

May 10th, 2019

Dear Emily,

Thank you for your letter, which I received via Duncan Ranslem on March 28th, 2019. I realize that it must have been difficult to write, and I appreciate your willingness to raise difficult issues, as well as your constructive approach to the conversation that we had on April 3rd.

I apologize for anything that I said to you after the publishing event in September 2018 that you regard as inappropriate, or that resulted in the reactions that you describe. Although our recollections of that conversation differ in important respects, I understand your concerns about workplace power dynamics, both in and out of the office, and I think it's good for Verso that you have raised these questions.

I did not say anything to the effect of the line that you put in quotes, which in all honesty does not sound like something I would ever say. I do realize, however, that I may sometimes miss aspects or interpretations of conversations that are affected or structured by workplace relations or positions. It is only through raising these questions that we can develop better practices and policies as a workplace.

I would like to assure you that your hiring and professional development was and will continue to be carried out in accordance with our policies. The decision to hire you was made by your colleagues in the publicity and marketing department, which I approved after reviewing their assessment of your potential as a publicist. Your annual reviews and promotions, which are undertaken with Anne Rumberger and the shop steward present, are and will always be based on your professional record, which includes feedback from your colleagues.

Before you started at Verso, the Brooklyn office collectively negotiated and agreed the staff guide and appointed a shop steward. In part, this was to address questions and concerns that employees had about reviews and promotions, hiring and firing, and how to handle disciplinary procedures, grievances, and cases of harassment, bullying, or discrimination. One aim was to agree on a set of parameters for management approaches in those situations, in line with best practices elsewhere. I have supported this workplace process throughout, and I'm committed to ensuring that Verso operates to high standards as an employer, with inclusive and democratic processes.

Verso's workplace policies are and should be living documents: they were collectively negotiated and have since been collectively amended. They would no doubt benefit from further discussion and elaboration. As I said on April 3rd, I think that you have identified some areas that could be improved, and I appreciate your efforts to do so. I'm sure that Verso would benefit from hearing and discussing your views. To this end, with your agreement, I would be happy to participate in an office- or company-wide discussion of any of these issues. Please let me know if this is something you would be comfortable with, and of course we can discuss it further with Duncan if you'd like.

I hope that this letter addresses all of your questions and concerns, and I look forward to working with you on Verso's forthcoming books.

Best wishes,

Jacob