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For immediate release  
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## **Scholastic journalism organizations support essential coverage of Black Lives Matter movement**

Faced with unprecedented challenges this year, student journalists across the country have demonstrated remarkable fidelity in practicing the journalistic process.

As professional news organizations model daily, reporting on newsworthy events is the duty of any media outlet. Scholastic media programs hold themselves to the same standard. Working to produce a yearbook, in particular, requires journalism students to apply skills in reporting and writing, photography and graphic design as they demonstrate news judgment to plan and produce a one-time product. Unlike other media, its cycle follows a single print and distribution model, and because of that permanence students hold themselves to the highest standard. In a sense, the book is the ultimate formative assessment of the educational experience. Students' efforts in creating and producing the yearbook represent the highest levels of thinking and knowledge augmentation.

We commend student media programs and their advisers for their outstanding work in the 2020-21 school year. As the national education dialogue focuses on learning loss due to the pandemic and a perceived skills gap, the yearbook delivery season shows the opposite.

We find it especially concerning then, to discover racist accounts of censorship, punishment and retaliation due to journalistic reporting of Black Lives Matter activities in 2021 yearbooks.

Yearbooks have a specific mission: to cover all newsworthy stories from the year to create an archival record of events. The coverage must follow the journalistic process to document those events accurately and responsibly. To ignore historic and important topics would betray the very principles of journalism.

Racism in our communities and the fight against it is a newsworthy topic by any journalistic standard and should be included in all yearbooks around the country. Including it is not a political decision or a matter of viewpoint but rather an application of news values students learn in every introductory journalism course.

Documenting history with carefully planned and executed visual and verbal coverage demonstrates industry-standard practices like that of professional media outlets. Site administrators, school board officials and parents should take pride in this evidence of career readiness and real-world critical thinking. Yearbook coverage first and foremost provides a historical record of the year for the student body, but it also provides the perfect assessment of journalism students' growth and development as learners. In other words, yearbook coverage of the true stories of 2020-21 like Black Lives Matter demonstrations proves students met their learning objectives.

The value of the student media experience is in the opportunity for students to be critical thinkers, truth tellers and decision makers as they develop a student-centered voice for their school community.

We stand behind the work of student journalists who have made the right decision to report on prominent events from the year, including Black Lives Matter.



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Participating organizations' officers

*Kelly Glasscock*

JEA Executive Director Kelly Glasscock, CJE

*Sarah Nichols, MJE*

JEA President Sarah Nichols, MJE

*Laura Widmer*

NSPA Executive Director Laura Widmer

*Hadar Harris*

SPLC Executive Director Hadar Harris



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**Student Press Law Center**

<https://splc.org/>

Since 1974, the Student Press Law Center has worked to support, promote and defend the First Amendment and freedom of expression rights of student journalists at the high school and college level, and the advisers who support them. Working at the intersection of law, journalism and education, SPLC runs the nation's only free legal hotline for student journalists. SPLC is an independent, non-profit 501(c)(3) organization based in Washington, D.C.

**Journalism Education Association**

<http://www.JEA.org>

Founded in 1924, JEA supports free and responsible scholastic journalism by providing resources and educational opportunities, promoting professionalism, encouraging and rewarding student excellence and teacher achievement, and an atmosphere which encompasses diversity yet builds unity. It is headquartered at Kansas State University, Manhattan, Kansas.

**National Scholastic Press Association**

<http://studentpress.org/nspace>

National Scholastic Press Association, based and incorporated in Minnesota as a non-profit educational association, provides journalism education services to students, teachers, media advisers and others throughout the United States and in other countries. It was founded in 1921.