

Triad City Beat

A STATEMENT TO OUR READERS ABOUT OUR BEST OF THE BEAT READERS' POLL

In Early September *Triad City Beat* launched the nominations phase for the Best of the Beat, Winston-Salem Edition, with hundreds of categories like Best Burger, Best Cocktails and Best Landscaping Company. We also included non-commercial options like Best City Council Member and Best Political Gaffe, to add some substance to what can sometimes be an advertiser-centric project, and to allow our readers to reflect on the things that matter to them.

It wasn't until a week into the final voting phase that we realized how problematic a few of these categories were, after strong criticism from activist groups and individuals that truly struck home.

Among them: Best Troublemaker — a noble appellation in some regards, but also profoundly problematic when the label is applied to a Black woman by a white man, which was the perception among many. To our shame, we didn't even see it until one of the nominees pointed it out.

The Best News Story category also unleashed unintended consequences, revisiting trauma upon the family of John Neville, the Greensboro man who died after being in custody at the Forsyth County jail.

Both categories have been removed entirely from the ballot, and we have rescinded nominations in other categories such as Best Activist at the request of the nominees, and pledge to do the same for anyone who does not care to participate in our Readers' Poll.

Some have suggested that we drop the poll entirely, but we are not giving up on the contest, which has been running for almost three months, and is tethered by contractual obligations that bind us legally to its publication. And we still believe it can be useful, and reflective of our communities.

But we promise in future incarnations of the poll — our Greensboro/Guilford Readers' Poll is scheduled for early 2021 — that our category choices will be more deliberate, adhering first and foremost to the principle of not doing harm.

These were no mere oversights. Our myopia on these matters serves as a powerful example of structural inequities that exist in so many of our systems, including ours.

We were founded in 2014 by white men, two of whom — Senior Editor Jordan Green and Publisher Brian Clarey — are still on the editorial staff. We have always worked towards diversification and actively seek out new and different perspectives. Our current associate editor, Sayaka Matsuoka, is Japanese American; our food editor, Nikki Miller-Ka, is a Black American woman; and our editorial intern, Michaela Ratliff, is also a Black American woman. We mention these facts not to tokenize our staff but to let people know that we are all invested in *Triad City Beat* and its mission with our time, our talents and our professional reputations.

We acknowledge the pain, stress and anger that our recent actions have caused those in the community which we serve, specifically Black women, in the midst of an ongoing pandemic that has already further marginalized Black and Brown communities. For that, we deeply apologize. Specific regrets go out to our strongest critics as we acknowledge the labor they undertook to correct our course, and to the family of John Neville, who felt that we reduced his terrible death into entertainment. This was not our intention, but as we're learning, intentions don't matter when causing actual harm.

We hope that our body of work reflects the care we take to get to the truth and to minimize harm, especially in tackling stories about trauma, exclusion and mistreatment. But we also know that we're only as good as our last issue, and we promise to do better.

We remain open to feedback, to conversation, to ideas and — most important — to criticism. We're not perfect, by a long shot, and we are always looking for ways to better serve the communities we cover.

For now, we're sorry for our transgressions. We're continuing our work on making *Triad City Beat* more inclusive to all in our communities. And we're grateful for the perspective granted to us by what remains our best source: Our readers.

Feel free to address this statement directly by emailing Brian (brian@triad-city-beat.com) or Sayaka (sayaka@triad-city-beat.com).

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