

IDEASLAB

ONE NIGHT, BIG REACTION

1
OF



Milwaukee Brewers celebrated Black culture. And then racism followed.



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What exactly did Black Culture Fest take away from anyone? • Nobody was prevented from watching the Milwaukee Brewers beat the Atlanta Braves at American Family Field on Aug. 21. No one was harmed as the Brewers celebrated Black culture for one night during a 162-game regular season. • Yet judging by some of the comments posted on social media, even that was too much:

- “Malt liquor the drink of choice.”
- “Were they giving out free watermelon and crack?”
- “Where is the fried chicken?”

Those were actually some of the milder ones. Others referred to human beings as monkeys, robbers, baby mamas and crack smokers. Some posted racist memes, including one titled “My First Ankle Monitor” featuring a little boy with an ankle monitor around his leg.

Think about what caused this reaction.

The Brewers simply acknowledged the contributions of Black Americans. The team partnered with groups, including Social X MKE, to celebrate Milwaukee’s Black community. Fans experienced live music and local marching bands, supported

Black-owned businesses and celebrated the historical contributions of Black baseball players and the Negro Leagues.

And somehow, that alone was enough to bring the racists out.

What struck me most wasn’t simply how ugly and degrading the comments were. It was how comfortable people were making them.

They weren’t hiding behind white hoods. They weren’t writing anonymous letters or whispering these things among friends.

They put their names and faces next to them on public feeds with accounts that didn’t appear to be fake or bot generated.

That should bother all of us.

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IMAGES

Catching errors means Wisconsin's election system is actually working

Your Turn

Tom Barrett, JB Van Hollen, Scott Klug and Michael Tate
Guest columnists

Our elections are safe and secure, yet time after time, mistakes in the process lend credence to those who would cast doubt. That is particularly frustrating for the thousands of election workers across the state whose work is questioned despite repeated audits, recounts and reviews finding Wisconsin elections to be secure. The system has checks and redundancies specifically designed to identify mistakes and correct them.

The August primary provided another reminder of why that matters.

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PARASITE OUTBREAK SHOWS THE NEED FOR LOCAL, ORGANIC FOOD



Your Turn

Lori Stern
Guest columnist



GETTY IMAGES

The summer of 2026 might be remembered for multiple things – the World Cup and the heat wave in Europe among them. It’s also the summer of explosive diarrhea. Caused by an outbreak of Cyclosporiasis, the intestinal illness comes from eating food or drinking water that contains feces with the parasite *Cyclospora cayetanensis*.

The outbreak has made for some funny memes and late-night talk show jokes, but anyone who has had this can tell you it’s anything but fun.

The current outbreak began in mid-July and is linked to lettuce grown and distributed by Taylor Farms. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 15 states have reported clusters of Cyclospora specific to this outbreak. Just when you might have thought it was safe to start eating fresh produce again, Taylor Farms recalled a wide range of products that contained peppers that were

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OPINION

A 9-year-old knew better. But why didn't the adult who tripped him?



James E. Causey
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We spend a lot of time talking about how young people need to do better. We tell them to control their emotions, to respect one another and when things don't go their way, they can't lash out or hurt someone else.

Some adults need to start listening to the same advice.

During a youth football game Aug. 22 at Case High School in Racine, a 41-year-old Milwaukee man got upset over a play, walked onto the field and tripped a 9-year-old boy who was running down the field, according to Mount Pleasant police.

Yes, you read that right. A grown man tripped a 9-year-old during a football game. I've watched the video several times, and each time I keep asking myself the same question.

What the hell was this man thinking? This wasn't the Green Bay Packers playing the Chicago Bears. This wasn't the Super Bowl.

These were kids under the age of 10 playing football.

The man was a parent of a player on the opposing team. Police said he got upset over a play before things escalated.

But what could possibly happen during a football game involving 9-year-olds that would make a grown man think it was OK to walk onto the field and trip somebody else's child?

Nothing.

The 9-year-old acted more maturely than the adult

Thankfully, the boy who was tripped wasn't hurt. Case Eagles coach Channing Schultz said the young player got right back up and was ready to continue playing.

Think about that. The 9-year-old got knocked down, got back up and kept playing. The adult was the one who couldn't control his emotions.

Police stopped the man after he left the game. He cooperated with officers, admitted what he had done and acknowledged he was wrong. He was cited for disorderly conduct.

He was wrong. We can all see that.

An apology to the boy he tripped, his family and the football team would be a good place to start.

I thought I was encouraging her. Taylor didn't see it that way. Then my 6-year-old daughter gave her father one of those check-yourself moments that I've never forgotten.

"Dad, it's just a game, and if you are going to yell, then don't come."

Unfortunately, I've seen adults lose perspective at youth sporting events before. It happened when my daughter was 6 years old and playing soccer at Milwaukee German Immersion School.

Her team was playing another school on a rainy Saturday, with a chilly fall wind making things uncomfortable for the parents standing along the sidelines.

These were 6-year-olds. Half the time, both teams would gather in a tight circle around a soccer ball that looked almost as big as they were, kicking it about a foot at a time.

During the game, one of the girls fell and started crying.

Her father ran onto the field and threatened to beat up parents on the German Immersion side.

Some parents yelled back, and suddenly a soccer game involving first-graders had adults behaving worse than the children.

That was 17 years ago, and I still remember it. Maybe because I also

learned something about myself that soccer season.

Sometimes our children have to check us. Mine did.

I understand how parents can get intense watching their children play. Some of us imagine our children playing in high school or college. Maybe even professionally.

And sometimes, without realizing it, we start living through them. That's not fair to our children. My daughter, Taylor, taught me that.

I was one of those parents who would yell from the sidelines:

- Try harder!
- Kick the ball!
- Run!

I thought I was encouraging her. Taylor didn't see it that way. After a tough loss one day, we were walking back to the car when I asked whether she had been trying her hardest. She told me she was. Then she told me something I wasn't expecting.

Me yelling at her to try harder wasn't helping. It was making her play worse.

Then my 6-year-old daughter gave her father one of those check-yourself moments that I've never forgotten.

"Dad, it's just a game, and if you are going to yell, then don't come."

Ouch. We went to McDonald's for hamburgers after the game, and I apologized.

And you know what? She was right. It was just a game.

I needed to hear that from my 6-year-old daughter.

Seventeen years later, another father may need to hear the same thing.

There isn't a touchdown important enough to justify tripping somebody else's child.

There isn't a blown call important enough to lose control over.

And there isn't a youth football game important enough to forget why you're there in the first place.

You're there for the kids.

Let them play.

At the end of the day, it's just a game.

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Stern

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exposed to *Salmonella* contamination.

We are in a moment of distrust. From our elected officials to the systems that are intended to keep us safe, such as health insurance, air traffic control, and our news sources, many of us wonder what we can trust. Adding to our doubt and anxiety is the way AI is making it difficult to discern if a photo or video is real. Now, we can't eat lettuce or salsa without considerable fear.

One or two companies often control a food sector

The current outbreak points to several problems with our food system. One is consolidation. Whether it's pork, eggs, lettuce, or strawberries, one or two companies often control the sector.

Even if you'd never heard of Taylor Farms before the summer of "diarrhea lettuce," you've eaten their produce. According to the company's website, "Taylor Farms is now the leading global producer of salads and healthy fresh foods, with production facilities across the U.S., Canada, Mexico, and Western Europe." Its bagged produce is labeled under many names, including Kirkland Signature (Costco) and Trader Joe's. The company provides bulk shredded lettuce to McDonald's, Subway, Olive Garden, and many other fast-food chains.

This much control of a dietary staple puts us all at risk. It's not just the farms where the lettuce is produced that Taylor Farms owns but the robotic technology for weeding, the facilities where it is washed and packaged, and the refrigerated transportation in which it crisscrosses the country.

Contributing to the severity of the outbreak are federal cuts to departments and programs charged with tracking, preventing, and communicating information related to food-borne illnesses. The loss of funding for testing and laboratory testing and the elimination of experienced staff at the Centers for Disease Control and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration have put us all at risk.

I am the director of Marbleseed, a nonprofit that supports organic agriculture and farmer education in the Midwest. You might guess that my message is to eat organic lettuce – then we'd all be fine. Any lettuce can become contaminated, if it meets the parasite. In fact, Taylor Farms has an organic brand – Earthbound.

Outbreak another reason to support smaller farms

Rather, what I'm hoping is that this outbreak reminds people of another one of the multiple reasons to support small- and mid-sized farms in our area. When we buy produce at a farmers' market or in community groceries and food stands that carry local produce, we sidestep the consolidated giants such as Taylor Farms.

Our food isn't grown in another state or another country. Instead, it is grown from someone we can meet and get to know. And our food doesn't travel thousands of miles to intermingle in large cleaning and packaging facilities. It takes less gas, less plastic, and fewer hands on the product.

Wisconsin has long been a leader in organic farming. We rank second in the nation for total certified organic farms, with more than 1,400 operations. It is a network that we can not only be proud of but should protect and promote.

Lori Stern is executive director of Marbleseed, a Wisconsin-based nonprofit committed to supporting farmers in their transition toward sustainable, organic farming systems that are ecologically sound, economically viable, and socially just. Her background includes work related to community and environmental health, social justice, and food access. She lives with her wife, LeAnn, on a small farm near Monticello where they grow vegetables and raise chickens and goats.

Causey

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Baseball hasn't always welcomed Black people

Baseball spent generations excluding Black players. Jackie Robinson famously broke Major League Baseball's color barrier on April 15, 1947, however Black attendees still were forced to sit in segregated sections of the ballpark and endured other harassment while attending games.

Seventy-nine years later, people responding to a Brewers celebration were still using some of the same stereotypes that have been used to demean Black people for generations. That's not ancient history. It's 2026 for the whole world to see.

And baseball still has a diversity problem. Black players made up just 6.8% on Major League Baseball rosters, injured lists and restricted lists on Opening Day this season, according to ESPN. That's an improvement from 6.2% in 2025 and 6% in 2024, but it's still a small percentage.

The divide is visible in the stands, too. Only about 8% of MLB fans identify as Black, compared with 69% who identify as White and 19% who identify as Hispanic, according to Statista.

I've been to plenty of Brewers games. One thing that's hard not to notice is the lack of racial diversity.

Maybe more Black people would go to games if they felt like they were welcome. That's why events like Black Culture Fest matter.

Yes, they're about celebrating culture. But they're also about telling people who historically haven't felt represented in baseball that this game belongs to them, too.

Maybe someone who came to hear the music, support a Black-owned business or enjoy the atmosphere will come back to watch Jackson Chourio, Brice Turang, Andrew Vaughn or All-Star pitcher Jacob Misiorowski.

Why would anyone have a problem with that?

Black and Hispanic residents are

taxpayers, too. Public money is helping keep the Brewers in Milwaukee. They have every right to walk through those gates, sit in those seats and feel like that ballpark belongs to them just as much as it belongs to anybody else.

Don't hide the racism. See it for what it is. Then speak out.

As a columnist who writes about race more than most, I wish the comments about the game surprised me. Sadly, they didn't. They're versions of the same feedback I receive whenever I touch on these subjects.

Write about racial disparities in Milwaukee, and someone will tell me racism doesn't exist anymore. Mention Black achievement, someone will find a way to diminish it.

We like to pretend we've moved beyond this. A familiar refrain is that Barack Obama was elected president twice. ... But electing a Black president didn't make America post-racial, and things are getting worse.

We like to pretend we've moved beyond this. A familiar refrain is that Barack Obama was elected president twice. Or that Black Americans lead major corporations, universities and governments and Black athletes are among the biggest stars in American sports.

But electing a Black president didn't make America post-racial, and things are getting worse. Six in 10 Americans say race relations in this country are generally bad, according to Pew Research Center. Black Americans are even more pessimistic. Seventy-one percent describe race relations negatively, compared with 56% of White Americans and 60% of Hispanic Americans.

After reading the comments surrounding the Black Culture Fest game, it's not difficult to understand why. Some people complained that organizations should take down the social media posts where these racist comments appeared.

I disagree.

Leave the comments up. Let people see what was said. But calling this out can't just fall on Black people.

This is where we need our allies of all colors to speak up, too.

It's one thing for me to call out these comments. It means something different when the person saying, "That's racist, and that's not OK," is someone who doesn't look like me. A friend. A brother. A sister. A mother. A father. A co-worker. A boss.

Racism isn't going to disappear simply because Black people keep pointing it out. I reached out to several people on Facebook who posted racist comments and asked them a simple question: What was it about Black Culture Fest that made you respond that way?

I'm still waiting for an answer.

This is no time to retreat on Black Culture Fest

Until then, I hope the Brewers don't retreat from Black Culture Fest because of what happened online.

I hope they make it bigger and more Black families come, more businesses participate and more Black children walk into that ballpark and see people who look like them being celebrated.

And I hope the people who had such a problem with the fest come, too.

Maybe they'll discover something they should have learned a long time ago: Baseball doesn't belong to them.

It belongs to all of us. The Brewers have the best record in baseball. They're doing their part on the field.

The least we can do as fans is to be better to one another.

This is my Crew, too. Go Brewers.

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