

The Daily Texan Diversity & Inclusion Board August 3, 2020 Statement: Demands for Reforms in The Daily Texan Newsroom

To The Daily Texan and Texas Student Media (TSM):

The murder of George Floyd, Mike Ramos, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, Tony McDade and countless other lives lost to anti-Black violence in the U.S. has led to an upheaval of the oppressive structures that harm this country's newsrooms. Black and Latinx journalists at news outlets such as The Los Angeles Times, The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette and many, many more across the country have pressured their employers to reckon with this industry's complacency in upholding white supremacy. And as a student media outlet, it's imperative that we do the same.

A response to "Demands for Reforms in The Daily Texan Newsroom" from the Director for Texas Student Media (TSM)

The Director agrees and is committed to finding a resolution for each of the recommendations. If the Diversity and Inclusion Board would be open to meeting, we can define a path that builds structure and framework to accomplish these requests by October 1. It will require work by committee, but that achievement is possible. A committee composed of the D&I Board, the Director of TSM, and representatives from the TSM Board of Trustees, The Daily Texan leadership and the Moody College of Communication can work to resolve these requests.

I also agree that the Daily Texan and all student media units at Texas Student Media haven't always been as welcoming as they could be. I believe this to be true for the 100+ year history of the organization. It's never been excusable and it should no longer be accepted. Good, thoughtful work needs to happen for substantive change, and it has never been more important than at this moment in history.

The Daily Texan newsroom has not always been as welcoming and inclusive as it should and can be. Members of our Diversity + Inclusion Board and other staffers of color in the newsroom have been subjected to the following, but not limited to:

1. The newspaper's adviser cursed out the current D+I Board and other staffers of color after they demanded more support of Black staffers following George Floyd's murder at a summer meeting.
2. At the meeting specified above, the summer managing editor and the newspaper's adviser did not listen to or support the D+I Board and other staffers of color. Rather than trying to create solutions or understand why BIPOC staff felt unsupported, they chastised the current D+I Board for not addressing their concerns with the management team sooner.
3. The newspaper's adviser has repeatedly questioned the validity of the Board's efforts since its creation in early 2019 and repeatedly asked BIPOC staffers why diversity should matter in a newsroom.

I am surprised and saddened to hear of your interactions with the Texan Advisor, who I directly supervise. I know of no other person more committed to today's Daily Texan, its growth and success. I have never witnessed or been made aware of this type of behavior but am committed to working with the Advisor on improving communication, being open to change and better handling newsroom conflict. This behavior described will not be tolerated.

4. Inside the newsroom, many staff members have been harassed or questioned on subjects such as their citizenship status, sexuality and race.

5. Sources in stories published by the Texan have repeatedly been misrepresented and harmed, such as describing students as “suffering from” disabilities , incorrectly stating someone’s citizenship status , or LGBTQ students being outed in photographs and stories without their consent.

This list is only a fraction of the experiences that have traumatized and harmed both UT’s communities and The Daily Texan’s staffers in its 120-year history. Thus, The Daily Texan’s D+I Board has crafted a list of action items that will create equitable, tangible steps towards supporting Black, Indigenous and People of Color folk inside and outside of our newsroom:

Behavior inside the newsroom (or any area of TSM) is also subject to rules for participation and a variety of consequences for noncompliance. Harassment of any kind is a very serious violation of these rules. These violations are grounds for immediate and permanent removal from participating at TSM. This behavior will not be tolerated and should be immediately reported to the advisor or a member of the professional staff to ensure proper reporting, investigation and outcomes required by university rules.

Recommitting to Diversity and Inclusion: In the past, D+I efforts have been neglected by non-minority staffers. Creating diverse and inclusive spaces should be the responsibility of all staffers. Management, TSM, and our adviser need to be understanding of and support the changes the D+I Board strives to make in the newsroom.

- Management should make a public statement that they support the board and our efforts, and should recommit to fostering diversity and inclusion in our newsroom and in our coverage.
- The Texan should make a public apology to the communities and organizations the paper has misrepresented over the years.

Hiring Practices: Hiring practices vary at the personal discretion of the respective semester’s Managing Editor, Editor-in-Chief and department heads. In order to prevent discriminatory practices from continuing, we demand the following rules to be established:

- All applicants for paid permanent positions must be interviewed before decisions are made.
- All those in charge of hiring must provide a written explanation of why a candidate was selected. These statements should be reviewed by the Managing Editor and staff adviser.
- The Texan must establish a clear hiring guide to be easily accessible on the Texan website.

- The creation of a temporary, paid position of a Hiring Director, who will be responsible for improving our hiring practices by recruiting through various student organizations and communities and ensuring our hiring standards meet the standard for diversity, equity and fairness that applicants deserve.

With the Texan leadership and committee, we can build a process that is documented and meets these requests. The hiring practices at the Texan have been, and should be, conducted by students. The guidelines imposed by TSM are that pay is consistent semester to semester, same titles are paid the same rate and that one person may not be paid for two or more positions - only the highest of the two. These guidelines were imposed in the last six years to assure equity, avoid favoritism and ensure roles are available to include as many students as possible. These requests are achievable.

Hiring the Managing Editor: The staff has little to no say in the selection of the Managing Editor every semester despite being the people to know and work with the candidates the closest.

1

- The Texan's D+I Director from the previous semester should be present at the deliberation for the next semester's Managing Editor.
- Texan staffers from the previous semester should be able to submit statements about each applicant to be taken into consideration by the TSM Board.

Input and feedback for selection of the Managing Editor, by the TSM Board of Trustees, is currently available through signature, letters of support and direct interaction with the Board at the time of selection. TSM is dedicated to regularly communicating this process in the future, and the committee can work to ensure that all students who want to have input have avenues to do so in the future

Permanent Establishment of the D+I Board: As the Texan is currently structured, the only permanent positions established by TSM are the Managing Editor and Editor-in-Chief.

2 In order to continue our work for years to come, we demand the following changes be made:

- The D+I Board members become permanent positions within the Texan under TSM guidelines. The roles and titles of the positions may need to change, however the D+I Board as an entity must remain a permanent fixture in the Texan.

1 The TSM Board receives applications and decides who is selected for the position with a vote. The previous semester's Managing Editor and Editor-in-Chief are present at a deliberation about the candidates to give their input on each candidate before they are chosen, but they do not vote. 2 The Managing Editor is solely responsible for determining the availability and pay of all positions. As a result, the D+I Board can be removed or pay changed at the discretion of any Managing Editor.

These requests will require approval by the TSM Board of Trustees, as well as changes to our governing documents. This is achievable through committee work and approval by the TSM Board. Setting payment rates by my office is also easily

achievable and can be conducted with historical documentation and collaboration with the current Managing Editor and TSM Business office.

- The pay structure of these roles should not be determined by the Managing Editor, but instead set by the TSM Director. These wages must reflect similar rates as the other Management positions at the Texan.
- The D+I Director should be an official part of the monthly TSM Board Meetings.
- The establishment of a fund controlled by the D+I Board to help fund different efforts and initiatives. For example, funds should be set aside to help finance memberships in minority journalism organizations such as NABJ, NAHJ, AAJA, NAJA, NLGJA and TJA and their respective annual conventions. Membership in these groups provide safe spaces, networking opportunities and scholarship opportunities that aren't found in the Texan's current atmosphere. **Pay Structure Within the Texan:** The current structure of The Daily Texan, and many newsrooms across the country, is one of the barriers in the way of change and equity. Low wages set by Texas Student Media disproportionately impact our staffers of lower socioeconomic backgrounds.. To rectify this, we demand the following changes:
 - TSM collaborates with colleges, particularly the Moody College of Communication, to offer internship credit for selective positions at the Texan.
 - While the Texan currently offers one scholarship to help provide assistance to low-income staffers, there must be greater efforts to support them. In order to expand the scholarship, a set amount from our annual fundraising should be set aside to help grow this vital fund.

Internships college-wide require supervision by a staff or faculty member of the University (not a student). This has been the barrier to increased internships in general. The committee can work with Moody representatives to see if there are workable solutions to increase internship opportunities in the newsroom by utilizing TSM or Moody faculty or staff. Annual fundraising generates between \$10,000 and \$25,000 in donations by year for the entire organization. The Texan's share of this fundraising is a portion, but a workable dividend can be recommended by the committee and presented to Texan leadership and TSM business office. Success will largely depend upon student participation during pledge drives.

Internal Practices: It's one thing to say The Daily Texan will promote diversity and inclusion and it is another to practice it and see the results of it. Conducting regular analyses of staff demographics and sourcing will help the newsroom determine the effectiveness of diversity and inclusion initiatives taken within the newsroom.

- Staff members must participate in the D+I Board's demographic survey at the beginning of every semester. The D+I Board will collect, analyze and release the data in a comprehensive report for management and staff members to read.
- The Daily Texan's content-producing departments should participate in mandatory coverage tracking to ensure our coverage is representative and inclusive of all members of our audience. As part of the production process, we would like editors of content-producing departments to

collect information on their articles. The D+I Board will collect, analyze and release the data in a comprehensive report for the public, management and staff members to read.

- We would like The Daily Texan to properly address and thoroughly evaluate its social media guidelines for staff and how we train staffers on objectivity. **Community Outreach:** In addition to making student journalism more accessible regarding pay and funding, making student journalism accessible to high school students from low-income and predominantly minority communities is just as important.

Internal practices requests seem achievable and will require committee work with Texan leadership, and potentially the TSM Board for required activities.

For many, working at The Daily Texan is often a way for students to gain their first journalistic experience working in a newspaper environment. Being one of the largest college newspapers in the country, The Daily Texan is well-known and widely-followed.

- Create a budget for community outreach initiatives beyond UT to make student journalism more accessible and attainable to diverse communities. This would involve visiting high schools and talking to scholastic journalists and students interested in media. We believe this would be more effective than our current efforts through Explore UT, which only exposes a limited fraction of K-12 students to what opportunities TSM has to offer.

The Daily Texan has lost the goodwill of many organizations on campus already, some of whom have signed below. If you would like to express your support and add your name to the list of signatories below, please fill out the form linked here .

Community Outreach requests also are achievable with a documented strategy and process derived through the committee's work.

I stand ready and committed to resolving these concerns and helping to build a student media experience that is more diverse, more inclusive and where all participants feel welcome and respected.

Signed: Gerald Johnson, Director for Texas Student Media

Signed,

Current and Former Members of the Diversity and Inclusion Board:

Angelica Arinze , D + I External Relations Director (Summer '20), D + I Director (F' **Lauren Girgis** , D + I Internal Relations Director (Summer '20), former D + I Collaborations Director (Spring '20)

Emily Hernandez , Associate News Editor and D+I Board Member (Summer '20), D+I Collaborations Director (Fall '19), News Editor (Fall '20) **Neelam Bohra** , Associate News Editor and D + I Board Member (Summer '20), D+I Collaborations Director (Fall '20) **Aareba Amer** , UT System/Economy Reporter and D + I Board Member (Summer '20), D+I Internal Relations Director (Fall '20) **Lisa Nhan** , Managing Editor (Spring '20) and D + I Board Member (Spring '19)

Tiana Woodard , Diversity and Inclusion Director (Spring 2020) and Life and Arts Editor ('18-'19) **Meghan Nguyen** , D + I External Relations Director (Spring '20) **Divya Jagadeesh** , D + I

External Relations Director (Spring '20) Faith Castle , Video Editor ('19-'20) , D + I Internal Relations Director (Fall '19) María Méndez , D+I Board Member (Spring '19) and Texas Public Radio Reporter Forrest Milburn , Managing Editor (Spring '19) and Audience Engagement Editor at The Miami Herald

Student Organizations:

Texas Roundtable Afterglow ATX It's On Us at UT Austin Texas Blazers Afrikan American Affairs

Asian American Journalists Association Black Student Alliance Texas Spirits

Daily Texan Alumni:

Stephanie Adeline , News Reporter (Spring '17, Fall '17, Spring '18), News Desk Editor (Fall '18), *The Straits Times* (Singapore) **Alex Dominguez** , Social Media Editor, Associate Managing Editor, Director of Digital Strategy ('16-'19)

Kirsten Handler , Associate Managing Editor (Spring '20), Copy Desk Chief (Fall '19/Spring '19)

Chase Karacostas, News Editor (Fall '18), Projects Editor (Fall '19), Newsletters Editor (Spring '20) **Samantha Ketterer**, News Editor, Senior Reporter, Editorial Assistant (Spring '13 - Fall '15) *States Courts Reporter at The Houston Chronicle*

Kevin Lokuwaduge , Science and Tech Reporter ('19) **Eilish O'Sullivan** , City/State Reporter, Staff Photographer ('17-'19), News Wire Editor at *The Daily Dot* **Christiana Peek** , Design Editor ('19-'20), Senior Designer (18-'19)

Sarah Tang , Video Editor ('18-'19) **Angel Ulloa**, Photo Department ('16-18) **Rachel Zein** , Photo Editor ('18) **Spencer Buckner** , Editor-in-Chief ('19-'20) **Mireya Rahman** , Design Editor (Spring '19), Senior Designer (Fall '18) **Sara Schleede** ,

Audio Editor, Audio Producer, Senior News Reporter (Fall '17 - Spring '20), *The Drag Audio Production House* **Samantha Shaps** , Senior Social Media Staff, Social Media Contributor (Fall '17 - Fall '18) **Anusha Lalani** , News Desk Editor, New Reporter ('16 - '18) **Andrea D'Mello** ,

Associate Managing Editor, Design Editor ('17-'19) **Tirza Ortiz** , Social Media Editor, Social Media Staff, Videographer ('17-'19), *KTSM-9 news* **Wynne Davis** , News Editor, Senior News Reporter ('13-'16), *NPR* **Katie Balevic** , Senior Reporter for *UT System and Lege* ('17-'19),

Austonia **Juan Figueroa** , Photo Editor (Spring '18), *The Dallas Morning News* **Allyson Waller** , Senior Crime Reporter (Spring '18), *The New York Times* **Savana Dunning** , News Editor (Spring '20), Associate News Editor (Fall '19), *Austin Monitor* (Intern) **Kaitlyn Wells** , 2009, *Journalism*, UT alumna, *Wirecutter / The New York Times*

Angela Wang , Double Coverage photo editor, senior photographer, staff photographer (Fall '17 - Spring '19) **Gracie Awalt** , associate news editor (Fall '19), News Desk Editor (Spring '19), Senior News Reporter (2018)

Current UT Students:

Delaney Davis, Senior / Government & Spanish / Former Afterglow Co-Editor-in-Chief **Brett Dolotina**, Senior / Public Health and Biochemistry / Texas Roundtable, President; Texas Blazers, Vice Chair of Engagement; MenCanEnd, Co-director; President's Student Advisory Committee Member **Selome Hailu**, Senior / English, African and African Diaspora Studies / Editor-in-Chief of Afterglow ATX **Annie Lyons**, Senior / Journalism / Afterglow ATX, KVRX 91.7, Spark Magazine

Laiken Neumann, Junior / Journalism / Afterglow ATX **Amel Weaver**, Junior / Sociology / Kendra Scott WEL Institute, MEC-AAA- Director of Ops **Zoe Ramirez**, Senior / History, Texas Spirits President **Sara Jane**, Government, Vice President Texas Spirits **Haven Gonzales** , Junior / Anthropology / Student, Texas Spirits member **Roxanne Smith** , Sophomore / Texas Spirits member **McKenzie Castro** , Junior / Human Biology, Health & Society **Rachel Snead** , Senior / Chemical Engineering / Texas Spirits **Kiran Patel** , Junior / Marketing / Texas Spirits, Texas Mohini, KVRX **Athena Zeng** , Senior / Business Honors / Texas Spirits, Texas Club Tennis, KVRX 91.7 **Grace Clark** , Sophomore / Chemistry, Plan II / Texas Spirits **Katherine Hancock** , Sophomore / Social Work / Texas Spirits