

The National Books Critics Circle has reached a critical point in our 46-year history. We had intended to make a simple, yet powerful statement that Black Lives Matter. Recent events at the organization have drawn attention away from that clear and powerful statement. We need to refocus our public work on that belief, but first must undertake some difficult internal work.

There have been many inquiries about governance structure and leadership at the organization, and we plan to respond to our members' complaints and requests. We must do so within the procedures set forth by law and our governance documents.

Fifteen board members have resigned, and the nine that remain are committed to continuing—but only with deep reflection upon past mistakes, and a commitment to serious, structural change in how we conduct business and continue to celebrate the rich diversity of global literature. We owe this to all of the NBCC members, as well as to the millions of readers across the country.

The NBCC Board is committed to reimagining the entire organization and restructuring in a way that modernizes the NBCC and demonstrates a clear commitment to racial and social justice. We will not move forward as an organization unless we have met the ideals we aspire to.

We hope to be in a position to present the NBCC awards for calendar year 2020. However, we will put aside all reading and deliberation in order to focus on fulfilling and exceeding the action items in our Anti-Racism Pledge and Action Plan which follows.

Specifically, we will take the following steps:

- VP of Membership Richard Z. Santos will immediately begin reaching out to past, current, and potential members of the National Book Critics Circle. We want to hear their ideas on how we move forward as an organization and how the NBCC can best support marginalized communities, including LGBTQ+ writers, writers from black, indigenous, and other communities of color, and writers of all ages and abilities.
- Gregg Barrios has been elected VP of Diversity and Inclusion. Gregg will lead the Board's efforts to make the NBCC a safer, more welcome, and more inclusive space for all.
- We will look closely at our own structures and traditions in order to examine and remove the effects of white gatekeeping within our organization.
- We will require completion of diversity training for each board member and will explore options on making that training available to general membership.
- We will continue our Emerging Critics program and will enhance our support for this program.
- We will continue to send out Critical Notes in order to promote the work of our members.
- We will hold regular virtual town halls with members who have concerns about the organization in general and specific suggestions on how we can increase our diversity.

- We will not repopulate our board until we're confident we have diverse candidates who reflect our commitment to literature and social justice.
- We will reach out to black, indigenous, and people of color to encourage them to run for board positions.
- We will reach out to LGBTQ+ critics and writers to encourage them to run for board positions.
- Former President Jane Ciabattari will serve as temporary President until the board can be reestablished; it is not her intention to seek reelection as President. Richard Santos, VP/Membership, will serve as official spokesperson for the NBCC board. He can be reached at [membership@bookcritics.org](mailto:membership@bookcritics.org)
- Throughout this process of change we commit to centering BIPOC voices in all of our deliberations.

On July 21, the board will meet to determine our next steps as an organization. We intend to award the 2020 John Leonard and Balakian Prizes, whose nominees are submitted by and emerge from the general membership. However, we will postpone or cancel the other 2020 awards until we make satisfactory progress on the above action items.

The NBCC commits to transparency throughout this process and will send out regular updates to NBCC members via email and social media. Please continue to reach out to [membership@bookcritics.org](mailto:membership@bookcritics.org) with thoughts, suggestions, and ideas for next steps.

Thank you,  
The National Book Critics Circle