

## STATEMENT FROM BOB MILLER, PRESIDENT & PUBLISHER, FLATIRON BOOKS

In recent days a backlash arose against *American Dirt*, a novel published by Flatiron Books. When we began the journey of supporting this book, it quickly spawned as much excitement and anticipation as any book I can remember in my forty years working in the publishing business. During the lead-up to publication, we heard praise from major authors; Barnes & Noble designated it their book club pick; independent bookstores made it their #1 choice for February; and Oprah Winfrey made it a book club selection. It is a book we continue being proud to have published.

We were therefore surprised by the anger that has emerged from members of the Latinx and publishing communities.

The fact that we were surprised is indicative of a problem, which is that in positioning this novel, we failed to acknowledge our own limits. The discussion around this book has exposed deep inadequacies in how we at Flatiron Books address issues of representation, both in the books we publish and in the teams that work on them. We are committed to finding new ways to address these issues and the specific publishing choices underlying this publication, and feel an obligation to our colleagues, readers, and authors alike. On a more specific scale we made serious mistakes in the way we rolled out this book. We should never have claimed that it was a novel that defined the migrant experience; we should not have said that Jeanine's husband was an undocumented immigrant while not specifying that he was from Ireland; we should not have had a centerpiece at our bookseller dinner last May that replicated the book jacket so tastelessly. We can now see how insensitive those and other decisions were, and we regret them.

Simply put, we wish to listen, learn and do better. But that also must include a two-way dialogue characterized by respect. Jeanine Cummins spent five years of her life writing this book with the intent to shine a spotlight on tragedies facing immigrants. For that reason, it's unfortunate that she is the recipient of hatred from the very communities she sought to honor. We are saddened that a work of fiction that was well-intentioned has led to such vitriolic rancor. While there are valid criticisms around our promotion of this book that is no excuse for the fact that in some cases there have been threats of physical violence. We join with those in the Latinx community and others who have spoken out against such violence.

Unfortunately, our concerns about safety have led us to the difficult decision to cancel the book tour. Based on specific threats to booksellers and the author, we believe there exists real peril to their safety.

Rather than run away from this conversation, we want to move towards a solution. For that reason, we will be organizing a series of townhall meetings, where Jeanine will be joined by some of the groups who have raised objections to the book. We believe that this provides an opportunity to come together and unearth difficult truths to help us move forward as a community.