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MIAMI INVITES ITS PEOPLE TO WRITE THE CITY INTO THE PUBLIC SQUARE

O, Miami, SWWIM, and Elevate Miami launch “Sonnet Boom,” turning personal love of place into a shared civic ritual.

Miami, FL – January 12, 2026 Cities are shaped not only by policies and buildings, but by the stories people tell about where they live and why it matters.

Today, two of Miami’s most influential literary organizations, **O, Miami** and **SWWIM (Supporting Women Writers in Miami)**, announced a major collaboration with **Elevate Miami**, with civic storytelling support from **The Miami Herald**, to launch **Sonnet Boom: Love Poems for Miami**, a citywide invitation for residents of all ages to write original love poems to the place they call home.

Sonnet Boom is designed as more than a literary contest. It is a public act of authorship.

By inviting thousands of people to name what they love about Miami and lifting those words into shared public spaces, the project transforms private feeling into collective expression, strengthening civic pride, cultural identity, and a sense of belonging rooted in place.

This unprecedented partnership unites Miami’s core poetry institutions with a new civic platform to turn personal expressions of love into collective storytelling that reflects the city’s spirit, contradictions, beauty, and culture.

“At O, Miami, we’ve spent more than a decade bringing poetry into everyday life,” said **Caroline Cabrera, Co-Executive Director of O, Miami**. “Sonnet Boom is a way to invite the entire city to claim its voice - from families to students to lifelong writers - and to fill Miami with poems that feel like this amazing place we call home.”

“SWWIM has always centered voices that are too often overlooked,” said **Catherine Esposito Prescott, Co-Founder of SWWIM**. “A city is made of the people who love it. This contest allows Miamians to see themselves not just as residents, but as creators of the city’s culture.”

A Call to Write Miami’s Love Letter to Itself

Beginning **January 12, 2026**, anyone with a meaningful connection to Miami is invited to submit an original poem up to 14 lines. Sonnets are traditional love poems. We want to know why folks love Miami - the sunrises over South Beach, the fresh mangoes every summer, memories with

friends and family, visiting the Everglades... Describe your love for Miami in 14 lines. Use rhyme or no rhyme. Use a poetic meter or your own rhythm. The only requirements are 14 lines... and love.

The contest has both **youth and adult categories**, with no entry fees, cash (adults) and scholarship (youth) awards for 1st, 2nd, and 3rd prize winners in each category, and a strong emphasis on inclusion and accessibility.

Poems will be reviewed by a distinguished panel of Miami-based literary leaders, including:

- **Caridad Moro-Gronlier**, Poet Laureate of Miami-Dade County
- **Catherine Esposito Prescott**, Co-Founder, SWWIM
- **Caroline Cabrera**, Co-Executive Director, O, Miami
- **Richard Blanco**, inaugural Poet Laureate of Miami-Dade County
- **Fabienne Josaphat**, author, poet and translator

Adult finalists and winners will be selected through a combination of juried review and public voting. The public voting component will allow the city to elevate the voices that resonate most deeply. Youth finalists and winners will be selected by a panel of judges. Winners will receive cash awards, publication, and performance opportunities across the city.

From Page to Public Space

Sonnet Boom is designed not just as a contest, but as a civic activation that brings poems into the fabric of Miami.

Public showcase events are planned for **National Poetry Month (April 2026)**, with partners exploring opportunities for readings, installations, and live performances throughout the city.

“Cities don’t belong to institutions. They belong to the people who live in them,” said **Kim Coupounas, CEO of Elevate Cities**. “Sonnet Boom invites Miamians to step into that ownership by placing their love for this city into the public square. It positions residents not as spectators of the city, but as co-authors of its identity.”

Education, Youth & Emerging Voices

The collaboration will produce classroom curricula and free community workshops to bring poetry to students and emerging writers. Sonnet Boom is partnering with **YoungArts, Miami Book Fair, Miami-Dade Schools**, and other youth-based and literary cultural partners to provide mentoring, judging, and performance opportunities for the youth category.

Contest Timeline

- **Launch & Call for Poems:** January 12, 2026
- **Submission Window:** January 12, 2026 – February 14, 2026
- **Judging:** February 15 – March 14, 2026
- **Finalists Announced:** March 16, 2026
- **Public Vote:** March 16 – March 23, 2026
- **Winner Reveal & Public Reading:** Week of April 6, 2026

Full contest details and submission guidelines:

<https://sonnetboom.submittable.com/submit>

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About O, Miami

O, Miami celebrates South Florida through the empathy-building power of poetry. We educate and engage communities using a process called Civic Publishing—providing resources for people to identify and express themselves through poetry, and publishing that poetry in public spaces and books. Our work invests in collaborative narratives of place, to create a more equitable future. Learn more at <https://omiami.org/>

About SWWIM (Supporting Women Writers in Miami)

SWWIM sustains and celebrates women poets by connecting creatives across generations and by curating a living archive of contemporary poetry, while solidifying Miami as a nexus for the literary arts. SWWIM publishes, promotes, and celebrates women-identifying writers and all gender-expansive definitions of that term with a year-round reading series held at The Betsy-South Beach in Miami Beach, FL and the online poetry journal *SWWIM Every Day*. Learn more at <https://www.swwim.org/>

About Elevate Miami / Elevate Cities

Elevate Cities is a new civic venture incubated within the global, Miami-based Elevate Prize Foundation, founded by philanthropist Joseph Deitch. Elevate Cities spotlights local changemakers, inspires civic pride, and catalyzes joy-filled, place-based activations. Elevate Miami is the initiative's first city program, experimenting with creative contests, awards, storytelling, and cultural rituals designed to help cities see themselves at their best and amplify what's working. Learn more at www.elevatecities.org