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PRESS RELEASE

Virtual World Fantasy Convention 2020 Addresses Programming and Discrimination Issues

*Salt Lake City, UT—October 13, 2020—*The WFC 2020 Committee, after much reflection and listening to the grave concerns BIPOC panelists and fans expressed about the program panel descriptions, has revised the descriptions and also reassessed its commitment to ensure panel members are representative of the increasingly diverse voices in fantasy and horror literature. “The WFC 2020 Committee humbly acknowledges that we could have done better and deeply regret the offense, unintended, but nevertheless hurtful, towards our BIPOC fans and panelists. We also acknowledge that long-term, systemic issues with discrimination in our industry and with World Fantasy Convention itself cannot be rectified in one convention; this will be an ongoing effort beyond WFC 2020,” said Ginny Smith, WFC 2020 chair.

The World Fantasy Convention Board of Directors said in a statement, “The WFC Board is sensitive to the criticisms by members from marginalized communities within the fantasy and horror genres. We acknowledge the minimal representation of these diverse populations on the Board and are taking steps to rectify that lack of perspective. We have voted to add at least one ex officio member to our number to review future WFC programs. We are currently reaching out to proposed candidates to discuss and will release a statement when the new Board member(s) are chosen.”

To address the programming issues for this year’s convention, the WFC 2020 Committee has done the following:

- WFC Chair Ginny Smith engaged the help of three well-respected members of the fantasy community, two people of color and a well-regarded writer and sensitivity advisor, to review the offensive and insensitive programming language. They have completed their review and the revised program descriptions have been published on the WFC 2020 website. Members will be notified by email.
 - WFC 2020’s amazing and supportive BIPOC panelists helped the WFC 2020 Committee create more panels to represent the rich diversity of the fantasy genre. For example, one of the new panels is “Black Women in Horror.”
 - WFC 2020 remains committed to offering sponsorships to people of color. The intent in offering these sponsorships is to make the convention accessible to those who might not otherwise be able to attend the convention and to ensure that the convention’s attendance reflects the diverse fandom and artistry in the fantasy and horror genres. The committee is grateful to the private donors who have so far made it possible for 50 people of color to attend the convention for free. People of color can still apply for these sponsored memberships. For more information and to apply, please visit the WFC website at <https://www.wfc2020.org/people-of-color-sponsored-membership>.
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This will be the 46th World Fantasy Convention; the WFC 2020 acknowledges its responsibility to ensure the con remains viable and relevant and to begin addressing the convention’s history of exclusion. The WFC 2020 Committee remains committed to building and conducting a vibrant, diverse, and professional WFC that brings together industry professionals from many backgrounds. “Please accept our sincere apology for what has happened; we hope you’ll still consider attending the convention to help celebrate, explore, and build what may be the oldest, most diverse genre on our planet—fantasy,” said Smith.

WFC is an annual gathering of professionals, collectors, and others interested in the field of fantasy literature and art. The convention is held annually in a different city around the world, usually around Halloween. This year's virtual event will take place October 29–November 1. The convention will operate under the auspices of the Utah Fandom Organization, a nonprofit committed to bringing quality science fiction and fantasy events to Utah. For more information and to register, visit www.wfc2020.org.

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