

# MIAMI BOOK FAIR'S SECOND WEEKEND IS HEAVY ON AUTHOR PANELS

BY TIM ELFRINK, CAROLINA DEL BUSTO, JESSICA WEISS, JUAN BARQUIN, NICOLE MARTINEZ

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John Leguizamo

*Courtesy of Miami Book Fair International*

In its 32nd year, **Miami Book Fair International** brings a bevy of authors – both world-

renowned and local gems – to downtown Miami for eight days of all things literature. With headliner Patti Smith having given a successful talk the opening night of the festival last Sunday, and the likes of Achy Obejas, Joyce Carol Oates, and Judith Miller sitting on panels this weekend, this year's fest indeed highlights women in the industry. Let's not forget about the men, though. Featuring plenty of celebrity guests – like Jesse Eisenberg and John Leguizamo – discussing their literary endeavors and a plethora of local authors stepping into the spotlight, the fair has a panel for just about every interest, no matter how unique.

**"I'm going to be there with my proudest work, sharing it with like-minded people."**

*New Times* caught up with five authors ahead of their appearances at the festival. All will speak at Miami Dade College's Wolfson Campus at 300 NE Second Ave. in downtown this weekend. For more info, visit [miamibookfair.com](http://miamibookfair.com).



Judith Miller

*Courtesy of Miami Book Fair International*

**Judith Miller.** The *New York Times* headlines came fast and furious in 2003 as the Bush administration made its case for invading Iraq. Intelligence sources suggested that Saddam Hussein had caches of chemical weapons, the *Times* reported, and that he was pushing for nukes. At the forefront of that coverage was the pugnacious, Pulitzer-winning veteran Judith Miller.

By the next year, though, when occupying U.S. troops still couldn't find those WMDs, it was

Miller who took the brunt of scorn from critics who thought the *Times* had been too enthusiastic in joining Dubya on the war drums.

More than a decade later, Miller is now revisiting those stories, correcting the record in places and taking caustic aim at those critics in others. In all, her new memoir, *The Story*, adds much-needed context to the buildup to a war that everyone now recognizes as a catastrophe.

"When I think back to what I got wrong, I overestimated the threat," she says. "It's clear now that overestimating threats has just as much of a cost as underestimating them. I'd spent years thinking if we'd done more, 9/11 might not have happened. But in this case, we did more, and look at what happened." (*Saturday, November 21, at 10:30 a.m. in room 2106*) – *Tim Elfrink*

**John Leguizamo.** Comedians aren't known for their warmth or inviting nature, so when Colombian-American actor John Leguizamo opens up about his upbringing and invites the whole world in, things can get a little ghetto. The star of the HBO standup hit *Ghetto Klown*, Leguizamo decided to turn his skit into a more tangible form that is naturally autobiographical in nature. With his new graphic novel of the same name, Leguizamo explains that out of all his shows, *Ghetto Klown* was the "most comprehensive and expansive," hence the best one to revisit and adapt.

When thinking about how to take something as visual as a standup show and turn it into a book, he quickly landed on the graphic novel. It was an easy choice for the comedian because, he says, "Graphic novels are my favorite form of storytelling – especially when they deal with personal things and take you outside the box of the normal comic book world." Thrilled to be a part of the book fair, Leguizamo says with an audible smile, "I'm very proud of this book, and I feel like the artists did such a fantastic job – every stroke so brilliant, thoughtful, and emotional. So I'm going to be there with my proudest work and sharing it with like-minded people." (*Saturday, November 21, at 5:30 p.m. at the Swamp and Sunday, November 22, at 6:30 p.m. in the Chapman Conference Center*) – *Carolina del Busto*





Achy Obejas

*Courtesy of Miami Book Fair International*

**Achy Obejas.** Call Achy Obejas anything but a jack-of-all-trades. The accomplished author, journalist, and translator claims the only thing she peddles are words. "I always think it's really funny when people say 'the multitalented Achy Obejas,' because actually I have very limited talents," she says, a statement that's unequivocally untrue. With three critically acclaimed novels, countless literary awards, a Pulitzer Prize, and a reputation as one of the nation's finest literary translators, Obejas is certainly one of the most prolific writers of the 21st Century.

Her latest endeavor, a novel she claims is "insanely about Cuba," is taking her an unusually long time to finish – likely because she's been busy working on a new short-story collection, a taste of which fans will enjoy during her reading at the book fair, and a new MFA program in translation at Mills College in California, which Obejas put together and designed herself while in residency at Mills over the past three years. "My wife would tell you that if I wasn't doing all this other stuff, I'd probably be done by now," she says. (*Sunday, November 22, at 12 p.m. in Building 8, third floor, room 8303*) – *Nicole Martinez*

**Joyce Carol Oates.** The seeds of Joyce Carol Oates' literary musings were planted early, before the young girl could write. *Alice in Wonderland* – a gift from her grandmother Blanche – was, according to Oates, the "singular book that changed my life." Before she began to craft and manipulate words, the curious farm girl was inspired by Alice to draw stories featuring characters like cats and red-feathered chickens.

To Oates, Alice's explored universe marked the beginning of her own observation of the world "as an indecipherable, essentially absurd but fascinating spectacle." Many years later, the yearning to write about it has resulted in an impressive oeuvre. The 77-year-old Oates has penned 40 novels, plus stories, poems, and essays. She won the National Book Award for 1969's *Them*. Her other notable works include *A Garden of Earthly Delights* and *We Were the Mulvaneys*.

For those who write, Oates' newest book, *The Lost Landscape*, will resonate as an insightful explanation of the setting and curiosities that shaped one of our nation's most cherished novelists. For everyone else, it's a delightful, sensitive, transparent coming-of-age tale of the many landscapes that make up an early life. Against its array of rural landscapes and the relationships that fill them, Oates' beautiful collection offers honesty, introspection, and discovery. (*Sunday, November 22, at 12:30 p.m. in the auditorium, room 1261*) – *Jessica Weiss*





Cory Doctorow

*Courtesy of Miami Book Fair International*

**Cory Doctorow.** Discussing his latest graphic novel, Cory Doctorow explains how women are breaking down the nonsensical barrier that the gaming world has erected. *In Real Life*, featuring gorgeous artwork by Jen Wang, tells the story of videogame player Anda, who is confronted with a series of moral dilemmas within the massive multiplayer online role-playing game (MMORPG) she recently joined. "Women make some of the best gamers in the world," Doctorow writes in an email interview with *New Times*. "Women like Anita Sarkeesian, Zoë Quinn, and Brianna Wu are putting themselves in the targeting reticles as the mouth-breathing poster children for fragile masculinity by refusing to back down. Their bravery is awesome to behold, and they are emboldening a generation of women and allies who refuse to be silenced by the Internet Tough Guy Patrol."

In a world where, as he rightfully points out, "most game consoles are bought by women," *In Real Life* offers girls some representation as gamers. His opening statements in the graphic novel discuss the economics of gaming and the fact that the times in which we live – and even the internet – have changed the way we band together and communicate for the better. (Sunday, November 22, at 12:30 and 4 p.m. in the Magic Screening Room) – Juan Barquin

### **Miami Book Fair International**

Through Sunday, November 22, at Miami Dade College, 300 NE Second Ave., Miami. Prices and times for events vary. Visit [miamibookfair.com](http://miamibookfair.com).

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