

Recording Academy Diversity Task Force Issues Blistering Statement in Wake of Deborah Dugan Allegations

 [billboard.com/articles/business/8548919/recording-academy-diversity-task-force-statement-deborah-dugan](https://www.billboard.com/articles/business/8548919/recording-academy-diversity-task-force-statement-deborah-dugan)

The group is calling on the organization's board of trustees to implement 'systemic changes.'

With multiple allegations of sexual harassment and discrimination leveled by Recording Academy president and CEO **Deborah Dugan** this week sending shockwaves through the industry, the Recording Academy Task Force on Diversity and Inclusion has issued a scathing statement calling on the organization's board of trustees to step up.

"As representatives from across the music community serving on the Recording Academy Task Force on Diversity and Inclusion, we want to speak in our own voice about our shock and dismay at the allegations surrounding the Recording Academy and its leadership that surfaced this week," the statement begins. The task force goes on to urge the trustees to implement all 18 "systemic changes" outlined in the 47-page report it issued in December, with the goal of improving diversity and inclusion at the academy and across the industry.

The charges by Dugan, the statement continues, "reinforce just how important and urgent it is that the Academy implement all of the changes in the report that we delivered -- without any delay." The statement goes on to highlight several of the proposed recommendations, including more diverse academy committees, with equal numbers of women and men; implementing ranked-choice voting for the "Big Four" Grammy categories; changing the board of trustees election system to make it more diverse and inclusive; hiring a dedicated diversity and inclusion officer at the executive level; and hiring an independent outside advisor to ensure the academy has a "compliant and inclusive workplace culture."

"The Academy's Board of Trustees and leadership must immediately commit themselves to real reform, take concrete steps to implement all of the Task Force reforms, and transparently and regularly report on their progress -- including transparently reporting on the pending investigations they have announced are underway," it reads, noting it expects to hear progress from the academy when the task force reconvenes in 90 days' time.

Chaired by Time's Up president and CEO **Tina Tchen**, the Recording Academy Task Force on Diversity and Inclusion is comprised of Universal Music Group Nashville's **Stephanie Alexa**; Universal Music Group's **Michele Anthony**; songwriter-producer **Shakari Boles**; country singer Cam; rapper Common; singer Andra Day; TV journalist **Giselle Fernandez**; songwriter, producer and artist **Jimmy Jam**; Creative Nation CEO **Beth Laird**; BET chairwoman **Debra Lee**; Lionfish CEO **Rebeca Leon**; ASCAP CEO **Elisabeth Matthews**; USC Annenberg Inclusion Initiative

founder and director **Dr. Stacy Smith**; Friends at Work founder and CEO **Ty Stiklorius**; Sony Music's **Julie Swidler**; Seven20 CEO **Dean Wilson**; and Women's Audio Mission executive director **Terri Winston**.

Read the full statement below.

As representatives from across the music community serving on the Recording Academy Task Force on Diversity and Inclusion, we want to speak in our own voice about our shock and dismay at the allegations surrounding the Recording Academy and its leadership that surfaced this week.

Our Task Force devoted the last year and a half to determining ways of making this industry we love more inclusive and representative of all of our voices. On December 12, 2019, we issued a 47-page report, setting out 18 systemic changes we determined were needed to improve diversity and inclusion at the Academy, and drive constructive change across the music industry.

These new charges reinforce just how important and urgent it is that the Academy implement all of the changes in the report that we delivered -- without any delay.

The Academy's Board of Trustees and leadership must immediately commit themselves to real reform, take concrete steps to implement all of the Task Force reforms, and transparently and regularly report on their progress -- including transparently reporting on the pending investigations they have announced are underway. The Task Force will be reconvening in 90 days and expects to hear progress from the Academy by that time.

To reiterate, among the recommendations outlined in our report are calls for:

- *Ensuring that all committees of the Academy, including nominations committees, are diverse, with equal representation of men and women -- an area where progress achieved last year was eroded in this year's appointments;*
- *Implementing ranked-choice voting at both the nominating committee and final ballot stages for the Big Four award categories (Record of the Year, Album of the Year, Song of the Year, and Best New Artist), which we believe would be a more fair and representative way to decide among a large group of nominees;*
- *Changing the Board of Trustees election system so that the leadership of the Academy will be more diverse and inclusive. While the Academy announced a partial implementation of our recommendation last month, it does not go far enough;*
- *Hiring a dedicated Diversity and Inclusion Officer at the executive level to lead the deeper changes that are obviously needed; and*
- *Hiring an independent outside advisor to conduct a review of all policies to ensure the Academy has a compliant and inclusive workplace culture.*

To be clear, these are changes that need to be made at the highest levels and institutionalized so that they outlast any single leader.

While we understand there are ongoing investigations about the issues raised over the last week, our experience and research tells us that if the Academy leadership, its staff, and the nominating committees that govern the Awards were more diverse and inclusive, there would be better processes for resolving problems and more trust in the Academy as a whole. Those seeking to make such reforms need to be supported, not impeded.

Change is hard. It won't be easy to make these changes. But we are deeply disappointed at the level of commitment by some of the Academy's leadership in effecting the kind of real and constructive change presented in our report. We are confident that they can do better.

Music has historically catalyzed and galvanized mass social change. And so it must again. Now.

