all red states, I would say Are the exact cultures a fight that they are bringing to the state of Wisconsin? We cannot let that happen. The region must do what is right. All of us must do what is right and all of us must advocate for what is right. Diversity, equity and inclusion. Tell me what is wrong with diversifying our workforce. Our institutions are how we just do things. Tell me what is wrong with diversity. Tell me what is wrong with equity. Tell me what is wrong with inclusion. Tell me what? What is the fear? Why is it that the Republicans. I saw fit said it into getting this out of our vocabulary and unaware of life. So it is not our responsibility again to make sure that this is part of our DNA. We cannot get rid of it. That is what America is about. This is one country based off of immigrants and diversity, equity and inclusion. So thank you for being here. And I think now I let one of my colleague, Representative Morrison, to say a few words. No.

[00:07:02] **Speaker 1** That's exactly the he.

[00:07:06] **Speaker 4** He could go. Good afternoon, everybody. I'm a Reverend Greg Lewis. I'm the executive director of Souls to the Polls, Wisconsin. I'm the chairman of the Board of Power to the Poles and founder and president of an organization called Passions United and. We have a morality question here. You know, we have a lot of people who have not gotten opportunities, have been underserved, denied opportunities day after day after day. And when we come up with solutions that could help a person or two, we look back because of politics and eliminate them. See, I can stand up here and I can talk about racism, bigotry, white supremacy, hate all I want, and nobody's going to listen to me because they'll say I play the race card. That's why I need you. My white brothers and sisters to stand up to these people and tell them how wrong they are when they start to deny us rights that we certainly deserve. If you have not walked in my shoes, you don't know how I feel about people taking things away day after day after day. I'm a man and I want to be treated like a man. If you have the opportunity to help somebody, you certainly ought to do it. You shouldn't take the initiative to eliminate me out of your situation. I deserve a chance, just like anybody else. I deserve to live like an American who has the joy of enjoying my country. I shouldn't have to live on comfortably all my life. I shouldn't have to keep fighting the same battles. And that's what's happening here right now. 1619. My people have fought to be free, to be treated like equals, to be something. To do the right thing. I want to live in polyester paradise, too. I want a white picket fence, too. I want my children to grow up and be representative of people who can help the development of this country. And we're only as strong as our weakest link. Don't you realize that you can't keep putting me down and expect this country to be great? So we've got to stop letting people do things to us. Ladies and gentlemen, we need you to stand up for our small white brothers and sisters. I'm playing the race card. You could have a conversation. You need to do that with these people who are making bad decisions, putting us in places where we have to fight with our backs against the wall. And when we fight hard, you tell us that something's wrong with that. I'm just going to leave that right there. I have to warn you, never give a pass through the my o'clock because I will start to preach and I'm going to say this. You need to treat people like you want to be treated. And that's just the bottom line. I just want to thank you for hearing me out. I am so fed up with getting treated like less than a man. I am so fed up with my opportunities being denied. I am so fed up with building, helping to build this country. And nobody wants to give me credit. I'm fed up. That's it. Thank you so much. Oh.

[00:11:09] **Speaker 1** To have to follow that up. It's not an easy task. But I wanted to really take the time to speak today to uplift. The fight of our young people.

[00:11:24] **Speaker 4** Yes.

[00:11:25] **Speaker 1** In this conversation that the regents will be voting on tomorrow and have been negotiating. Well, not the regents have been negotiating, but folks have been negotiating for over the past few months has never taken the opportunity to take this conversation to the students. One of my my core philosophies that I that I carry with me every day in this work is that those who are closest to the problems are the closest to the solutions. And in this case, our faculty and our students are the closest to the solution here. And they haven't had the opportunity to to voice their opinions or their thoughts in this negotiation process. We've seen. Republicans in the Assembly in the Senate negotiated on the backs of black, brown and indigenous communities. For years. And we've seen that tremendously happening this year. As it relates to several conversations we've had over major policies that radically affect this entire state. But this time they negotiate on the backs of my kids. We all know, especially those of us who are who come from communities of color, know that our futures, our ability to thrive, our freedom to thrive, hinges on the backs of our ability, hinges on our ability to achieve. Successful outcomes in educational institutions. My mom at the very youngest age of my life. The earliest stages I can remember when I was two and a half told me that a mind is a terrible thing to waste. And she told me that every single day of my life. So when I showed up in in, in my educational institutions, we fought hard to ensure that I had the opportunity to achieve something great. And that's what our students are trying to achieve right now on our campuses in the UW system. And what we're doing today and what we're still does is it says no. Right. We'll make it a little bit harder for you to make to get here. We'll make it harder for you to achieve your ability to achieve access to the freedom to thrive. And. That's disheartening. It's infuriating for me and my colleagues, which is why most of the, if not every single assembly Democrat stood against us that stood against this deal. When we found out about it last week, that we're standing against this deal right now. Because we know what our young people need. They need support on our campuses, especially on the campus in this in this in the city where we know historically has abused and berated young people of color. We've seen it this year, right? We've seen it earlier last year when we had young people, young people of color, assaulted, spit on, paraded on our college campuses and in the city. We can't continue to allow folks to negotiate deals on our students backs. We can't continue to be silent when our young people access for help. So I'm asking the regents to deny this deal, because when we negotiate for for better pay for our buildings on the backs of our kids. We found the future of this very state. And I refuse to allow the future of this state. To be a source of harm for my children. And for the folks that I call my little cousins, right when I walk into my neighborhood. We need justice in this moment of now. And we need our regents to step up and to fight for that justice, especially the ones that don't look like us. And that's all I have to say.

[00:16:58] **Speaker 2** I have words from Representative Stubbs, who is a member of the Legislative Black Caucus and represents UW Madison. After the University of the Board of Regents voted 98 to reject a Republican brokered proposal to trade cuts in diversity, equity and inclusion programing and faculty positions for engineering, building and employee pay raise funds. She wants to send a clear message to the UW Board of Regents. We must fight for campuses where everyone is welcomed and feels they belong. Words cannot describe the relief she had knowing that justice had prevailed when we sought the vote Saturday. However. We still she still remains deeply distraught and perplexed that this trade was ever on the table to begin with. Diversity, equity and inclusion will never be values that she is willing to compromise on. And she would hope that the rest of the state of Wisconsin, a state that consistently ranks highest in racial disparities in the nation across every aspect of a person's life would agree with her. And so she encourages those to stand, to stay steadfast in a trusting that the growth of our young people are supported. And as we wrap up today's press conference, a few final words. And maybe to dispel some myths as well. There have been talks, comics. Twitter, X, whatever you call it nowadays. That's what we're saying is bigoted. What we're saying is racist. I find it hard to believe that if we still have we're second soloists and economic opportunities for African-Americans that we could be racists or bigoted. I find it hard to believe that our children cannot read and write by third grade, and that's our African-American children. I find that hard to believe. And I find it extremely difficult to ever put a price tag on someone's life. I find it hard to believe that there had to be laws on the books to just ensure that people that were disabled were able to get into buildings. I find it hard to believe that being bigoted or racist means that women still don't have the right to choose in their own state. And with the issue that I had yesterday, I made very loud and clear that there is a close meeting. There was called the question that was legal and due to a legislative memo, that meeting that took place yesterday was illegal. There is not enough information. About what was being deliberated deliberated in that meeting. And so I am calling on the Dana County D.A. and our attorney general to investigate the matter. But also a final message to our Board of Regents. As a caucus, we recognize that you were put right in the middle of political. Grabs. There have been abuse of power from legislative Republicans, and it's disgraceful. But for those. That voted against this deal Saturday. I ask that you take heart. And you hold on to courage is because I can assure you doing the right thing will never be in the wrong. You will always be paid tenfold for the things that we do for good, for those that are in the least of these. And so as civil approaches today, we do not know what the outcome of this deal would become. We implore and we ask the Board of Regents to stand on their vote. That happened on Saturday. And if that is not the case, rest assured that was the Wisconsin Legislative Black Caucus members, community members, students, faculty and anyone that knows and values diversity as our strength will be at every step of the way fighting against this. Thank you for your time.