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Miami Book Fair turns to Chapter 36

The annual book event brings several authors from the Caribbean and beyond

Clayton Gutzmore Nov 13, 2019 Updated Nov 15, 2019



Books are vehicles that informs us and entertains us. They can be tools that shape our imagination more than what other media could. South Florida's largest collection of these tools is on the horizon.

The Miami Book Fair, a massive gathering of books, authors, and book enthusiasts, kicks off this Sunday. With over 500 authors from across the country coming, this year's schedule is designed to hold discussions that aim to break barriers between each of us.

"I think we are going through some interesting times in our country, in our world and our culture. We have to make an effort to be in the same room together. If we keep being in our separate houses, watching our separate social media feeds and watching TV we are comfortable with, we are going to

get stuck,” said Lissette Mendez, program director of the Miami Book Fair. “I want everyone to come down and make a point to give an hour of your time to a writer or a set of ideas that you are not used to.”

The Miami Book Fair takes place Nov. 17-24 at the Miami Dade College Wolfson Campus in Downtown Miami. The book fair has been around for 36 years and has drawn as many as 7,500 people to the event. People such as Cornel West, “The Daily Show” host Trevor Noah and author Ta-nehisi Coates have participated in the fair. The Miami Book Fair has activities to engage anyone at any age. A kid’s zone is dedicated to showing the amusement in books for children. The book fair also has a street festival where local authors can sell their books and connect with guests who attend. All of this has sprouted from the South Florida community’s passion for books.

“This has grown to be one of the most important book events in the country. This is in great part to the people who come out every year who believe in books and dialogue to move our culture forward,” said Mendez.

Expect more authors from the Caribbean this year. According to Mendez, authors from almost every country of the Caribbean will be present at the book fair. Authors from Haiti will have their material in both Creole and English for those who have a preference. The American Black authors who are attending this year have compelling stories that people should catch.

Hanif Abdurraqib traces the creative career of A Tribe Called Quest in his latest book, “Go Ahead in the Rain: Notes to A Tribe Called Quest.”

Miami’s general litigation lawyer Marilyn Holifield partook in the historical eight-day sit-in at Swarthmore College in 1969. She was one of the eight students whose protest led to the increase of Black enrollment and hiring of Black staff. Her latest book, “Seven Sisters and a Brother” shares in detail of what happened back then.

On the comedic side, Damon Young, a columnist for The Root and editor-in-chief of “Very Smart Brothas” will be at the Miami Book Fair. His latest book, “What Doesn’t Kill You Makes You Blacker” explores the ever-shifting definitions of what it means to be Black and male in America.

“Come to my session if you want to be in a room with Black people who love Black people. Come to my session if you want to be in a room where you are allowed to laugh and be vulnerable,” said Young. “It feels surreal to me that people are inviting me to places to speak about my book and speak about me,” said Young.

Another author who has anticipation behind his appearance is Kadir Nelson. He has local ties as he is related to Salhia Nelson and Emily Gunter of the community development organization, Urgent Inc.

Nelson is an awarding artist who has done the illustrations for Dreamworks, Coke Cola and Michael Jackson. He is responsible for the album artwork for Drake's 2013 project, "Nothing Was the Same."

For schedules, visit miamibookfair.com.



Damon Young

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