

Writers Guild of America, East

250 Hudson Street
New York, NY 10013

T. 212.767.7800
F. 212.582.1909
www.wgaeast.org



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Dear Brent,

Over the past several months we have met with hundreds of freelance producers and associate producers who have worked on shows for Leftfield Entertainment. The overwhelming majority of them have indicated to us that they would like our assistance in helping them form a union and bargain a contract with Leftfield. A collective bargaining agreement at Leftfield could address some of their concerns, but also could help Leftfield set a positive example for the industry and become a model for workplace standards.

The Writers Guild of America, East has represented professionals in the television industry for as long as there has been one. We represent writers, producers, showrunners, executive producers. We are proud to count current industry executives among our past and present membership. We understand and are sympathetic to the pressures your company faces in this marketplace. It is our responsibility as union leaders to help unionized companies succeed, and along with them our union members. To that end we are sure you will find the WGAE as sympathetic and collaborative partners, open-minded and imaginative at the bargaining table. What we bring to the table in representing your producers and associate producers is a willingness to think creatively about solutions to the problems that your employees face. We believe that is precisely why your employees and many other non-fiction producers and associate producers like them are choosing our union to organize with us - because we are forward-thinking and willing to help them build up a union that is unique to their industry and circumstances.

The producers and associate producers have indicated to us that many of the issues they face are not unique to Leftfield, but are endemic to the entire nonfiction industry. Our union is committed to industry-wide change, not just creating a union island in a vast non-union sea. We don't think Leftfield bears the burden of fixing the problems freelancers face all alone. But in order to fix those problems, we must build the union shop-by-shop. Hopefully we can both address issues producers and associate producers at Leftfield have, while at the same time exporting Leftfield's best practices throughout the industry.

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Assistant Executive Director

Many of your employees have indicated to us that they fear reprisals for their support for a union. They are concerned that you will put pressure on them to influence their vote or that you may choose not to hire people back who support unionization. I would assume that those fears are without merit, but I would hope you could demonstrate to your freelancers your respect for their right to make this decision among themselves, free of any interference or influence, by agreeing to be neutral. Several other media companies who have unionized in the past few months have all agreed to neutrality and to honor whatever path their employees chose. I hope you will make a similar commitment.

In all likelihood we will soon be sitting across the bargaining table from one another, laying the foundation for what will hopefully be a long, fruitful and mutually beneficial relationship between Leftfield and their freelance producers and associate producers. Why not start now on defining that relationship as one of mutual respect, a willingness to understand the other side, and openness?

I look forward to hearing from you.

Lowell Peterson
Executive Director
Writers Guild of America, East
212 767 7828
lpeterson@wgaeast.org