

Women To Watch: Trend Tracker® With Lissette Mendez

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MIAMI (CBSMiami) — Voracious reader that she is, Trend Tracker® Tara Gilani loved hanging out with literacy advocate, Lissette Mendez.

The two bookworms met up at the glamorous Ritz Carlton South Beach for a conversation, in the presidential suite no less, about the 3 R's: Reading, reading and reading.

Mendez is the program director at the Center for Writing and Literature at Miami Dade [College](#) and the Co-Director of Miami Book Fair International. Lissette is by, for and about reading.

"As the program's director for the Center For Writing and Literature and the Miami Book Fair, I'm [responsible](#), with the team, for creating literary programming in South Florida. Anything that has to do with books and literature, I'm involved in one way or the other or I partner with other organizations that do the same kind of things that we do and together we build literary Miami," said Mendez.

Books are clearly Lissette's passion and obsession.

"Reading is my meditation. If I'm not reading a book I enjoy, I feel disoriented and not at peace with myself," said Mendez.

Co-founded 32 years ago by Dr. Eduardo Padron of Miami Dade College and Mitchell Kaplan of Books & Books, the Miami International Book Fair is one of the most prestigious literary events in the world. It is in this world that Mendez is most at [home](#).

"I go to New York, meet publishers and I go through catalogs and I want to bring almost every single writer down to Miami because those books, the stories, fiction, non-fiction, poetry, the stuff that's in those books I want other people to be able to experience it the way I experience it," said Mendez.

Miami Book Fair International is a labor of love that is loved by millions.

"Community building, and books, and it's for kids and old people and everyone in-between and they all come together and there's beer. What else can you possibly need," said Mendez. Tara chimed in with, "What's not to love?"

Helping promote literacy is Mendez's's passion.

"I always say that books saved my life," she said.

Mendez is helping improve lives by bringing books to as many people as she possibly can.

"We have creative writing workshops, conferences, people come from all over the country for those, we do a lot of literacy programming for kids in our community that don't have access to books," said Mendez.

Her message and her mantra are clear: Read!

"I love books. I love reading. I'm constantly pushing books. I feel like everybody should be able to fall into a book and find the world that you can find and you can only find them when you read," said Mendez.

Mendez has a [degree](#) in women's studies. "Love that," said Gilani.

"I'm surrounded by extremely powerful capable women and it gives me great joy to know I'm supporting them at the same time they're supporting me," said Mendez.

It's simple: Lissette loves literature.

"I love my job because I get free books. I love my life because I get paid for what I love to do the most – read," said Mendez. "I couldn't imagine doing anything else. I have a tattoo that says: "Born To Read."

Lissette Mendez from the heart, answered the Trend Tracker's round of questions: I want, "to do this for the rest of my life and make it even better." I won't "ever do anything that I don't feel is right." I wish "that there would be a little more kindness in the world." I promise "to answer your questions a lot faster next time."

Tara Gilani from the heart said, "And I promise not to rush so much, next time. Rock on Lissette Mendez, Woman To Watch!"

For more on Mendez and how you can help promote literacy in South Florida, read up here:

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