

AFM INTERNATIONAL DIVERSITY COMMITTEE

MEMBERS:

- Lovie Smith-Wright
Chair and President Emeritus of Local 65-699 (Houston, TX)
- Tina Morrison
IEB Member and President of Local 105 (Spokane, WA)
- John Acosta
IEB Member and President of Local 47 (Los Angeles, CA)
- Deacon John Moore
President of Local 174-496 (New Orleans, LA)
- Bennie Keys
President of Local 56 (Grand Rapids, MI)
- Beth Zare
Secretary-Treasurer of Local 6 (San Francisco, CA)
- Keith Nelson
Secretary-Treasurer of Local 369 (Las Vegas, NV)
- Douglas Robinson
Secretary-Treasurer of Local 586 (Phoenix, AZ)
- Alfonso M. Pollard
AFM Staff Director of Diversity, Member of Local 161-710 (Washington, DC)

Abbreviated Mission Statement:

Our mission is to reflect the diversity of our musical community and further the goal of the AFM to recognize and celebrate the diverse nature of our organization. With the assistance of our International Executive Board, we seek ways to better represent and increase membership by raising the level of participation by all, through affirmative means.

Meetings per year: Three

Special Projects:

AFM Diversity Awards at our International Convention
Las Vegas LIVE- Las Vegas, NV
AFM Player Conference Coordination



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Statement on Race and Social Justice

Throughout our 123-year history, from the dark days of Jim Crow when the subsidiary/segregated locals were established, to present times, the American Federation of Musicians eventually made great progress with the integration of musicians of color and underrepresented populations into our union. This was accomplished by demanding that all musicians be afforded the opportunity to appear on all performance platforms and venues, to receive proper wages, achieve improved working conditions and, above all, be afforded the same rights and privileges of retirement security enjoyed by those living and working under strongly negotiated union collective bargaining agreements.

Musicians have always spoken out and been on the leading edge of social justice. The recent murder of George Floyd underscores our need to work harder toward that goal of social justice, which we strive for through recognition of the talents and contributions of people of color, and in particular the contributions made by Black, Latino, and other underrepresented musicians. Global solidarity is what we strive for. Musicians and union members the world over, particularly in the United States, join with our brothers and sisters in peaceful protest of the police brutality that has continuously ignited flames of mistrust in communities across this nation.

As union members, our mantra has always been the preservation of human dignity. And while this nation struggles with ways to mitigate racial failings, we must work together to ensure that the public we serve is free to embrace the ideals of freedom and liberty granted us under the Constitution. At a time of healing, President Abraham Lincoln said, "We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained, it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory ... will swell when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature."

Our goals are the inclusion of more women into leadership roles in our industry, the long overdue inclusion of Black Americans and Latinos in our nation's film, television, and symphony orchestras, and the surety that all young people have equal opportunities for success in our industry. Recognition of the importance of lives of Americans like George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, and Breonna Taylor mean as much to the AFM as the lives of our own musical giants and other golden age artists whose lives and music have brought together mixed ensembles and mixed audiences the world over. Our membership recognizes that each artist has a unique contribution to make to society and we advance these contributions through our craft.

Our desire to advance the positive roots that humanity has to offer is why the senseless, heinous killings of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, and Breonna Taylor, as well as the murder of other Black and Brown Americans, along with the marginalization of the lives of all people of color, is the clearest indication of why Black Lives Matter and these murders must come to an end! The AFM Diversity Committee believes that the answer to overzealous policing is accountability, "transparency, training, and dismissal" and these should be the cornerstones of solid police reform.

Over the years, the AFM Committee on Diversity has been charged with the task of recognizing the full potential in every musician. May our recognition of life led by George Floyd and others lost to racial violence signal a new beginning for America? We pray for those whose lives have been lost and for their families. We hope that the flame from their spirits becomes the beacon we need to help cleanse America of this evil plague of racism and hurt. Our mission is to keep moving forward in harmony. President Obama stated, "We choose hope over fear. We see the future not as something out of control, but as something we can shape for the better through concerted and collective effort." May these words not only bring us comfort but light the path toward an eternal life of peace and harmony.