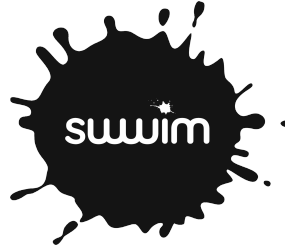


O,
Miami



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Miamians Write the City's Love Letter: Winners of "Sonnet Boom" Poetry Contest Announced

Citywide initiative draws over 500 original sonnets and 140,000 public votes; submissions came from first-time writers, entire classrooms and a poet as young as 7

MIAMI (April 9, 2026) – This past winter, more than 500 Miamians, including a 7-year-old, sat down and wrote a love poem to their city, but not just any love poem – a 14-line sonnet. Today, **Elevate Cities** and **Elevate Miami**, in partnership with **O, Miami** and **SWWIM**, are proud to announce the winners of **Sonnet Boom: Love Poems for Miami**.

The citywide contest, which launched in January, invited residents to submit original sonnets reflecting their connection to the "305." The public voting period drew a staggering 140,000 votes. Teachers brought the contest into classrooms on their own initiative, and in at least one case, a teacher personally typed every one of her students' handwritten poems so they could be officially submitted.

"This is the biggest contest that we've experienced from a community involvement perspective in over 15 years," said **Caroline Cabrera, Co-Executive Director of O, Miami**. "Having this many votes is wildly impressive and proves that Miamians are hungry to share their story."

Submissions were received from 19 states and eight countries, all connected by a shared love for Miami, with poems in Spanish, English, French and Creole. From the rhythmic "reggaeton blasting in streets" to the familiar comfort of cafecito and family traditions, the sonnets explore cultural identity, migrations, language, and everyday magic that makes Miami feel like Miami.

The Adult Category winners:

- **First Place:** Michael Ivory ("Magic City")
- **Second Place:** Clayre Benzadón ("Miami (Debutante) Sonnet")
- **Third Place:** Nyah Hardmon ("305786")

The Youth Category winners:

- **First Place:** Ava, Grade 10, Ransom Everglades School (“The Pink Hotel Threw Fire”)
- **Second Place:** Andrea, Grade 10, The Cushman School (“Border to Boulevard”)
- **Third Place:** Nadine, Grade 8, Miami Arts Charter School (“Magic City”)

Winners in both categories receive prizes of \$2,000 for first place, \$1,000 for second place and \$500 for third place, along with opportunities for publication and live performance across the city. [Read the winning poems here.](#)

Eileen Higgins, Mayor of the City of Miami said, “When people write about the city they love, they are doing more than making art, they are building a sense of belonging. Sonnet Boom brought Miami together across languages, generations, and neighborhoods, and it proves that our culture is one of our greatest strengths. That is civic pride in action, and it is exactly the kind of community spirit we want to keep building across Miami,” said Higgins. “I am grateful to Elevate Miami, O, Miami, and SWWIM for creating a space where Miamians can be heard and celebrated.”

Youth finalists and winners were selected by a distinguished panel of literary leaders, including Miami-Dade County Poet Laureate **Caridad Moro-Gronlier**, Inaugural Miami-Dade Poet Laureate **Richard Blanco**, SWWIM Co-Founder **Catherine Esposito Prescott**, O, Miami Co-Executive Director **Caroline Cabrera** and poet and author **Fabienne Josaphat**.

While judges selected the primary winners, the public also had the opportunity to vote on their favorite submissions through an online gallery. Michael Ivory emerged as the top recipient of the public vote, further cementing his poem "Magic City," which vividly describes "hibiscus trumpets blaring life" and "mangrove roots prophesying," as a community favorite.

“In a time when so much of our lives are mediated by technology, poetry offers something rare: an unfiltered human voice,” said **Kim Coupounas, CEO of Elevate Cities**. “It creates space for reflection, for meaning, and for connection, both to place and to each other. Sonnet Boom is about more than poems; it’s about reminding people that they have a role in shaping the story of their city. That kind of authorship - and belonging - feels more important than ever.”

Catherine Esposito Prescott, Co-Founder of SWWIM, added: "A city is made of the people who love it. This initiative allowed Miamians to see themselves not just as residents, but as creators of the city's culture."

The winners and finalists were recognized live during a special community celebration at YoungArts on April 8, coinciding with National Poetry Month. The evening featured live readings of the winning poems, including Ava’s first-place youth entry describing "sugared tile still cooling from the night," and Michael Ivory’s reflection on the "language of heat like love."

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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