



****EMBARGOED UNTIL 09:00 ON FRIDAY, JUNE 18****

Actor and author Shobna Gulati, author Tasha Suri and writer Nii Ayikwei Parkes among judges for SFF prize for writers of colour, as HarperVoyager and Del Rey UK become publishing partners

Future Worlds Prize for Fantasy and Science Fiction Writers of Colour is excited to announce its judging panel for the 2021 prize, and to welcome HarperVoyager and Del Rey UK as publishing partners.

This year's judges are:

- Actor and author Shobna Gulati
- Author Tasha Suri
- Writer Nii Ayikwei Parkes
- Journalist Zahra Hankir
- Cultural commentator Lloyd Bradley
- Publisher Valerie Brandes.

Sarah Shaffi, project manager for the prize, said: "This year's judging panel is a dream group of hugely talented individuals who bring with them a wealth of knowledge about storytelling in its many different forms. It's thrilling to have them all on board.

"I'm also excited that HarperVoyager and Del Rey UK are joining as partners for the prize, cementing how important this prize is to SFF in the UK."

Future Worlds Prize for Fantasy and Science Fiction Writers of Colour, which closes for submissions at 23.59pm on Friday, June 25, aims to find new talent based in the UK writing in the SFF space, from magical realism and space operas to dystopia and more. The winner will receive a prize of £4,000, the runner-up £2,000 and up to six additional shortlisted authors will each receive £800. All shortlisted writers, the runner-up and the winner will also receive mentoring from one of the prize's publishing partners.

Shobna Gulati, who has just finished filming the role of Ray in the upcoming feature film *Everyone's Talking About Jamie* and is the author of the memoir *Remember Me? Discovering My Mother As She Lost Her Memory*, said: "I am absolutely thrilled to be a judge. I have always found a sense of belonging in fantasy and science fiction. To celebrate writers of colour working within this genre...what's not to love?"

Tasha Suri, author of *The Books of Ambha* duology, said: "I'm delighted to be judging Future Worlds Prize. There are so many talented SFF writers in the UK who have been overlooked or haven't had the opportunities they deserve, and this prize feels like a fantastic step towards changing the face of the SFF genre for the better."

Nii Ayikwei Parkes, author of six books including two collections of poetry, said: "Having spent most of my writing life advocating for literature that reaches beyond the conventional, it's a huge honour to be a judge for Future Worlds Prize for Fantasy and Science Fiction Writers of Colour. I think that SFF as a genre already owes so much to writers of colour globally, but we have not seen output in the UK particularly that reflects that. I am very happy to have a chance to contribute to righting that imbalance through this prize."

Zahra Hankir, a Lebanese journalist who edited the *Our Women on the Ground* anthology, said: "I'm so excited to be part of this important judging panel and to help elevate and celebrate the work of writers of colour in this fascinating genre, at a time when the publishing industry is still lagging in diversity, despite some strides forward."

Lloyd Bradley, one of the UK's foremost Black music experts and a seasoned cultural commentator, said: "Years ago, I remember an African American comedian riffing on the just-released *Logan's Run* film from the angle that there were no black people in it (the character Box was an evil robot), the punchline being 'they're fixing for us not to be around in the future'. I've long felt it's been a bit like this with the writing of it too, so a competition for fantasy and sci-fi writers of colour is a doubly exciting prospect and I'm so looking forward to taking a trip to the worlds their imaginations will create. Future Worlds Prize is one of the most thrilling and necessary developments in British publishing and I feel privileged to be part of it."

Valerie Brandes, founder of Jacaranda Books, said: "I am particularly excited to be part of the judging panel for this award because, besides the importance of fantasy and science fiction writing in continuing to reflect and create past, present and future worlds that de-centre eurocentric narratives, this prize is open to debut writers. Supporting new voices and relocating the canon to include them in all their brilliance is central to the work that I do and therefore I am looking forward to what we will uncover through the submission process."

HarperVoyager, the SFF imprint at HarperCollins, and Penguin Random House UK's Del Rey UK are partnering with the prize this year, alongside the already announced Gollancz, Hachette's SFF imprints including Orbit, and Pan Macmillan's Tor.

Natasha Bardon, publisher at HarperVoyager, said: "We must do everything within our ability as publishers to ensure our lists reflect a wide and diverse range of voices. Any prize that promotes diversity is one we're thrilled to be a part of."

Sam Bradbury, senior editor at Del Rey UK, said: “We’re thrilled to be supporting Future Worlds Prize, and the vital initiative that it represents. We are passionate about publishing diverse voices, for diverse readers, and are working towards a world where everyone can see themselves on the page. This prize is a fantastic step in that direction, and we’re very excited to come together with other SFF publishers to take another step towards breaking down barriers for underrepresented voices.”

Future Worlds Prize, first run in 2020 and founded by bestselling author Ben Aaronovitch, was previously called the Gollancz and Rivers of London BAME SFF Award. As part of the prize’s long-term aim of opening science fiction and fantasy publishing to more people, it has been rebranded for its second year. The prize is sponsored by Aaronovitch, with additional financial support from *Bridgerton* actor Adjoa Andoh. It is administered by Cityread, a registered literature charity.

The 2020 prize was won by Esmie Jikiemi-Pearson for *The Principle of Moments*, a space-based adventure story. Jikiemi-Pearson has since secured a publishing deal with Gollancz, and her debut novel will be released in 2022.

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For submission details and more on the prize, visit <http://www.futureworldsprize.co.uk/>, <https://twitter.com/FutureWorldsPrz>, or <https://www.instagram.com/futureworldsprize/>.

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