

Diversity Statement for WMUK-FM | September 2023

Why diversity is important to our public media work.

WMUK-FM is licensed to Western Michigan University (WMU). As part of WMU's commitment to diversity, the Station annually provides a report on our internal diversity, as well as our efforts to reach an increasingly diverse audience with our reporting and programming. We also believe this is also an extension of our licensee's educational mission, in line with the Station's core mission of creating a more informed public.

The extent to which our staff and governance reflect such diversity.

As of 30 September 2023, WMUK is comprised of eleven (11) full-time employees and four (4) active part-time employees. Within the Station unit, the General Manager is an African-American male, and the Corporate Support and Major Giving Manager is an Indian-American female. Additionally, there were four (4) news interns employed between 1 October 2022 and 30 September 2023 – of this group the demographics are as follows: two white females, one Indian-American female, and one white male. All four interns were paid.

With regard to our governance, as of 30 September 2023, there are seven (7) active members of the Board of Trustees of Western Michigan University. Of these seven, two are minority female trustees (one Asian-American, one African-American). Another trustee is a Native-American male. WMUK's governance also includes the University President, who is an African-American male. There is additionally one vacancy on our governance board.

WMUK and WMU seek to reach diverse candidate pools as part of our employment outreach. This includes posting to minority job banks, both locally and nationally, when full-time employment opportunities become available.

Progress we've made to increase our diversity in the last 2-3 years.

WMUK-FM maintains outreach to diverse communities through local coverage and community engagement. This includes on-air reporting and interviews by staff with people reflecting the diversity of our community.

Examples of issues impacting diverse constituencies in the past year include coverage of clashes in local school boards regarding LGBTQ+ issues. Specifically, the Station aired three (3) news reports in Spring 2023 regarding a controversy over the Galesburg school board's decision to remove a book entitled *Gender Queer: A Memoir* from a local high school library. In October 2022, the Station aired a news report regarding protests against a decision by the Paw Paw Public Schools Board of Education to remove rainbow flags from classrooms, and the cutting of a mental health curriculum.

WMUK's weekly *Art Beat* feature series often covers arts and culture relevant to diverse communities. For example, in October 2022 *Art Beat* explored inequality in access to home ownership experienced by Kalamazoo's African-American community, as experienced by author Twala Lockett-Jones. She discusses her children's book on this topic, which is focused on the African-American community, with an aim "to encourage home ownership as a way to build personal wealth."

Further, a locally-hosted music and arts program (*Let's Hear It*) continues to broadcast a number of interviews on topics of importance to minority listeners, which are aired on our sister station *Classical WMUK* (WKDS 89.9 FM and 102.1 FM HD2). A number of these interviews were with visiting guest or local minority artists who discussed their works or upcoming concerts on-air, as well as their efforts to promote diversity within their art forms.

As an example, *Let's Hear It* host Cara Lieurance interviewed the Detroit-based black pianist/composer BLKBOK (pronounced "Black Bach") in June 2023. The artist joined others for a Juneteenth Celebration at a local venue in Kalamazoo. During the interview BLKBOK shared his musical journey, as well as his connection with the meaning of the newly-designated federal holiday, Juneteenth. WMUK's General Manager, Stephen Williams, was the introductory speaker for BLKBOK's Juneteenth concert.

Our diversity plans for the coming year (FY 2024 | October 1, 2023 – September 30, 2024)

- Under the News Director, we will continue to reassess our strategic news objectives, with an eye towards enhanced outreach and reprioritization of coverage.
- As additional employment opportunities arise, the Station will continue to recruit and interview qualified minority staff, as well as students seeking to participate in our paid and unpaid News internship programs.
- WMUK's content unit, including our newsroom, will maintain our commitment to covering issues affecting diverse communities across our region, through locally-produced programming. This includes efforts to produce 2-3 features and/or interviews on the diversity issues relevant to the communities of West Michigan, with at least one of those being viewed through the lens of the rural-urban relationship in our region. The latter will be done by our Report for America reporter.
- We will continue seeking collaborations that foster outside, diverse perspectives, including visits by international colleagues in the field of media journalism.