



## **Statement in Support of Philadelphia Inquirer Journalists' Sick Out**

The Philadelphia Association of Black Journalists, the Asian American Journalists Association - Philadelphia, the National Association of Hispanic Journalists - Philadelphia, and Free Press stand in solidarity of the more than 40 *Philadelphia Inquirer* journalists who called in “sick and tired” today, in response to the outlet’s tone-deaf headline that crudely co-opted language that supports Black life and dignity.

In a moment of collective pain and community outrage over police violence, newsrooms management made the indefensible decision to allow the publication of a “Building Matters, Too” headline, an embarrassing move which has caused, yet again, irreparable harm toward the largest demographic in the city: the Black community.

It should go without saying, that Black lives matter more than buildings.

The headline sparked outrage within the newsroom, with Black journalists, journalists of color and their allies calling for a “sick and tired” day off as an act of protest to address ongoing internal abuse that they too often face from majority-white management. We commend these journalists taking action, risking their jobs in a moment of industry upheaval.

The courageous response by the *Inquirer's* journalists must be followed by clear internal and external policies and procedures from *Inquirer* management that go beyond the apology that was given to staff. Management must also conduct an honest assessment of the measures it needs to take to reform its newsroom practices and culture. Among many things, we believe the *Inquirer* must provide more support for journalists of color, listen to and respond to their concerns about bias and inequity inside the newsroom, consider changing how the newsroom relies on police narratives that often misrepresent or malign the Black community, seek to regain the public’s trust by hosting community listening sessions, and create mechanisms for meaningful external editorial oversight to ensure community information needs and perspectives are reflected in coverage.

We stand ready to support the wants and needs of these stalwart Black journalists and journalists of color who continue to fight for equity within their newsrooms, as well as ready to support our communities in their demand that local media be just, equitable, and responsive to their needs.

We are in a critical moment in history where the public needs the press to document, report and elevate issues that spotlight injustices and hold the powerful accountable. The important work of the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, though, will continue to be undermined if the public it serves cannot trust it to stand with them and its reporters of color in the struggle to create a more just and equitable world.