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NBC'S SNUB has put in jeopardy the Golden Globes' status as a key precursor to the Academy Awards.

NBC WON'T AIR '22 GOLDEN GLOBES

It's another big blow to foreign press group
after Times' report

By **Josh Rottenberg** and **Stacy Perman**

For years, NBC has billed the Golden Globe Awards as “Hollywood’s Party of the Year.” On Monday, the network announced that, for now at least, the party is over. Capping months of intensifying controversy sparked by a Times investigation into the Hollywood Foreign Press Assn., the tiny but powerful group that hands out the Golden Globe Awards, NBC said Monday that it will not air the show, a key precursor to the Oscars, in 2022.

The HFPA had been struggling to contain a mounting crisis since publication of the Times investigation that shed light on a range of alleged ethical and financial improprieties and revealed that the organization has no Black members. The Feb. 21 report set off a growing chorus of criticism from Time’s Up and powerful industry figures, including director Ava DuVernay and TV producer Shonda Rhimes.

Fighting to safeguard the Globes and their very existence, the HFPA announced a series of sweeping reforms last week, including increasing its historically insular membership ranks by 50% over the next 18 months, with a focus on recruiting Black members.

But the much-anticipated proposals did little to quell the controversy, with a number of Hollywood’s biggest power players — including Netflix, Amazon Studios, Warner Bros. and HBO — saying in recent days that they would not work with the HFPA until more mean-

ingful changes were enacted.

After two months of publicly backing the HFPA in an effort to preserve the viability of a show it has aired since 1996, NBC ultimately concluded that the situation was untenable.

“We continue to believe that the HFPA is committed to meaningful reform,” the network said in a statement. “However, change of this magnitude takes time and work, and we feel strongly that the HFPA needs time to do it right. As such, NBC will not air the 2022 Golden Globes. Assuming the organization executes on its plan, we are hopeful we will be in a position to air the show in January 2023.”

The move marks a stunningly rapid reversal of fortune for the nearly 80-year-old association of foreign journalists, which had come to occupy a perch of major influence in Hollywood despite years of criticism over its legitimacy, credibility and ethics and a string of scandals and lawsuits. In a single stroke, NBC’s decision to pull the Globes from a key spot as a precursor to the Academy Awards will remake the entire awards landscape for the foreseeable future.

“Regardless of the next air date of the Golden Globes, implementing transformational changes as quickly — and as thoughtfully — as possible remains the top priority for our organization,” the HFPA said in a statement. “We invite our partners in the industry to the table to work with us on the systemic reform that is long overdue, both in our organization as well as within the industry at large.”

A coalition of leading publicity agencies, which had allied with Time’s Up and other advocacy groups including Color of Change and GLAAD in pushing for reforms, issued a statement applauding the network’s decision.

“The depth and scope of change necessary requires time and sustained focus,” the statement read. “We must ensure the organization’s revision of its most fundamental governance, ethics and methodology reflects the worthy ideals on which the organization was originally founded.”

“This is a defining moment for Hollywood,” said Tina Tchen, president of Time’s Up. “Today, we have the opportunity to recognize that, by speaking up against one powerful but deeply flawed awards system, we can begin to reimagine a more equitable industry.”

NBC’s decision came shortly after news that Warner Bros. and HBO were following Netflix and Amazon Studios’ lead in cutting ties with the HFPA. With movie theaters beginning to reopen and next year’s awards season looming, many in Hollywood had grown impatient with the HFPA’s response to the crisis, which was widely criticized as fumbling and tone deaf and which included a number of embarrassing setbacks, including the unexpected departure of a diversity consultant brought on to help the group navigate the situation.

“While we commend the HFPA membership’s approval of the plan to move towards radical reform, we don’t believe the plan goes far enough in addressing the [breadth] of our concerns, nor does your timeline capture the immediate need by which these issues should be addressed,” WarnerMedia executives said in a letter Sunday to HFPA President Ali Sar. “WarnerMedia Studios and Networks will continue to refrain from direct engagement with the HFPA, including sanctioned press conferences and invitations to cover other industry events with talent, until these changes are implemented.”

Echoing criticisms from Time’s Up and the publicists’ coalition that launched a boycott of the group in mid-March, as well as blistering statements issued in recent days by A-listers Scarlett Johansson and Mark Ruffalo, WarnerMedia criticized the journalists’ association for too often neglecting Black-led projects. The letter also cited “racially insensitive, sexist and homophobic questions” by HFPA members in news conferences.

“For far too long, demands for perks, special favors and unprofessional requests have been made to our teams and to others across the industry,” WarnerMedia said. “We regret that as an industry, we have complained, but largely tolerated this behavior until now.”

The controversy over the HFPA’s lack of Black members overshadowed this year’s Globes, which saw its ratings plummet to an all-time low, dropping more than 60% from the 2020 telecast, a collapse in viewership that further eroded the position of the HFPA. The

group gave NBC a roughly \$20-million rebate to alleviate the loss, according to a person familiar with the deal who was not authorized to comment.

The HFPA's contract with NBC has ballooned in recent years, pouring money into the association's coffers. Last fiscal year, the organization pulled in \$27.4 million from the network, up from \$3.64 million in fiscal 2016-17, according to a budget document.

While the HFPA has increased its philanthropy in recent years, the Times investigation found that it has also funneled money to its own members in ways that some tax experts say could run afoul of Internal Revenue Service guidelines. In the fiscal year that ended in June 2020, the HFPA paid members \$1.929 million to serve on committees and perform other tasks. The HFPA, which has 86 members, has said its compensation practices are in line with other nonprofits' practices and vetted by outside consultants.

Notoriously fractious and bound by restrictive bylaws, the HFPA had struggled to respond to the crisis, which was exacerbated last month after former eight-term President Phil Berk sent an email to the group's entire membership that referred to Black Lives Matter as "a racist hate movement." Two days later, Berk was expelled from the group.

Many members felt blindsided by the criticisms, arguing internally that their association, which includes members from countries around the world, was already diverse.

Although many in Hollywood had long griped about the HFPA's practices, attitudes toward the group began to harden over its response to the calls for reform, said one high-level studio executive who was not authorized to comment publicly. "Seeing it laid bare, along with their unrepentant nature, turned the tide," the executive said. "The HFPA didn't think they did anything wrong. There was an opportunity for them to turn this around and be repentant and acknowledge their issues, but instead you got an attitude that they were the wronged party."

Behind the scenes, the executive said, there were numerous conversations involving the studios, Time's Up and a coalition of publicists as the crisis snowballed.

The HFPA attempted to continue to book screenings and line up access to the stars that represent its lifeblood, only to be met with a wall of resistance, as studios increasingly looked to prioritize their own relationships with talent over the benefit that the Globes historically conferred as a valuable marketing tool.

Within the HFPA, the mood among members grew increasingly apocalyptic and bewildered in recent days as Hollywood turned against the organization. One current member, who declined to speak on the record out of fear of retaliation, described the attitude among many members in a meeting last week as "desperate" and one of "panic seeping in."

With the 2022 Globes telecast canceled, it remains to be seen whether the HFPA — which has seen its awards show bounced off networks in the past after scandals — will be able to remake itself and repair its relationships with Hollywood in time for the 2023 telecasts.

But the absence of the historically boozy and festive Globes in next year's awards season is likely to have an enormous effect. In addition to pulling in millions of dollars annually in advertising for NBC, the Globes have long provided studios a way to boost their films on the road to the Oscars.

Some believe the damage to the Globes as a brand, however, could prove irreparable. In a sign of just how severe that damage has been, Tom Cruise — an actor long synonymous with Hollywood stardom — returned his three Globes trophies to the HFPA, Deadline reported.