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UB Art Project Incites Racial Tension on Campus

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By Ryan Whalen

Wednesday, September 16, 2015 at 10:07 PM EDT



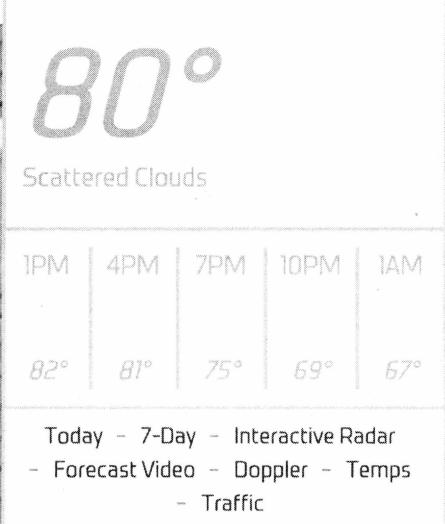
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BUFFALO, N.Y. — Art is often judged by the emotion it subjects its consumers to, for better or worse, but a recent controversial, racially charged installation on the University of Buffalo campus has students outraged.

A "White Only" sign was posted outside a bathroom at Clemens Hall Wednesday afternoon. "Black Only" signs appeared near drinking fountains and restrooms on campus.

"We want answers as to who approved this, why they would approve this and why no one took



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into consideration the feelings of black students on campus," UB student Jayonia Griffin said.

School officials said an African-American art student posted these signs as part of a project. She appeared at a Black Student Union meeting that evening where many members expressed their anger over the project.

"It actually backfired, it kind of separated the campus even more," said UB African Student Association President Charles D'Onigbind. "I feel it kind of divided us into black and white. Especially in a time where there are police killings, there are Muslim kids getting arrested for building a clock. This is not a great period to try and play around with something like that."

The Black Student Union suggested the artist's intention was to evoke an emotional response from the student body.

"It really triggered some emotions of inequality and segregation and discrimination that my generation has never felt in that way before," said UB Black Student Union President Micah Oliver. "This is a student problem. The signs triggered emotions and threatened safety of students at UB, not just black students."

"In a setting like this, there's always an academic explanation," Oliver said. "There's always an academic tie to it. Seems like there's always a theory behind the way that these things happen. In any case, the Black Student Union feels like this in particular was highly insensitive and inappropriate."

A university spokesperson said it is continuing to review the matter through appropriate university policies and procedures.



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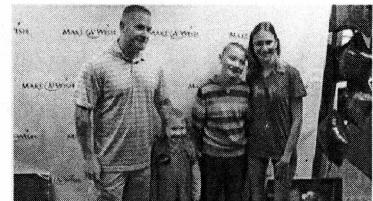
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