# Bernardine Evaristo awarded £100,000 Women's Prize Outstanding Contribution Award for championing diversity



Bernardine Evaristo, the acclaimed Booker Prize-winning novelist, continues to break boundaries in literature, challenging conventions surrounding genre and identity. Recently announced as the recipient of the £100,000 Women's Prize Outstanding Contribution Award, Evaristo's influence on the literary world is profound, driven by her commitment to amplifying under-represented voices. The award recognises her transformative impact on literature and her unwavering dedication to promoting diversity within the literary community.

At 66, Evaristo has produced a diverse body of work encompassing poetry, memoirs, and seven novels, with "Girl, Woman, Other" standing as a defining achievement. This polyphonic narrative, which won the Booker Prize in 2019, intricately weaves the stories of twelve Black British women, each reflecting a unique experience and perspective. It has sold over a million copies and earned the distinction of being selected as one of Barack Obama’s favourite reads of the year. "I just go wherever my imagination takes me," Evaristo remarked, illustrating her approach to storytelling that defies traditional expectations.

Evaristo's literary journey has not been conventional. Winning the Booker Prize at the age of 60 marked a pivotal moment in her career, both revitalising her professional life and enhancing her visibility as a writer. She noted that had she received such recognition earlier, she might not have been equipped to handle it as well. In reflecting on her career, Evaristo stated, "It changed my career – in terms of book sales, foreign rights, translation, the way in which I was viewed as a writer." This recognition has opened new doors, leading to various opportunities that have greatly expanded her reach and impact.

Her works often blur the lines of genre, with Evaristo herself dubbing her style “fusion fiction.” This approach is characterised by a playful disregard for traditional grammatical structures, focusing instead on the rhythm and texture of language. Readers may be intrigued to know that "Girl, Woman, Other" contains only a handful of punctuation marks. Evaristo underscores the importance of diverse narratives within British literature, defending the richness of the Black experience through her writing. She has previously drawn attention to the often-overlooked presence of Black individuals throughout British history, such as in her novel "The Emperor’s Babe," which highlights a Black presence in Roman Britain over 1,800 years ago.

Evaristo’s ambition extends beyond her own writing; she is deeply engaged in initiatives designed to uplift other writers. The Complete Works programme, which she co-founded to support poets of colour, has significantly increased their publication rates in the UK. "A decade ago, poets of colour represented under 1% of published works; now that number has risen to 10%," she stated proudly, reflecting on the programme's impact on the literary landscape.

The Women's Prize Outstanding Contribution Award was established to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the annual Women’s Prizes for English-language fiction and nonfiction. According to Kate Mosse, the founder of the prize, Evaristo's "dazzling skill and imagination, and her courage to take risks" make her an ideal recipient for this honour. The award will provide Evaristo with funding to support other women writers through a planned but undisclosed project, demonstrating her ongoing commitment to fostering inclusivity and diversity in literature.

Despite her elevated status in the literary establishment — as a professor, Booker winner, and president of the Royal Society of Literature — Evaristo remains cognisant of the work still required to maintain progress in racial equality within the arts. She commented on the evolution of societal attitudes since her childhood, emphasising a need for vigilance in the face of backlash against diversity: "We’ve made a lot of progress, and I feel that we need to work hard to maintain it, especially in the current political climate." Evaristo’s voice resonates not just through her writing, but also as a powerful advocate for change, illustrating the vital role of art in fostering understanding and representation for marginalised communities.

As she continues to teach and inspire the next generation of writers at Brunel University, Evaristo’s journey stands as a testament to the enduring power of literature to effect change and challenge societal norms.

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* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/bernardine-evaristo-london-booker-prize-african-barack-obama-b2763157.html), [[2]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/bernardine-evaristo-london-booker-prize-african-barack-obama-b2763157.html)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/bernardine-evaristo-london-booker-prize-african-barack-obama-b2763157.html), [[3]](https://www.ft.com/content/70cf12cf-7f95-4dfb-aa25-6e2d669b4339), [[5]](https://www.theguardian.com/books/2019/oct/14/booker-prize-judges-break-the-rules-and-insist-on-joint-winners)
* Paragraph 3 – [[4]](https://bevaristo.com/girl-woman-other/), [[6]](https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/books/booker-prize-2019-margaret-atwood-and-bernardine-evaristo-are-joint-winners-1.4050351)
* Paragraph 4 – [[7]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bernardine_Evaristo), [[2]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/bernardine-evaristo-london-booker-prize-african-barack-obama-b2763157.html)
* Paragraph 5 – [[2]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/bernardine-evaristo-london-booker-prize-african-barack-obama-b2763157.html), [[5]](https://www.theguardian.com/books/2019/oct/14/booker-prize-judges-break-the-rules-and-insist-on-joint-winners)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/bernardine-evaristo-london-booker-prize-african-barack-obama-b2763157.html), [[3]](https://www.ft.com/content/70cf12cf-7f95-4dfb-aa25-6e2d669b4339)
* Paragraph 7 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/bernardine-evaristo-london-booker-prize-african-barack-obama-b2763157.html), [[6]](https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/books/booker-prize-2019-margaret-atwood-and-bernardine-evaristo-are-joint-winners-1.4050351)
* Paragraph 8 – [[2]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/bernardine-evaristo-london-booker-prize-african-barack-obama-b2763157.html), [[5]](https://www.theguardian.com/books/2019/oct/14/booker-prize-judges-break-the-rules-and-insist-on-joint-winners), [[3]](https://www.ft.com/content/70cf12cf-7f95-4dfb-aa25-6e2d669b4339)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/bernardine-evaristo-london-booker-prize-african-barack-obama-b2763157.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/bernardine-evaristo-london-booker-prize-african-barack-obama-b2763157.html> - Bernardine Evaristo, the Booker Prize-winning novelist, has been awarded the £100,000 Women's Prize Outstanding Contribution Award for her transformative impact on literature and dedication to uplifting under-represented voices. Evaristo's eclectic work includes poetry, memoirs, and seven novels, notably 'Girl, Woman, Other,' which won the Booker Prize in 2019. The novel, a polyphonic narrative of twelve Black British women, has sold over a million copies and was selected as one of Barack Obama's books of the year. Evaristo's commitment to promoting diverse voices is further exemplified by her Complete Works mentoring programme for poets of colour, which has significantly increased their publication rates in Britain. She plans to use the prize money to support other women writers through an undisclosed project.
3. <https://www.ft.com/content/70cf12cf-7f95-4dfb-aa25-6e2d669b4339> - In an insightful conversation, Bernardine Evaristo and visual activist Zanele Muholi discuss their respective works aimed at making marginalized communities visible. Evaristo's novel 'Girl, Woman, Other' highlights the lives of Black British women and non-binary individuals, while Muholi's photography documents Black LGBTQ+ people in South Africa. They explore themes of identity, representation, and the power of art to challenge historical erasure and colonial perceptions. Both artists reflect on their careers, the impact of their work, and the challenges they face, including creative blocks and the pressures of recognition. The conversation underscores their shared commitment to activism through art and the importance of documenting and celebrating diverse identities. ([ft.com](https://www.ft.com/content/70cf12cf-7f95-4dfb-aa25-6e2d669b4339?utm_source=openai))
4. <https://bevaristo.com/girl-woman-other/> - 'Girl, Woman, Other' is Bernardine Evaristo's eighth novel, published in 2019. The 'fusion fiction' novel follows the lives of twelve very different people in Britain, predominantly female and Black, aged 19 to 93, spanning a variety of cultural backgrounds, sexualities, classes, and occupations. The novel has sold over a million copies and was chosen as one of Barack Obama's books of the year. It was also the 12th bestselling hardback fiction book in the UK in 2019 and remained in the top 10 for 44 weeks. ([bevaristo.com](https://bevaristo.com/girl-woman-other/?utm_source=openai))
5. <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2019/oct/14/booker-prize-judges-break-the-rules-and-insist-on-joint-winners> - In 2019, the Booker Prize judges made history by awarding the prize jointly to Margaret Atwood for 'The Testaments' and Bernardine Evaristo for 'Girl, Woman, Other.' This marked the first time the prize was shared since 1992, despite a rule change banning joint winners. Evaristo's win made her the first Black woman to win the Booker Prize since its inception in 1969. ([theguardian.com](https://www.theguardian.com/books/2019/oct/14/booker-prize-judges-break-the-rules-and-insist-on-joint-winners?utm_source=openai))
6. <https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/books/booker-prize-2019-margaret-atwood-and-bernardine-evaristo-are-joint-winners-1.4050351> - The 2019 Booker Prize was awarded jointly to Margaret Atwood for 'The Testaments' and Bernardine Evaristo for 'Girl, Woman, Other.' Evaristo's novel, written in a form of free verse or prose poetry, tells the stories of 12 (mostly Black) women in the UK over the last century. The judges described it as 'a must-read about modern Britain and womanhood … passionate, razor-sharp, brimming with energy and humour.' ([irishtimes.com](https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/books/booker-prize-2019-margaret-atwood-and-bernardine-evaristo-are-joint-winners-1.4050351?utm_source=openai))
7. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bernardine_Evaristo> - Bernardine Evaristo is an Anglo-Nigerian author of fiction and verse. Her novel 'Girl, Woman, Other' won the 2019 Booker Prize. Evaristo's work explores aspects of the African diaspora and spans short fiction, reviews, essays, drama, and writing for radio. She is Professor of Creative Writing at Brunel University London and Vice Chair of the Royal Society of Literature. She was awarded an MBE in the Queen’s Birthday Honours List in 2009 and lives in London. ([en.wikipedia.org](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bernardine_Evaristo?utm_source=openai))