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## Milwaukee drops the ball again on race relations

### Statement from Alderman Rainey on standing ovation for Josh Hader

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Milwaukee has been blessed with a great sports legacy. As an upper-Midwestern city, in many instances, the rest of the world learns about Milwaukee through our sports teams, players and fans. Athletes like Kareem Abdul-Jabbar and Hank Aaron, who in the face of racism and discrimination, united fans of all ethnic backgrounds. But as I look around in 2018 I wonder how much progress has been made in the decades since those great names dominated their respective sports.

Earlier this year, we saw footage of Milwaukee Bucks player Sterling Brown, an African-American, harassed by police officers. I applaud the Bucks franchise for issuing a statement that took a courageous stance in recognizing this incident speaks to a larger problem related to race. *“Unfortunately this isn’t an isolated case. It shouldn’t require an incident involving a professional athlete to draw attention to the fact that vulnerable people in our communities have experienced similar, and even worse, treatment.”*

Just last week, we saw homophobic and racist tweets including “white power” surface from Brewers pitcher Josh Hader, a Caucasian man. The tweets preceded his time as a professional baseball player to when he was 17. In a statement, Brewers General Manager David Stearns calls the comments “inexcusable” but did not take the opportunity to acknowledge Hader’s comments are an example of a larger issue related to racism. *“Those of us that have come to know Josh do not believe that these posts are representative of his beliefs. He has been a good teammate and contributor to the team in every way. We will continue to work through this issue with Josh as we prepare to resume games after the break.”*

What occurred during Josh Hader’s first appearance since those tweets surfaced is most troubling. Thousands of fans gave the pitcher a standing ovation. This frankly is an embarrassment to the world. The boisterous manner of standing to show support for Hader is nothing less than a dismissive stance against problems of race affecting an entire community: a community dealing with the effects of hypersegregation, economic disparity and police harassment.

The act of crowd members rising to their feet to cheer Hader ignores these very issues that NFL players seek to highlight while kneeling in silent protest during the national anthem. I am deeply concerned that President Trump continues to castigate those football players, recently recommending suspension for those who do not stand “at attention, hand on heart.” Although it seems cynical, I cannot help but think it comes down to skin color.

The Hader incident at Miller Park highlights circumstances with which the Sterling Brown incident could transpire. I urge residents of Milwaukee, its suburbs and Wisconsin to think about their actions on these issues and the words they speak whether it’s at a fish fry, picnic or on social media. Let us honor the great sports legacy of Milwaukee by having the courage to acknowledge problems being felt in parts of the city and some of the structural problems working against those members of the community.