

An Open Letter to the Networks from Live TV Musicians

Dana Walden, Disney/ABC Television
Mark Lazarus, NBC Universal TV & Streaming
George Cheeks, CBS Entertainment Group
Bob Bakish, Viacom CBS

“Since we live in an age in which silence is not only criminal but suicidal,
I have been making as much noise as I can...” —*James Baldwin*

After years of attempts to achieve balance and fairness in the industry of broadcast television, we—the musicians performing on live television—write to you—the networks—to agree to create economic parity with our actor, writer, and director colleagues in residual payments on streaming platforms, health care contributions, and wages.

This month your companies acknowledged that live television musicians are the only sector of the industry exhibiting substantial racial diversity, but at the bargaining table we are told that our contributions are worth less than those of actors, writers, and directors, even though we give just as much. You cannot ignore that the other guilds are predominately white and are compensated at a higher rate with residual payments for streamed content, health care, and wages.

We are aware of how consumer-based enterprises value diversity, equity and inclusion. A cultural shift is happening across the globe and consumers are watching and listening. Your networks' shows use Black music and BIPOC people for humor, healing, and processing emotional content. The clips in these shows, made possible by us and in which we appear, generate millions of views and tens of millions of dollars in advertising revenue for your networks on streaming platforms like Peacock, CBS All Access, and Disney+, and yet we must continually beg for what the other guilds already receive.

Historically our union (AFM) has been more inclusive of BIPOC members than the other unions inside of the Live TV industry. Unfortunately, this goes hand-in-hand with its members being economically disrespected, undervalued and underpaid in comparison to those of other unions. Systemic racism becomes the status quo regardless of intention or awareness, but now **you** have the opportunity to rewrite this narrative.

You have yet to show a willingness to reach a meaningful agreement with the most diverse workforce in the entertainment industry: live television musicians. Now is the time to fix this problem by no longer taking advantage of us and offering economic parity with our creative colleagues.

We demand fair wages, fair health coverage, and equal residuals for work used on streaming platforms.

By addressing these demands you will demonstrate to us a commitment to value **all** working musicians and you will demonstrate to the world a powerful example of action toward dismantling systemic racism.

#RespectUs

September 16, 2020

September 17, 2020

Open Letter to the Networks Signed by:

Jessica Arellano

Woodwinds, *Dancing with the Stars*

Jeff Babko

Musician, Cleto & the Cletones, *Jimmy Kimmel Live!*

Jon Batiste

Bandleader, *The Late Show with Stephen Colbert*

Hagar Ben Ari

Bass, *The Late Late Show with James Corden*

Ron Blake

Baritone Saxophone & Flute, *Saturday Night Live*

Guillermo E. Brown

Drums, *The Late Late Show with James Corden*

Eli Brueggemann

Music Director, *Saturday Night Live*

Syd Butler

Bass, *Late Night with Seth Meyers*

Louis Cato

Multi-instrumentalist, *The Late Show with Stephen Colbert*

Eric Daniels

Digital Keyboards / Sound Design, *The Voice*

Justin Derrico

Guitarist, *The Voice*

Kirk Douglas

Guitarist, The Roots, *The Tonight Show with Jimmy Fallon*

Jonathan Dresel

Drums, Cleto & the Cletones, *Jimmy Kimmel Live!*

Jimmy Earl

Bass, Cleto & the Cletones, *Jimmy Kimmel Live!*

Stro Elliot (Brian Elliot Roberson)

Percussion, The Roots, *The Tonight Show with Jimmy Fallon*

Cleto Escobedo Jr.

Saxophone, Cleto & the Cletones, *Jimmy Kimmel Live!*

Cleto Escobedo III

Saxophone/Singer, Music Director, Cleto & the Cletones, *Jimmy Kimmel Live!*

Louis Fouché

Saxophonist, *The Late Show with Stephen Colbert*

Alex Foster

Alto Sax, Soprano Sax, Clarinet, Flute, Piccolo, *Saturday Night Live*

Kamal Gray

Keyboardist, The Roots, *The Tonight Show with Jimmy Fallon*

Javier Antonio Gonzalez

1st Trumpet, *Dancing with the Stars*

Dave Guy

Trumpet, The Roots, *The Tonight Show with Jimmy Fallon*

Ian Hendrickson-Smith

Saxophone, The Roots, *The Tonight Show with Jimmy Fallon*

Mark Kelley

Bass, Keyboard, The Roots, *The Tonight Show with Jimmy Fallon*

Jon Kubis

Keyboards, Guitar, Orchestration, Programming & Production, *Dancing with the Stars*, Ray Chew Live

Jon Lampley

Trumpet/Tuba/Vocals, Stay Human, *The Late Show with Stephen Colbert*

Paul Mirkovich, Musical Director

The Voice, *Rockstar*, *Comic Strip Live*, and various awards shows and specials ABC and all the other networks, since 1986.

Endea Owens

Bassist, *The Late Show with Stephen Colbert*

J Shawn Pelton

Drums, *Saturday Night Live*

James Poyser

Keyboards, The Roots, *The Tonight Show with Jimmy Fallon*

Steve Scalfati

Keyboard, Music Production, *The Late Late Show with James Corden*

Marnie Stern

Guitarist, *Late Night with Seth Meyers*

Artie Reynolds III

Bass, *Dancing with the Stars*

Maddie Rice

Guitar, *Saturday Night Live*

Nêgah Santos

Percussionist, *The Late Show with Stephen Colbert*

Joe Saylor

Drummer, *The Late Show with Stephen Colbert*

Garrett Smith

Trombone, *Dancing with the Stars*

Toshi Yanagi

Guitarist, Cleto & the Cletones, *Jimmy Kimmel Live!*

Tim Young

Guitar, *The Late Late Show with James Corden*