

Lady Justice Brewing - Response to May 25, 2023 meeting with Bob Pease

August 28, 2023

Members of the Lady Justice Brewing team (Alison Wisneski (she/her), Betsy Lay (she/her), Jess Burnett (she/her), and Meg Burless (they/them)) met with the President and CEO of the Brewers Association, Bob Pease, on Thursday, May 25, 2023. The meeting held at Lady Justice Brewing focused on the three questions laid out in our May 12 letter to the BA.

We also discussed a fourth topic arising from conversations with the Lady Justice Brewing staff regarding the inclusion and expansion of educational tracks and the BA's understanding of small brewery needs.

As follows, here is a truncated version of our discussion with Bob:

Topic 1 - The documented shortcomings of the BA in protecting members prior to arrival with actionable steps for our safety;

Bob shared that the decision to not make a statement regarding the safety and security of LGBTQIA+ members entering a state with the most anti-queer legislation in the United States to date was a decision made in part by the BA and in part by their communications and PR partner. They considered making a statement and chose not to. They assumed making a statement would bring more attention to the matter, making the event unsafe for everyone.

The Lady Justice Brewing team shared that we are not any less queer and therefore not any safer no matter what state we travel in. Moreover, we were not asking for the location to be changed. What we were asking for was for the BA to make a public statement on what exactly their plans for safety were, as their members and attendees were anxious for themselves and their teams. What we were wanting was an understanding of who we could go to if there were an emergency (including if attendees received harassment, anti-queer language, etc.), a clear explanation of maps of the location we were going to be, and any other information regarding what the BA was providing to their dues-paying members in a state hostile to LGBTQIA+ people.

In response to these clarifications, Bob shared that the "Not Me" app was ready to be utilized in case of an emergency, and could be used to report more than just sexual assault. He shared that they made the Not Me app available for download on the back of attendee's name tags. We shared that the education for the use of the app was not made clear or widespread, and more education surrounding what the app is used for, along with a clear understanding of how to identify BA staff when needed alongside event staff for safety, is necessary for future BA gatherings. An example shared was how easy it is to spot Great American Beer Fest (GABF) volunteers by their shirts and lanyards - why is this not also the case for other BA gatherings?

We also communicated that we would like to see more thorough and clear safety plans, including education and encouragement of use for the "Not Me" app, by GABF 2023. This education can include social media posts, emails, and large posters with clear explanations for all attendees.

Topic 2- The BA's selection of featured speakers, some of whom the BA allowed to bypass the approval process that is mandated for everyone else;

Bob shared that he, along with executive-level leadership of the BA, approved Sarah Bettman's talk, "Privilege as Your Leadership Superpower." He shared that Bettman approached the BA requesting to give the talk and that members of executive leadership approved the talk without running it past their in-house DEI committee. He also shared that Bettman did not go through the traditional approval process.

Bob shared that he has received overall positive feedback on Bettman's talk. We shared that within our circles and understanding, this was not the case. We asked why a straight, white woman was selected to give a talk on DEI topics without proper vetting or co-presentation with someone from the communities she was actively speaking about in her presentation. Bob shared that he had hoped that her approach and the grabby title may attract a larger audience, opening the door to a DEI conversation. We shared that this approach was harmful to the many communities left out of the conversation; in other words, the BA's actions had the opposite effect of their intentions.

Bob justified his choice of a straight white woman giving a DEI presentation over an individual of color because he believed it would be a more approachable exposure to DEI topics for the typical white, straight man in the brewing industry. We expressed that is an unacceptable justification and that it further revealed the need for increased diversity at the leadership level of the BA.

When asked during her presentation Q&A why she felt qualified to speak on the subject, Bettman responded by saying A - she was a woman who worked with all men in a firehouse, and B - if she were speaking on a panel and noticed a Black woman wasn't in the room, she'd give up her seat for her. She did not say why she did not include any BIPOC speakers in the presentation she pitched to the BA.

Moving forward, Lady Justice Brewing has requested that all speakers, whether approached by the BA to present or applying to speak via the traditional channels, must all go through the exact same rigorous process of multiple checks of their presentation. Further, all presentations must go through the DEI committee to ensure that they are truly inclusive, and not utilizing harmful language against any communities in conference attendance.

Topic 3 - The BA's continued allowance of breweries with documented histories of abuse, assault, and racism, as entrants of the World Beer Cup and as dues-paying BA Members..

We shared with Bob that the BA's continued support and sharing of accolades to breweries with documented histories and lack of accountability for abuse and bigotry is at odds with the BA's stated values and code of conduct. Bob shared that he supports the removal from the BA of companies that fail to uphold these standards; however, issues must be raised through official channels, which include reporting breweries through the BA's Code of Conduct Complaint Process (available on their website). He mentioned that the BA has not received complaints from affected individuals concerning companies with these histories.

Additional issues identified at the meeting: The discussion with Bob concerning our three main bullet points naturally flowed into focusing on the BA's lack of inclusion of smaller-scale breweries. According to Bob, the average BA member produces 600 barrels or less a year. Yet, the majority of educational material and programming provided through the different tracks at CBC focused on breweries with a much higher output. Acknowledging a majority of BA membership is under 1,000 barrels a year would lead to greater inclusion of more relevant education to a majority of membership. We suggest that the BA add an educational track at CBC specifically for the average BA member, a "Small Brewery" track. We don't want to reinvent the wheel—we want to be included in this space where we are dues-paying members so that we can learn from larger operations that have resources we don't. The BA should support the small brewery that wants to become the next big brewery, as well as the small brewery that is happiest with a small footprint in their community. Only focusing on companies producing large barrelage does not help small breweries - the average BA member - to reach their full potential.

We recommend that anyone who has experienced harm by a member of the BA reports their experiences to the BA through the BA's Code of Conduct Complaint Process if they feel comfortable in doing so. We also call on the leadership of the BA to examine their reporting processes for opportunities to increase access and safety for individuals looking to report harmful behavior.

In summary, we hope, and requested, to have additional in-person discussions on these points with BA leadership. Bob shared that our team is welcome to visit the BA Headquarters to discuss our first letter as well as this response and we look forward to doing so in the near future. As always, we will share outcomes from the discussions after they happen and our team has taken the time to discuss next steps.

-The Lady Justice Brewing Leadership Team