

March 12, 2021

To our community –

Thank you all for taking the time to join us, ask questions, and provide feedback during our Listening Session: Diversity in The Industry last week. The Board and our Membership strongly believe this series of sessions is a great start to give you, our constituents, an opportunity to play an active role in our evolution as an organization.

In case you were not able to join us, or if you would like to revisit our conversation from the conversation, we've outlined the top three topics covered below. Please note that other topics were discussed, but we wanted to give you a synopsis of those we discussed the most.

Stay tuned for details about the Court of Master Sommeliers, Americas' next Listening Session: Somm Moms, taking place virtually on Monday, March 29 at 2:00 PM Pacific. Along with Master Sommeliers Rebecca Fineman, Sara Floyd, and Jennifer Huether we will have three guest Somm Moms on the panel. You can register in advance for the Zoom meeting by using this [LISTENING SESSION LINK](#).

Listening Session: Diversity in The Industry Topics Recap

Overview of Diversity Committee Purpose and Progress

Purpose: We exist to make wine education more accessible and inclusive of underrepresented communities, so that the Court of Master Sommeliers can inspire a new generation of wine professionals.

Progress:

- 100 Scholarships for BIPOC, Women and those suffering from financial hardships
- Lobbied for updated board eligibility
- Hosted candidate town halls
- Introduction of Non Discrimination Policy
- Introduction of Anti Racism Pledge
- Amplifying voices with IG Live Take Overs

1. **Introducing CMS-A Non-Discrimination Policy and Anti-Racism Pledge from Our Diversity Committee:** Since its inception, the Diversity Committee has been striving to help make our organization a safer and more inclusive space for underrepresented communities within the wine industry. One of the key milestones on this journey is the introduction of our Non-Discrimination Policy and our Anti-Racism Pledge. These were inspired by similar work by other universities and organizations such as the Girl Scouts of America, UNC Charlotte, and Oregon Wine to name a few.

These statements were drafted by the Diversity Committee with feedback from all our BIPOC, Female and LGBTQ+ members of CMS-A and external DEIB experts. This past week the board voted with unanimous consent to adopt these policies on behalf of our organization.

The NDP will be incorporated into the application for anyone partaking in any CMS-A exams or courses going forward. These will also be incorporated into the work our Ethics Committee which is

centered around building a healthy foundation for communication, accountability, and transparency within the CMS-A. We are excited to share these with the industry at large.

To read our full Non-Discrimination Policy and Anti-Racism Pledge, please visit:

<https://bit.ly/3qokx1z>

2. **Continued Use of The Term “Master Sommelier:”** It is absolutely valid and legitimate to feel that the term master sommelier is uncomfortable, even offensive. Instead, we take a different approach, that it’s a positive thing for words to have multiple meanings to different people. If we were to step back and look for a guiding principle in all of this, it would be that the opposite of diversity is purity, so its problematic to think that all thinking the same way- a purity of ideas- makes us better. A purity of ideas doesn’t develop the skills we need to be a diverse community. We worry that changing the term “Master Sommelier” would reinforce the idea that we’re better as a community if we all pretend that individual contexts aren’t diverse or that they don’t matter. This means CMS-A has to be absolutely clear that when we use the word Master Sommelier, we don’t leave any room for doubt that there are no racial tones in our meaning. Again, this is why our anti-racism commitment and the actions we’re pledging to take, are important for us to be able to use the term Master Sommelier, and only use it to mean that we expect our members to display the highest levels of acumen over the subject of beverage hospitality.

3. **Examinations and Programs in Other Languages:** We are beginning our process of incorporating other languages and further including other CMS regions in our examination and program plans. While talks of collaborating more closely with CMS-EU are underway, we also plan on translating our upcoming Online Introductory Sommelier courses and examinations after the initial English-only launch. Because filming, translation, and COVID restrictions that make these processes a bit more difficult take time, please be patient with us as we continue to grow these additional offerings!

We won’t stop listening. Please do not hesitate to reach out to us either by emailing listening@mastersommeliers.org or visiting the CMS-A [website](#) for panelist contact information.

Yours In Service,

Emily Wines, MS
Chair, Court of Master Sommeliers, Americas

Kathryn Morgan, MS
Vice Chair, Court of Master Sommeliers, Americas

Christopher Bates, MS	Joshua Nadel, MS
Robert Bigelow, MS	Sabato Sagaria, MS
Brahm Callahan, MS	Mia Van de Water, MS
Keith Goldston, MS	David Yoshida, MS
Michael Meagher, MS	