

National Book Award winners coming to Miami book fair

By Laura D'Ocon

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The 2014 winners and finalists for the National Book Award, one of the most prestigious literary prizes in the United States, will participate in the Miami Book Fair International this fall after the awards are announced.

Harold Augenbraum, executive director of the National Book Foundation, said it would be the first time that the 20 winners and finalists have been able to travel to the fair after the prizes are announced. The longlist of contenders will be announced on Sept. 15; the finalists on Oct. 15. Winners will be announced and honored on Nov. 19 in New York; then winners and finalists will attend the book fair on Nov. 20.

"It's always been very difficult to coordinate ... because the dates always coincide," Augenbraum told El Nuevo Herald. "But this time we changed our dates."

The book fair, held every year on Miami Dade College's Wolfson campus, will be held this year Nov. 16-23. The National Book Awards are bestowed for the categories of fiction, non-fiction, poetry and children's literature

Augenbraum said the idea for coordinating the book awards with the fair came from Mitchell Kaplan, co-founder of the Miami event.

The Miami fair brings in more than 500 authors and 200,000 visitors each year, according to MDC.

Cuban-American author Carlos Eire, whose book *Waiting for Snow in Havana: Confessions of a Cuban Boy*, won the National Book Award in 2003 for non-fiction, said the Miami event is a great opportunity to meet prize winners and other writers.

"It's worthwhile for people to go and enjoy the International Book Fair, because from what I hear, each year there are more publishers who don't send their writers out to meet with readers because of the economic crisis," Eire said.

Eire added that authors and visitors also like the fact that C-SPAN, the TV cable and satellite channel, broadcasts all the fair events live and interviews most of the writers who are presenting their books.

"I've been to the fair twice, and honestly I think it is a really good opportunity to get to meet the authors as well as to promote the importance of literature among the community. For beginning writers, I think this is a great chance to meet with the professionals from the literature industry and

show them their work,” Eire said in a telephone interview from New Haven, Conn.

Eire also said that it’s not easy to be recognized as a writer, and he recommended, that writers need to practice constantly, without fear of rejection.

“I personally have a folder full of rejections before I got to be one of the winners of the National Book Award, but if you love writing and it is your passion, go for it,” he said.

For more information about participants and events in the book fair, visit www.miamibookfair.com.