

October 29, 2020

Fellow Sommeliers –

The Court of Master Sommeliers, Americas and the current Board of Directors appreciate the courage it takes to step forward when someone's conduct fails to live up to the principles of common courtesy and professionalism. Every person should feel safe and valued at all times, and the current CMS-A Board of Directors is actively working to make the organization a more respectful and inclusive space with the highest standards of professional conduct and integrity.

Humble hospitality is at the core of being a sommelier, and it is one of the cornerstone values of our organization. All members of our community deserve to be educated and have an examination experience that is free of marginalization or inappropriate conduct by any individual. The Court of Master Sommeliers, Americas does not condone the actions of any individuals described in the recent New York Times article. This Board upholds any discipline already handed down and will investigate all accusations outlined in the article. The Court of Master Sommeliers, Americas is committed to receiving, investigating, and resolving all instances of misconduct involving the organization.

The Court of Master Sommeliers, Americas wishes to make it clear that GuildSomm and CMS-A are separate, unrelated entities. GuildSomm is not the education arm of the CMS-A, and Geoff Kruth is not a leading educator for the CMS-A.

We were disheartened to hear that candidates and students in our community felt powerless to speak up, and we are making strides to address this power dynamic and offer a safe way to report misconduct without fear of retribution. The organization has created a formalized process for reporting ethical issues and concerns regarding our CMS-A programming. We encourage every individual to utilize this formal process, so that we may receive the information first-hand, properly investigate, and resolve any inappropriate conduct, in order to help make our organization, community, and industry a safer place for all.

The current Board has taken great strides to ensure merit and professionalism are the only aspects by which members and candidates are judged. All of our decisions have reflected this, and this Board continues to evolve while maintaining the integrity and rigor of our world-class education and examinations. The Court of Master Sommeliers, Americas is taking the steps to even the playing field and create a safe space for every individual to perform at their highest potential without fear of discrimination or favoritism.

The Court of Master Sommeliers, Americas has refined existing protocols and created new resources for addressing misconduct within our organization and our community. To date, the current Board of Directors has taken the following steps:

- **Ethics Committee:** The organization has a standard procedure for addressing complaints about professional conduct. If a specific complaint regarding a member’s conduct is brought to the Board, an Ethics Committee of unbiased members is convened to determine the facts, and the Board takes appropriate disciplinary action dependent upon the findings. Our Ethics Committee has been revised to more evenly represent all interests of our membership.
- **Diversity Committee:** The Court of Master Sommeliers, Americas created a Diversity Committee, to give underrepresented voices a platform and further the mission of opening up our organization, the sommelier community, and the hospitality industry to be more reflective of society as a whole.
- **Ethics Reporting Hotline:** A 24-hour, toll-free ethics reporting hotline has been established for members and students to report harassment, discrimination, workplace misconduct, unsafe working conditions and other ethical or criminal violations. The anonymous hotline is operated by third-party provider, Lighthouse Services. The ethics reporting line information can be found on the CMS-A website [HERE](#), and English speakers in the USA and Canada can call 833-373-0329 directly. Additional numbers for French and Spanish speakers in Mexico and Canada can be found on the CMS-A website.
- **Mandatory Traliant Suite of Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity Trainings:** Moving forward, all Master Sommeliers who teach or proctor examinations at any level of the organization will meet the Court of Master Sommeliers, Americas’ new requirements regarding mandatory training for diversity and sexual harassment. The online trainings are administered by Traliant, a compliance training company. The Diversity training suite includes workplace diversity, inclusion and sensitivity, unconscious bias, and microaggressions in the workplace. The Sexual Harassment training includes a module on preventing discrimination and harassment.
- **Implicit Bias and Racial Equity Workshop and Training:** In August 2020, the CMS-A offered and over 90% of the membership participated in an Implicit Bias and Racial Equity Workshop led by Azure Antoinette.
- **Digital Suggestion Box:** For those wishing to provide feedback that are not ethics related, The Court of Master Sommeliers, Americas has also established a digital suggestion box via third party provider, Lighthouse Services. The suggestion box can be found on the CMS-A website [HERE](#).

Racism, sexism, or any other form of discrimination has no place within the Court of Master Sommeliers, Americas, nor the hospitality industry as a whole. This Board applauds the courage of those who have spoken up, as it shines a light on an area where we can hold our members more accountable to the mission of excellence in hospitality to which we aspire.

As a merit-based organization, the Court of Master Sommeliers, Americas prides itself on integrity, service, and professionalism. This Board is continually evaluating additional resources that will be of service to our members and our community at large, in an effort to make the hospitality industry a more welcoming, diverse, and safe place for all people.

Any media inquiries can be directed to Magrino PR at [CourtMasterSommeliers@magrinopr.com](mailto:CourtMasterSommeliers@magrinopr.com). Any general inquiries can be directed to Executive Director Kathleen Lewis at [kLewis@mastersommeliers.org](mailto:kLewis@mastersommeliers.org).

With Gratitude,



Devon Broglie, MS  
Chairman of the Board  
Court of Master Sommeliers, Americas



***The Court of Master Sommeliers sets the global standard of excellence for beverage service within the hospitality industry with integrity, exemplary knowledge, and humility.***