

To Whom It May Concern:

Even though I have no book entered, I signed up to judge the RITA this year because the inclusivity of last year's RITA winners made me hopeful the contest might finally be reaching its *potential*. Over the years, I've looked forward to judging this prestigious contest, and given this year's new judging system, I wanted to be a part of what I always knew the RITA *could* be.

To give you an idea of how important this goal was to me, a month ago, my house flooded, leaving me living out of boxes for the next few months during a massive reconstruction project -- and yet despite that, I didn't withdraw from judging. *That's* how dedicated I was to helping the RITA contest succeed.

However, I no longer believe the RITA can succeed this year. Recent events and revelations of racism--especially in regards to the RWA staff--have made it clear that RWA is not currently capable of running a contest welcoming or fair to marginalized authors.

After the news first broke, I vowed to follow the lead of authors of color. While some judges dropped out right away, I decided to stay for as long as marginalized authors believed the contest still worth the effort. As of yesterday, every author of color I know with an entry has pulled their work from this year's RITA.

It's now obvious the contest can't live up to its potential this year, and I'm not interested in volunteering days' worth of my time just to give the already-privileged authors still remaining in the contest a pat on the back. That's not the type of contest I wanted the RITA to be, especially not after last year hinted at its true potential.

Therefore, I'm **withdrawing** from my commitment to judging and ask to be **removed** from the list of RITA judges this year.

After the racism and other bigotry problems rooted deep within the structures and systems of RWA are burned to ash and tossed out, I hope the contest will be able to return better than ever. Until that happens, I will not lend my support.

In addition, I would urge those in charge to consider *cancelling* this year's contest and spending the time instead focused on fixing the many problems revealed by the last week and half of scandal. Any authors remaining in the contest will have their name and book tainted by being associated with the current events, and long-term, **we don't want the brand of the RITA contest to be tainted as well**. For the good of the contest, it would be better to take this year off in hopes of avoiding further damage to the reputation of our beloved RITA contest.

Thank you,
Jami