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**Contact:** Sherrie Young  
National Book Foundation  
(212) 685-0261  
[syoung@nationalbook.org](mailto:syoung@nationalbook.org)

## **2016 NATIONAL BOOK AWARDS LONGLIST FOR FICTION**

*The ten contenders for the National Book Award for Fiction.*

**New York, NY (September 15, 2016)** – The National Book Foundation today announced the Longlist for the 2016 National Book Award for Fiction. Finalists will be revealed on October 13. (Please note that this date was originally set for October 12, but has been changed to acknowledge Yom Kippur.)

The Fiction Longlist includes a former National Book Award Winner for Young People’s Literature and two titles by former National Book Award Finalists for Fiction. The list also includes three Pulitzer Prize finalists. One title is currently shortlisted for the 2016 Baileys Women’s Prize for Fiction and another was recently selected for Oprah’s Book Club. There is one debut novel on the list.

The year’s Longlist is told from and about locations all around the world. Authors hail from and titles explore locations that range from Alaska, New Delhi, Bulgaria, and even a reimagined United States.

**Colson Whitehead’s** *Underground Railroad* follows Cora, a fugitive slave, as she escapes the south on a literal underground railroad in a speculative historical fiction that reckons with the true legacy of liberation and escape. In a very different journey, former Pulitzer Prize finalist **Lydia Millet’s** *Sweet Lamb of Heaven* follows a mother as she traverses the country with her daughter, fleeing her powerful husband. *What Belongs to You*, a debut novel by **Garth Greenwell**, finds its American narrator in Sofia, Bulgaria attempting to reconcile the shame and desire bound up in his own sexuality. **National Book Award Winner Jacqueline Woodson**, in her first adult novel in 20 years, depicts a young woman from Tennessee who has resettled in Brooklyn with her grieving family.

The perennial themes of love, marriage, and family are also deftly explored in three of the longlisted titles. In **Elizabeth McKenzie’s** *The Portable Veblen*, a soon-to-be married couple must navigate

personal values, economic pressures, and politics as their wedding day approaches. Former Pulitzer Prize and **National Book Award Finalist Adam Haslett** explores how mental illness afflicts a family over multiple generations in *Imagine Me Gone*. **Chris Bachelder's** *The Throwback Special* chronicles a group of men who has obsessively met to reenact a tragic football play for nearly seventeen years as they confront middle age, marriage, and fatherhood in this exploration of the American male psyche.

Looking towards the historical, former **National Book Award Finalist Brad Watson's** *Miss Jane* explores the life of a woman with a genital birth defect in rural Mississippi during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. **Paulette Jiles' News of the World** depicts post-Civil War America from the perspective of a retired Army captain who must deliver a young orphan, kidnapped by a Native American tribe, to her relatives on the other side of Texas.

*The Association of Small Bombs* by **Karan Mahajan** takes us to New Delhi, India, where a community is devastated by the losses brought on by an act of terrorism. The novel shows the reader both sides of a terrorist attack—how the loss of even just a few lives can change the fates of others and gives us a window into how someone might become capable of committing such atrocities.

#### **2016 Longlist for the National Book Award for Fiction:**

**Chris Bachelder**, *The Throwback Special*  
W. W. Norton & Company

**Garth Greenwell**, *What Belongs to You*  
Farrar, Straus and Giroux / Macmillan

**Adam Haslett**, *Imagine Me Gone*  
Little, Brown and Company / Hachette Book Group

**Paulette Jiles**, *News of the World*  
William Morrow / HarperCollins Publishers

**Karan Mahajan**, *The Association of Small Bombs*  
Viking Books / Penguin Random House

**Elizabeth McKenzie**, *The Portable Veblen*  
Penguin Press / Penguin Random House

**Lydia Millet**, *Sweet Lamb of Heaven*  
W. W. Norton & Company

**Brad Watson**, *Miss Jane*

W. W. Norton & Company

**Colson Whitehead**, *The Underground Railroad*

Doubleday / Penguin Random House

**Jacqueline Woodson**, *Another Brooklyn*

Amistad / HarperCollinsPublishers

Publishers submitted a total of 387 books for the 2016 National Book Award for Fiction. The judges for Fiction are James English (Chair), Karen Joy Fowler, T. Geronimo Johnson, Julie Otsuka, and Jesmyn Ward. These distinguished judges were given the charge of selecting what they deem to be the best books of the year. Their decisions are made independently of the National Book Foundation staff and Board of Directors; deliberations are strictly confidential. To be eligible for a 2016 National Book Award, a book must have been written by a US citizen and published in the United States between December 1, 2015 and November 30, 2016.

The National Book Award Finalists will be announced on October 13 and the Winners at the invitation-only National Book Awards Ceremony and Benefit Dinner on November 16 in New York City.

### **Fiction Biographies:**

**Chris Bachelder** is the author of *Bear v. Shark*, *U.S.!*, and *Abbott Awaits*. His fiction and essays have appeared in *McSweeney's*, *The Believer*, and *The Paris Review*. He lives with his wife and two daughters in Cincinnati, where he teaches at the University of Cincinnati.

**Garth Greenwell** is the author of a novella, *Mitko*, which won the 2010 Miami University Press Novella Prize and was a finalist for the Edmund White Debut Fiction Prize and a Lambda Award. A native of Louisville, Kentucky, he holds graduate degrees from Harvard University and the Iowa Writers' Workshop, where he was an Arts Fellow. His short fiction has appeared in *The Paris Review*, *A Public Space*, *StoryQuarterly*, and *VICE*. *What Belongs to You* is his first novel. He lives in Iowa City, where he holds the Richard E. Guthrie Memorial Fellowship at the University of Iowa.

**Adam Haslett** is the author of three works of fiction: the short story collection *You Are Not a Stranger Here*, which was a Pulitzer Prize and **National Book Award** finalist; the novel *Union Atlantic*, winner of the Lambda Literary Award and shortlisted for the Commonwealth Prize. His books have been translated into eighteen languages, and his journalism and fiction have appeared in *The Financial Times*, *Esquire*, *New York Magazine*, *The New Yorker*, *The Guardian*, *Der Spiegel*, *The Nation*, *The Atlantic Monthly*, and *Best American Short Stories*. He has been awarded the Berlin Prize by the American Academy in Berlin, a Guggenheim fellowship, and the PEN/Malamud and PEN/Winship Awards. In 2016, he received the Strauss Living Award from the American Academy of Arts & Letters. A graduate of Swarthmore College, the Iowa Writers' Workshop, and Yale Law

School, he has been a visiting professor at the Iowa Writers' Workshop and Columbia University. He lives in New York City.

**Paulette Jiles** is a poet and memoirist. She is the author of *Cousins*, a memoir, and the bestselling novels *Enemy Women* and *Stormy Weather*. She lives in San Antonio, Texas.

**Karan Mahajan** was born in 1984 and grew up in New Delhi, India. His first novel, *Family Planning* won the Joseph Henry Jackson Award and was a finalist for the International Dylan Thomas Prize. It was published in nine countries. Mahajan's writing has appeared in *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The New Yorker Online*, *The Believer*, NPR's *All Things Considered*, *The San Francisco Chronicle*, *Granta.com*, *Bookforum*, *Tehelka*, and the anthology *Stumbling and Raging: More Politically Inspired Fiction*. He currently lives in Austin, Texas. *The Association of Small Bombs* is his second novel.

**Elizabeth McKenzie's** work has appeared in *The New Yorker*, *The Atlantic Monthly*, *The Best American Nonrequired Reading*, and the *Pushcart Prize Anthology*, and recorded for NPR's Selected Shorts. Her collection, *Stop That Girl*, was short-listed for The Story Prize, and her novel *MacGregor Tells the World* was a *Chicago Tribune*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, and *Library Journal* Best Book of the year. She is the senior editor of the *Chicago Quarterly Review* and the managing editor of *Catamaran Literary Reader*.

**Lydia Millet** is an American novelist and conservationist. Her third novel, *My Happy Life*, won the 2003 PEN Center USA Award for Fiction, and she has been a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize as well as a Guggenheim fellow, among other honors. Millet has written books and stories that range from the philosophical to the satirical, on matters including the inventors of the atom bomb, political culture under George H.W. Bush, the discovery of mermaids in a coral reef, and the crises of extinction and climate change. Millet served as a fiction judge for the 2009 National Book Awards. She lives in the desert outside Tucson, Arizona with her two children and works for the Center for Biological Diversity.

**Brad Watson** teaches creative writing at the University of Wyoming, Laramie. His first collection, *Last Days of the Dog-Men*, won the Sue Kauffman Award for First Fiction from the American Academy of Arts & Letters; his first novel, *The Heaven of Mercury*, was a finalist for the National Book Award, and his *Aliens in the Prime of Their Lives* was a finalist for the PEN/Faulkner Award for Fiction.

**Colson Whitehead** is the *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Noble Hustle*, *Zone One*, *Sag Harbor*, *The Intuitionist*, *John Henry Days*, *Apex Hides the Hurt*, and one collection of essays, *The Colossus of New York*. A Pulitzer Prize finalist and a recipient of MacArthur and Guggenheim fellowships, he lives in New York City.

**Jacqueline Woodson** is the **2014 National Book Award Winner for Young People's Literature** for her *New York Times* bestselling memoir *Brown Girl Dreaming*, which was also a recipient of the Coretta Scott King Award, a Newbery Honor Award, the NAACP Image Award, and the Sibert Honor Award. The Poetry Foundation recently named Woodson the Young People's Poet Laureate. She is the author of more than two dozen award-winning books for young adults, middle graders, and children; among her many accolades, she is a four-time Newbery Honor winner, a three-time **National Book Award Finalist**, and a two-time Coretta Scott King Award winner. She lives with her family in Brooklyn, New York.

### **2016 National Book Award Judges for Fiction:**

**James English** (*Chair*) is the John Welsh Centennial Professor of English at the University of Pennsylvania, where he directs the Penn Humanities Forum and the Price Lab for Digital Humanities. His books include *The Global Future of English Studies* and *The Economy of Prestige: Prizes, Awards, and the Circulation of Cultural Value*, selected as the best academic book of 2005 by *New York* magazine.

**Karen Joy Fowler** is the author of six novels and three short story collections. She's written literary, contemporary, historical, and science fiction. Her most recent novel, *We Are All Completely Beside Ourselves*, won the 2014 PEN/Faulkner Award, the California Book Award for Fiction, and was shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize in 2014. She lives in Santa Cruz, California.

Born in New Orleans, **T. Geronimo Johnson** received his MFA from the Iowa Writers' Workshop and his M.A. in Language, Literacy, and Culture from UC Berkeley. His first novel, *Hold It Till It Hurts*, was published in 2012 and was a finalist for the 2013 PEN/Faulkner Award for fiction. His second, *Welcome to Braggsville*, was Longlisted for the **2015 National Book Award**.

**Julie Otsuka** is the author of *When the Emperor Was Divine* and *The Buddha in the Attic*, which won the PEN/Faulkner Award and was a **Finalist for the National Book Award**. She is the recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship and an Award in Literature from the American Academy of Arts and Letters. Her work has appeared in *Granta*, *Harper's*, and *100 Years of The Best American Short Stories*. She lives in New York City.

**Jesmyn Ward** is the author of the novels *Where the Line Bleeds* and *Salvage the Bones*. *Salvage the Bones* won the **2011 National Book Award**. Her memoir, *Men We Reaped*, won the *Chicago Tribune* Heartland Prize for Nonfiction. Ward grew up in DeLisle, Mississippi, where she lives now.

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**The National Book Foundation's mission** is to celebrate the best of American literature, to expand its audience, and to enhance the cultural value of good writing in America. In addition to the National Book Awards, for which it is best known, the Foundation's programs include **5 Under 35**, a

celebration of emerging fiction writers selected by former National Book Award Finalists and Winners; the **National Book Awards Teen Press Conference**, an opportunity for New York City students to interview the current National Book Award Finalists in Young People's Literature; **NBA on Campus**, a partnership that brings National Book Award authors to colleges across the country; the **Innovations in Reading Prize**, awarded to individuals and institutions that have developed innovative means of creating and sustaining a lifelong love of reading; and **BookUp**, a writer-led, after-school reading program for middle-school students.

**The National Book Award** is one of the nation's most prestigious literary prizes and has a stellar record of identifying and rewarding quality writing. In 1950, William Carlos Williams was the first Winner in Poetry, the following year William Faulkner was honored in Fiction, and so on through the years. Many previous Winners of a National Book Award are now firmly established in the canon of American literature, such as Sherman Alexie, Louise Erdrich, Jonathan Franzen, Denis Johnson, James McBride, Joyce Carol Oates, Adrienne Rich, and Jesmyn Ward.