

Dear *Current Affairs* readers,

My name is Adrian Rennix. You may have read me in *Current Affairs* and heard me on the podcast under the name Brianna Rennix, where I have formally served as a masthead editor since around 2016-2017. (This wasn't particularly how I wanted to debut my name change, but oh well!) Although I am not a twitter guy and generally do not enjoy making a public spectacle of myself, I feel obligated to speak out regarding recent events at *Current Affairs*. My interest is in giving *Current Affairs* its best chance of surviving as an honest, transparent, worker-friendly socialist magazine of the kind our subscribers signed up for.

I have been a part of the magazine for almost as long as it's existed, give or take a few months. I was invited to write for *Current Affairs* by Nathan J. Robinson shortly after he and Oren Nimni co-founded the magazine. I began writing regular articles for the print and online editions, and later began regularly editing articles by outside contributors and assisting with various administrative tasks. This work was, initially, unpaid; I was later paid a quarterly stipend of (if I recall correctly) \$1500, which I stopped taking when I graduated from school and took a fulltime salaried job. All my writing and editing work for *Current Affairs* since 2018 has been unpaid—at my request, for reasons related to my school's student loan repayment policies. Throughout this time, up until these recent events, I was also Nathan's personal friend and co-wrote over a dozen articles with him on numerous topics, including a fun one called [Can Hierarchy Be Justified?](#) (At the time, Nathan and I both agreed it could not be.)

I have been present for and participated in virtually every interviewing and hiring cycle of *Current Affairs* employees since the magazine began. In the summer of 2021, I was also directly involved in crafting and conducting staff surveys and interviews to better understand the paid staff's and masthead editorial board's thoughts about how they would like organizational decisionmaking to be configured, as part of a long-running and long-delayed project—vocally endorsed by *all* members of *Current Affairs*, including Nathan—to make *Current Affairs* a functional democratic workspace in accordance with the magazine's socialist (sometimes articulated by Nathan himself as “libertarian socialist” or “anarcho-socialist”-leaning) values.

I also serve on the Board of Directors of *Current Affairs*, which has been a mostly ceremonial body up until now and consists of various members of the *Current Affairs* editorial masthead. I am writing here in my personal capacity and not on behalf of the Board.

On August 8, 2021, Nathan Robinson attempted to force the resignation of four *Current Affairs* paid staff members without warning or process and without consulting with any other person. They have written a letter [describing their recent experiences](#) at Nathan's hands. The events described in staff's letter are wholly accurate with respect to emails I have personally seen and conversations I have personally participated in, with both Nathan and the affected staff members.

Nathan then proceeded to [publish his own version of events](#) on August 20, 2021. I feel an obligation to correct numerous things in this statement that are not accurate with respect to my personal knowledge.

- (1) As of June 2021, Nathan vocally expressed full confidence in our business manager, Allegra. He stated that he felt no need to conduct a performance review before converting her to fulltime status because, in his view, she was so self-evidently doing a good job and was a good fit for the organization. Nathan now writes, bizarrely, that he asked her to resign because she did not “understand the core mission of the magazine, which is not to sell a magazine but to advance the left as a political movement,” but then also claims he asked her to resign because “she did not successfully improve the performance of the magazine” by raising subscription growth to the degree he wanted. It does not take logical genius to see that these statements are inconsistent.

At no point did Nathan ever express any concerns about the performance of the business manager before the Board or to any other fulltime staff members until she was scheduled to make a presentation to the company about possible restructuring models, which included a worker co-op. I will let Allegra’s colleagues, and the contributors and vendors with which she interacted, release whatever statements they wish about her job performance; my personal opinion is that she was doing an excellent job at the extremely difficult task of making a small socialist magazine run effectively, and that she greatly improved many long-running sources of frustration for *Current Affairs*’s editors and subscribers.

- (2) Nathan significantly misrepresents an internal organizational conversation about race and hiring. I was present for staff meetings where the most recent editorial hiring was debated, actively participated in three of these interviews, and reviewed and commented on videorecordings of the other two interviews conducted by staff. Prior to this hiring cycle, the staff, including Nathan, had agreed that they would jointly evaluate and vote democratically as a group on the new hire. (Before *Current Affairs* had a significant fulltime staff, we had an ad hoc system where the Board collectively voted on new hires, but we felt that it now made more sense for the fulltime staff to do so, since this person would be their new coworker with whom they would work closely). The staff agreed in advance upon a set of interviewing questions and editing tests that would be provided consistently to all candidates to assist in a fair evaluation.

Ultimately, there were four exceptional finalists in this hiring process: two of them were women of color, and two of them were white women. Early in the hiring process, Nathan identified a candidate he himself preferred, who was one of the women of color. He offered her detailed advice about her editing test by email in advance of her submission. When other staff members saw that these emails had only been sent to one candidate but not the other three (including the other woman of color), they felt that this had been unfair; Nathan’s advice also resulted in a submission that, while highly promising,

was significantly different in format from the other editing tests and thus hard to compare to the other frontrunners. As a result, when the final decision came down to two candidates—one of whom was Nathan’s preferred candidate—and the staff was divided between them, some staff members asked that an additional editing test be administered to both candidates, without any additional advice, in order to ensure fairness. I was present for the conversation where this measure was mutually agreed to by the group.

Nathan has selectively posted excerpts from conversations on the company slack, to which I no longer have access, in order to make it appear that members of the staff were not taking diversity seriously as a hiring component. The two finalist candidates under debate, both of whom were, again, exceptional, were a woman of color from a professional background who had become enthusiastically involved in left organizing, and a white woman who worked service jobs throughout her adult life and had recently organized her workplace to raise wages for her fellow-workers. At the staff meetings I was present for and participated in, all parties acknowledged that both candidates were exceptional and seriously discussed the value of race and class diversity for our organization, which has hitherto been majority white and overwhelmingly lawyers and graduate degree holders. Ultimately, the staff voted by a three-fourths majority for Nathan’s preferred candidate, whom I also personally believed was the best-qualified individual, although it was a very, very close call between two excellent people who both would have greatly enriched our organization.

- (3) Everyone at *Current Affairs*, including Nathan, has long stated that they wanted *Current Affairs* to be a democratic workplace. Our business manager, Allegra, was hired with that specific mandate—I can confirm this, because I was present at the final hiring interviews. Allegra’s first year was largely taken up with trying to improve *Current Affairs*’ dysfunctional internal processes so that magazines could actually be released on a reliable schedule (for the first time ever!) and trying to improve subscriptions and revenue during a broad left media slump caused by the pandemic and post-election malaise. She only had the chance to turn to the second part of her mission, our organizational restructuring, in the summer of 2021. I assisted in this process by helping craft and conduct surveys and one-on-one interviews with staff. Having spoken to people individually and seen the survey results, I can confirm that there continued to be universal concern about implementing functional, shared decisionmaking procedures, and a broad interest in worker ownership: the move toward a co-op was not a project being pushed by our business manager, but was a model being proposed because it was consistent with the data before us about the desires of *Current Affairs* staff and editors.

As of the time of the attempted firings conducted by Nathan, no actual decisions on organizational restructuring had been made: we were only beginning the conversation about possible workplace models. At a *Current Affairs* meeting, Allegra provided information about organizational possibilities, was highly open to and responsive to the group’s questions and concerns, and had gone out of her way to research and present

various points about nonprofit models that Nathan had suddenly raised several days in advance of the meeting.

Nathan has acknowledged in various private emails to staff that he in fact torpedoed these discussions because he did not want to have “meetings about meetings” and wanted to retain total control over an enterprise he viewed as “his,” even though he also admits he does not have the managerial skills to run such a top-down organization.

- (4) For all that Nathan now claims that he does not want total control and ownership over *Current Affairs* and wanted a board-owned nonprofit model for this reason, I would note that he did not consult a single board member about these attempted forced resignations and indeed obstructed all our efforts to reach out to him for conversations in advance of these actions. He subsequently has locked all board members out of the company slack, the *Current Affairs* website, and *Current Affairs* social media. Before the Board informed him that his attempted firings were invalid, he reached out behind our backs to offer our colleagues’ positions to other individuals that the staff had interviewed for the recent open editorial position, without telling them that he had purged the staff that had interviewed them. I have since heard from several people devastated to learn that these job offers were not real and upset about the conditions under which they were proffered.
- (5) For what it’s worth, although I am not a paid employee and my livelihood has not been impacted by these events, Nathan dissolved my masthead position and requested my resignation from the *Current Affairs* board of directors as soon as I spoke out against the firings on our company slack and told him I could not be associated with a company that fired workers without cause. I ultimately refused to comply with this resignation request because I realized that I had a duty to my colleagues and our subscribers to try to mitigate the damage caused by his actions.

I am deeply disappointed in Nathan’s behavior and his attempts to publicly obfuscate events in order to downplay the severity of his political hypocrisy and managerial ineptitude. Please do not contact me about doing press; my public engagement on this issue is limited to this statement.

Adrian Rennix