

July 29, 2020

This diversity solutions document was created with the help of the Star Tribune's non-white staff members. The document was shared with management starting in early July. A small leadership group met to discuss the need for long-lasting change and the solutions that will get us there. All involved felt that they were heard and there seems to be concrete steps on the horizon. We, the Star Tribune non-white employees, believe that these solutions outlined below are vital to the survival of our organization.

The changes we want for our newspaper

To: The Star Tribune publisher and leadership

Date: July 2020

The killing of George Floyd on May 25 was another chapter in the reinvigorated Civil Rights Movement of our time. We could not have imagined that mere weeks ago Minneapolis -- a city we love -- would become the epicenter of a moment in our nation's history that would change everything. It's disheartening to know that it took the viral death of an unarmed Black man being suffocated by a police officer for our country and our communities to see the racial inequities that have long existed. However, we marvel at the reckonings we are seeing in the worlds of government, criminal justice, sports, entertainment and more.

But just as our country is rethinking and reimagining how to dismantle structural and institutionalized racism so must the Star Tribune. For the people of color at the Star Tribune, Floyd's tragic death has also laid bare our tiredness, our traumas and our truths that stem from this newsroom. To be silent is to be complicit, and we are done being silent.

Floyd's death has given us a renewed sense of clarity on how the Star Tribune can rise to this moment. Generations of journalists of color before us have been fighting for change in this newsroom for decades. But this is the moment where we are making it clear: We want to disrupt our newsroom's systemic centering of whiteness and maleness by making structural changes.

We are tired of incremental change. We are tired of being undervalued. We are tired of our ideas being passed over. We are tired of explaining and reexplaining what it means to be people of color in our newsroom. We are tired of watching people who look like us leave. We are tired of the whisper network of indignities we have to use to support each other. We are tired of helplessly watching misguided coverage decisions hurt the very communities we come from. We are tired of doing the hard work in the shadows to

convince communities of color to trust the Star Tribune with their stories. We are tired of tempering our tone or fearing retaliation if we speak truth to power. We are tired of white people attempting to debunk our truths.

We cannot sit by and watch other media outlets openly reckon with their complicity in perpetuating institutionalized and structural inequities as if similar problems do not exist at the Star Tribune. This is not about one specific person but rather the structures that have allowed certain people to move freer than marginalized people in the newsroom.

We are proposing an action plan on how the Star Tribune leadership can address and dismantle the inequities in our newsroom including recruitment, retention, community outreach and coverage. These structural and cultural changes should make space for people of color and women to be seen, heard and valued. By doing this we create a newspaper environment that allows for complete coverage of all communities with care and context.

This shortened version of our demands for change are here.

Recruitment/Retention

- **Hire a Community Editor:** Our newsroom needs someone in leadership who does three important tasks: hold our institution internally accountable for our coverage, talk to readers and staff about questions, comments or concerns they have about our coverage and facilitate the necessary changes to our newsroom structure to create a more equitable culture. Our readership typically only sees the headlines and photos on a story but have no idea of the behind the scenes efforts to get the story right and what sometimes leads to perceived mistakes and failures. The community editor can pull back the curtain on these decisions. Given the work ahead to effect swift change in our newsroom, we believe this should be an internal hire that should be announced as soon as possible.
- **360 Review System:** We want a 360 review system for all newsroom employees that includes not just feedback but career development plans and holding staffers accountable for coverage and fostering diversity.
- **Implicit bias training:** We want all staff members to be required to participate in annual implicit bias training. This training, run by a person of color, should build upon the staffer's previous implicit bias training so it's not just a repetition every year. This training should allow for staffers to examine their own blind spots personally and professionally. We urge leadership to seek out resources that can bring this training to our newsroom in early 2021.

- **Annual Newsroom Diversity Report:** We want newsroom leadership to create and release an annual newsroom diversity report for our readership. Our readership and the communities who do not trust us, deserve to know who is telling the stories and who are the keepers of power that affect the narratives they see in the media.
- **Star Tribune Journalists of Color Convention Attendance:** At least one person from Star Tribune leadership should be required to attend national journalists of color conferences like NABJ, NAHJ, AAJA and others. We believe their presence at these conferences, engaging with programming related to communities of color and organically building their own relationships with journalists of color is critical to our newsroom's diversity efforts. We also want more financial support for journalists of color to attend newsroom diversity focused conferences like the National Association of Black Journalists, National Association of Hispanic Journalists and the Asian American Journalists Association.
- **Diverse hiring:** We demand management provide transparent reporting of their efforts to recruit diverse candidates for every position they fill, including what channels they used and how many candidates of color applied. According to our analysis, only 1 of the 7 reporters hired in 2019 was a person of color. That's 14%. In 2018, it was the same with 1 of 7 new reporting hires being people of color. And 2017 wasn't much better with 2 out of 7 new reporting hires being people of color. This is unacceptable. At least 30% of all new hires in each classification should be people of color.
- **Career Development Plan:** Team leaders should be required to have a once a quarter sit down with the people they manage to discuss their goals for the year. A special worksheet should be developed that team leaders and reporters can work on together to identify ways they can achieve their short term and long term goals. This sheet should be passed on to a new team leader if the person being managed is moved under them. Assistant managing editors for each section should also be required to work on career development worksheets with each team leader they manage.
- **Standardize Promotion Criteria:** New hires coming into the Star Tribune for roles like the night reporter job should be required to stay in their role for at least a year before being considered for a new job internally. Too often, women and people of color are relegated to spending time in roles for years before being able to move on -- if at all

-- often because management cites the difficulty in replacing them. However, staffers of color can cite multiple examples of young, white males being able to move into different roles within a matter of months of being hired. Beyond the optics of this, management needs to develop consistent expectations and standards around promotions.

Leadership

- **An apology.** Even though these disparities weren't created by this current management group it was perpetuated by them and they were complicit in its continuation. A newsroom wide email apologizing would start to repair trust with people of color at the Star Tribune and demonstrate to the community a deeper understanding of why there needs to be a change in the way we do things.
- **Create a racially diverse management group.** Of the 7 assistant managing editors in the newsroom, all 7 are white. This is not a coincidence, but rather a reflection of a larger truth: The Star Tribune is a white-centric organization that does not represent at the highest levels the diversity of the communities that call Minnesota home.

This lack of representation has a huge impact both internally and externally, as upper management makes key decisions on what news we cover, how we cover it and who covers which stories. We want a newsroom with management that reflects the diversity of the place where we live. The company must find a way to expand the management ranks to include diverse leaders or re-examine the entire structure of its management positions.

- **Diversifying Team Leaders:** Team leaders can play a big role in a reporter's career and influence our news coverage but there are currently few people of color in these positions. The lack of people of color in these roles means a white lens is often overseeing our coverage decisions rather than a diverse, cohesive, nuanced cohort who can discuss and debate how to proceed during a news cycle and develop richer stories.

Outreach

- **Transparency and media literacy:** The Star Tribune should help support and deepen outreach efforts started by the guild, where they send reporters/editors who are interested once a month to community centers, classrooms, conferences like BITCON and engage with the public about the news process at the paper. Everyone in the newsroom

including leadership, reporters, photojournalists, copyeditors and more should be able to help with these efforts.

- **Management Community Engagement:** Managers should be required to meet with communities of color outside of the newsroom and attend community events like public forums on violence in the community, rallies (like the George Floyd rallies), etc. to hear the stories and voices of people of color. Bearing witness to these moments of anguish and trauma is critical to shaping better, more nuanced coverage of these vulnerable communities.

Coverage

- **News Planning Meeting Representation:** We demand that there be at least three people of color in the morning and afternoon meetings. Currently there are usually only 2. Adding one more person of color allows a more diverse group of people to talk about critical coverage decisions while also shifting the unspoken burden of one or two people of color being forced to speak up about coverage decisions.
- **Diversity Coverage Audit:** We want an annual audit of the diversity of our coverage and the light in which we cover different races and ethnicities. We also want an audit of bylines that appear on Sunday A1. The higher percentage of Sunday A1 bylines by white reporters is one of many examples of implicit bias in the newsroom in which the reporters tapped by management to write the “big” stories are reporters who look and talk like them.
- **Stylebook Changes:** The Star Tribune’s stylebook team needs to change policies so that we use the word “undocumented” instead of “illegal immigrant” when reporting on immigration issues in our community. The continued use of “illegal immigrant” in our stories has created a rift between us and immigrant communities and we cannot do our jobs without their trust. We also want our stylebook updated to not use “minority” and instead use “people of color” or be more specific and use Black, Latino, Asian American or indigenous.
- **POC Source Directory:** We want the newsroom to develop a newsroom wide document should be created with names and contact information of people of color who should be reached out to for interviews. Too often, people of color are used when it's a story about people of color but professionals of color are also experts in subject matters beyond the intersection of race.

- **Valuing Multilingual Skills:** Multilingual colleagues are often pulled away from their stories and other beat work to help interpret interviews with non-English speaking interviewees including Spanish, Somali and Hmong. We want the Star Tribune to develop a network of paid interpreters who reporters, editors and photojournalists can use on assignments/phone calls to take this off of the plate of people in our newsroom. If the company cannot commit to this, we are urging the company to provide extra pay for colleagues who offer interpretation services in house.