

An Anti-Racist Future: A Vision and Plan for the Transformation of Public Media

Racism is the idea that one racial group is inferior or superior to another and has the social power to carry out and benefit from systemic discrimination. This applies to most, if not all, institutions in this country, including public media. Anti-Blackness and white supremacy shape both the institutional policies and practices of society and shape the cultural beliefs and values that support racist policies and practices.

White supremacy is the political and socioeconomic system that allows white people both at a collective and individual level to enjoy structural advantage and rights that other racial and ethnic groups do not.

Anti-racism is the idea that people of all racial groups are equals. Anti-racism is also the work of actively opposing racism and white supremacy by advocating for changes in political, economic, and social life that reduce racial inequity, and the advocacy of policies that support equity for people oppressed by white supremacy.

White supremacist culture and anti-Blackness shape the policies, norms and standards of public radio. They determine whose opinions are valued, whose voices are heard, whose stories are told and taken seriously, who is promoted, and whose resume never gets a second glance. Historically, Black on-air talent are told their dialect and speaking voices do not fit the public radio prototype. There is a strong bias against journalists who have a distinct ethnic or regional tone in their vocal delivery.

Management pats itself on the back for hiring journalists and editors of color but then does not support them or give them space to grow professionally. While moving to anti-racist principles may require shifting funds around, keep in mind that budgets should reflect an organization's values, and this is especially true in public media.

Our audience has changed a great deal since the 1968 Kerner Report and the Minority Report on Public Media ten years later. Public media management has not. It remains overwhelmingly white.

The Kerner Commission concluded that news media were not serving Black communities in 1968. That was more than 50 years ago. Public media has had the opportunity and time to change since then, but stations, networks, and nationally distributed shows have not done enough. The first public report on public radio in 1978 decades ago said that "public radio has been asleep at the transmitter" on issues of race.

Complicated decisions--who to hire, who to promote, what stories to cover--require careful thought and consideration. Not instinct, hunches, or strong feeling, but

anti-racist processes and systems that prevent us from making biased choices. Processes that are measurable and quantifiable, that can be tracked and articulated. When we don't follow those processes, when we decide to make decisions, based solely on our guts, we must be held accountable.

Racism is not a knowledge problem. We know it's wrong. We've known that it's wrong for hundreds of years, but we're making racist decisions anyway. Racism is a behavior problem.

We're not a mostly white and male industry because we consciously think white males are better, but because we live in a racist, sexist, society that has conditioned us to view white male heteronormative as the standard. Racism and sexism are the norm. The way we do things, the way it's always been done, however, is not working.

The systems we're comfortable with are sustaining the discriminatory system that favors white males. Comfort is the enemy at this point. The work that faces us is painful and frustrating and profoundly uncomfortable.

THE WORK AHEAD

This effort is the result of more than 200 people in public media coming together to identify the primary obstacles to anti-racist public media and create a vision for transformation. Our vision for public media is the implementation of anti-racist procedures and policies, radical transparency, equity and *not* equality, and no more decisions based solely on instinct. It's time for a new kind of journalism: anti-racist journalism. We hope to tear down public radio in order to build it back up. We don't critique our industry because we hate it, but because we love it and hope it can live up to a higher standard of inclusivity that serves our diverse communities.

Creating anti-racist media is a collective task. Everyone in the industry has a responsibility to scrutinize how our work contributes to or challenges white supremacy and racism. It's a task that requires long-term commitment and accountability with measurable outcomes. But ultimately, anti-racist transformation means cultural change, and we know that some of the most important results of anti-racist commitments appear in how we are transformed individually, and collectively.

There is no easy way to do this work. But the work calls on us and on everyone who listens to public radio to expand their imaginations about who the audience is, who provides leadership, and how decisions are made.

Our open letter is divided into five sections:

1. Amends
2. Hiring, Promotions, and Pay Structures
3. Training
4. Transforming Coverage
5. Accountability

Section 1: Amends

Vision and demand: We envision public media in the 21st century as a platform that centers the most marginalized, that serves the parts of the public that have been traditionally underserved by corporate media, and that presents a leading model for community engagement and anti-racist practices in journalism. As a prerequisite and an ongoing practice, public media must own its mistakes and apologize for the harm it has caused to individuals and communities of color. Public media organizations, as well as individuals in leadership and in newsrooms, must make amends for these harms.

Rationale: Making amends is not a standalone act, but an ongoing cycle that is fundamental to healing and transformation. The process of amends undergirds all the other work we do to dismantle structural racism, as our public media institutions will not succeed in anti-racist transformation without meaningfully addressing past harms.

Amends is actually a three-step process: Reckoning, apologizing, and offering reparations. In recent years, a growing number of news organizations from the [Los Angeles Times](#) to [Wisconsin Public Radio](#) have launched efforts to reckon with everything from historic racist coverage to a lack of diversity among news sources. The [Montgomery Advertiser](#) has apologized for its “shameful” coverage of lynching; [National Geographic](#) has apologized and openly explored its decades-long history of racist coverage. Of course, the apologies are only as good as the follow-through with transforming coverage; and the effort at transforming coverage only as good as the offer of reparations to communities who have been harmed.

Making amends for racism in news media is not a new idea. In 2020, Black employees of the national organization Free Press released a landmark essay that describes a vision for reparations in U.S. media, as part of a project called [Media 2070](#). The essay explains how media profited from and participated in slavery, benefited from and upheld Jim Crow laws, and has remained entrenched in dangerous complicity with white supremacy well into the 21st century.

“We dream of a world where reparations are made real, where Black people live and fully exercise their fundamental human rights that are actually enshrined and protected by law,” writes Free Press. Following the leadership of Black visionaries, let’s imagine a public media that truly embraces transformation by moving to make amends and offer reparations.

Implementation:

- Public media stations and organizations must audit and reflect on their past and present racism—in terms of coverage, relationships to communities of color, and how they have treated BIPOC (Black Indigenous and People of Color) employees.
- Public media must apologize for racist coverage and for neglecting communities of color in programming, past and present.
- Public media must open its doors to communities of color that have experienced these harms and neglect to play an active role in shaping the future of public media, including shaping public apologies and suggesting specific and creative forms of reparations.
- If any BIPOC employees have left the organization due to racism, sexism, mental health harms, or abuse on the job, leadership must document what happened, apologize publicly for the harm it caused, and hold individuals accountable for that harm. This includes removing white people who have created a hostile work environment for people of color, and the leaders who have been complicit in that hostile work environment.
- In addition to apologies to individuals and communities, public media leaders

should offer specific, concrete forms of reparations and accountability to the people harmed. These reparations could include offers of financial compensation, support for mental health costs for individuals, or in some cases opportunities to return to positions they have left or lost. The people harmed should be involved, if they choose, to drive this process forward.

Accountability:

We will know amends are working when:

- Former and current BIPOC employees accept apologies, articulate their specific needs for repair, and then those needs are met.
- Former BIPOC employees return to their jobs or positions, or get to a place where they would be comfortable recommending that another person of color take their former positions.
- Communities of color are able to make specific demands for reparations from past harm, and those demands are met.
- Communities of color are at the center of conversations about transforming newsrooms going forward.

The following four sections of this document outline what specific transformative changes may look like. Please keep in mind that part of making amends and offering reparations is about listening. For example, in your community, repair may look like supporting a bail fund, training a group of youth to make radio and helping them produce their own show, or helping Black and brown-led organizations with a fundraising strategy. There are many creative ways public media can contribute to the

communities it has harmed and these will naturally be community-specific. Ideally, they'll result in relationships of depth and trust.

Section 2: Hiring, Promotions, and Pay Structure

Vision and demand: Every station in the U.S. should have a workforce, including leadership, that proportionately reflects the demography of the community in which it operates and serves; and provides leadership around diversity and representation for groups that are underrepresented in non-public media.

On the path toward this vision, every station should adopt a full [pay transparency](#) policy, and a standardized organizational chart that includes job descriptions, salary ranges, and requisites for promotion advancement with flexibility to modify guidelines based on region and cost of living indices.

Rationale: The current organizational structure at many public radio stations is chaotic and misused, offering no standardization of organization or organizing principles that allow for equity and transparency. A lack of [standardization](#) shields problematic managers, prevents accountability in cases of misconduct, and may lead to stations becoming a reflection of the preferences of individual general managers and leaders.

Arguably, [pay transparency](#) could create friction and resentment between colleagues. It's important to note, however, that the right to discuss your salary is protected by federal law. It's equally arguable that resentment already exists based on inequitable institutional structures that perpetuate inequality. Moreover, college-educated Black women are woefully undervalued and face considerable bias when [negotiating their salaries](#) compared to their white male peers. This often pressures prospective hires to accept mediocre wages – or worse, it dissuades a new generation of talented journalists from considering work in public media.

Salary transparency alleviates confusion for new hires, [builds trust among employees](#), and makes it [easier to account for fair wages](#). Further, research shows employees tend to be more [productive](#) and companies enjoy [higher retention rates](#) when salaries are [disclosed](#).

A public radio employee should not have to start over every time they move from one station to another. Consistency and transparency in pay and organizational structure will make public radio career paths more equitable and viable, and help public media organizations to recruit and retain diverse candidates.

Implementation:

- Pay structures and ranges for each position should be made transparent to all job applicants and current employees.
- We suggest hiring an [independent auditor](#) to evaluate, adjust, and organize employee categorization and demographics, making the new organization structure accessible to all employees.
- As part of the restructuring the auditor will perform a regression analysis to account for pay differentials and other variables that are often obfuscated by subjective assessment as opposed to policy procedure. Once they are identified, race and gender-based inequities in pay must be corrected immediately.
- Organizations should also track numbers of applicants of color, and not proceed with job searches without a) an open search and due diligence and outreach, and b) a proportional percentage of qualified applicants of color. If you are not getting applications from qualified Black, Indigenous and people of color, your outreach isn't done.
- New organizational structures should allow for advancement without the requirement of becoming a manager, and prioritize transparent pathways to career advancement.
- Organizations must not abuse intern and fellowship programs. Overuse of unpaid and temporary positions has contributed to the disempowerment of staff members and unfairly disadvantages people of color who often can't afford to spend months working without pay. Managers should not be the only employees who enjoy job security at an organization.

Accountability:

- Full remediation and adjustments must be made, going forward, to compensate eligible employees.
- Routine audits of compensation and employee advancement should show no racial or gender inequities in hiring or pay.
- All employees should be able to clearly identify organizational structures and the opportunities to advance within these structures.
- Organizations should set clear, time-stamped targets for BIPOC employee recruitment and retention. Make those targets part of hiring managers' job responsibilities and evaluations. When those targets are not met, managers in charge of hiring must be held accountable.

Section 3: Equity and Accountability in Public Media Training and Professional Development Programs

Vision and demand: We envision the public media workplace to have competent, flexible, and accountable leadership with a commitment to justice and equity. Public media should be a workplace that equitably provides professional and personal growth. It also has leaders who hold the highest journalistic standards while having the tools to know how to treat employees with integrity and respect and lead anti-racist transformation.

Training and development dollars need to be invested equitably so that all employees have the opportunity to progress and evolve in their careers. This holds true from onboarding through career progression. All managers need to receive some kind of DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) training so that they can be held accountable for implementing and carrying out effective and inclusive policies.

Rationale: Aside from a small portion of stations [licensed to historically Black colleges](#), public media leadership is dominated by [whites](#) who make up 87 percent of management.

This imbalance disproportionately affects Black journalists who are not represented in positions of power. Public media is losing talented journalists of color while failing to successfully [attract the next generation](#) of media practitioners because its management structure is not transparent, lacks accountability, and lacks a standardized criterion to measure employee career progression, provide guidance, opportunities and training, required for career progression in a 21st century newsroom.

An organization's most valuable resource is its people. It is in the interest of any public media organization's sustainability to onboard employees thoroughly and continue to develop staff throughout their careers, whether they are early-stage producers or senior-level managers.

Lack of career development opportunities is often cited as a reason why employees [leave news organizations](#). Those losses impact the quality of content, as well as organizations' bottom lines. According to [Gallup](#), the cost of replacing an individual employee can range from one-half to two times the employee's annual salary. It is more sustainable for an organization to grow its own people than to have jobs that function like lily pads. This failure to develop and retain staff also hurts the communities that stations serve; communities are best covered by employees who have (or develop) deep ties in the community.

Poor leadership is a liability for our industry. The quality and character of employees in the newsroom sets the tone of the station. Incompetent and abusive managers lead to low employee engagement and productivity, high turnover rates, and toxic work environments.

Implementation:

- Organizational leadership must establish clear, strategic goals for anti-racist transformation, and for diversity, equity, and inclusion, either by bringing in consultants or trainers, and/or by hiring a diversity officer to lead this process.
- All staff and management should receive routine and ongoing training around diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) that is tied to the organization's DEI goals. This training must not be a one-time event, but an ongoing and embedded part of the organizational culture that's grounded in the specific needs of the local community.
- Management must prioritize training as distinct, goal-oriented occasions for professional development in which staff are presented on-going opportunities to acquire new skills and strengthen or improve existing ones.
- Employees who are Black, Indigenous, and people of color in particular should be encouraged and supported to pursue outside opportunities for professional development and community-building. For staff members in white-dominated newsrooms, these opportunities can be a very important part of job retention.
- Professional development training should be conducted by peers, experts, consultants or organizations that demonstrate a commitment to, and take action in, diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) work.
- In addition to training, managers should invite staff to regularly participate in manager meetings, hold regular all staff meetings, and employee-management one-on-one meetings that encourage open and ongoing communication. Managers should also invite staff to join managers' meetings periodically, and routinely hold listening sessions open to all staff and board members.
- Managers should clarify and review accountability protocols with staff during onboarding, and annually, to ensure comprehension of protocols for reporting misconduct, harassment, or abuse within the organization.

Accountability:

Develop a standardized protocol that allows employees to provide feedback on manager performance (i.e. editors, news directors, general managers, producers) and overall newsroom culture annually without fear of reprisal. There is no one-size-fits-all approach to this, however, some examples of this system may include:

- Staff learning and development can be measured subjectively by the employee and documented by supervisors during processes of performance management, onboarding, and career progression.
- DEI training can be evaluated both subjectively in terms of how employees respond to it, and through assessment of the specific organizational goals and outcomes identified through these trainings. Are the changes being discussed in trainings actually happening after the training is over? Three, six, and twelve-month follow-ups should reveal that the answer is “yes.”
- Management should conduct quarterly anonymous staff surveys with results discussed with full staff and an annual summary released to the station’s membership. Questions in this survey should address the effectiveness of professional development opportunities, DEI training, and leadership in general.
- Professional development opportunities should be routine, should appear in the organization’s yearly budget, and should be participated in and assessed by BIPOC employees with particular attention to their needs.

Section 4: Transforming Coverage

Vision and demand: Public radio newsrooms are places where reporters come from a variety of backgrounds and life experiences, this includes racial and ethnic identity, socioeconomic background; gender identity and sexual orientation. What’s more, sources should reflect the communities newsrooms serve in all their complexity; and news is produced to serve the entire community, not just one segment of the audience. The overarching objective of all coverage is to be fair, accurate and representative.

Public radio newsrooms must transform their coverage by insisting on diverse newsrooms, ending the pursuit of objectivity, rigorously pursuing racial diversity in sourcing and audiences, and developing ethics codes that embrace anti-racism and harm reduction.

Rationale: Democracy suffers when communities cannot hear themselves and the stories they care about reflected on our airwaves. Lack of diversity in editorial leadership positions creates patterns of inaccurate news coverage. It’s not just the lack of diversity in leadership that is problematic. More than 50 years after the Kerner Report determined lack of diversity in newsrooms contributed to civil unrest in the 1960s, [The Democracy Fund notes](#) the same homogeneity in our newsrooms and in our coverage persists today. As Keith Woods, Chief Diversity Officer of NPR, noted: Newsrooms need to make an ethical and moral commitment to reform, beyond the “business case” for attracting new audiences.

Stations must strive to consider the entirety of an audience and community, not just white public radio listeners. Catering to the status quo creates a “parasitic” relationship between journalists of color and public media newsrooms. Stations hire journalists of color in an attempt to prove their commitment to diversity, but don’t value their perspectives and experiences in reporting and covering the news. Ultimately, this hurts newsroom staff, hiring and retention efforts, and the news audience.

For too long, public radio has pursued objectivity as a value, and sought to present news in an unbiased, neutral way. Objectivity, however, doesn’t exist.

Every person brings their own experience and perspective into the newsroom, which informs the work they do. The opinions of reporters, editors, and producers in the industry shape what stories are published, and how they sound and are told. The pursuit of objectivity denies this [reality](#). And leads to the silencing of journalists whose subjective reality – being Black, or trans, or working class, for example – leads to them being labeled as incapable of being objective.

With increased transparency we can earn the trust of the public we serve — longtime listeners and future listeners alienated by not seeing themselves reflected in coverage — rather than assuming their trust is ours to lose.

Implementation:

- End the pursuit of objectivity, and instead pursue fairness, transparency and accuracy
 - Create statements of belief for journalists and the public. (For example: “Climate change is real,” “Black Lives Matter”)
 - Create ongoing, requisite opportunities for staff to interrogate their own biases, surfacing them, examining them and challenging them.
 - Co-create systems to ensure journalists are giving a fair hearing to all peoples, including those they personally disagree with.
- Rigorously pursue racial diversity in our audiences and in our sources
 - Public media should reach out to communities it has covered unfairly or neglected and ask what better coverage would look like. It’s not enough to say “Black Lives Matter” on air now; public media institutions also need to rebuild the broken trust with the folks who have been asking for that chance for a long time.
 - Newsrooms should track the diversity of sources and make the data and analysis public, with clear goals for better representing the demographics of the communities public media covers.
- Create an ethics code that embraces anti-racism. Stations need to update diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion statements to be explicitly anti-racist.
 - Create and promote opportunities for people in the coverage area to raise concerns and know they will be taken seriously, about content, public profile and representation within the station.

- Create and stick to accountability measures for everybody.
- All employees should be made aware of processes for examining incidents of racism in the workplace and should face no negative repercussions for reporting.
- Raise awareness of how traditional reporting has damaged and silenced communities of color. Create guidelines for pursuing coverage that is not exploitative or extractive.

Accountability:

- Concrete representation as seen through source tracking.
- Feedback from the communities we cover that we are getting it right (and them coming to us with more stories).
- More community engagement across the spectrum, informing our coverage.
- Increased membership, especially from people who had not been members before.

Section 5: Accountability

Vision and Demand: We envision public media in the 21st century that does not abandon “racial reckoning” in the murky swamps of 2020, but takes racial reckoning to its most transformative outcomes: Organizations led by and accountable to Black and Indigenous people and people of color; organizations engaged in deep and ongoing work to dismantle racism and resist white supremacy; organizations that are part of a media movement for reparations and media justice. As such, we demand ongoing efforts at transparency and accountability that allow the public to hold public media to its promise of serving the whole community.

Rationale: If you are still reading this, it’s likely you’re ready to adopt the idea that an anti-racist model for public media is the right way to move forward. We also believe it is the *only* way to move forward. The imperative to change is moral and practical. The forces of white supremacy in this country are empowered and extreme; the numbers of people of color (and potential audiences and creators of public radio) are ever-growing; the organizations that embrace an anti-racist model are the ones that will survive and thrive. The others will face protest and divestment in growing volume, and will be complicit in a violent system of racism that cannot survive.

Implementation: Accountability in all of the processes we have outlined must be applied at several levels: leadership (CPB, NPR, and station licensees); management (editors, news directors, and others in supervisory positions); and newsroom coverage (reporters, producers, and all who collaborate on news production).

What it looks like:

- As a proactive means for accountability, stations and organizations should form community-led boards that are empowered to make specific demands of

leadership around anti-racist transformation. Non-management employees including support staff and contractors should have the opportunity to select members of these boards, as should communities that have been historically underserved by the station or organization. This document and its suggestions for implementation and accountability may serve as a roadmap for the work of these boards.

- Many stations and companies have outdated diversity statements that don't honestly name and challenge racism. This needs to change. Stations need to update diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion statements to be explicitly anti-racist. This allows the people we work with and communities we work in to hold us accountable.
- If leadership and management do not make amends for past harms and publicly transform to an anti-racist approach, accountability will eventually mean escalating complaints up the chain of command and removing individuals who are resistant to change. We don't care where that accountability comes from—top down, bottom up, or from interested members of the public who want to return their public media outlets to the hands of the public.
- Organizations must track newsroom coverage, demographic source data, and staff diversity, and publish these numbers with specific targets for improvement. When these targets aren't met, newsroom leadership should face consequences including demotion or resignation.

Where these forms of accountability don't happen voluntarily, they can and will happen through community organizing, protest, sit-ins, walk-outs, encouraging donors to withhold funds, and other forms of confrontation and divestment. We have provided a road map: now the work is up to you.

We, the undersigned, stand in support of this document and the goals it hopes to accomplish:

(If you would like to sign on to this letter on behalf of your organization or yourself, please email Celeste Headlee: celeste@celesteheadlee.com.)

Cassius Adair

Alexander Charles Adams

Ernesto Aguilar

Mark Arehart

John Asante

Ann Marie Awad

Anabel Bacon

Helen Barrington

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Alex Baumhardt

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Meg Cramer
Meg Dalton
Debbie Daughtry
Chad Davis
Rachel Dennis
Luke Dennis
Julie Depenbrock
Cheryl Devall
Jennifer Deyo
Camila Domonoske
Madeline Ducharme
Emily Elena Dugdale
Keisha Dutes
Alyssa Edes
Rose Eveleth
Shahla Farzan
Kathryn Fink
Jami Floyd
Patrick Fort

Candice Fortman
Charles Fox
Ian Fox
Noel Freitas
Elizabeth Friend
Julia Furlan
Laura Garbes
Deanna Garcia
Rae Garringer
Sarah Geis
Ariel Gentalen
Bradley George
Nathan Gibbs
Tom Godell
Tami Graham
James T. Green
Jolenta Greenberg
Christina Greer
Graham Griffith
Sylvia Maria Gross
Posey Gruener
Ellen Guettler
Mark Gunnery
Adwoa Gyimah-Brempong
Lisa Hagen
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Bill Healy
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Andrea Henderson
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Paul W. Hitchcock
Grant Holub-Moorman
Pien Huang
Sarah Hulett
Aileen Humphreys
Emma Hurt
Laura Isensee
Tucker Ives
Maxie Jackson
Emma Jacobs
Morgan Jaffe
Logan Jaffe
Joanne Jennings
Cecilia Johnson
Claire Catherine Jones
George Joseph
Eleanor Kagan

Johnny Kaufman
Carrie Kaufman
Meghan Keane
Caledonia Kearns
Frannie Kelley
Margaret Kelley
Emily Kennedy
Sarah Kerson
Sarah Y. Kim
Elizabeth Kim
Oliver-Ash Kleine
Katie Klocksinn
Lyndsay Knecht
Kiley Kosciński
Melody Kramer
Margaret Krauss
Kamila Kudelska
Jess Kung
Emily Kwong
Katherine Lanpher
Alex Laughlin
Sam J. Leeds
Mikaela Lefrak
Kyle Lerfald
Marissanne Lewis-Thompson
Rachel Osier Lindley
Ryan Lindsay
Duncan Lively
Dana Livingston

Jennifer Mabry
Kyle S. Mackie
Amanda Magnus
Daniel Margolies
Rose Martin
Ariana Martinez
Ramona Martinez
Sergio Martínez-Beltrán
Mia Mask
Amelia Mason
Jaye McAuliffe
Cooper McKim
Eric Garcia McKinley
Kevin McLean
Kristen Meinzer
Ariel Mejia
Linda Miller
Cat Modlin-Jackson
Alicia Montgomery
Natalie Moore
Marceleen Mosher
Maggie Mullen
Shula Neuman
Eli Newman
Audrey Nguyen
Rachel Otwell
Ray Pang
Justine Paradis
Kelli Payne

Lucy Perkins
Siona Peterous
Daniel Peterschmidt
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Sara Plourde
Michelle Polton-Simon
Ali Post
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Andrew Ramsammy
Naina Rao
Anita Rao
Gisele Regatão
Jen Rice
Tiffany Brown Rideaux
Julia Ritchey
Nancy Rosenbaum
Gabriel Rosenberg
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Renata Sago
Brenda Salinas Baker
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Eric Schmid
Ally Schweitzer
Roxanne Scott
Afi Scruggs
Jeb Sharp
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Madhulika Sikka

Emily Siner
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Morgan Springer
Heena Srivastava
Rob St. Mary
Marc Steiner
Christina Stella
Alain Stephens
Diane Sylvester
Lindsay Foster Thomas
Jeanene Thompson
Tracy Thorne
Adaora Udoji
Phoebe Unter
Claire Utecht
Emily Anne Vaughn
Christopher Vazquez
Aria Velasquez
Arun Venugopal
Lam Thuy Vo
Lewis Wallace
Tennessee Watson
Bill Welsch
Catherine Wheeler
Alice Wilder
Patricia
Loretta Williams

Wil Williams

Jia Lian Yang

Afi Yellow-Duke

Karen Yi

Maria Zamudio

Paolo Zialcita

Laura Ziegler

On behalf of New York Public Radio (NYPR), we're proud to add our name in support of this Vision for an anti-racist, equitable public radio.

We want to express our deep gratitude to our colleagues across the system who came together to draft it—especially our BIPOC colleagues who led the effort.

This Vision aligns in spirit and substance with the Race Equity Action Plan that NYPR has been developing for the past six months. We undertook this effort with a clear understanding from NYPR staff that the time for words and promises at our organization was long past, and that a plan for immediate, actionable change was overdue. Developed by a working group of employees from across the organization, the final draft of the plan was shared with our staff community in December, and is being finalized through small group discussions. We will share the full plan publicly in the coming weeks.

The NYPR 2021 Race Equity Action Plan includes 19 specific, tangible commitments for work to be done over the next 12 months, grouped into three broad categories:

1. Strengthening our internal culture via recruitment, hiring, training and retention
2. Creating content that speaks in diverse voices to diverse audiences
3. Transparency and accountability.

And because the work of building and sustaining an equitable, inclusive organization is never done, we will continually evaluate our work, and create new commitments and goals each year, based on our progress and the needs articulated by our staff. Moving forward, this will be an annual process.

We also want to acknowledge the courageous voices of current and former NYPR employees who have spoken up to share their experiences at our organization and call for change. We deeply regret the ways NYPR has historically failed to fulfill the ideals of public radio, especially for our BIPOC employees.

As I stated in a memo to staff in July 2020, “Put bluntly, NYPR—in its entire history—has yet to meet its aspiration, and obligation, to reflect the full diversity of our city and listeners we serve. We have failed to recruit, mentor, promote, and retain diverse talent, especially our Black reporters and editors. We have failed to listen to the voices of our current and former staff calling for change for too long. Essentially, we have failed to fully live up to the values so many of you worked hard over the past several years to craft and adopt. That these problems existed for years before my arrival nine months ago—and that they are all too common in our industry and our society—is no excuse for us to not move swiftly to make deep, meaningful change today.”

The willingness of the public radio community to speak up and speak truth to power embodies the best of the journalistic tradition, and deeply fortifies our commitment to building a truly equitable workplace.

As the Vision we sign today makes clear, this work is up to us, and at New York Public Radio, it is underway. It's our most urgent organizational priority, and we pledge ongoing, sustained action.

We're proud to be a part of the effort to create an anti-racist public radio system that best serves our audiences, now and in the future.

Goli Sheikholeslami, President and CEO

On behalf of the New York Public Radio Executive Leadership Team

We at WCSU FM, the first federally licensed HBCU radio station, support this letter and its proposed vision and plan for an anti-racist future and transformation in public media.

We applaud you and the collaborators for bringing this vision forward.

Charles Fox

General Manager

WCSU FM - Jazz Ambassador

Central State University