

Opening statement for contract bargaining session between the Pacific Media Workers Guild  
and the San Francisco Chronicle/Hearst, Aug. 23, 2021

Presented by Tal Kopan, bargaining committee member

Before we get started, we wanted to address the tone and tenor of this process even as it has just begun. We feel the process has already entered an antagonistic territory that we view as counterproductive and disheartening.

We do not see bargaining as an adversarial process by default. Of course, there will be areas where there will be disagreement, but we believe there are many areas where the company's interests and the employees' interests align and the contract can be built collaboratively.

Unfortunately, we have been dismayed by the tone of this process thus far by the company. Several communications sent to all employees we have felt have been gratuitously disparaging toward the Guild, portraying its members as serving some outside interest. We wanted to again emphasize, each of us are the employees of The Chronicle.

- I am the D.C. correspondent and a senior political reporter.
- Lauren Hernandez is a breaking news reporter.
- Caroline Grannan is a copy editor.
- Todd Trumbull is a graphic artist.
- Shwanika Narayan is a race and equity/business reporter.
- Mike Cabanatuan is a breaking news and general assignment reporter.
- Sarah Ravani, who is taking a pause from the committee to teach a journalism class at Berkeley, is the East Bay reporter.

All of us love the newspaper, work every day to make it great, and want it to be a place where people feel welcomed and supported to work for a long time. When we come to this (virtual) table, there is no outside interest to support, we are only representing ourselves and our colleagues, with whom we regularly communicate. We are the Guild. The Guild is us.

Not only have communications to all employees been antagonistic toward the Guild, but there have also been times where those communications responded to a good-faith request or statement by the Guild without actually directly interacting with the Guild. We see no purpose or productivity in such tactics, other than to attempt to minimize or sideline the Guild.

It is difficult for our Guild members and us as employees to believe the company when it says it has its employees' well-being at heart when it acts with such hostility toward us as we engage in our legally protected right to collectively engage with the company.

We believe it would be beneficial for the Guild, who serves employees' representative, to have a direct line of dialogue with the newsroom's top management as well as with HR and the company's attorneys, as a way of ensuring that communication through third parties is not obscuring where we are in alignment and can work together to address quotidian issues. We are asking that the Labor/Management Committee called for in the contract be swiftly

established, and that it include top newsroom leadership directly. As the contract states, we hope that the committee can “promote more harmonious working relationships.”

And we hope that going forward, we can both approach this process as an opportunity to work together collaboratively and respectfully, rather than introduce hostility. We hope you’ll take these concerns as they’re meant -- a heartfelt expression of hope that this process can be its most productive. We look forward to establishing our joint committee and continuing with bargaining today.