



There's a wave coming. One can hear it in the sky.

*A Heroic Sonnet Crown for Mayor Daniella Levine Cava
and the Residents of Miami-Dade County*

by 28 Miami-Dade (and neighboring area) poets

Edited by Maureen Seaton and Nicole Tallman

INTRODUCTION

Last year, Maureen and I started a new tradition of collaborating on a poetry project for the Mayor and residents of Miami-Dade County. Our first Heroic Sonnet Crown, "[We Who Rise From Saltwater, Let's Sing!](#)" was the result of that initial spark, and some of our fellow sonneteers decided to continue on the journey with us for round two. "There's a wave coming. One can hear it in the sky." is Miami-Dade County's second Heroic Sonnet Crown for the Mayor and residents of Miami-Dade County, and this one is devoted to a topic that is especially critical to our County: the environment.

For our County's first (that we know of!) Heroic Eco-Crown, Maureen and I followed a process similar to that of our first Crown: We simply asked that each of our 14 poet-pairs be prepared to write a 14-line sonnet that was enviro/eco themed, used no foul language or hate speech, and maintained the integrity of the collaborative chain by starting with the last line from the previous poet-pair's sonnet, or a play on that line.

To get the ball rolling for round two, I wrote the first line of Sonnet I and sent it to Maureen via email. Maureen responded with the second line via email, and we continued to send lines back and forth to each other over the next few days until we reached 14 lines. We then passed the last line of our sonnet on to the next poet-pair in the chain, Denise Duhamel and Julie Marie Wade.

From there, each poet-pair had no more than 7 days to work on their sonnet and return it to Maureen and me via email. We would then pass the last line of that sonnet on to the next poet-pair, starting the clock for the next collaboration. This exercise continued week by week over the summer, with prompts sent out each Tuesday morning. When Maureen and I received Sonnet XIV, we took a few days to collaborate on the Mastersonnet: the 15th poem in the Crown, crafted from lines from the previous 14 sonnets.

This Heroic Eco-Crown (15 eco-sonnets by 28 Miami-Dade and neighboring poets) is a tribute to our Water Warrior, Mayor Daniella Levine Cava, and the residents of Miami-Dade County. We hope this project inspires our readers to be even greater stewards of our planet.

Thank you so much for reading.

With gratitude,



Nicole Tallman
Poetry Ambassador for Miami-Dade County
April 2, 2023

I

The night Mother Earth died, we were busy on our phones.
The sea had risen above our ears in the dripping Everglades,
and the last bald eagle unnested herself
to fly to where the sun would rise in defiance.
Venus and Mars felt a funeral in their force,
Mercury stayed in perpetual retrograde, and the Moon lost face.
The celestial death rally could be heard galaxies away
where the few with billions had hoped to ransack and regroup.

The night Mother Earth thrived, we put away our phones.
She came back so strong, we hardly recognized her
and vowed to honor her each day forward—
her sonorous sea voice, the spirited silence of her forests.
The next morning, the flowers bloomed bigger and brighter.
Welcome, we said to the whales & warblers: Welcome back!

(Maureen Seaton & Nicole Tallman)

II

“Welcome,” we said to the whales & warblers,
to the orange iguana wagging his dewlap,
to the lime green lizards suctioned to our screens.
I dreamt alligators in my dishwasher,

their crooked teeth gnashing at the pots and pans.
I asked, “Are you lonely?” In unison, they answered “Yes.”
Leafwing butterflies and gopher tortoises look for friends
in the twospike crabgrass and pineland sandmat.

They’re lonely, too, like the crocodile who came to Hollywood Beach
and frolicked for hours alone in the waves. Safety, rescue, peril:
loggerhead eggs, yellow cones to protect their nests.
We tiptoe around the caution tape of everyday life,

one banner proclaiming “Bienvenidos,” another
“Cuidado”—high voltage, slippery when wet.

(Denise Duhamel & Julie Marie Wade)

III

Cuidado – high voltage, slippery when wet—
what moves through these Everglades—monitor
tegu, and python—each speaks a secret
dialect, the silent song of all migrators.

Like southbound brine this grassy river flows,
and with it, the stories of our elders.
We aim to follow, to see where it goes—
what other gods lie there in rushing waters?

We build our dreams in skyscraping worship
of blushing skies, of orange groves sown
into the land, and cling to its hip
as walls, shaken by fall's parade of storms,

are kept aloft by rum, offered and sipped.
We claim this place and make it our own.

(P. Scott Cunningham & Fabienne Josaphat)

IV

We claim this place and make it our own
As if we had the right to take the best view, the killer spot.

Miami, queen of mangrove, of river womb, your gumbo
limbo leaves were dappled with light before we learned to wave.

Your Flamboyant tree shook her seed-pod maracas before our bodies
danced, your soil fermented and flowered before we could count

upward and multiply—beachward, mudward, onward. We survey
what we take and dredge your shores, our plastic-wrapped afterparty heaves

sewage and pesticides, red tide and algae bloom, schools of suicidal fish—
evidence of what we took from you to get here.

We don't thank you. We expect you to write us a love letter
whose salutation reads: *Querido Amo(r)*.

As if to own means to love.
As if you ever needed us to survive.

(Mia Leonin & Caridad Moro-Gronlier)

V

As if you ever needed us to survive—
we who found your glittering shore by boat,
who hacked into your Everglades on foot,
who macheted mangrove sentinels, elided

soldierwood, whose peppercorn seeds explode,
sound of gunpowder, of freedom, of America,
fireworks that startle the anhinga,
shot from safe waters, devil bird, snake bird

foretelling the fall of the Pa-Hay-Okee,
the forever river, a grassy expanse explored,
then claimed and reclaimed, bog filled in for more
settlers, more homes, more roads, more levees.

We took but didn't give back or replace
and you wouldn't give in to our unholy embrace.

(Jen Karetnick & Catherine Esposito Prescott)

VI

And you wouldn't give in to our unholy embrace
In front of Off/Site beneath the gumbo limbo tree
Where once and still we unholied souls of history
Let fly our hearts, and hips, in blasphemous bliss -
We roil and twist to the mysteries of calypso
With mango juice and salt-sweat stickying our tongues.
Our big city of magical dolphins opens us up
To the unrelenting nightlife of twists and turbulence
Beyond the disinformation highway, where zero
Marks the frost line and the flood line and the lot line,
Sometimes. Sometimes it's just a place to find yourself
Screaming, or slapped with sound. The ibis, Jitney,
Manatee. Don't we all dream of free breathing deep
Underwater, us, amphibious, surviving the drought?

(Jubi Arriola-Headley & Neil de la Flor)

VII

“Underwater, us amphibious, surviving the drought?”
said Bryan Norcross as he clung to a buoy,
surrounded by fragments of turquoise glass from
La Ermita and nurse sharks. Lights, oozing eos,
a magnetic midnight hues baja blast and martian,
he warned, “we are all in danger of extinction.”
We’ll puff up our bodies brighter than cadmium
fireflies ripping through the night. Cast flare for
an open casket: almost dying by thirst,
a tapirage-collage. Parrots from the abandoned
jungle are sirens, with their feathers colored by tapping rage.
Our body of water curls, fashions a lighthouse out of foam
and falls; we both ignite, extinguish, then
trill: *agua viva*, what will be our understory?

(Clayre Benzadón & Melissa Gomez)

VIII

Agua viva, what will be our understory?
The coral sway and dance with the current,
asking for their colors to remain-
schools of fish twinkle like all of the lights in the skyline
no matter the confines of human-made time.
Oil spills and drills keep the sea creatures awake,
columbines attempting to grow through cement cracks.

Will they bear witness to our heads
hard as the cement and metal that burden us too heavy
to dance Magalenha in the purple hues of a sun-liquored Atlantic?
Or because it knows the blossom of its own body,
the capoeira of dolphins jumping through dolphins, will the sea
simply leave us to our demise breaking to find our paradise?
It is here, it whispers through the waves. *We are already here*.

(Neysa King & Catalina Rose Otero)

IX

We are already here, I whisper, here.
Here: a city of waves. Here: arrival.
Tangle-rooted and steeped in salt, under
laden cumulonimbus clouds we wait,
sip cortados—veins flash with caffeine dreams.
You see, this port is made home by its sky—
a vaulted arch hued blue by our voices.
How long will our sibilants linger here?
Para siempre, I hum, *para siempre*:
I am Miami's dawn, Miami's night.
Our heaven, an ether dome, a mirror
to the bright constellation below it.

Public installation of reflections.
Private kinship with this district of light.

(Ana Maria Caballero & Yaddyra Peralta)

X

Private kinship with this district of light,
from skyscrapers that sparkle, twinned by the water,
to the blue glow of the Colony Hotel, the lights are never
still. And still we know the flare before the match is extinguished,
the heat before the rising. Every storm carries away more sand.
The animals whisper its coming, hermit crab to stingray, octopus
to blue tang. Algae blooms are quietly fed by stormwater and leaks.

Offshore industries leech coral reefs, docile manatees starve,
toes of long-legged mangrove root: white, red, black
curl and cling to shrinking lace edges of the shoreline.
Saharan hot breath, dust blows through jalousie windows,
coats citrus groves, confuses honeybees, frangipani drop petals
early or bloom late, orange and black scallops, proclaimed queen
of fluttering creatures, monarchs diminishing return.

(Judy Ireland & Susannah Simpson)

XI

Milkweed for fluttering creatures, the monarch's diminishing return.
Bees deciding whether or not to exist surprise my radermachera
trained into a single flowering trunk, like the sea grape tree,
both sculptured into frozen daiquiri shade for the yard and house.

The neon in Miami's sky serves to entice as much as warn:
"too much heat, too much heat, too much heat. Slow down."
And the undersea tunnel connects to a floating paradise over
a sinking sea, champagne bubbles above a darkening blue wake.

The other day, a blue macaw screamed continuously atop
the widow's peak of an invasive Australian pine, her partner lost.
How much must our city, named after Big Waters, lose before
we also scream: "enough, enough, enough. Stop."

A mother manatee knows exactly where it's safe. The sleepy
channel (no wake zone) offers her and us a reprieve.

(Carolina Hospital & Nicole Hospital-Medina)

XII

The channel's no-wake zone offers her & us a reprieve
until again we gyrate through the tug-of-war among
sun & moon & easterlies that remember, beneath carbon's
& water's rise, harried caravels & brigs —but what about

the song & dance, the bow & curtsy of sludge & balloons,
cleaned up only to come back tenfold. Listen to the
parrots' new song: "Not me, not me!" It's Never Me.
Never me: our moonwalk, our lip service upon the
squishies of posterity. Watch as the Miami River flood

plain morphs condos into reefs, as Atlantis on Brickell, devolves
into a snorkelers paradise: "First Floor, Amberjacks..."
second floor, dead rays & beach glass born of flat-screens
pocked with dwarf cordilleras of happy little barnacles

—there's a wave coming. One can hear it in the sky.

(Lenny DellaRocca & Michael Mackin O'Mara)

XIII

There's a wave coming. One can hear it in the sky.

Lightning flashes the downpour, a curtain submerging the tile roofs.

A wash of hammer falls, windows humming. The inundation thrills.

The memory of my mother takes me by the hand, through the downpour she appears again,
making me feel brave, whispering to myself, I know I can.

Thunder can't clap louder than the feeling there's a wave coming, more from my chest than from the sky.

My ephemeral feelings now drying on that rainbow, a light prism so intimately mine and everyone's
at once.

The sky divides, sunlight showers color back onto us, through the steam rising off the pavement.

We step among these clouds.

Salvation is here, where homeward feelings anchor us among the greenery, where everyone has a cloud
head to claim as their own.

We are here, washed by the rain, dried by the light, shining with life,
carried on by the wave.

(Oscar Fuentes & Adam Schachner)

XIV

The wave claps the shore. The moon tells the ocean
when the show is over. The earth tells the moon
I miss you. Behind the earth's curtain, the aquifer
sighs. The mangroves curl into the sandcake dirt

like ingrown hairs. Someone removes their top
allowing the sun to burn evenly across their chest.
A bird migrates. A shell is, suddenly, hollow.
Yet, the sound of waves is all that the ear hears.

A susurrantion against rocks, skyscrapers, noveled sins,
the kind that floods earth and brings its surface closer
to sky just for the sun to set everything on fire.
The moon a shameful bystander. I cannot miss this.

Or you. Against the banyan. Kissing. Inhaling branches
or trunks; I cannot differentiate your migration from forsake.

(Stephanie Lane Sutton & Ayesha Raees)

XV

“Welcome,” we said to the whales & warblers.
“Cuidado”—high voltage, slippery when wet.

We claim this place and make it our own
as if you ever needed us to survive.

You wouldn’t give in to our unholy embrace.
Underwater, us, amphibious, surviving the drought.

Agua viva, what will be our understory?
It is here, it whispers through the waves. We are already

here. Private kinship with this district of light
of fluttering creatures, monarchs diminishing return.

The sleepy channel (no wake zone) offers us a reprieve.
There's a wave coming. One can hear it in the sky.

And we are here, carried on by the wave.
The wave claps the shore, the moon tells the sea.

(28 Miami-Dade & Neighbor Poets)

CONTRIBUTORS

Jubi Arriola-Headley (he/they) is a Blacqueer poet & storyteller, a first-generation United Statesian, and author of [original kink](#) (Sibling Rivalry Press, 2020). He holds an MFA in poetry from the University of Miami and lives with his husband in South Florida.

Clayre Benzadón is an MFA graduate alumnus at the University of Miami, *Split Lip* poetry reader, and Broadsided Press's Instagram editor. Her chapbook, *Liminal Zenith*, was published by SurVision Books. She's been published in *14poems*, *SWWIM*, *Fairy Tale Review*, *ANMLY*, and *Grist Journal*. Find more about her here: clayrebenzadon.com.

Ana Maria Caballero is a Colombian-American poet and artist. Her work has won the Beverly International Prize and Colombia's José Manuel Arango Poetry Prize. She's been nominated for a Pushcart, a Best of the Net, and been a finalist for the Academy of American Poets Prize. Find her online at anamariacaballero.com.

P. Scott Cunningham is the author of *Ya Te Veo* (University of Arkansas, 2018), selected by Billy Collins for the Miller Williams Poetry Series, and the founder and executive director of O, Miami.

Neil de la Flor is a writer and educator. He is the author of three solo collections of poetry, including *The Ars Magna for the Manifold Dimensions of z* (JackLeg Press, 2021), *An Elephant's Memory of Blizzards* (Marsh Hawk Press, 2013), and *Almost Dorothy* (Marsh Hawk Press, 2010), and four collaborative books. He can be reached at neildelaflor.com.

Lenny DellaRocca is founding editor and former publisher of *South Florida Poetry Journal*. He's the author of four poetry collections, and his work has appeared in *One*, *Slipstream*, *Nimrod*, *Seattle Review*, *POEM*, *Laurel Review*, *Fairy Tale Review*, *The Meadow*, and *Hawaii Pacific Review*. He was interviewed by Grace Cavalieri for *The Poet and The Poem* on NPR and has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize. He has invented the Epoem, a new form on display at his new poetry journal, *Witchery*, which is embedded online at *South Florida Poetry Journal*.

Denise Duhamel's most recent book of poetry is *Second Story* (Pittsburgh, 2021). Her other titles include *Scald*; *Blowout*; *Ka-Ching!*; *Two and Two*; *Queen for a Day: Selected and New Poems*; *The Star-Spangled Banner*; and *Kinky*. She is a distinguished university professor in the MFA program at Florida International University.

Catherine Esposito Prescott's poetry collection, *Accidental Garden*, won Gunpowder Press's 2022 Barry Spacks Poetry Prize (selected by Danusha Laméris) and is forthcoming in 2023. She is also the author of the chapbooks *Maria Sings* and *The Living Ruin*, and co-founder and editor in chief of *SWWIM Every Day*.

Oscar Fuentes, aka The Biscayne Poet, is a multidisciplinary artist based in Miami. He is the author of several books of poetry and prose, including: *Beautiful Women Will Never Know*; *4 Nights With Betsy*; *Vagabond: Selected Poems, Short Stories, and Plays*; *Welcome Home: Poems inspired by 1Hotel South Beach*; *My Heart Points Back*; and *For the Love of Leotards*. Oscar is represented by Eaton Literary Agency and uses typewriter tape for a mustache.

Melissa Gomez is a queer Cuban-American producer and photographer based in Miami, FL. She serves as production coordinator and digital storyteller for O, Miami. In her spare time, Melissa enjoys discovering new R&B, watching documentaries, and finding solace at the nearest Flanigan's restaurant.

Carolina Hospital authored *Key West Nights and Other Aftershocks*; *The Child of Exile: A Poetry Memoir*; *Myth America*, a collaboration with Maureen Seaton, Holly Iglesias, Nicole Hospital-Medina; and the novel *A Little Love*, under the pen name C. C. Medina. She edited *Los Atrevidos: Cuban American Writers* and *A Century of Cuban Writers in Florida*.

Nicole Hospital-Medina instructs writing at the University of Miami. Her poems are featured in *Poems from the Lockdown*, *Feminine Rising: Power and Invisibility*, *Women Write Resistance: Resist Gender Violence*, *The Miami Herald*, and more. She collaborated with poets Carolina Hospital, Maureen Seaton and Holly Iglesias to publish *Myth America*.

Judy Ireland's poems have appeared in *Hotel Amerika*, *Calyx*, *Saranac Review*, *Eclipse*, *Cold Mountain*, and other journals. Her book, *Cement Shoes*, won the 2013 Sinclair Poetry Prize. She is co-director for Performance Poets of the Palm Beaches, an editor for *South Florida Poetry Journal (SoFloPoJo)*, and she teaches at Palm Beach State College.

Fabienne Josaphat's poems have been anthologized in *Eight Miami Poets* and *On Shore, Poets of the Caribbean and Caribbean Diaspora*. Her work has appeared in *Grist Journal*, *Fourth Genre*, the *Hong Kong Review*, and *The African American Review*. Her novel *Dancing in the Baron's Shadow* was published by Unnamed Press.

Jen Karetnick is the author of 11 poetry collections, including the forthcoming *Inheritance with a High Error Rate*, winner of the 2022 Cider Press Review Book Award, and *What Forges Us Steel: The Judge Judy Poems* (Alternating Current Press, 2023). Co-founder and managing editor of [SWWIM Every Day](#), she works as a food-travel journalist and cookbook/guidebook author.

Neysa King's writing has been featured by O Miami, Bread Loaf Writers' Conference, Community of Writers, *Sand Berlin Literary Journal*, *Darling Magazine*, *SWWIM Every Day* and others. She is the author of two poetry chapbooks, *Rainbow Body* (2021) and *My Heart Points Back* (2022). She is the co-founder and executive director of Miami Poetry Club, a nonprofit dedicated to helping Miami writers improve their craft. She lives in Miami Beach. Follow her @neysaking and @miamipoetryclub.

Mia Leonin is the author of four poetry collections, most recently *Fable of the Pack-Saddle Child* (BkMk Press) and a memoir, *Havana and Other Missing Fathers* (University of Arizona Press). Leonin teaches creative writing at the University of Miami in Coral Gables, Florida.

Michael Mackin O'Mara, queer, long-term POZ thriver, was born in Brooklyn, N.Y., and lives in West Palm Beach. They are managing editor and publisher of *SoFloPoJo* (the *South Florida Poetry Journal*) and have been published in a number of online and print anthologies and journals. Find them on social media @minwpb.

Caridad Moro-Gronlier is the author of *Tortillera* (TRP, 2021) and *Visionware* (FLP, 2009). She is the recipient of an Elizabeth George Foundation Grant and a Florida Artist Poetry Fellowship and an associate editor for *SWWIM Every Day*. She has taught English in Miami-Dade County for the past 30 years.

Yaddyra Peralta is a Honduran-American poet, essayist, and editor whose work has appeared in *Ploughshares*, *Sink Review*, *Jai Alai*, *The Florida Review*, *Miami Rail*, *Eight Miami Poets* (Jai Alai Books), *The Breakbeat Poets, Vol. 4: LatiNext* (Haymarket Books) and *Home in Florida: Latinx Writers and the Literature of Uprootedness* (University of Florida Press). She lives in Miami, Florida.

Ayesha Raees عائشه رئيس is a hybrid creating hybrid poetry through hybrid forms. Her work strongly revolves around issues of race and identity, G/god and displacement, and mental illness while possessing a strong agency for accessibility, community, and change. She currently serves as an assistant poetry editor at AAWW's *The Margins* and has received fellowships from Asian American Writers' Workshop, Brooklyn Poets, and Kundiman. Her book *Coining A Wishing Tower* won the Broken River Prize and was published in March 2022. She currently shifts between Lahore, New York City, and Miami.

Adam Schachner was born and raised in Miami. He teaches high school literature, takes his dog on bike rides, kayaks with his amazing wife, and enjoys baking cookies. Sometimes he writes poems, sometimes he plays video games. His favorite color is purple, but he is open to other options.

Maureen Seaton's recent solo collections are *Undersea* (JackLeg, 2021) and *Sweet World* (CavanKerry, 2019), winner of the Florida Book Award. Honors include Lambda Literary Awards for Lesbian Poetry and Lesbian Memoir, the Audre Lorde Award, NEA, and Pushcart. She was voted Miami's Best Poet 2020 by *The Miami New Times*.

Susannah W. Simpson is co-director of the Performance Poets of the Palm Beaches. Her work has been published in: *North American Review*, *Wisconsin Review*, *South Carolina Review*, *POET*, *Nimrod International*, *Poet Lore*, *Salamander*, and *Xavier Review* among others. Her collection *Geography of Love & Exile* was published by Cervena Barva Press, 2016.

Stephanie Lane Sutton was born in Detroit. Her writing has appeared in *Black Warrior Review*, *The Offing*, and *Rhino Poetry*, among others. She is the author of the micro-chapbook *Shiny Insect Sex* (Bull City Press) and has a creative writing MFA from the University of Miami. She makes live interactive poetry on Twitch as @AthenaSleepsIn.

Nicole Tallman is the poetry ambassador for Miami-Dade County, associate editor for *South Florida Poetry Journal*, poetry and interviews editor for *The Blue Mountain Review*, and special projects editor for Redacted Books. She is the author of [Something Kindred](#) and [Poems for the People](#), and her next book, *FERSACE*, is forthcoming in November 2023. Find her on Twitter and Instagram @natallman and at nicoletallman.com.

Julie Marie Wade's forthcoming collections are *Meditation 40: The Honesty Room* (Pank Books, 2023), *Fugue: An Aural History* (Diagram/New Michigan Press, 2023), and *Otherwise: Essays* (Autumn House Press, 2023), selected by Lia Purpura for the 2022 Autumn House Nonfiction Book Prize. She teaches in the creative writing program at Florida International University.

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