



January 11, 2021

To: The New York Times Audio Division

From: The Public Radio Program Directors Association

Re: The Daily

On behalf of our membership and the public radio programming and content community at large, PRPD is writing to you today to express our concerns over the recent behavior of members of *The Daily* production team and personnel decisions undertaken by the New York Times that impact *The Daily*. Our concerns are as follows:

- The decision by host Michael Barbaro to contact other media journalists, especially our [colleagues at NPR](#), and attempt to influence their coverage of errors made by *Caliphate* is extremely troubling. For decades, public radio news organizations have worked diligently to create a relationship with our communities that is based on the highest journalistic ethics. We, along with our audiences, place tremendous value on the fact that our journalism is free from influence of any kind, whether motivated by financial, political, or personal enrichment reasons. On station websites you will find clearly articulated ethical guidelines, which represent the promise we make to our communities, audiences, staffs, boards, and donors about the rigor of our journalism. This is our ethical compass. We feel Barbaro's actions are in direct conflict with our ethical guidelines and they call his general credibility into question.
- Your lack of transparency in not disclosing the personal relationship between Barbaro and Lisa Tobin, EP of *Caliphate*, when you issued the [30-minute corrective interview](#) that he hosted shows a serious lapse in judgment. Your decision to place Barbaro in the host chair for that conversation was flawed, especially given the point raised above. How are we to trust that difficult questions would be asked, answers would be demanded, and the truth would be sought? This was a moment for transparency, that moment is now lost and there should be accountability for this lapse in judgment.
- Finally, we feel it is necessary to address the decisions made by the New York Times to reassign Rukmini Callimachi, a female journalist, while giving greater visibility to her white male counterpart Andy Mills, the subject of [recent coverage](#) from the Washington Post and someone with a history in public radio from his time at New York Public Radio. We fully recognize this is a vast simplification of the situation, we understand the complexity of this issue and the many considerations that went into making this decision. It seems, however, that the optics of this decision may not have been carefully considered. Over the past several years, public media has undertaken strenuous efforts to create diverse, equitable and inclusive workplaces. We have felt the pain of inequity, exclusion, and dominant white culture since #MeToo, carrying forward to the Black Lives Matter movement and the important cultural reckoning we experienced in 2020 after the killing of George Floyd.

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There is a deafening call for action to be taken in our industry to ensure transparency and equity in all our staffing decisions, a call that can no longer be dismissed. Many public media companies are undergoing massive shifts in the culture of our workplaces and many have made public statements about their own commitments to meaningful and measurable change. From an optics perspective, we feel your decision was not just tone-deaf, but blind to the current landscape in which we now exist. It stands in opposition to the actions we have taken to ensure that our organizations have pathways for advancement for ALL employees, not just those of a privileged class. The times are changing and yet based on this decision, it appears that The Times is not changing along with them.

We have thus far been pleased with *The Daily*; our audiences value the program, and it has good listenership. However, millions of Americans rely on our news organizations every day as one of their most trusted sources of information and we are accountable for all the programming that we provide to them. That trust, and our responsibility in upholding that trust, is the very foundation on which we operate; it is the most important and sacred bond that ties us together. When that trust is called into question, we must respond. We must make our very best decisions about the programming we deliver and ensure it meets the high standards that our listeners expect and demand from us, while also staying committed to the standards by which our newsrooms operate. We respectfully request that the New York Times acknowledges and takes responsibility for these lapses in judgment and takes steps to remedy them now and in the future.

Sincerely,

Abby Goldstein
President & Executive Director
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