

# MDC's Miami Book Fair to Launch ReadingEast Featuring Authors Exploring Middle Eastern and South Asian Experiences

October 26, 2022

As part of its 39<sup>th</sup> edition, **Miami Dade College's** (MDC) **Miami Book Fair** (MBF) will launch the new **ReadingEast**, a program that showcases the work of authors in fiction, nonfiction, and poetry exploring Middle Eastern and South Asian experiences. Representing nationalities from Bangladesh to Palestine, this program embodies the Fair's vision of an inclusive, attentive, and sustainable community of writers, readers, and collaborators across all disciplines and cultures.

The program will feature several renowned authors, including Iranian **Reza Aslan**, a leading expert in world religions and an internationally celebrated writer professor, Emmy and Peabody-nominated producer and a recipient of the prestigious James Joyce Award, as well as Turkish journalist and author **Mustafa Akyol**, who writes columns for Turkish publications like *Hurriyet Daily News*, the Middle-East-focused *Al-Monitor.com* and *The New York Times*.

Unless otherwise noted, ReadingEast programs will take place in-person at MDC Wolfson Campus during the weekend Street Fair, Nov. 19 and 20. All events are free with Street Fair admission. **Visit [MiamiBookFair.com](http://MiamiBookFair.com) for more information on accessing the Fair.**

## **ReadingEast In-Person Events:**

### **SATURDAY, NOV. 19**

#### **12 p.m. Room 3209, Bldg. 2, 2nd floor**

In conversation with author and journalist **Meenakshi Ahamed**, award-winning author, poet, activist, and teacher **Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni** will discuss *The Last Queen*, the story of Maharani Jindan, the indomitable queen regent of Punjab who fought the British in many ingenious ways. This session will also feature the work of Bombay-born bestselling author **Thrity Umrigar** and her new novel *Honor*, which tells a riveting and immersive story of two couples and the sometimes dangerous and heartbreaking challenges of love across a cultural divide.

#### **2 p.m. The Lab 1101, Bldg. 1, 1<sup>st</sup> floor**

Pakistani American children's book author, essayist, and interfaith activist **Saadia Faruqi** will introduce *Marya Khan and the Incredible Henna Party* the start of a charming new chapter book series about a third grader whose plans may backfire but whose persistence and heart are inspiring. She will be joined by New York Times bestselling author, educator, and community

activist **Renée Watson** on *Ways to Share Joy*, her charming young middle-grade book trilogy starring Ryan Hart, a girl who is pure spirit and sunshine.

**2 p.m. Room 3209, Bldg. 3, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor**

### **Palestinian Lives: Past & Present**

Three authors of Palestinian origin gather for a lively discussion with poet **Lena Khalaf Tuffaha**, co-founder of the *Institute for Middle East Understanding*. **Etaf Rum** on *A Woman is No Man: A Novel*, the story of three generations of Palestinian-American women struggling to express their individual desires within the confines of their Arab culture in the wake of shocking, intimate violence in their community. **Susan Abulhawa** on *Against the Loveless World: A Novel*, where Nahr, a young Palestinian woman, fights for a better life for her family as she travels as a refugee throughout the Middle East, and **Suad Amiry** on *Mother of Strangers: A Novel* based on the true story of two Jaffa teenagers, Subhi, a 15-year-old mechanic, and Shams, the 13-year-old student he hopes to marry one day.

**3 p.m. Room 2106, Bldg. 2, 1<sup>st</sup> floor**

Three authors share personal stories with their respective memoirs. Attorney, advocate, podcaster, New York Times bestselling author and executive producer of the four-part HBO documentary series *The Case Against Adnan Syed* **Rabia Chaudry** will talk about *A Memoir of Food, Fat, and Family*, a warm, intimate account about food, body image, and growing up in a loving but sometimes oppressively concerned Pakistani immigrant family. **Rafael Agustin** (TV writer, *Jane The Virgin*) discusses *Illegally Yours*, a funny and poignant story about how as a teenager he accidentally discovered he was undocumented and how that revelation turned everything he thought he knew about himself and his family upside down. **Erika L. Sanchez** on *Crying in the Bathroom*, a memoir-in-essays that probes the author's experiences with mental health, first-generation trauma, womanhood and motherhood.

**3 p.m. Live Arts Lab, Bldg. 1, 1<sup>st</sup> floor.**

A writer, activist and actor whose career spans film, animation as well as roles in hit TV series such as *30 Rock*; *Weeds*; and *Whitney*, **Maulik Pancholy**, author of *Nikhil Out Loud*, **a new middle grade novel about a gay Indian American boy who learns the power of using his voice, will delve into a discussion** with fellow youth authors, **Chantel Acevedo**, *The Curse on Spectacle Key*; **Christina Diaz Gonzalez**, *Invisible: A Graphic Novel*, and **Sherri Winston**, *Lotus Bloom and the Afro Revolution*; introduction by Jack & Jill of America, South Miami Chapter.

**3 p.m. Chapman Center, Bldg. 3, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor**

Indian-born journalist **Meenakshi Ahamed** presents her critically acclaimed book *A Matter of Trust: India U.S. Relations from Truman to Trump*, that explores how 70 years of India-US relations has shown that despite the two countries being democracies, not only are they far apart culturally but the intersection of their critical interests is relatively modest. Ahamed will be joined by **Philip Short**, author of *Putin*, an unflinching, hard-hitting, and objective biography of

the Russian president that provides the whole tale, up to the present day, and **Michael Beckley** on *Dangerzone: The Coming Conflict with China*, a provocative and urgent analysis of the U.S.– China rivalry.

**4:30 p.m. Room 3209, Bldg. 3, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor**

**ReadingEast** closes the day with Turkish author **Mustafa Akyol**, a senior fellow at the Cato Institute and opinion writer for *The New York Times*, whose book *Reopening Muslim Lives: A Return to Reason, Freedom, and Tolerance* both diagnoses “the crisis of Islam” in the modern world and offers a way forward. Diving deep into Islamic theology, and also sharing lessons from his own life story, he reveals how Muslims lost the universalism that made them a great civilization in their earlier centuries.

**SUNDAY, NOV. 20**

**12 p.m. Room 6100, Bldg. 6, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor**

On *Brown Girl Chromatography*, Bangladeshi-American poet and writer **Anuradha Bhowmik** interrogates issues of race, class, gender, and sexuality in a post-9/11 America while navigating her millennial childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. The poems follow Bhowmik as she learns about the cruelties in both American and Bangladeshi worlds without any guidance or instruction on how to survive these conflicting spheres. She is joined by fellow poets **Rio Cortez** on *Golden Ax*, **Jasminne Mendez** on *City Without Altar*, and **Alexandra Lytton Regalado** on *Relinquenda*.

**2 p.m. Room 8201, Bldg. 8, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor**

Sri Lankan born writer and activist **Ru Freeman**, author of *Sleeping Alone* a collection of rich and textured stories about crossing borders, both real and imagined, the book asks one of the fundamental questions of our times: What is the toll of feeling foreign in one’s land, to others, or even to oneself? Writers in this session include **Angie Cruz** author of *How Not to Drown in a Glass of Water*, an electrifying and indelible new novel about a woman who has lost everything but the chance to finally tell her story, and **Cleyvis Natera** on *Neruda on the Park*, a New York Times Editors’ Choice is an exhilarating debut novel following members of a Dominican family in New York City who take radically different paths when faced with encroaching gentrification.

**3 p.m. Room 2106, bldg. 2, 1<sup>st</sup> floor**

Jordanian American author **Diana Abu-Jaber** will present *Fencing with The King: A Novel*, a tale of middle eastern intrigue and adventure. She will be joined by novelists **Kali Fajardo-Anstine** author of *Woman of Light: A Novel*; **Namwali Serpell**, *The Furrows: A Novel*, and **Jacinda Townsend** on *Mother Country: A Novel*.

**3 p.m. Room 8202, bldg. 8, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor**

Author **Zain Khalid** presents *Brother Alive*, an astonishing debut novel about family, sexuality, and capitalist systems of control, following three adopted brothers who live above a mosque in

Staten Island with their imam father. Other authors in this session include **Kalani Pickhart** on *I Will Die in a Foreign Land*, and **Leila Mottley** on *Nightcrawling: A Novel*.

**3:30 p.m. Room 8201, Bldg. 8, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor**

Writer and filmmaker **Fatimah Asghar** will introduce *When We Were Sisters: A Novel*, a heartrending, lyrical debut work of fiction, that traces the intense bond of three orphaned siblings who, after their parents die, are left to raise one another. She will be joined by **Rasheed Newson** on *My Government Means to Kill Me: A Novel*, and **Moriel Rothman-Zecher** on *Before All the World: A Novel*.

**3:30 p.m. Room 6100, Bldg. 6, 1<sup>st</sup> floor**

Lebanese poet **Zeina Hashem Beck** presents *O*, her third poetry collection and according to NPR, “a musical compilation of poems,” where she embraces the multitudes – mother, citizen, poet, warrior – and presents herself to the reader as one whole. This session will also feature the work of fellow poets **Betsy Aoki** on *Breakpoint*, **Sun Yung Shin** on *The Wet Hex*, and **Yanyi** on *Dream of the Divided Field: Poems*.

**4:30 p.m. Room 2106, Bldg. 2, 1<sup>st</sup> floor**

**ReadingEast** finishes on a high note with Iranian bestselling author **Reza Aslan**, who will hold a discussion about *An American Martyr in Persia: The Epic Life and Tragic Death of Howard Baskerville*, an erudite and piercing biography of Howard Baskerville, a 22-year-old Christian missionary from South Dakota who traveled to Persia (modern-day Iran) in 1907 for a two-year stint teaching English and preaching the Gospel. The Persian students Baskerville educated in English in turn educated him about their struggle for democracy, ultimately inspiring him to leave his teaching post and join them in their fight against a tyrannical shah and his British and Russian backers. In 1909, Baskerville was killed in battle alongside his students, but his martyrdom spurred on the revolutionaries who succeeded in removing the shah from power, signing a new constitution, and rebuilding parliament in Tehran.

**ReadingEast Virtual Events:**

**TUESDAY, NOV. 15**

**Noon on-demand event available through MiamiBookFairOnline.com.**

Award-winning author **Shruti Swamy** will be in conversation with **Melissa Fu** on *Peach Blossom Spring: A Novel* and **Tsering Yangzom Lama** on *We Measure the Earth with Our Bodies: A Novel*.

**WEDNESDAY, NOV. 16**

**Noon on-demand event available through MiamiBookFairOnline.com.**

Beirut-born Palestinian novelist and poet **Maya Abu Al-Hayyat** will discuss her book *You Can Be the Last Leaf: Selected Poems*, which draws on two decades of work by the author.