

Dear Ms. Hughes, Mr. Escobar and the leadership of the Philadelphia Inquirer:

We send the warmest of greetings from across the Delaware River. We also send our concerns that [you are not taking seriously our colleagues at the J.A.W.N. Coalition](#) who shared their concerns that the Inquirer is not doing enough to ensure diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in your newsroom.

Recognizing the Inquirer's status as an outlet that covers our state, the New Jersey Society of Professional Journalists (NJ-SPJ) feels obligated to speak in support of our colleagues at the coalition.

When the partnership between your outlet and the Philadelphia Association of Black Journalists (PABJ) [was announced in March 2021](#), Ms. Hughes is quoted as being "delighted to work with PABJ on initiatives that will have a significant impact on our staff and on the journalism we produce."

We are disappointed to learn [through an open letter from the coalition](#) that the Inquirer has failed to follow through on agreements with PABJ.

Among the points that caught our attention, "the Inquirer has zero (0%) Black male news reporters... There are no Black male reporters outside of sports — none in features, none in breaking news, none in investigations, none in business, none in health, and none on the new communities desk." In a city, [whose population is majority people of color](#), 41% of whom are Black, this is a grave offense.

More troubling is the tone and some of the language Ms. Hughes chose to use [in an email to your staff](#) in response to the coalition's letter. "We will not be discouraged, and we will not give in to their demands, threats, and belittlement," she wrote. Candidly, this is language that we would expect our national defense leaders to use against terrorists.

To be clear, the J.A.W.N. Coalition is not comprised of terrorists. They are our colleagues with whom we share the same concerns about diversity, equity and inclusion in newsrooms across the region. It should be pointed out that some of the members of the organizations that comprise the coalition work in your newsroom. We believe Ms. Hughes' choice of words is contrary to [the SPJ Code of Ethics](#) which calls for treating our colleagues as human beings deserving of respect.

As you are aware, [diversity is important to our national organization](#). It's also important to our state chapter. Not only do we support the J.A.W.N. Coalition and its efforts to address DEI in your newsroom, but we echo their concerns, and call upon the Philadelphia Inquirer to quickly address them.

Sincerely,

The New Jersey Society of Professional Journalists

P. Kenneth Burns, President