

Dr. Patrick Soon-Shiong
Los Angeles Times
2300 E. Imperial Highway
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February 1, 2024,

Dr. Soon-Shiong,

We write to you as dedicated readers and supporters of the Los Angeles Times, deeply troubled by the recent decision to terminate 115 staffers, a significant number of whom are reportedly from Black, Latino, Asian, and other underrepresented communities. Our concerns are further heightened by the apparent contradiction between these layoffs and the promises made by the LA Times in 2020 to enhance diversity within the newsroom.

In the fall of 2020, your [editorial](#) on the LA Times' "reckoning with race" and the paper's commitment, under your leadership, to "meaningful change" was welcomed by our community with much optimism. At the time, despite Latinos comprising 48 percent of LA County's population, they only made up [11.1 percent](#) of the paper's Editorial Board. UCLA's report observed that between 2020 and 2021, nearly [96 percent](#) of op-eds published by the LA Times did not include Latino voices. As you admitted, the paper had a representation problem.

You and your leadership team welcomed Latino advocates to the table to chart a path forward. By the summer of 2023, [UCLA's new findings](#) reported that representation on the editorial board of the LA Times increased from 11.1 percent (2021) to 37.5 percent in 2022 — accounting for the largest growth in Latino representation on the editorial board of the five papers whose boards were analyzed. While there were areas of concern that lingered, we welcomed these new findings with abundant hope as it proved that the collaboration between the paper's leadership and the city's Latino leaders produced tangible results.

After short-lived but promising progress, you can imagine how last week's announcement of the termination of 115 staffers - many of Latino descent - shocked our community.

Dr. Soon-Shiong, Latino representation at the LA Times is not just about fulfilling diversity quotas; it's about ensuring that the narratives and issues crucial to one of the city's largest demographic groups are accurately and empathetically portrayed. Latino journalists bring invaluable perspectives, shaping stories through cultural insights and lived experiences that resonate with a broad audience. This representation fosters a deeper, more nuanced understanding of the community's challenges and triumphs, enriching the paper's relevance and fostering a more inclusive dialogue across the city.

There are at least 62 million Latinos in the United States or one in every five Americans. Our buying power is estimated at [\\$3.4 trillion](#), making us the 5th most powerful economy in the world. And our community is among the [top consumers of media](#) in the country. With the data presented before us, it's incomprehensible why our community must stomach such a devastating setback in our quest for equal representation in the LA Times newsroom.

Our coalition of 31 state and national groups also believe, to borrow from [your own words](#), that a news organization “can succeed only to the degree it engages, examines and accurately reflects the city and the region it operates in and profits from.” The decimation of the Times’ De Los team; the firing of Jean Guerrero, the only Latina political columnist at the paper; the disproportionate losses suffered by the Black, Latino, and AAPI caucuses; and the reduction of the Washington Bureau and breaking news team at the height of an election year is puzzling and deeply concerning to our community. The move has reneged on practically every promise to hire more reporters and editors of color and to “build an organizational culture that truly values representation and equity.” Furthermore, while we acknowledge Terry Tang's historic role as the first female editor and the experience she brings as the Interim Executive Editor, we urge a heightened commitment to diversifying editorial perspectives, ensuring that the breadth of voices within our community is thoughtfully represented in the LA Times' coverage. The appointments of Hector Becerra to the position of Managing Editor and Maria La Ganga to deputy managing editor are promising, but far more needs to be done to address our concerns.

Today, we ask:

- A meeting with you, Dr. Soon-Shiong, and your leadership team;
- Annual reports on the demographics and roles within the LA Times newsroom, ensuring clarity and accountability in representation;
- New reporting on the demographics of sources in newsroom reports and op-ed submissions, including those that are submitted and ultimately published;
- Comprehensive demographic statistics, including gender, ethnicity, race, job position, and tenure of employees recently laid off;
- Establish a Latino community advisory board that holds quarterly meetings with the publisher and paper executives, ensuring ongoing dialogue and representation of Latino perspectives;
- A commitment to rehire the staff from the De Los initiative and guarantee the maintenance of funding for at least two years, safeguarding the initiative's continuity and impact.

The strength and credibility of a news organization like the LA Times rests upon its ability to accurately represent the varied perspectives of its readership. The decision to let go of a substantial number of staffers, particularly those from underrepresented communities, not only undermines the paper's commitment to diversity but also raises questions about the sincerity of the promises made just a few years ago.

While acknowledging media organizations' economic challenges, we implore you to reconsider these layoffs and actively seek alternative solutions that uphold the commitment to diversity. A diverse newsroom not only enhances the quality of journalism, but also ensures that the LA Times remains relevant and connected to its diverse readership.

Thank you for your attention to this matter, and we sincerely hope that the Los Angeles Times can continue to serve as a beacon of journalistic integrity and inclusivity.

Sincerely,

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Lead Strategist

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