

TexasMonthly

A Note to Readers

Political and longform journalism are central to our past, and our future

Yesterday, the esteemed *Columbia Journalism Review* published an article asserting that *Texas Monthly* was heading in a new direction, elevating lifestyle coverage and backing away from politics and longform journalism. The news ricocheted across social media, and it brought many a heart rate soaring up, mine included. In speaking about *Texas Monthly's* online coverage, I made a comment about the relative emphasis we have placed on news and politics versus lifestyle and longform. In making this comment, I unfortunately gave the CJR the wrong impression.

Let me first say that I know Texans care about politics, and deeply, especially in these times. Let me also say that I am committed to covering politics, as *Texas Monthly* has done since its inception, and to uphold its tradition of longform journalism. What I was trying to point out is that there is much more to the Texas identity. As a general interest magazine, *Texas Monthly's* coverage—online and in print—must be unique and that in the age of quality online journalism there are other outfits better equipped to cover the daily ins and outs of our political process, such as how a proposed bill makes its way through the Legislature. *Texas Monthly*, by contrast, must play the role it always has: evaluate that bill on its merits, and consider its potential impact on the state, for a general audience. It is also the case that on the web, where we already dedicate significant time and energy to news and politics, there is much more that the magazine can do that will make us more interesting to more Texans. Texans care about politics, yes, but they also want to know about barbecue. And lifestyle. And music. And football.

I have loved *Texas Monthly* since I was a junior in college. It was the magazine that made me realize what journalism could do and be for a community. The way it trained a careful and scrutinizing eye on Texas political figures and explored the public policy questions facing our state helped me see that smart reporting and beautiful storytelling could change lives. It could also be a ton of fun. After interning at *Texas Monthly* and seeing what went into making a great magazine, it became my dream to one day work here and carry on a tradition I deeply admired. *Texas Monthly* has a long, rich history of investigating and holding those in power accountable, and that history must continue. Do I think Bum Steers and Ten Best & Ten Worst Legislators could be freshened? Yes. But I have no intention of softening the magazine's attention on the people who affect the lives of Texans.

One of my all-time favorite *Texas Monthly* stories is "Mothers, Sisters, Daughters, Wives" by Mimi Swartz. The story explored the contentious 2011 legislative session that resulted in new restrictions for those seeking abortions, and it won a National Magazine Award for its attention on women's health issues. Pamela Colloff has thoughtfully explored the criminal justice system's injustices and, in so doing, become one of the country's most celebrated narrative practitioners. Michael Hall's upcoming story on former death row convict Kerry Max Cook, set to appear in the

April issue, is a must-read for anyone who relishes a complicated and nuanced story well told. I have no intention of putting an end to this kind of journalism. In fact, I want more of it, in the magazine and on the web. Two months' into this job, I have come to see even more clearly just how great the work done at *Texas Monthly* is, and the vital role the magazine plays in challenging our readers to live up to the promise of Texas.

It is also the case that *Texas Monthly* can and should continue to modernize. The state has changed enormously, and we must now appeal to you on many platforms and from many perspectives. Our journalism has to be reliable, whether we are telling you about backroom dealing, corporate intrigue, or the best restaurant in El Paso. You can count on the magazine to do so. It is what has made *Texas Monthly* worth reading for so many years, and it is what will keep it indispensable for years to come.

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