



# COMPLICIT

Corporate Media's Capitulation to Trump's Attacks  
on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

LIVE •

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**“THERE IS A REASON THAT PRESIDENT TRUMP AND FCC CHAIRMAN BRENDAN CARR RESORT TO USING THE ACRONYM DEI WHEN THEY ATTACK DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION EFFORTS. DEI IS JUST A COLLECTION OF LETTERS, A CONVENIENT BOGEYMAN FOR THEIR PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE GROWING DIVERSITY OF THE UNITED STATES. THIS IS PART OF THEIR DESPERATE ATTEMPT TO MAINTAIN WHITE DOMINANCE.**

**“LET’S BE CLEAR-EYED ABOUT WHAT ATTACKS ON DEI REALLY ARE: AN ATTEMPT TO LEGITIMIZE DISCRIMINATION AGAINST PEOPLE OF COLOR, WOMEN, PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES, RELIGIOUS MINORITIES, LGBTQIA+ PEOPLE AND OTHERS WHO HAVE FACED BIGOTRY IN THE UNITED STATES. THIS IS MORALLY AND LEGALLY WRONG. CONGRESS CREATED THE FCC TO REGULATE OUR COMMUNICATIONS SECTOR WITHOUT DISCRIMINATING ON THE BASIS OF ONE’S PROTECTED STATUS. PREVENTING DISCRIMINATION IS RIGHT THERE IN THE STATUTE, IN TITLE 47 OF THE U.S. CODE, SECTION 151.”<sup>1</sup>**

*—Free Press Co-CEO Jessica J. González*



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# I. Executive Summary

Diversity. Equity. Inclusion. These words are not just an acronym (“DEI”).<sup>2</sup> They are principles that form the bedrocks of healthy democracies. From ancient Greece to today, a functioning government has required representation and free expression from all of society’s voices.

Today those principles are under threat from every corner of the Trump administration in a dangerous attempt to erase history, control the narrative and undermine opportunity for people of color and other targeted communities. These threats are evident in the Department of Justice’s efforts to restrict inquiries and investigations into discrimination; in the censorial strictures placed on government workers to avoid words like “diversity,” “ethnicity,” “equity,” “race,” “inclusion” and more; in the revisions to official historical records at national parks and museums.<sup>3</sup> But nowhere has the anti-DEI scheme been more obvious than in President Donald Trump’s own executive orders, which have opened the floodgates to regulators, lawmakers and other government officials to act on his command and do away with any measures related to diversity, equity and inclusion.

Perhaps most glaring, corporate media companies are complicit in facilitating the regime’s white-supremacist agenda. By bending the knee to Trump, putting profits over people and scaling back their DEI initiatives, the wealthiest media owners are enabling the spread of Trump’s MAGA propaganda, the regime’s scapegoating of vulnerable communities and the destruction of our democracy.<sup>4</sup>

Federal Communications Commissioner Anna Gomez, the lone dissenting voice at the agency, captured the stakes. “You show your priorities by the first actions that you take,” she said. “... and one of the first actions that this FCC and this administration took was a dismantling of anything related to diversity, equity, and inclusion at the commission and the demand that companies eliminate their diversity, equity and inclusion programs.”<sup>5</sup>

Upon taking office on Jan. 20, 2025, Trump issued 26 executive orders — and one of the first called for repealing DEI initiatives across the public sector, an action that later spread across the private sector.<sup>6</sup> Within hours of his swearing in, Trump signed executive order #14151, aimed at eliminating diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility “mandates, policies, programs, preferences, and activities in the Federal Government.”<sup>7</sup> On Jan. 21, he signed executive order #14173, aimed at terminating DEI and DEIA efforts in the private sector.<sup>8</sup>

While legally toothless and lacking any real enforcement authority, these orders have helped usher in a wave of capitulation in various sectors as companies shut down their DEI programs. In other words, while aware that DEI efforts are a way for companies to comply with their federal and state civil-rights obligations under the 14th Amendment, Trump is demanding that companies fold their DEI practices.<sup>9</sup> In anticipation of Trump’s actions, some companies folded their DEI efforts in 2024 after the presidential election. The executive orders tear at the very fabric of many people’s ability to engage fully, equally and safely in U.S. society by twisting the definition — and misleading the public — about the intent and history of DEI programs and initiatives.

On the one-year anniversary of these executive orders, original Free Press analysis finds that the largest media conglomerates have quietly removed former commitments to diversity, equity and inclusion. **This report analyzes this regression and features a timeline charting corporate media’s capitulation to Trump in 2025.** It’s important to note that since this is a dynamic ecosystem, corporate moves are in constant flux.

## Our research identified three key findings:

- 1. Media companies capitulated quickly: 26 of the top 35 media companies shifted their DEI efforts and/or practices within the first nine months after Trump issued his executive orders.**
  - ▶ At least six companies (17 percent) had already capitulated one month into Trump's term.
    - Amazon, Meta, Fox Corporation, X, Alphabet (Google) and Disney (listed by speed of capitulation)
  - ▶ At least 20 companies (57 percent) capitulated within the first six months.
    - The companies above plus Trump Media, Paramount Global, Warner Bros. Discovery, AT&T, TelevisaUnivision, Gannett, Comcast, Verizon, Nexstar, Tegna, Bloomberg, T-Mobile, Charter and Audacy (listed by speed of capitulation)
  - ▶ Every major telecom company capitulated within the first six months.
  - ▶ 26 of the 35 companies (74 percent total) made DEI shifts within the first nine months.
    - The aforementioned plus Apple, Advance Publications, Digital First Media (Alden Global Capital), Microsoft, Sinclair and Snap
  - ▶ Eight of the remaining nine exist in a gray zone.
    - Four have supported the regime's white-supremacist agenda in less direct ways.
      - Cox, Gray, iHeart Media, News Corp
    - Three newspapers and publishers exist in a gray zone as newsroom diversity remains disproportionately low relative to the population at large.<sup>10</sup>
      - Hearst, *The Los Angeles Times*, *The New York Times*
    - TikTok continues to publicly maintain its commitment to DEI. But given that its new ownership structure was just revealed in late 2025, it's not possible to assess the company at this point.
  - ▶ Only Netflix has both maintained its diversity, equity and inclusion efforts and refused to change how it represents that work to the public. However, Netflix's position could change since it needs government approval to secure its purchase of Warner Bros. Discovery.<sup>11</sup>
- 2. Companies are using doublespeak to obscure their DEI backsliding:** Doublespeak is the Orwellian language of distortion.<sup>12</sup> It is a unique rhetorical strategy involving the use of carefully constructed language that seeks to "mislead, distort, deceive, inflate, circumvent, obfuscate."<sup>13</sup> The strategic use of doublespeak creates an optical illusion. In this context, it obfuscates a company's approach to DEI and, at times, facilitates a performative commitment to the principles. This is used to distract us from companies' emphasis on profits over people — and to make companies appear inclusive when in fact they're capitulating. (See **Methods of Capitulation**.)
- 3. The new political power dynamic is driving DEI capitulation:** While some of these companies had no authentic DEI efforts in place before Trump took office, Free Press has found that others shifted or rolled back DEI commitments because they saw the writing on the wall and quickly aligned themselves with the Trump regime. Some of them took more of a wait-and-see approach and changed their policies only after the Trump FCC targeted them; others made changes as a direct result of pressure from regulators. And still others abandoned their DEI commitments to gain regulatory favors to expand their conglomerates (e.g., Paramount Global, Verizon, T-Mobile).

## II. Defining the Problem

Upon taking office, Trump deployed a series of tactics to dismantle decades of civil-rights progress and capture the media. He signed two executive orders that, according to the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, are “designed to chill and prohibit lawful efforts to advance equal opportunity ... by spreading disinformation and distorting federal laws to advance an agenda based on division and hate.”<sup>14</sup> Within hours of his swearing in on Jan. 20, Trump signed the executive order “Ending Radical and Wasteful Government DEI Programs and Preferencing,” and he signed the executive order “Ending Illegal Discrimination and Restoring Merit-Based Opportunity” on Jan. 21. Together, these orders make it clear that Trump aims to eradicate programs and initiatives aimed at equalizing opportunities for us all.

Many of the largest media companies are problematically caving to Trump’s fascist demands that they end their diversity, equity and inclusion efforts. By capitulating, some are failing to equitably represent the communities they claim to serve — whether in the content they create or in their workforces. And those companies that produce journalism are largely abdicating their First Amendment-protected responsibility to serve the public interest over the interests of an autocratic regime — and are failing to uphold their duty to serve as a check against tyranny.

### **TRUMP’S WAR ON DEI IS AN ATTACK ON FREE SPEECH AS HIS EXECUTIVE ORDERS SEEK TO REMOVE DISSENTING VOICES FROM VIEW WHILE PROMOTING AND NORMALIZING WHITE SUPREMACY.**

Trump’s orders reverse longstanding efforts toward fostering inclusive environments where diverse voices can equitably and safely participate and be heard, and they revoke prior executive orders designed to ensure workforce equity. Trump’s war on DEI is an attack on free speech as his executive orders seek to remove dissenting voices from view while promoting and normalizing white supremacy. To enforce these orders, Trump is weaponizing government agencies like the FCC. Instead of protecting the public, FCC Chairman Brendan Carr is using threats, coercion and lies to control the media. He has positioned DEI as a bargaining chip to capture and whitewash the media, and transform them into the regime’s MAGA-propaganda machine.<sup>15</sup>

Corporate media are putting profits before principle, and that’s a dire problem for our democracy. “The Hungarian example shows us that once the government claims control over media, reversing the course becomes very difficult,” said Policy Solutions Director András Bíró-Nagy.<sup>16</sup>

# III. Corporate Media's Capitulations on DEI

Prior to the second Trump administration, many media companies claimed a strong commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion. Over time, however, most have changed their DEI practices. They have readily shifted their allegiance to DEI toward whatever approach increases their profits. In 2020, this meant claiming a renewed commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion.<sup>17</sup> In 2025, this meant bending the knee to an authoritarian regime and its white-supremacist agenda. The net effect is the erosion of our First Amendment rights, as diverse communities and individuals are marginalized, silenced and attacked.<sup>18</sup>

We find that instead of prioritizing a commitment to the public interest, most of the 35 companies we studied have abandoned their DEI efforts and/or deployed doublespeak — a rhetorical strategy used to distort the truth to circumvent responsibility — to obscure their stance on DEI.<sup>19</sup>

This section is organized as follows. First, we list the various methods of capitulation that emerged from our analysis, and provide examples. Then we categorize the companies by speed of DEI capitulation:

**1. The First to Bend the Knee (by Feb. 20, 2025)**

**2. The Followers (Feb. 21–July 20, 2025)**

**3. DEI Doublespeak (July 21–Oct. 20, 2025)**

**4. The Outlier**

## A. Methods of Capitulation

Some media companies have scaled back or folded their DEI efforts while at times claiming to uphold these commitments — employing doublespeak to appear inclusive to audiences and consumers even as they're acquiescing to the Trump regime. This performative commitment to DEI is used to distract us from corporations' prioritization of profits over people.

The following chart highlights the types of doublespeak and examples that emerged in 2025. The list is dynamic and not intended to be exhaustive. Exclusion from the list is not confirmation that a company has not been practicing that form of doublespeak.

METHODS OF CAPITULATION	COMPANIES DEPLOYING THE METHOD (THIS LIST IS NOT EXHAUSTIVE)
1. Folding DEI programs and initiatives	Alphabet (Google), Amazon, Comcast, Disney, Fox Corporation, Meta, Paramount, T-Mobile, Verizon and X
2. Making payments to the regime (donations, settlements, etc.)	Alphabet (Google), Amazon, Disney, Comcast, Meta, Paramount and X
3. Shutting down DEI trainings and hiring initiatives	AT&T and Meta
4. Discontinuing sponsorship of DEI-focused events, programs and scholarships	AT&T and Comcast
5. Discontinuing diversity (impact) reports	Gannett and Snap
6. Appropriating DEI language to advance white supremacy	Paramount Skydance
7. Hiring anti-DEI zealots to surveil and censor	Meta and Paramount Skydance
8. Failing to adequately consider DEI impacts in merger/acquisition filings	Charter and Cox
9. Pushing for policies that will have harmful/adverse effects on DEI across a given industry	Nexstar, Sinclair and Tegna
10. Scrapping or rewording DEI language; using different images	Amazon, AT&T, Audacy, Charter, Disney, Fox Corporation, Nexstar and Tegna
11. Folding DEI efforts while continuing to market to diverse communities	AT&T
12. Using journalistic “neutrality” & “objectivity” to maintain the status quo	<i>The New York Times</i>
13. Focusing layoffs disproportionately on people of color and other historically marginalized groups	Advance Publications, Comcast and Paramount Skydance
14. Providing surveillance technologies to terrorize immigrant communities	Amazon, Apple and Microsoft
15. Hiding behind what the parent company claims and what its subsidiaries practice regarding DEI	Fox Corporation vs. Fox News

## 1. Folding DEI programs and initiatives

The following companies have explicitly stated that they were folding their DEI efforts: Alphabet (Google), Amazon, Comcast, Disney, Fox Corporation, Meta, Paramount, T-Mobile, Verizon and X.

Example: Paramount ended its DEI efforts to help win approval of the Skydance merger.<sup>20</sup>

## 2. Making payments to the regime (donations, settlements, etc.)

Payments, often taking the form of legal settlements, campaign contributions and other donations, are a less-direct way of facilitating Trump's white-supremacist agenda. Media companies engaging in this practice include Alphabet (Google), Amazon, Disney, Comcast, Meta, Paramount and X.

Example: Tech broligarchs donated millions of dollars to Trump's inauguration fund<sup>21</sup> and positioned themselves as gatekeepers determining who gets to safely participate in digital environments. Elon Musk reportedly spent up to \$240 million via his America PAC to help Trump win reelection.<sup>22</sup>

## 3. Shutting down DEI trainings and hiring initiatives

Companies in this category include AT&T and Meta.

Example: Meta announced in January that it was ending its DEI programs, including those related to hiring, training and choosing suppliers.<sup>23</sup>

## 4. Discontinuing sponsorship of DEI-focused events, programs and scholarships

Companies in this category include AT&T and Comcast.

Example: While stating on its website that the company remained committed to DEI, Comcast dropped its sponsorship of the 2025 WorldPride events and San Francisco Pride.<sup>24</sup>

## 5. Discontinuing diversity (impact) reports

Gannett and Snap are among the companies that have stopped producing such reports.<sup>25</sup>

## 6. Appropriating DEI language to advance white supremacy

Trump and his loyalists are appropriating DEI language to capture the media and advance white supremacy.

Example: Paramount Skydance. On July 15, then-Skydance CEO David Ellison and his lawyer met with FCC Chairman Carr to lobby for agency approval of the company's proposed merger with Paramount. Ellison assured Carr of the company's "commitment to unbiased journalism and its embrace of diverse viewpoints, principles that will ensure CBS's editorial decision-making reflects the varied ideological perspectives of American viewers."<sup>26</sup> To guarantee this alleged "diversity of viewpoints," Skydance committed to hiring an ombudsman for CBS News. After Carr approved the merger, Paramount hired Kenneth Weinstein, who served in advisory roles in the first Trump administration and is the former president and CEO of a "right-leaning D.C. think tank."<sup>27</sup> In response to this move, FCC Commissioner Anna Gomez wrote on X, "The job of this FCC-imposed 'truth' monitor must not be to judge whether independent reporting conforms to this Administration's views and priorities. That's a clear violation of the First Amendment and the law. Everyone should be watching their actions closely."<sup>28</sup>

## 7. Hiring anti-DEI zealots to surveil and censor

Companies in this category include Meta and Paramount Skydance.

Example: Meta hired Robby Starbuck, an anti-DEI right-wing zealot, as an advisor "to prevent 'bias' in its artificial intelligence systems."<sup>29</sup>

## 8. Failing to adequately consider DEI impacts in merger/acquisition filings

Charter and Cox are prime examples.

Example: In the “Petition to Deny” that public-interest groups filed to oppose the Charter-Cox merger, the petitioners argued that “Applicants ... failed to demonstrate that this transaction serves the public interest ... Instead, their filing relies on vague promises of ‘synergies’ and scale economies while providing no concrete commitments to lower prices, improve service quality, or expand access to underserved communities.”<sup>30</sup> When services are too expensive or are otherwise inaccessible, the impacts fall disproportionately on people of color and low-income communities — a common outcome of mergers. These companies use doublespeak when they claim to value DEI — yet fail to consider the harmful impacts of their mergers on diverse communities.

## 9. Pushing for policies that will have harmful/adverse effects on DEI across a given industry

Lobbying the Trump-era FCC to eliminate the national broadcast-ownership cap would open the floodgates to more media consolidation and would negatively impact diversity, equity, and inclusion.<sup>31</sup> In a letter to the FCC, leading press-freedom groups, civil-liberties organizations and labor unions urged the agency to preserve the ownership cap as media consolidation has historically resulted in job losses and news deserts, harming local newsrooms and the communities they serve.<sup>32</sup>

And through a history of mergers and acquisitions, a small cartel of predominantly white millionaires and billionaires has seized control of our media landscape.<sup>33</sup> When a handful of mostly white men own nearly all of our news and entertainment media, owners of color are crowded out and people of color are either stereotyped, misrepresented or ignored in both news coverage and entertainment content.<sup>34</sup>

Example: Nexstar, Sinclair and Tegna — all of which are pursuing mergers — are lobbying the FCC to lift the ownership cap.<sup>35</sup>

## 10. Scrapping or rewording DEI language; using different images

Companies in this category include Amazon, AT&T, Audacy, Charter, Disney, Fox Corporation, Nexstar and Tegna.

Example: Audacy made changes to the language and images on its website after Trump took office. Sometime between Jan. 17 and Jan. 24, it changed the top image on its “About” page from three diverse-presenting individuals to two white-presenting ones.

Then between June 19 and July 17, the company deleted the word “diverse” from the same page. (See p. 16.)

## 11. Folding DEI efforts while continuing to market to diverse communities

Example: AT&T continues to heavily market to the same diverse communities it has turned its back on. Even as it’s caving to the Trump regime, AT&T is deploying a series of marketing campaigns targeting Latinos.<sup>36</sup>

## 12. Using journalistic “neutrality” and “objectivity” to maintain the status quo

Often, those who defend themselves by calling what they do “objective” are actually just upholding the status quo.<sup>37</sup> This is not objectivity; it’s complicity. As Yale University Professor Donna Haraway notes, “neutrality” and “objectivity” are concepts used to throw sand in our eyes.<sup>38</sup> Powerful white people often work to convince themselves and others that “life as they experience it on their side of the color line is simply the objective truth about race.”<sup>39</sup> It is not.

Example: The *New York Times*’ headlines frequently normalize the most extreme elements of Trumpism.<sup>40</sup>

### 13. Focusing layoffs disproportionately on people of color and other historically marginalized groups

Advance Publications, Comcast and Paramount Skydance are among the culprits in this category.

Example: Advance Publications laid off six staff members at Teen Vogue, including the outlet's politics editor. Most of these former staffers are BIPOC women or trans.<sup>41</sup> The company later fired union employees who demanded answers about these layoffs.<sup>42</sup>

### 14. Providing surveillance technologies to terrorize immigrant communities

Amazon, Apple and Microsoft are key examples.

Example: Apple is using its technologies and digital-gatekeeping power to support ICE. It removed from its App Store the mobile app ICEBlock and similar apps that aid in sharing information about ICE operations — reportedly following direct demands from the Trump administration.<sup>43</sup>

### 15. Hiding behind what the parent company claims and what its subsidiaries practice regarding DEI

Conglomerates hide their actual approaches to DEI by creating a deniability gap between parent companies and their subsidiaries.

Example: While Fox Corporation continues to claim a commitment to DEI, its subsidiary Fox News — a notorious disinformation machine — has a long history of spouting fearmongering rhetoric about DEI.<sup>44</sup>

**Next, we take a closer look at the 35 companies by speed of DEI capitulation — and note the month that each company caved to the administration.**

## B. Blocking Access to DEI Data and Reports

Having access to accurate and timely information is a critical first step to making disparities visible and tracking our progress toward closing the equity gap. Because the Trump regime wants to hide the truth and control the narrative, it has taken deliberate steps to obstruct public access to this information. Gannett, for example, cites Trump's anti-DEI executive order as the reason it stopped publishing demographic and diversity data about its workforce.<sup>45</sup>

Our own analysis of corporate Equal Employment Opportunity-1 reports and diversity metrics reveals an overrepresentation of whites in executive/senior level and management positions across the media industry.<sup>46</sup> The FCC's own report on "Ownership of Broadcast Stations" (data as of Oct. 1, 2023) finds that majority-controlled ownership of full-power commercial broadcast-TV stations is far from equitable.<sup>47</sup> In 2023, people of color were majority

owners of only 9 percent of such stations. Halting the collection of critical data is yet another way that Chairman Carr is weaponizing the FCC. In July, the FCC's Media Bureau suspended by 18 months the deadline for submitting Form 323, which provides data for analysis of ownership diversity.<sup>48</sup> And the agency will no longer collect Form 395-B, which had collected demographic data on the workforces of FCC-regulated companies.<sup>49</sup> As with DEI reports, the information collected in these forms allows us to see the truth about representational disparities.

The failure to collect and make DEI data accessible is an attempt to conceal racial inequities — and white privilege — and keep systemic roadblocks in place for historically marginalized communities. Censoring DEI research is a form of disinformation that aims to hide the truth to whitewash our future.

## C. The First to Bend the Knee

One month into Trump's term, six companies had already announced that they were folding or scaling back their DEI efforts: **Amazon, Meta, Fox Corporation, X, Alphabet (Google) and Disney** (listed by speed of capitulation).

### DECEMBER 2024

**Amazon** read the writing on the wall and dropped its DEI efforts before the president's inauguration. Candi Castleberry Singleton, Amazon's vice president of inclusive eXperiences and technology, told employees in December 2024 that the company was "winding down outdated programs and materials" related to DEI by the end of that year, and the tech giant deleted DEI language from its 2024 annual report.<sup>50</sup> Jeff Bezos also signaled his allegiance to Trump by donating \$1 million to his inaugural fund. And Amazon earns significant revenue from the ICE-deportation machine as AWS, its cloud-computing platform, provides the backbone for these operations.<sup>51</sup> The company's willingness to help the Trump regime terrorize immigrants signals a disdain for vulnerable communities. It is thus not surprising that Amazon ended its DEI efforts soon after the 2024 election.

### JANUARY 2025

On Jan. 7, **Meta** CEO Mark Zuckerberg followed suit, announcing that Meta would roll back hate-speech rules and remove "restrictions on topics like immigration and gender."<sup>52</sup> The company cited "recent elections" as a catalyst. This move opened the floodgates to hate speech on the platform, posing a "great threat to vulnerable communities globally and drastically increas[ing] the risk that the company [would] yet again contribute to mass violence and gross human rights abuses."<sup>53</sup> Exemplifying another method of capitulation, Zuckerberg gave \$1 million to Trump's inaugural fund and agreed to pay Trump \$25 million to settle a baseless lawsuit that claimed the company had violated the president's First Amendment rights when it suspended his accounts after the Jan. 6 insurrection.<sup>54</sup>

In January, **Fox News** — synonymous with right-wing media distortion — removed its pro-DEI language from job postings, with a Fox representative stating, "FOX News Media routinely reviews our legal obligations including under federal, state, and local law and we have removed this language."<sup>55</sup> Fox Corporation, which owns Fox News, continues to claim a commitment to DEI.

Also in January, **X** owner Elon Musk posted on the platform, "DEI is just another word for racism. Shame on anyone who uses it."<sup>56</sup> This post exemplifies his company's ethos regarding DEI. Upon purchasing Twitter, Musk dissolved its Trust & Safety Council, leading to a barrage of hate speech on X. A 2025 study found that "posts containing homophobic, transphobic and racist slurs increased in the months after Elon Musk purchased the company," making it an increasingly unsafe space for diverse groups.<sup>57</sup>

### FEB. 1–20, 2025

On Feb. 5, **Google** informed its employees in an email that it will no longer have hiring targets designed to improve diverse representation among its staff.<sup>58</sup> Deploying another method of capitulation, Sundar Pichai, CEO of Alphabet/Google, donated \$1 million to Trump's inaugural fund.<sup>59</sup>

On Feb. 11, **Disney's** HR officer informed employees that the company was changing its DEI programs to focus on "business outcomes."<sup>60</sup> Among the changes, it discontinued its "Reimagine Tomorrow" initiative aimed at highlighting underrepresented voices, replacing it with an "inclusion" site.<sup>61</sup> This came on the heels of Disney's decision to settle a spurious Trump defamation suit in December 2024. In spite of these capitulations,



FCC Chairman Carr announced via X on March 28 that he had “asked the FCC’s Enforcement Bureau to open an investigation into Disney & ABC … [regarding] their DEI practices.”<sup>62</sup>

One month into Trump’s term, two broadcasters (Fox News and Disney) and four online platforms (Amazon, Meta, X and Google) capitulated on DEI.

## D. The Followers

Within the next five months, at least 14 more media companies — **Trump Media, Paramount Global, Warner Bros. Discovery, AT&T, TelevisaUnivision, Gannett, Comcast, Verizon, Nexstar, Tegna, Bloomberg, T-Mobile, Charter and Audacy** — softened or eliminated their diversity, equity and inclusion efforts. This group includes every single major U.S. telecom. While their degree of capitulation varied, they all acquiesced to Trump’s anti-DEI demands. By July, 20 companies in total had caved to Trump.

### FEB. 21–28, 2025

In its 2024 Corporate Governance Guidelines, **Trump Media** states that “the Board is committed to creating and maintaining a culture of diversity and inclusion.”<sup>63</sup> However, in February — in response to a CNN report — a Trump Media spokesperson “dismissed the significance of the diversity and inclusion statement in the company’s corporate governance, implying that it was merely legal language to comply with anti-discrimination laws.”<sup>64</sup>

According to a Feb. 26 internal memo *The Hollywood Reporter* obtained, **Paramount Global’s** changes to its DEI efforts included eliminating staffing goals tied to race, ethnicity, sex and gender. The company also stopped collecting gender and diversity data for most U.S. job applicants and stopped tying its employee-incentive program to DEI goals.<sup>65</sup> It also paid \$16 million to Trump to settle his meritless lawsuit against CBS over *60 Minutes*’ editing of its interview with then-Vice President Kamala Harris — and agreed to scrap these DEI efforts to win government approval of its merger with Skydance.<sup>66</sup> After the Paramount Skydance merger was approved, the company disbanded CBS News’ Race and Culture Unit.<sup>67</sup>

In a memo sent to staff on Feb. 27, **Warner Bros. Discovery** said it planned to continue to tell inclusive and diverse stories and to build an “inclusive team” through its recruiting and training programs — but that it was “doing away with the term DEI … to make sure we continue to comply with the evolving legal landscape in the United States and around the world.”<sup>68</sup>

### MARCH 2025

In March, **AT&T** ended its participation in the Human Rights Campaign’s Corporate Equality Index; stopped providing pronoun pins to employees; ended its DEI-focused employee-training program; withdrew financial support for the Trevor Project, a suicide-prevention group for LGBTQIA+ youth; and stopped supporting Turn Up the Love, a series of Pride events showcasing musicians. The company also eliminated scholarships for minority groups, and the company’s chief diversity officer now lists herself as “vice president of culture and inclusion” on LinkedIn.<sup>69</sup>

On March 3, as part of a \$220 million Department of Homeland Security anti-immigrant ad campaign, **TelevisaUnivision** began airing racist ads telling undocumented immigrants that the government would “find and deport them.”<sup>70</sup> The ads have aired in both the United States and México.<sup>71</sup>

At the end of March, **Gannett** updated its website: Its “culture” page says that the company would “no longer publish workforce diversity metrics, [or] a sustainability or inclusion report.”<sup>72</sup>

## APRIL 2025

In April, *The Philadelphia Inquirer* reported that **Comcast** had folded on its DEI commitments; it has since removed a webpage dedicated to DEI.<sup>73</sup> In February, NBCUniversal — which Comcast owns — cancelled MSNBC programs hosted by Joy Reid, a progressive political commentator who is Black; Katie Phang, who is Asian; and José Diaz-Balart, who is Latino. The company moved longtime *NBC Nightly News* anchor Lester Holt, who is Black, to a less-prominent role at NBC. On Oct. 15, “NBC News eliminated its teams dedicated to covering issues affecting Black, Asian American, Latino and LGBTQ+ groups as part of its layoffs of about 150 staffers.”<sup>74</sup> Comcast donated \$1 million to Trump’s inaugural fund, and is among the companies that have donated to Trump’s White House vanity ballroom project.<sup>75</sup>

## MAY 2025

In a Feb. 27 letter to **Verizon** Chairman and CEO Hans Vestberg, FCC Chairman Carr demanded the company end its DEI efforts. Carr outlined the different ways in which the company continued to “promote” DEI in its public-facing materials. According to whistleblower documents, Carr asked Verizon to get in touch with FCC personnel “working on Verizon’s pending transactions with the FCC” — those reviewing its pending merger with Frontier Communications — to “resolve” the DEI matter.<sup>76, 77</sup>



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON, DC 20554

Brendan Carr  
Chairman

February 27, 2025

Mr. Hans Vestberg  
Chairman and Chief Executive Officer  
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**RE: Verizon’s Promotion of DEI**

I am writing you regarding Verizon’s continued promotion of DEI.

As you know, President Trump took quick and decisive action to root out the scourge of invidious forms of DEI discrimination. In his first week in office, President Trump issued an Executive Order that will end the radical and wasteful DEI programs that have spread across the federal government.<sup>78</sup> Likewise, President Trump issued an Executive Order to end illegal discrimination and restore merit-based opportunity across the private sector.<sup>79</sup>

Following President Trump’s actions, I announced that the FCC will be ending its Biden-era decision to promote DEI.<sup>80</sup> In my announcement, I made clear that the FCC is ending its DEI group and task force as well as eliminating the promotion of DEI from our strategic plan, budget, performance plan, economic reports, and all other components of the agency’s work.

Subsequently, I wrote a letter to Comcast where I made clear that I expected all regulated companies to end invidious forms of DEI discrimination, given the scope of the FCC’s EEO rules and other authorities. While I am pleased with the progress that different companies are making on this front, I am concerned by the apparent lack of progress at Verizon.

<sup>73</sup> Executive Order on Ending Radical and Wasteful Government DEI Programs and Preferring (Jan. 20, 2025), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/202501/ending-radical-and-wasteful-government-dei-programs-and-preferring/>.

<sup>74</sup> Executive Order on Ending Illegal Discrimination and Restoring Merit-Based Opportunity (Jan. 21, 2025), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/202501/ending-illegal-discrimination-and-restoring-merit-based-opportunity/>.

<sup>75</sup> See, e.g., Statement of FCC Chairman Carr, Chairman Carr Ends FCC’s Promotion of DEI (Jan. 21, 2025), <https://docs.fcc.gov/public/attachments/DOC-4090541.pdf>.

Recently, Business Insider reported that Verizon has decided to stand out from other businesses when it comes to DEI. In particular, Business Insider states that Verizon is actively recruiting potential employees to join Verizon because, unlike other businesses, Verizon is still promoting DEI.

Moreover, a quick review of Verizon’s public facing materials shows the company’s continued promotion of DEI. Your company states that “Verizon is deeply committed to sustaining a culture of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) within our company and the communities we serve.” Continuing, your company states that “We view DEI as more than the right thing to do; it is a source of strategic business value for Verizon.” Your company also states that “Verizon’s leadership is committed to DEI and has built DEI considerations into companywide programs and processes.” And Verizon states that it hired President Obama’s former Attorney General Eric Holder to lead a company-wide DEI audit.

All of this is on top of reporting from Christopher Rufo on Verizon’s promotion of invidious forms of DEI discrimination.<sup>81</sup> According to whistleblower documents obtained by Rufo, Verizon launched an extensive race reeducation program based on the core tenets of critical race theory, including “system racism,” “white privilege,” and “intersectionality.” The training materials required Verizon employees to identify their race and “gender identity,” among other things. The materials show that employees were then instructed on Verizon’s elaborate racial-ettiquette system, including warnings about “microaggressions” and unconscious “microinequities.”

But promoting invidious forms of discrimination cannot be squared with any reasonable interpretation of federal law. It can only deprive Americans of their rights to fair and equal treatment under the law.

Despite the emergence of DEI initiatives in recent years, these forms of discrimination have long been condemned by America’s civil rights laws. Indeed, the Supreme Court has stated that “[d]istinctions between citizens solely because of their ancestry are by their very nature odious to a free people whose institutions are founded upon the doctrine of equality.”<sup>82</sup> Likewise, the Supreme Court has written that racial classifications “threaten to stigmatize individuals by reason of their membership in a racial group and to incite racial hostility.”<sup>83</sup> For this reason, the Supreme Court has stated that, in the government context, “action based on race – a group classification long recognized as in most circumstances irrelevant and therefore prohibited – should be subjected to detailed judicial inquiry to ensure that the personal right to equal protection of the laws has not been infringed.”<sup>84</sup>

In President Trump’s Executive Order to end illegal discrimination across the private sector, he wrote that illegal DEI policies “undermine our national unity, as they deny, discredit, and undermine the traditional American values of hard work, excellence, and individual achievement in favor of an unlawful, corrosive, and pernicious identity-based spoils system.” President Trump’s Executive Order also tasked federal agencies with combatting illegal private-sector DEI preferences, mandates, policies, programs, and activities.

As Chairman of the FCC, it is important to me that the entities the Commission regulates fully adhere to our country’s laws.

In order to aid the FCC’s resolution of these matters, please reach out to the agency personnel that have been working on Verizon’s pending transactions at the FCC. They are the FCC personnel most familiar with Verizon’s operations due to their merger review activity.

Thank you in advance for your attention to these important matters.

Sincerely,

  
Brendan Carr

In a May 15 letter to the FCC, Verizon promised to end its DEI programs.<sup>78</sup> Like clockwork, the agency approved the merger on May 16.<sup>79</sup> Carr pointed to Verizon’s “commitment to end” its DEI practices as a key factor in this approval.

As far back as November 2024, **Nexstar Media Group** Chairman and CEO Perry Sook stated that deregulation was the “number one priority” for the company. Sook said that he supported “eliminating the level of activist journalism out there.”<sup>80</sup> In April 2025, TheDesk reported that Nexstar had asked its local stations to pressure the FCC to gut longstanding media-ownership restrictions — and also worked with the National Association of Broadcasters to push the agency to remove these limits.<sup>81</sup> And in May, the company pulled back on DEI initiatives — removing references to DEI programs from its website and social-media profiles.<sup>82</sup>

COMPLICIT: CORPORATE MEDIA’S CAPITULATION TO TRUMP’S ATTACKS ON DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION

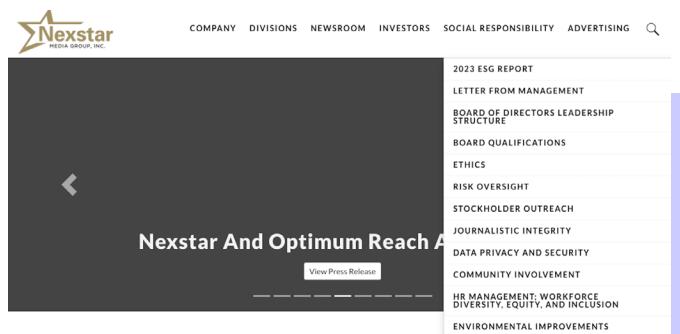
FREEPRESS.NET

14

## THE FOLLOWERS

Below is a progression of some of the changes on Nexstar's "Social Responsibility" menu from Feb. 11–Oct. 15, 2025:

Feb. 11, 2025



Oct. 15, 2025



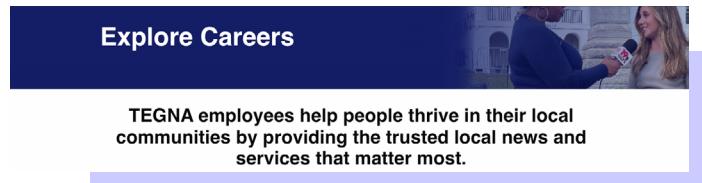
On Feb. 11, there were 12 pages on this menu, including "HR Management: Workforce Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion" and "Environmental Improvements." By Oct. 15, both of these pages, along with several others, had been deleted. Then, on Nov. 18, Nexstar filed an application with the FCC seeking agency approval of the company's bid to acquire Tegna's broadcast licenses, an unlawful merger that would combine the nation's largest television-station conglomerate with its fourth largest.<sup>83</sup> Rolling back its DEI efforts was a way for Nexstar to curry favor with the Trump administration — and secure the FCC's approval of the Tegna deal.

Earlier in 2025, during a company-wide "all hands on deck" call, a Tegna employee reported that executives were "dropping any talk of DEI, saying it is too politicized."<sup>84</sup> A Wayback Machine search revealed that at some point between May 27 and May 29, Tegna deleted the word "diversity" from its "Explore Careers" page:

May 27, 2025



May 29, 2025



**Bloomberg LP**, which earlier held its ground against capitulating to Trump, reportedly made some DEI rollbacks. In May, according to *Editor and Publisher*, Bloomberg Editor-in-Chief John Micklethwait told his newsroom the company was changing its inclusion efforts and would no longer focus on underrepresented groups. Bloomberg also stopped distributing its Equality newsletter.<sup>85</sup>

## JULY 2025

The two remaining telecommunications behemoths, **T-Mobile** and **Charter Communications**, folded in July. Notably, they both bent the knee as they sought FCC approval for proposed mergers and acquisitions.

In a July 8 letter to the FCC, T-Mobile announced that it had scrapped all of its DEI initiatives.<sup>86</sup> As with Verizon, it was not until after T-Mobile dissolved its partnerships with several civil-rights organizations — a collaboration focused on developing equitable corporate-governance practices — that the FCC green-lit T-Mobile's acquisition of UScellular's wireless operation and of internet service provider Metronet.<sup>87</sup>

Charter Communications once touted its commitment to “diversity & inclusion” (see image below). But it’s now bending the knee to Trump as it seeks official approval of its merger with Cox Communications — a deal that would create the nation’s largest cable/broadband provider and would also offer mobile and video entertainment services.<sup>88</sup>

On July 14, Charter and Cox filed with the FCC a public-interest statement that omitted any mention of diversity.<sup>89</sup> Earlier in 2025, Charter had a diversity and inclusion section on its website. Today, the language is gone, replaced with Trump’s dubious “merit-based” wording, a proxy for upholding white entitlements.

Feb. 19, 2025

## Diversity & Inclusion

Our workforce reflects the markets, communities and customers we serve, which enables us to deliver exceptional products and services. Our employees recognize Charter as an inclusive and merit-based workplace where they are valued and belong. Our programs and policies enable all employees to reach their full potential and have a long career at Charter.

Oct. 15, 2025

## Workforce Culture

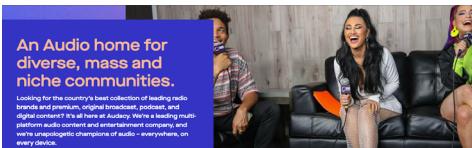
Charter is an inclusive and merit-based workplace where employees are valued and belong. Our workforce reflects the markets, communities and customers we serve, which enables us to deliver exceptional products and services. Our programs and policies provide all employees with the opportunity to reach their full potential and have a long career at Charter.

Following AT&T’s lead, Charter recently rebranded the title of its chief diversity officer, who is now listed as the company’s senior vice president, community impact & engagement.

Among **Audacy**’s stated values is “Community,” under which the broadcast company claims a commitment to “celebrat[ing] diverse perspectives.”<sup>90</sup> In 2021, under Audacy Serves, the company’s corporate social-responsibility program, Audacy launched its “Social Impact Report,” which expressed its support of DEI.<sup>91</sup> However, Audacy hasn’t released a report since 2022.

Audacy made subtle website changes in phases once Trump took office. Sometime between Jan. 17 and Jan. 24, it changed the top image on its “About” page from three diverse-presenting individuals to two white-presenting ones. Then between June 19 and July 17, the company deleted the word “diverse” from the same page.

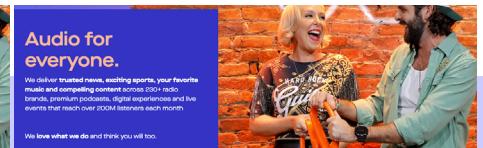
Jan. 17, 2025



Jan. 24, 2025



July 17, 2025



Notably, Audacy station KCBS FM is under formal FCC investigation for its lawful coverage of ICE activities in San Francisco. Carr claimed that the station’s programming violated the newscaster’s public-interest obligations. However, Trump and Carr opposed the news coverage because it informed people about ICE activities, warning them of the locations of ICE agents who had been racially profiling and unlawfully detaining people for exercising their free-speech rights or simply going about their day.<sup>92</sup>

Carr’s letter to Audacy appeared on the FCC website on March 12, 2025, but mysteriously disappeared the next day, when Sen. Richard Blumenthal launched an inquiry into the FCC’s political targeting of newsrooms.<sup>93</sup>

Within the first six months of Trump’s inauguration, **eight additional broadcasters** (Trump Media, Paramount Global, Warner Bros. Discovery, TelevisaUnivision, Comcast, Nexstar Media Group, Tegna and Audacy); **four cable & telecom companies** (AT&T, Verizon, T-Mobile and Charter Communications); and **two newspapers/publishers** (Gannett and Bloomberg LP) rolled back their diversity, equity and inclusion efforts.<sup>94</sup> **It’s important to note that within the first six months, every major telecom rolled back its DEI commitments.**

## E. DEI Doublespeak

In this section, we take a closer look at 14 companies that exist in gray zones. Some shifted their DEI efforts during the first nine months. However, the exact date of these capitulations is difficult to pinpoint because these particular companies either did not make any explicit statements about their shifts or deployed doublespeak — claiming to continue to uphold DEI commitments while covertly making changes or supporting Trump's white-supremacist agenda in less direct or visible ways (see Apple, Advance Publications, Cox, Digital First Media [Alden Global Capital], Gray, iHeart Media, Microsoft, News Corp, Sinclair and Snap). We've also included media companies whose newsroom diversity remains disproportionately low relative to the population at large (Hearst, *The Los Angeles Times* and *The New York Times*).<sup>95</sup>

Free Press has organized these 14 companies under three subcategories: broadcasters (**Cox, Gray, iHeart Media** and **Sinclair**); online platforms (**Apple, Microsoft, Snap** and **TikTok**); and newspapers and publishers (**Advance Publications, Digital First Media [Alden Global Capital], Hearst, The Los Angeles Times, News Corp** and **The New York Times**).

### BROADCASTERS

**Cox Media Group** (CMG) states a commitment to "amplifying diverse voices" and highlights "inclusion" as a core value.<sup>96</sup> However, Cox is seeking FCC approval to merge with Charter and it seems the media conglomerate's DEI practices may be falling short. On July 14, Cox filed a Public Interest Statement with the FCC that did not mention diversity.<sup>97</sup> While this may not be enough to conclude that Cox has capitulated, it's important to note that these kinds of mergers tend to have disproportionate impacts on communities of color and low-income communities.

In a Petition to Deny that Public Knowledge, the Communications Workers of America, the Benton Institute for Broadband & Society and the Center for Accessible Technology filed, the groups note that the deal "would result in substantial public interest harms including increased gatekeeper power over internet distribution, diminished competition, higher prices for consumers, and unequal treatment of underserved communities... [and] could raise digital discrimination concerns, whether intentional or [un]intentional, that require careful Commission scrutiny."<sup>98, 99</sup>

There's no mention of DEI on **Gray Media's** website. Under "additional Information" on its career page, the company states that it "provides equal employment opportunities to all employees and applicants for employment." Gray CEO Hilton Howell Jr.'s X feed features frequent praise for Trump and Elon Musk.<sup>100</sup> And Howell's leadership team is overwhelmingly white even though the company owns 44 Spanish-language Telemundo affiliates.<sup>101</sup>

**iHeart Media** states a commitment to "diversity at every level" of the company. Yet its trade organization is lobbying the Trump FCC to eliminate the national broadcast-ownership cap, which would allow a handful of conglomerates to own even more local stations. Media consolidation has a negative impact on DEI as it leads to less original local news and information, and less viewpoint diversity.<sup>102</sup>

iHeart Media's policy advocacy and racist programming also betray its stated commitment to diversity. Its lineup features hateful pundits who have been with the company since before its rebranding in 2014.<sup>103</sup> These include pundits like Bill Cunningham, who stated that "poor people [are] poor because they lack values, ethics, and morals"; Bill Handel, who has repeatedly made racist remarks about Asian communities; and others like Michael Berry, Kenneth Chiampou and Michael Savage, who have a history of spreading vitriol against people of color, women, LGBTQIA+ people, the poor and other marginalized communities.<sup>104</sup>

David Smith, the executive chairman of **Sinclair Broadcast Group**, has used his vast empire of local-television stations to promote Donald Trump's white-supremacist ideology.<sup>105</sup> In September, Sinclair (and Nexstar) preempted *Jimmy Kimmel Live!* on their local ABC affiliate stations because the late-night television host made First Amendment-protected comments about Charles Kirk's murder that did not align with the companies' views.<sup>106</sup> In other words, the media conglomerates wielded their power to censor Kimmel's free speech.

And while Sinclair has a diversity and inclusion statement — and continues to offer its annual Diversity Scholarship<sup>107</sup> — its Equal Employment Opportunity policy echoes Trump-regime talking points, stating, "employment decisions will be based on such factors as merit, qualifications, competence, and the needs of the Company... [and] will not be influenced or affected by virtue of" any protected status.<sup>108</sup> This type of EEO policy is a proxy for upholding white entitlements.

To ensure alignment with Trump, Sinclair asked ABC to create a CBS-like watchdog, an apparent condition for reinstating Jimmy Kimmel's show.<sup>109</sup> Such a request likely resulted from Carr's ongoing pressure campaign. "The goal is to get the companies to capitulate in advance, to the point where the FCC or the administration doesn't even need to speak," said FCC Commissioner Anna Gomez.<sup>110</sup> In fact, the Paramount Skydance merger came with the condition that CBS install an ombudsman.<sup>111</sup>

## CABLE AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Every major cable and telecommunications company folded or scaled back their DEI commitments within the first six months of the Trump administration, as detailed above.

## ONLINE PLATFORMS AND STREAMING

At **Apple's** annual shareholder meeting on Feb. 25, 97 percent of shareholders rejected an anti-DEI proposal a conservative think tank submitted. However, a Feb. 26 BBC article states: "Apple boss Tim Cook has said his company may have to change its diversity practices as the US legal landscape shifts."<sup>112</sup>

While Apple maintains its public commitment to diversity and inclusion, Cook donated \$1 million to Trump's inaugural fund.<sup>113</sup> Then, in August, he gifted Trump a plaque with a 24-karat gold base.<sup>114</sup> While these are not direct DEI capitulations, Apple is also using its technologies and digital-gatekeeping power to support ICE. As Free Press Advocacy Director Jenna Ruddock reports, "On [Oct. 2], Apple removed the mobile app ICEBlock and 'similar apps' used by people in the United States to share information about nearby immigration-enforcement operations from its App Store — reportedly following direct demands from the Trump administration."<sup>115</sup> Apple may claim to support DEI, but its actions betray its words.

In October 2024, **Microsoft** CEO Satya Nadella said in the company's annual report that DEI efforts "ensure our work force represents the planet we serve, and that the products we build always meet our customers' needs." In a LinkedIn post, Chief Diversity Officer Lindsay-Rae McIntyre stated: "As we close out another year, I'm thinking about the importance of continuing our diversity and inclusion work, expanding empathy, and anticipating the needs of all our stakeholders, both within Microsoft and beyond. The business case for D&I is not only a constant but is stronger than ever, reinforcing our belief that a diverse and inclusive workforce is crucial for innovation and success." However, a Harvard study found that the company reduced DEI references by 76 percent in its 2024 annual report.<sup>116</sup>

In an attempt to obscure its connection to ICE, Microsoft has shifted its contracts to Dell Federal Systems, a partnered reseller, instead of selling its software licenses and Microsoft Azure Cloud Service Provider (CSP) directly. In 2025, these contracts have reached record-high values (about \$20 million).<sup>117</sup>

**Snap** has bent the knee to Trump by making its diversity reports — which it's released since 2020 — less accessible. It has also changed the language on its site: The links to its "Diversity at Snap" page — from which

you could, at one point, download the reports — now take you to a “Belonging at Snap” webpage where neither the reports nor any mention of diversity data are accessible.<sup>118</sup> In its 2024 diversity report, Snap replaced the term “diversity” with “belonging.”<sup>119</sup>

**TikTok’s** stance on DEI and its impacts on diverse users remain to be seen as its new ownership structure was just revealed in late 2025.

## NEWSPAPERS AND PUBLISHING

In 1968, the Kerner Commission released its landmark report, which warned that our nation was “moving toward two societies, one black, one white — separate and unequal.” The report found that the media played a role in fueling racial unrest, and urged the media industry to integrate its newsrooms.<sup>120</sup> Newsroom diversity remains disproportionately low relative to the population at large<sup>121</sup> — and the lack of workforce diversity leads to less viewpoint diversity. This matters as news media shape how we understand the world and how we perceive one another. Without newsroom diversity, the views of powerful figures and institutions are privileged while bias remains unchallenged. In this way, the lived experiences of diverse groups can be misinterpreted, dismissed or erased, and trust is eroded, hindering people’s ability to fully participate in our democracy.

While some newsrooms made efforts in recent years to remedy these harms, the administration’s attacks on DEI — and the corresponding corporate capitulations — have undermined this progress. While they may not have directly shifted their DEI programs and initiatives since Trump took office, some outlets support his white-supremacist agenda in less direct or visible ways; this includes their historically slow progress toward diverse and equitable newsroom integration.

At **Advance Publications**, there are differing commitments to DEI among the company’s portfolio. In November, Condé Nast — a subsidiary of Advance Publications — folded Teen Vogue into Vogue.com — and laid off six Teen Vogue staff members. Condé United, a bargaining unit of the union the NewsGuild of New York, noted that “most of [the affected staffers] are BIPOC women or trans, including Teen Vogue’s Politics Editor — continuing the trend of layoffs at Condé disproportionately impacting marginalized employees.” The newsroom union added that the publication, which made its mark covering issues from a progressive perspective, “now has no writers or editors explicitly covering politics … as of today, only one woman of color remains on the editorial staff.”<sup>122</sup> The company subsequently fired four union employees from various Condé Nast publications who demanded answers about these layoffs.<sup>123</sup>

**Digital First Media (Alden Global Capital)** — a predatory company that has long gutted newsrooms it buys — claims a commitment to “reliable news and information … at a time when local news faces unprecedented challenges.” Its website is fairly opaque regarding its internal policies.<sup>124</sup> However, its “Communities” page shows a capitulation to Trump, evidenced by its reference to the “Gulf of México” as the “Gulf of America” and the “Sea of Cortéz” as the “Gulf of California.”<sup>125</sup> In other words, at some point since Trump took office, the company changed its maps to echo the regime’s America First stance.

**Hearst** notes a commitment to DEI, and continues to provide its Hearst Rise report.<sup>126</sup> The report includes employee demographics, programs aimed at “uplifting talent,” the company’s focus on creating an “inclusive workplace,” and information about its investment in “communities.”<sup>127</sup> Despite this stated commitment, the 2025 Rise report notes that 74 percent of the company’s leadership (managers) are white.<sup>128</sup> And as far back as 2023, Truthout reported that Hearst censored employees speaking up in solidarity with Palestine by “instituting a new social media policy that bans its employees, including its journalists, from expressing ‘personal political opinions’ online.”<sup>129</sup>

The **Los Angeles Times** is the largest newspaper in Los Angeles County, where over a third of residents are immigrants. The *Times* has a dismal history when it comes to diversity, equity and inclusion. In 2020, the paper apologized for its history of racism: “For at least its first 80 years, the *Los Angeles Times* was an institution

deeply rooted in white supremacy and committed to promoting the interests of the city's industrialists and landowners.”<sup>130</sup> Also in 2020, its owner, Patrick Soon-Shiong, wrote about his paper's failures on covering race and pledged “to increase diversity” at the paper.<sup>131</sup> That same year, the paper created an initiative to increase its DEI efforts, but only published DEI reports through 2022.

The paper's feeble attempts to course correct are visible in its leadership's doublespeak. On its website the company pledges a commitment to “cultivating a diverse and inclusive workforce that reflects the communities we serve,” and claims that diversity and fairness make up two of the company's five core values.” But mass layoffs in 2024 “disproportionately affected” journalists of color.<sup>132</sup> Soon-Shiong has bent the knee to Trump by pulling the plug on the paper's planned endorsement of Kamala Harris for president, and revamping the editorial board by recruiting more right-wing writers.<sup>133</sup>

**NewsCorp** — which owns right-leaning publications like *The New York Post* and *The Wall Street Journal* — has a corporate governance page on its website that includes a corporate diversity statement, and includes links to its Equal Employment Opportunity-1 survey data and its Australian Securities Exchange Diversity Measurable Objectives and Gender Balance.<sup>134</sup> But during a 2025 quarterly earnings call, News Corp CEO Robert Thomson portrayed Trump's win over Harris in celebratory terms: “There is the confluence of economic optimism and the cultural awakening with the yoke of woke having been lifted ... We believe these trends should lead to less superfluous, gratuitous regulation [and] greater capital formation.”<sup>135</sup>

While ***The New York Times*** has made its diversity metrics publicly available for years, it has failed to diversify its leadership: As of 2024, 68 percent of its leaders were white.<sup>136</sup> And though it has not folded its DEI efforts and has exposed Trump's lies and bigotry, it also routinely normalizes the most extreme elements of Trumpism.<sup>137</sup> For example, an article from February 2025 points to the various ways in which Trump is abusing his power, yet defines him as someone who “seeks to influence many spheres.”<sup>138</sup> And in a January 2025 *Michigan Daily* article, University of Michigan student Byron Brooks discusses how an interview he gave to *The New York Times*, which was meant to highlight “the importance of safe spaces for marginalized students at the University of Michigan[,] was twisted into a weapon used to attack DEI initiatives.”<sup>139</sup>

In his speech to the annual Reuters Memorial Lecture at Oxford University, *New York Times* Publisher A.G. Sulzberger defined independent reporting as “the kind that doesn't fully align with any one perspective.”<sup>140</sup> However, so-called journalistic neutrality or “objectivity” are contested terms.<sup>141</sup> As journalist and media critic Dan Froomkin notes, “those who want to preserve the status quo often defend themselves by calling what they do ‘objective’ — and what we [the public] want ‘opinion.’”<sup>142</sup> Resorting to false balance — presenting both sides of a story, regardless of their varying merits — is another way in which outlets like the *Times* fail to serve as a check against tyranny, which in turn facilitates the regime's escalating attacks on immigrants, the LGBTQIA+ community and other diverse communities. This has not kept *The New York Times* out of reach of a Trump lawsuit.<sup>143</sup> Nonetheless, the *Times* has also stood up to the Trump regime. On Dec. 4, it sued the Pentagon, accusing it of “infringing on the constitutional rights of journalists by imposing a new set of restrictions on reporting about the military.”<sup>144</sup>

Only nine months into the Trump regime, every company we analyzed other than Netflix had capitulated on DEI.

## F. The Outlier

Only **Netflix** seems steadfast in its commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion. In June, 99 percent of Netflix shareholders voted to reject an anti-DEI proposal a conservative shareholder group brought to the company's annual meeting.<sup>145</sup> The resolution asked the Netflix board to "produce a report assessing how the company's 'affirmative action initiatives' impact discrimination risks to the company."<sup>146</sup> In their recommendation that shareholders reject the proposal, the Netflix board said: "*The proposal is unnecessary as Netflix already has a well-established compliance program and relevant policies and practices. Netflix is an equal opportunity employer and does not discriminate in recruiting, hiring, training, or promoting on any basis protected by law.*"<sup>147</sup>



Unlike companies that are making vague statements about a "changing legal landscape" as an excuse for folding or scaling back their DEI programs and initiatives, Netflix delivered a legally grounded response.<sup>148</sup> As the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights notes, "equal opportunity and antidiscrimination obligations are enshrined in the U.S. Constitution and our federal civil-rights laws. [Trump's] executive orders do not and cannot change that. The president's role is to implement laws; he cannot rewrite them."<sup>149</sup>

For many companies, their retreat from DEI programs and initiatives is not based on any legal imperative, as civil-rights laws are enshrined in our Constitution. Instead, their moves are motivated by racism, fears of legal threats and retaliation from the Trump regime, and the desire to secure approvals of proposed deals or other regulatory favors from the Trump FCC.

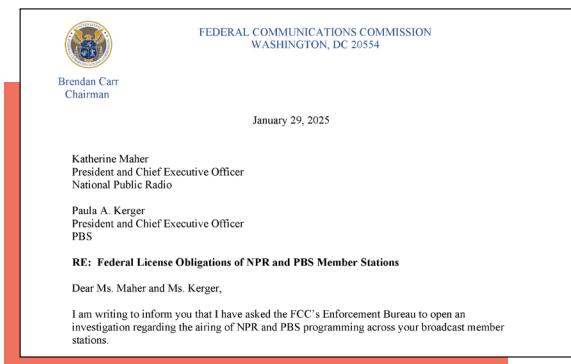
# IV. The FCC Under Trump: Threats, Coercion & Lies

*“[Carr] has cagily created a new and coercive technique for operating outside the agency’s established statutes and procedures to attack corporate decisions he and Donald Trump do not like. That technique is to use its powers—or the threat thereof—to micromanage the activities of companies without needing to follow the niceties of commission votes and judicial review. Prime targets are media company editorial decisions and open opportunity—or diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI)—initiatives.”<sup>150</sup>*

—Former FCC Chairman Tom Wheeler

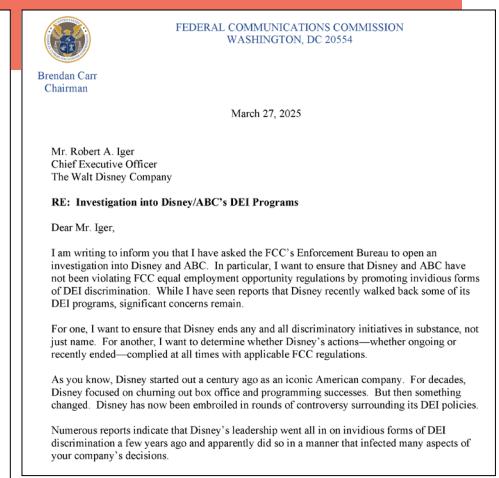
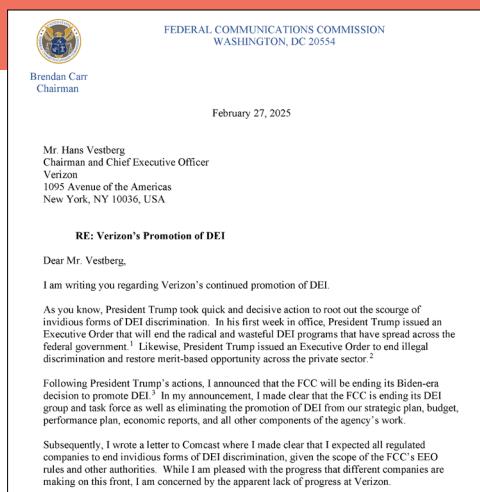
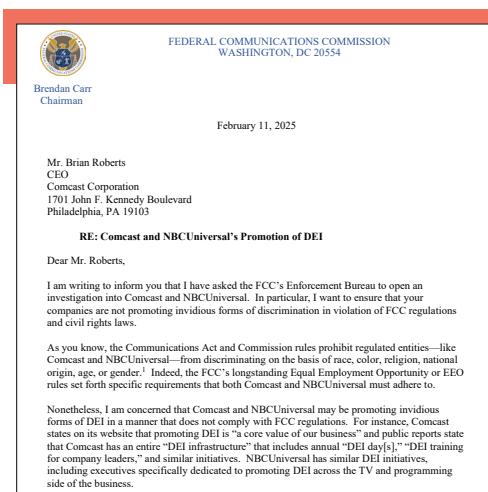
President Trump routinely directs FCC Chairman Brendan Carr to weaponize the FCC’s regulatory authority to attack diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives in media and telecommunications companies. Instead of preserving the agency’s independence and protecting the public interest, Carr’s FCC is doing Trump’s authoritarian bidding. Carr is playing a key role as Trump’s media extortionist, threatening and coercing media companies to become megaphones for the administration’s propaganda.<sup>151</sup>

As soon as Trump was elected to a second term, Carr went into attack mode. In November 2024, he sent a letter to the CEOs of Alphabet (Google), Apple, Meta and Microsoft in which he threatened to dismantle the companies for participating in a so-called “censorship cartel.”<sup>152</sup> Carr’s indignation is sleight-of-hand — an attempt to hide that the Trump regime is twisting the definition of free speech so it can police and censor dissent.



In January 2025, Carr opened an investigation into the underwriting practices of NPR and PBS. “I’m not sure I see a reason why the taxpayer should be forced to subsidize NPR and PBS,” he said.<sup>153, 154</sup>

Free Press Co-CEO Craig Aaron explains Carr’s move: “This unjustified investigation isn’t based on any genuine concern about whether there’s too much advertising on public media. It’s a blatant attempt to undermine independent, rigorous reporting on the Trump administration ... Communities all across the country rely on their local public radio and TV stations to provide trustworthy news reporting and a diversity of opinions.”<sup>155</sup>



In February and March, Carr threatened Comcast-owned NBCUniversal, Verizon and Disney with investigations into their DEI practices.<sup>156, 157, 158</sup>

“[Carr’s] attacks on diversity and inclusion programs at private companies are not only racist and sexist; they almost certainly are a dereliction of his duty to carry out the FCC’s mission,” said Free Press Co-CEO Jessica J. González.<sup>159</sup> Carr is abusing this power by threatening to withhold approval of mergers and acquisitions until companies toe the Trump line.

In a May 15 letter to the FCC, Verizon promised to end its DEI programs as it sought its merger approval with Frontier Communications.<sup>160</sup> The FCC approved this deal on May 16.<sup>161</sup> Chairman Carr pointed to Verizon’s “commitment to end” DEI practices as a key factor in this approval.

**verizon**

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Vandana Venkatesh  
EVP & Chief Legal Officer

May 15, 2025

The Honorable Brendan Carr  
Chairman  
Federal Communications Commission  
45 L Street, NE Washington, DC 20554

Re: W: Docket No. 24-445

Dear Chairman Carr:

We are responding to your letter of February 27, 2025, raising concerns with Verizon’s DEI practices. We appreciate the opportunity to share our thoughts and approach going forward.

Verizon has a long history of serving all members in the communities where we operate, which has been a competitive business advantage and enables long-term shareholder value. Delivering for customers requires attracting the best talent from across the country. We are committed to creating a culture that leverages and values each person’s unique strengths and talents. These values have been fundamental to our Verizon culture since our founding 25 years ago. However, we recognize that the regulatory and policy landscape surrounding diversity, equity, and inclusion (“DEI”) has changed. The Supreme Court, the President’s Executive Orders, and federal mandates require changes in the way companies approach DEI issues moving forward.

In response to this changing landscape, Verizon has been evaluating its DEI-related programs, HR processes, supplier programs, training programs and materials, and other initiatives. In doing so, Verizon recognizes that some DEI policies and practices could be associated with discrimination. For that reason, Verizon reaffirms its commitment to equal employment opportunity and nondiscrimination and is modifying its practices and **ending its DEI-related policies as described below**. **Verizon is making these changes to its practices not just in name or in the way they are described, but in substance.** These changes are effective immediately.

• **Changes to Leadership Structure and Job Functions:** Verizon is changing its HR structure and will no longer have a team or any individual roles focused on DEI. The small number of employees who had roles and responsibilities that included DEI will now focus on HR talent objectives.

**OFFICE OF CHAIRMAN BRENDAN CARR**

**FCC Approves Verizon-Frontier Merger**  
Deal Secures New Infrastructure Builds, Nondiscrimination, and Workforce Wins

WASHINGTON, May 16, 2025—Today, the FCC’s Wireline Competition Bureau approved Verizon’s \$20 billion acquisition of Frontier by granting a series of applications that transfer FCC licenses and authorizations.

**Chairman Carr issued the following statement:**

“By approving this deal, the FCC ensures that Americans will benefit from a series of good and common-sense wins. The transaction will unleash billions of dollars in new infrastructure builds in communities across the country—including rural America. This investment will accelerate the transition away from old, copper line networks to modern, high-speed ones. And it delivers for America’s tower and telecom crews who do the hard, often gritty work needed to build high-speed networks.”

**Secures New Infrastructure Builds and Investment for Rural America.** Approving this transaction allows Verizon to upgrade and expand Frontier’s existing network in 25 states, bringing more fiber to more communities. Verizon’s new fiber deployments will enable the retirement of old copper networks, ensuring that more communities benefit from advanced technologies. Following the transaction, Verizon expects to deploy fiber to 1 million or more American homes annually.

**Ensures that Discriminatory DEI Policies End.** **Verizon has also committed to ending DEI-related practices** as specified in the FCC’s record and has reaffirmed the merged entity’s commitment to equal opportunity and nondiscrimination. This will ensure that the combined business will enact policies and practices consistent with the law and the public interest.

**Delivers for America’s Workers.** Finally, this transaction delivers wins for America’s workers. Following its engagements with NATE, The Communications Infrastructure Contractors Association, Verizon made valuable commitments to America’s tower and telecom crews. These commitments remove costly burdens on this workforce and provide good-paying jobs for America’s workers while improving safety. A world-class wireless industry depends on having healthy companies that both construct and operate these networks. Verizon’s new commitments promote exactly that type of outcome.

##

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Carr claims that the FCC cannot approve any merger or acquisition if a company is “still promoting” DEI because then the transaction would not be in “the public interest” — a complete distortion of what it means to serve the public.<sup>162</sup> This strategy isn’t just dangerous; it’s arguably unconstitutional. As Free Press Vice President of Policy and General Counsel Matt Wood notes:

“We’re witnessing the spectacle of an FCC chairman — who once defended his agency’s independence from the White House when a Democrat was in charge — now gleefully carrying out the president’s orders to roll back civil-rights protections and equal-opportunity gains at all costs. For no other reason than overt racism and fake grievances, we have an administration that falsely cloaks itself in free speech telling American businesses what they can and cannot say.”<sup>163</sup>

# V. Conclusion

In many ways, Trump's anti-diversity, equity and inclusion executive orders form the foundation of his regime's efforts to dismantle our democracy. Outside of Trump and his enablers, no one is safe from attack. As long as white-supremacist structures persist and the media fail to resist, the attacks on our First Amendment rights will continue.

**DEI PROGRAMS AND INITIATIVES ARE NOT DISCRIMINATORY. THEY ARE AIMED AT CORRECTING OUR COUNTRY'S HISTORY OF DISCRIMINATION.**

Whether overtly folding their DEI programs and initiatives, covertly supporting the Trump regime in more indirect ways or deploying doublespeak to conceal their actions, media companies are fueling the Trump regime's white-supremacist agenda. Failing to serve as an essential check against tyranny, corporate players are increasingly serving as megaphones for the MAGA movement, putting vulnerable communities at greater risk of attack — and betraying our democratic values.

DEI programs and initiatives are not discriminatory. They are aimed at *correcting* our country's history of discrimination. And that's one of the many reasons why the companies' capitulations to the Trump administration are so insidious.

As Damon Hewitt, president and executive director of the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, notes, "Diversity, equity and inclusion is not illegal; it's not a 'favor.' In fact, diversity, equity and inclusion programs are really just ways for companies, workplaces, schools ... to comply with their federal and state civil-rights obligations. So, the question I have for so many of these groups that are dismantling their initiatives is: How are you going to comply now? ... Because the thing that hasn't changed is that you're still obligated ... By and large, the law hasn't changed much at all."<sup>164</sup>

The survival of our democracy requires collective action to push back against this dangerous corporate capitulation — we must fight for strengthened diversity, equity and inclusion in our media.

# VI. Methodology & Acknowledgements

Our findings accompany Free Press' Media Capitulation Index, which rates corporate media companies' capitulation to the Trump regime.<sup>165</sup> Free Press chose the 35 companies for review based on their market capitalization, national reach and influence.<sup>166</sup>

Free Press used textual analysis to complete the evaluation of whether and how companies have rolled back diversity, equity and inclusion policies and programs. We analyzed publicly available communications from websites, social-media posts, datasets, online newspapers, reports, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission documents, FCC letters and academic research.<sup>167</sup> Because this is a dynamic ecosystem, corporate moves are in constant flux.

Ruth Livier, Ph.D., is the lead author of this report. The development and production of this report could not have happened without support from Free Press colleagues Nora Benavidez, Jessica J. González, Timothy Karr and Derek Turner. This report was edited by Amy Kroin and designed by Courtney Morrison, also of Free Press. Julia Sorrenti of Neta Collab designed the front cover.

Free Press is a U.S.-based nonpartisan organization that defends free expression and press freedom and seeks to build the media and tech needed to achieve a multiracial democracy. Free Press believes that positive social change, racial justice and meaningful engagement in public life require equitable access to technology, diverse and independent ownership of media platforms, and journalism that holds leaders accountable and tells people what's actually happening in their communities. Free Press is a leader in the nationwide fight to protect free speech. Learn more at [freepress.net](http://freepress.net).

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# COMPLICIT

Corporate Media's Capitulation to Trump's Attacks  
on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion