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# 2017 NATIONAL BOOK AWARDS LONGLIST FOR FICTION

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

**New York City, September 15, 2017:** The National Book Foundation today announced the Longlist for the 2017 National Book Award for Fiction. Finalists will be revealed on October 4.

The Fiction Longlist includes two titles by previous National Book Award honorees: a 2001 Fiction Finalist and a 2011 Fiction Winner. The work of longlisted authors has appeared in *The New Yorker*, *The New York Times*, *Granta*, *Harper's*, *The Atlantic*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *The Washington Post*, among many others. Though two of the ten authors were born internationally, they all grew up in the U.S., in towns from California to Louisiana to New Jersey. The Longlist includes a former actor, a Marine, and two lawyers. Eight of the ten are women. There are two story collections and four debuts on the list.

New titles from former National Book Awards honorees depict tensions stemming from family absence. In **Jesmyn Ward's** *Sing, Unburied, Sing*, her first novel since her 2011 National Book Award Winner for Fiction, a fractured Mississippi family struggles to stay connected as they road trip across the state. 2001 Fiction Finalist **Jennifer Egan** follows a female diver seeking answers to her father's disappearance in the hope of understanding his fate and her own in *Manhattan Beach*, her first historical novel.

Two story collections make this year's Longlist. **Daniel Alarcón**, a National Book Awards judge in 2015, explores loss, uncertainty, and power in *The King Is Always Above the People*, a collection of wide-ranging stories concluding in a novella. The second collection is **Carmen Maria Machado's** *Her Body and Other Parties*, an eerie and provocative debut that delves into the realities and violence of women's lives in worlds that aren't quite our own.

In addition to debut stories, three debut novels appear on the Longlist. **Carol Zoref's** *Barren Island*, which was published after the manuscript won the 2015 AWP Award for the Novel, follows characters grappling with questions of morality and liberty while living in isolation on an industrial island in the 1930s. *A Kind of Freedom* by **Margaret Wilkerson Sexton** investigates racial disparities in the South through the stories of three generations of a

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Louisiana family fighting for the lives they wish for. In *The Leavers* by **Lisa Ko**, a son and the mother who abandoned him attempt to make sense of their circumstances while worlds apart.

Issues of family, identity, and unbreakable connections to our pasts drive **Min Jin Lee's** *Pachinko*, which chronicles a Korean family forced from their homeland as, over the course of many years, they experience the particular challenges of displacement.

Two Longlist titles set character-driven stories in particularly turbulent international regions. **Charmaine Craig** pulls from the lives of her mother and grandparents in *Miss Burma*, which follows members of the Karen ethnic minority group compelled to fight against repression and violence in their own country. In **Elliot Ackerman's** *Dark at the Crossing*, an Arab American man attempting to enter Syria wrestles with loss, grief, and redemption as he desperately searches for a cause.

Publishers submitted a total of 394 books for the 2017 National Book Award for Fiction. The judges for Fiction are Alexander Chee, Dave Eggers, Annie Philbrick, Karolina Waclawiak, and Jacqueline Woodson (Chair). 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 2017 National Book Award, a book must have been written by a US citizen and published in the United States between December 1, 2016 and November 30, 2017.

The National Book Award Finalists will be announced on October 4 and the Winners at the invitation-only National Book Awards Ceremony and Benefit Dinner on November 15 in New York City.

### **2017 Longlist for the National Book Award for Fiction:**

**Elliot Ackerman**, *Dark at the Crossing*

Knopf / Penguin Random House

**Daniel Alarcón**, *The King Is Always Above the People: Stories*

Riverhead Books / Penguin Random House

**Charmaine Craig**, *Miss Burma*

Grove Press / Grove Atlantic

**Jennifer Egan**, *Manhattan Beach*

Scribner / Simon & Schuster

**Lisa Ko**, *The Leavers*

Algonquin Books / Workman Publishing

**Min Jin Lee**, *Pachinko*

Grand Central Publishing / Hachette Book Group

**Carmen Maria Machado**, *Her Body and Other Parties: Stories*

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Graywolf Press

**Margaret Wilkerson Sexton**, *A Kind of Freedom*

Counterpoint Press

**Jesmyn Ward**, *Sing, Unburied, Sing*

Scribner / Simon & Schuster

**Carol Zoref**, *Barren Island*

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### Fiction Biographies:

**Elliot Ackerman**, author of the critically acclaimed novel *Green on Blue*, is based out of Istanbul, where he has covered the Syrian Civil War since 2013. His writings have appeared in *The New Yorker*, *The Atlantic*, *The New Republic* and *The New York Times Magazine*, among other publications, and his stories have been included in *The Best American Short Stories*. He is both a former White House Fellow and a Marine, and has served five tours of duty in Iraq and Afghanistan, where he received the Silver Star, the Bronze Star for Valor and the Purple Heart.

**Daniel Alarcón** is the author of *At Night We Walk in Circles*, which was a finalist for the 2014 PEN/Faulkner Award, as well as the story collection *War by Candlelight*, the novel *Lost City Radio*, and the graphic novel *City of Clowns*. His writing has appeared in *The New Yorker*, *The New York Times Magazine*, *Granta*, *n+1*, and *Harper's*, and he was named one of *The New Yorker's* "20 Under 40." He is executive producer of *Radio Ambulante*, distributed by NPR, and is an assistant professor of broadcast journalism at the Columbia University School of Journalism.

**Charmaine Craig's** first novel, *The Good Men*, was a national bestseller translated into six languages. Craig is a faculty member in the Department of Creative Writing at UC Riverside and the descendant of significant figures in Burma's modern history. A former actor in film and television, she studied literature at Harvard University and lives in Los Angeles with her husband and daughters.

**Jennifer Egan** is the author of five previous books of fiction: *A Visit from the Goon Squad*, which won the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Critics Circle Award; *The Keep*; the story collection *Emerald City*; *Look at Me*, a National Book Award Finalist; and *The Invisible Circus*. Her work has appeared in *The New Yorker*, *Harper's Magazine*, *Granta*, *McSweeney's*, and *The New York Times Magazine*.

**Lisa Ko** is the author of *The Leavers*, a novel which won the 2016 PEN/Bellwether Prize for Socially Engaged Fiction. Her writing has appeared in *Best American Short Stories 2016*, *The New York Times*, *Apogee Journal*, *Narrative*, *O. Magazine*, *Copper Nickel*, *Storychord*, *One Teen Story*, *Brooklyn Review*, and elsewhere. Lisa has been awarded fellowships and residencies from the New York Foundation for the Arts, the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, the MacDowell Colony, the Helene Wurlitzer Foundation, Writers OMI at Ledig House, the Jerome Foundation, Blue Mountain Center, the Van Lier Foundation, Hawthornden Castle, the I-Park Foundation, the Anderson Center, the Constance Saltonstall Foundation, and the Kimmel Harding Nelson Center. Born in Queens and raised in Jersey, she lives in Brooklyn.

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**Min Jin Lee's** debut novel, *Free Food for Millionaires*, was one of the "Top 10 Novels of the Year" for the *Times* (London), NPR's *Fresh Air*, and *USA Today*. Her short fiction has been featured on NPR's Selected Shorts. Her writings have appeared in *Condé Nast Traveler*, *Times* (London), *Vogue*, *Travel+Leisure*, *Wall Street Journal*, *New York Times Magazine*, and *Food & Wine*. Her essays and literary criticism have been anthologized widely. She served as a columnist for the *Chosun Ilbo*, the leading paper of South Korea. She lives in New York with her family.

**Carmen Maria Machado's** fiction and nonfiction have appeared in *The New Yorker*, *Granta*, NPR, *Guernica*, *Electric Literature*, *Gulf Coast*, *Tin House*, *Best American Science Fiction and Fantasy*, *The Best Horror of the Year*, *Year's Best Weird Fiction*, and *Best Women's Erotica*. Her short story "The Husband Stitch" was nominated for the Shirley Jackson and Nebula Awards, awarded a Pushcart Prize Special Mention, and longlisted for the James Tiptree, Jr. Literary Award. She holds an MFA from the Iowa Writers' Workshop and has been awarded fellowships and residencies from the Copernicus Society of America, the Elizabeth George Foundation, the CINTAS Foundation, the Speculative Literature Foundation, the University of Iowa, Yaddo, Hedgebrook, and the Millay Colony for the Arts. She is the artist in residence at the University of Pennsylvania, and lives in Philadelphia with her wife.

**Margaret Wilkerson Sexton** was born and raised in New Orleans. She studied creative writing at Dartmouth and law at UC Berkeley. She was a recipient of the Lombard fellowship and spent a year in the Dominican Republic working for a civil rights organization. Her work has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize, and her stories have been published or are forthcoming in *Grey Sparrow Journal*, *Limestone Journal*, and *Broad! Magazine*. She lives in the Bay Area, California.

**Jesmyn Ward** received her MFA from the University of Michigan and is currently an associate professor of creative writing at Tulane University. She is the author of the novels *Where the Lines Bleeds* and *Salvage the Bones*, which won the 2011 National Book Award. She is also the editor of the anthology *The Fire This Time* and the author of the memoir *Men We Reaped*, which was a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award. In 2016, the American Academy of Arts and Letters selected Ward for the Strauss Living Award.

**Carol Zoref** is a fiction writer and essayist. She teaches at Sarah Lawrence College and New York University. She lives in New York City.

### **2017 National Book Award Judges for Fiction:**

**Alexander Chee** is the author of the novels *The Queen of the Night* and *Edinburgh*. He is a contributing editor at *The New Republic*, an editor at large at *VQR*, and a critic at large at the *Los Angeles Times*. His work has appeared in *Best American Essays 2016*, *The New York Times Book Review*, and *Tin House*, among others. He is an associate professor of English at Dartmouth College.

**Dave Eggers** is the author of many books, including *Heroes of the Frontier*, *The Circle*, and *A Hologram for the King*, which was a finalist for the 2012 National Book Award. He is the founder of McSweeney's, an independent publishing company based in San Francisco. McSweeney's also publishes Voice of Witness, a nonprofit book series that uses oral history to illuminate human rights crises around the world. Eggers is the co-founder of 826 National,

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a network of seven tutoring centers around the country and ScholarMatch, a nonprofit organization designed to connect students with resources, schools, and donors to make college possible.

**Annie Philbrick** is the owner of independent bookstores Bank Square Books in Mystic, Connecticut and Savoy Bookshop & Café in Westerly, Rhode Island. She serves on the board of the American Booksellers Association (ABA), has twice chaired the ABA's Indies Introduce program that highlights debut authors, and last year was a judge for the prestigious Kirkus Prize for Fiction.

**Karolina Waclawiak** is a screenwriter and author of two critically acclaimed novels, *How to Get into the Twin Palms* and *The Invaders*. Her writing has appeared in the *Los Angeles Times*, *The New York Times*, *VQR*, and other notable publications. Formerly an editor of the *Believer*, she is now Deputy Culture Editor at BuzzFeed News.

**Jacqueline Woodson (Chair)** is *The New York Times* bestselling author of *Another Brooklyn*, which was a 2016 fiction finalist for the National Book Award, NAACP Image Award, a *Los Angeles Times* Book Prize and was a #1 Indie Pick. Her 2014 bestseller, *Brown Girl Dreaming*, won the National Book Award in Young People's Literature and was the recipient of the Coretta Scott King Award, a Newbery Honor Award, the NAACP Image Award, and the Sibert Honor Award. Woodson was named Young People's Poet Laureate (2015-2017) by the Poetry Foundation. 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.