

We condemn CV Vitolo-Haddad's appropriation of Black and Brown identities in no uncertain terms. They have resigned as co-president, and we have removed their access to our website, social media, and all other internal accounts. We cannot speak for CV, but we as TAA leaders are profoundly sorry for the harm they have caused members of the Madison community by 1) claiming Black and Brown identities, 2) using those identities to silence and alienate activists in organizing spaces, and 3) manipulating and gaslighting Black and Brown community members who tried holding them accountable. The TAA enabled this harm by electing them to a position of power in our union: we have unknowingly rewarded the toxic opportunism of performing Blackness. We intend to immediately begin the work of repairing this harm.

Firstly, we cannot in good conscience invite community members to events organized in part by somebody who took advantage of them. We are discontinuing those actions which CV was directly involved in organizing, in particular a previously-unannounced September 10th action against UW's Racist Restart. We will continue to engage in planned actions to support racial justice and against the University's "Smart Restart," such as the #ScholarStrike, because this work is too important to let the actions of one individual reduce our collective power to make change for the University or the community at large. In re-affirming this, we also commit to talking with BIPOC community organizations that the TAA has previously partnered with to mend any harm we have facilitated in having worked with CV. We have already begun reaching out to these organizations.

We are accountable to you, and we will hold a town hall on Monday, 9/14 so we can answer members' questions face-to-face, process damage, work towards healing as a group, and collaboratively move forward as a stronger union, particularly in support of our members who are BIPOC. We encourage you to ask questions and voice your concerns on the call, but we also want you to have the chance to be heard right now. You can submit questions and comments in advance here: <https://forms.gle/yxz18eQJprrsJXNh8>

Longer-term, we recognize that structural failings within our union prevented us from hearing the perspectives of all our membership on the candidates during this past election; the process by which people join TAA leadership cannot be taken for granted as race-neutral. We commit to reforming the TAA's electoral process: going forward, we will host candidate forums for membership to publicly ask questions of the candidates, and we will create anonymous mechanisms for collecting feedback from our community about candidates. We are also resolved to amend our constitution to transfer the task of candidate recruitment to the elections committee (which currently only oversees the voting process). The elections committee is formed each year from the rank-and-file without current Executive Board members or candidates, and this change will democratize the labor while facilitating transparency.

There are, without question, further structural changes we must make to make our union safer and more welcoming for grads of color. We commit to devoting time this spring to an audit of the roles within and structure of our organization, so as to address barriers to BIPOC entry and participation in TAA leadership (including a further review of the elections process). We commit to identifying and adopting internal accountability measures that adhere to the restorative justice practices we believe in, ensuring members feel safe coming forward.

We are sorry that it has taken us so long to complete this letter of commitment. We have been having conversations non-stop and making decisions about race, language, process, and accountability that some of us are still in the process of educating ourselves about. We see clearly that further antiracist education for ourselves cannot wait because it directly impacts our work and our community. We commit to conducting a leadership retreat this spring with antiracist training for all TAA organizers, as well as any members who wish to participate.

As we said in our original statement, we are a democratically-run union, and our organizing work transcends the actions of any one person. Nevertheless, we recognize that our union is the product of a labor movement infused with white supremacy and anti-Blackness. We should already have taken many of the above steps, but we are committed to changing our organization for the better.

In solidarity,
TAA Executive Board & Racial Justice Committee