Common University Book at the University of Miami:
Make Your Home Among Strangers

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SEEDS You Choose Leadership Award Application
1. Abstract:
Funding is sought to sponsor the introduction of a “common book” at the University of Miami. Increasingly standard at colleges and universities across the country, common books provide a shared educational experience for new students at an institution. This experience then becomes the springboard for dialogue and exchange, and is particularly useful in creating cohesion and community during times when controversy and political polarization threaten unity at institutions of higher education. By using the novel Make Your Home Among Strangers as the anchor for a common book project with first-generation students at the University of Miami, this proposal is responsive to calls for the University to be HERE: hemispheric in reflecting a Miami experience, excellent in building bridges regarding modes of learning among students, relevant in engaging the experiences of Miami students, and exemplary in fostering respect, diversity, and inclusion for members of our community.

2. Activity Goals:
Although the long-term goal is to institute a common book project for all students at the University, the inaugural run of the program would focus on first-generation and historically underrepresented students, and feature a book about the experiences of first-generation college students at institutions of higher education: Make Your Home Among Strangers. Authored by Jennine Capó Crucet, Make Your Home is a novel about the experience of a Cuban-American first-generation student from Miami during her first year of college at an elite Northeast University. A New York Times Book Review Editors’ Choice, winner of the International Latino Book Award for Best Latino-Themed Fiction in 2016, and named a “best book of the season” by Vanity Fair, Harper’s Bazaar, and Redbook, Crucet’s novel presents the challenge of higher education access using a character whose life experience reflects the experiences of not only many Miami residents, but likely many of the University’s own students, as well.

Modeled after common book programs at other institutions of higher education, the project would include:
• A launch event, at which the book would be distributed
• Three book events, at which various aspects of the book are discussed
• An author visit in March or April, which includes a public lecture and Q&A session

The project would further benefit from engagement of faculty and staff across the University who can announce the book, lead book discussions, moderate panels, and coordinate the author visit. Initial participation has already been secured from:
• Chantel Acevedo, Professor of English
• Chris Doell, Director, Programs of Academic Excellence, Office of Academic Enhancement
• Osamudia James, Vice Dean and Professor of Law
• Whitley Johnson, Senior Academic Advisory for Diversity and Inclusion
The common book project will also consider broader community engagement, potentially using live-stream technology and social media to engage students, faculty, and staff not formally participating in the project, but nevertheless interested in the experiences of first-generation students at the University of Miami.

At a time when national debates regarding immigration test our societal commitments to diversity, inclusion, and belonging, a book project meant to prompt dialogue about who does, and does not thrive, on University campuses around the country is particularly timely. This dialogue is particularly relevant at the University of Miami, an institution that operates and serves a city where the struggles of documented and undocumented immigrants, as well as first-generation citizens and residents are particularly urgent. Finally, as an increasingly competitive institution, this project prompts consideration of the ways in which our justifiably ambitious aspirations as a major research university must always be informed by a concurrent commitment to access.

3. Personal Goals:
Chantel Acevedo: As a creative writer and scholar, my interests are both in producing creative work, and thinking and writing about the positive effects of reading and writing creatively for students on campus. I tell my students, time and again, that writing does not happen in a vacuum. Writers often work with peers, agents, editors, copyeditors, support groups, and even, strangers on the Internet in online fiction writing forums. Neither can learning happen in isolation. We depend on one another to elevate discussion, to offer new perspectives, and to challenge our assumptions. So, I try to create learning spaces that allow for the kind of community where these things can happen. A common book program is an ideal way to build community--providing students with a common educational experience and an introduction to the vibrant intellectual life at the University. I, too, was a first-generation student at the University of Miami in the early 1990’s. The sense of isolation that can accompany that status, and the sudden shift from my family’s pride at my accomplishment to feeling like an outsider in my own hometown, was striking and, at times, limiting. It is a personal goal, then, to smooth the way for today’s first-gen students as best I can. A common book project like the one we have imagined, where first-gen and historically underrepresented students can come together and find both affinity and thought-provoking discussions, would have been beneficial to me back then, and I believe it will be a good experience for students today.

Osamudia James: In my research as a legal scholar, I focus on the interaction of identity and the law, with a particular focus on how both broaden or limit access to quality public education. In recent years, however, my work on identity and the law has expanded beyond education, to more general observations and insights about the role and functions of race and identity in American society. My immediate goal in co-designing this project is to foster dialogue and engagement around the
University regarding access to education, and remaining obstacles to equality of access as a result of race, ethnicity, class, gender, and language. More generally, designing, coordinating, and implementing this project would further develop my leadership skills and organizational capabilities, putting me in contact with colleagues across the University and undergraduate students with whom I don’t often interact in my own graduate department. Finally, co-sponsoring this project reflects my personal commitment to advancing racial and social justice in my capacity as an educator, a faculty citizen of the University, a resident of the city of Miami, and a participant in America’s democratic project.

4. **Budget:**
A $2,500 SEEDS grant is requested to help fund the entire project cost.

Project costs: $10,500
- $3,500: cost of books
- $5,000: honorarium to Jeanette Capò-Crucet, author of the book, who will be invited to deliver a lecture on campus
- $1,500: food and drinks for 3 book discussion meetings
- $500: food and drinks for a launch and book distribution event

Other funding sources:
- $2,500, Matching grant from the College of Liberal Arts
- Hotel and food stipend for Jennine Capó Crucet from The Betsy Hotel
- $250, Women’s Studies Department

We will secure additional funding from other units.
Chantel M. Acevedo

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Department of English
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Ashe Building, Room 321
Coral Gables, Florida 33146

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EDUCATION

M.F.A.  Creative Writing, 1997-1999
The University of Miami, Miami, Florida
Emphasis: Fiction

The University of Miami, Miami, Florida

PROFESSIONAL APPOINTMENTS

University of Miami, 2015-present
Department of English
Associate Professor
Interim Creative Writing Program Director, Spring 2017

Auburn University, 2006-2015
Department of English
Associate Professor
Alumni Writer-in-Residence (chaired professor)
Coordinator, Creative Writing Program

PUBLICATIONS

Novels

- The Millions “Most Anticipated Books”
- Seattle Times “Books to Disappear into this Fall”
- Books-a-Million “Summer Says’ Pick”

Audio Rights, Blackstone Audio

Published internationally in
- United Kingdom
- Italy (forthcoming)

Reviewed by
- Kirkus (starred)
- Booklist

- Indie Next Pick for Summer 2015
- Las Comadres Latino Summer Reading List Pick, 2015
- Longlisted for the ALA Andrew Carnegie Medal, 2015
- LateNight Library Literary Voices Book, 2015

Published/translated internationally in:
- Italy
- United Kingdom

Publication/translation forthcoming in:
- Poland
- France
- Canada

Reviewed by:
- *The New York Times*
- Booklist (starred)
- Kirkus (starred)
- *The Miami Herald*


- Second place winner, the Latino International Book Award
- Winner of the Doris Bakwin Prize
- Las Comadres National Book Club Selection
- National Bronze Medalist for the Independent Publisher Book Awards
- Finalist for the Balcones Fiction Prize


- First place winner of the Latino International Book Award
- Finalist for Connecticut Book of the Year

Reviewed by:
- *Booklist Reviews*
- *Publishers Weekly*
- *The Christian Science Monitor*
- *Library Journal*
- *The Sun Sentinel*
- *Chicago Tribune*
- *The Miami Herald*
- *The New Haven Register*
- *Miami Today*

Discussed critically by:
Chapbook


Short Stories


"The Execution of the Guitar." Epiphany. Fall 2015: 117-135


Flash Fiction


Poetry


Creative Nonfiction

Up Front: Storm Watch. Vogue. Forthcoming


<http://wraparoundsouth.org/spring-2014/essays/a-cuban-american-primer-by-chantelle-acevedo/>


Columns for the Multilingual Children’s Association:  

**Novel Excerpts**

<http://lithub.com/the-living-infinite/>

Excerpt from *The Distant Marvels*, PEN America. April 2015.  
<http://www.pen.org/fiction/distant-marvels>

Excerpt from *A Falling Star*, *South Writ Large*. Fall 2013.  
<http://southwritlarge.com/>

**Drama**


**Book Reviews**


SELECTED PRESENTATIONS

Panel. CRI. FIU. February 2017
Reading. University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Lincoln, NE. November 2016
Reading. Literary Quest. Westbeth Center. PEN World Voices Festival. New York, NY. April 2015
Reading. La Casa Azul. New York, NY, April 2015
Panel. "Writing Gender." PEN World Voices Festival. New York, NY, April 2015
Reading. Page & Palette. Fairhope, AL. April 2015
Reading. Shorter University. Rome, GA. April 2015
Visiting author. Colby College. Waterville, ME. September 2013


INTERVIEWS & PROFILES


Interview. WNYC’s The Leonard Lopate Show. Recorded at WNYC in New York City, September 21, 2017.


Interview. Late Night Library's "Late Night Conversation." Aired June 23, 2015


LITERARY AWARDS, HONORS AND FELLOWSHIPS


Andrew Carnegie Medal for Excellence in Fiction 2016, Longlisted, 2015


Indie Next Summer Pick, The Distant Marvels, Summer 2015


Las Comadres National Book Club Latino Summer Reading List, The Distant Marvels, 2015

First Place, Latino International Book Award anthology, Wise Latinas, June 2015

Second Place, Latino International Book Award, A Falling Star, June 2015

National Bronze Medalist, Independent Publisher Book Awards, A Falling Star, May 2015

Finalist, Balcones Fiction Prize, A Falling Star, May 2015

Las Comadres National Book Club Pick of the Month, A Falling Star, February 2015


Doris Bakwin Prize, A Falling Star, 2013

Alabama State Council on the Arts Literature Fellowship, 2012

Named the Alumni Writer-in-Residence (chaired professorship), Auburn University, 2011

Pushcart Prize Nominee, “Prayers to San Luís Beltrán,” Arts and Letters, 2010


Latino International Book Award for Best Historical Fiction (formerly the Latino Literacy Now Award), Love and Ghost Letters, 2006.


James Michener Fellowship, University of Miami, 1997-1999.

**GRANTS**

Special Lectures Grant. Auburn Writers Conference. Auburn University. $1,200. (2014)

Special Lectures Grant. Auburn Writers Conference. Auburn University. $1,200. (2013)


**TEACHING**

Auburn University Instructor, 2006-2008
Auburn University Assistant Professor, 2008-2011
Auburn University Associate Professor, 2011-2015
University of Miami Associate Professor, 2015-present

Courses taught at the University of Miami, 2015-present:

- English 290, Beginning Fiction
- English 390, Intermediate Fiction
- English 404, Advanced Fiction
- English 601, Forms in Fiction: The Literary Journal

Courses taught at Auburn University, 2006-2015:

- Composition I and II
- Designed the first Sustainability themed Composition I course, which served as a model for that particular themed course.
- World Literature I and II
- Introduction to Creative Writing
- Creative Writing: Fiction I
- Creative Writing: Fiction II
- Creative Writing Special Topics: Historical Fiction
- Creative Writing Capstone Course: Writing For and About Young Adults
- Popular Genres: Classical Muses and the Modern Imagination
- 20th Century Fiction: Caribbean Literature
- Forms in Fiction, a graduate level Creative Writing course
Undergraduate Honors Thesis students who work has been completed (University of Miami)

- Lee Eisen

Current Undergraduate Honors Thesis students (University of Miami)

- Sissi Chinea
- Dylan Ceder

Graduate students whose work has been completed (University of Miami)

- Bryan Aguilar. MFA. Thesis. Committee Member. 2016
- Brittany Lyons, MFA. Thesis. Committee Co-director

Graduate students whose work has been completed (Auburn University)

- Tawnysha Greene, MA. Creative thesis. Committee Member. 2009
- Steele Campbell, MA. Literature thesis. Committee Member. 2010
- Victoria Hollis, MA. Literature thesis. Committee Member. 2010
- Ashley Taylor, M.Ed. Non-thesis option. Committee Member. 2010
- Tom Dake, M.Ed. Non-thesis option. Committee Member. 2010
- Hallie Johnston, MA. Creative portfolio. Committee Director. 2011
- Tamela Uzzetta, MA. Creative portfolio. Committee Member. 2011
- Allie Bruce, MA. Creative portfolio. Committee Director. 2012
- Garrard Conley, MA. Creative portfolio. Committee Director. 2012
- Michelle Hopf, MA. Creative portfolio. Committee Director. 2013
- Chloe Livaudais, MA. Creative portfolio. Committee Director. 2013
- Savannah Harrison, MA. Creative Portfolio. Committee Director. 2014
- Angela Jordan, MA. Creative Portfolio. Committee Director. 2014
- Jessica Daves, MA. Foreign Language Thesis. Committee Member. 2014
- Katie Kent, MA. Creative Portfolio. Committee Member. 2014
- Javier Tolsa, MA. Foreign Language Thesis. Committee Member. 2014
- Luis Potosi, MA. Foreign Language Thesis. Committee Member. 2015
- Charles Sterchi, MA. Creative Portfolio. Committee Director. 2015
- Carley Muschara, MA. English Education. Committee Member. 2015
- Jessica Walker, MA. Creative Portfolio. Committee Director. 2015
- Alyssa Ross, PhD. Literature dissertation. Committee Member. 2016
- Dorothy Hutcherson, PhD. Literature dissertation. Committee Member. 2017

Current graduate students (University of Miami)

- Dana DeGreff, MFA. Thesis. Committee Director
- Matthew Nerger, MFA. Thesis. Committee Member
- Candice Mays, MFA. Thesis. Committee Member

Current graduate students (Auburn University)

- Angela Jordan, PhD. Creative Writing dissertation. Committee Director
- Julia Tignor, PhD. Literature dissertation. Committee Member
Outside reader for the following graduate students (University of Miami)

- Alejandro Nodarse. 2013
- Hallie Johnston. 2014

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

- Adviser for *Sinking City*
- Adviser for *Sinking City's UGrow position* (Managing Editor)
- NEA Literary Organizations Grants panel. 2015.
- Reviewed tenure materials for faculty at Goucher College and The University of Tennessee-Knoxville. 2014.
- Asked to be a member of the Carolina Wren Press Board, beginning August 2015
- McArthur Grant invited nominator. 2009.
OSAMUDIA R. JAMES
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ACADEMIC EMPLOYMENT

Vice Dean, University of Miami School of Law Present
Professor, University of Miami School of Law Present
Associate Professor, University of Miami School of Law Summer 2008 to Spring 2014

Courses: Torts, Administrative Law, Education Law, #BLM University Course
Research: Education Law, Administrative Law, Race and Education, Equal Protection & Identity

Senior Writing Fellow, Georgetown University Law Center 2003-2004
Legal Research and Writing Fellow, Georgetown University Law Center 2002-2003

AWARDS AND HONORS

Hausler Golden Apple Teaching Award: award presented by the University of Miami School of Law Bar and Gavel Society to recognize outstanding contributions by law faculty to the student body. April 2017

SEEDS You Choose Leadership Award Recipient: grant of $2,500, awarded to proposals that support diversity, and foster community and career satisfaction; awarded for #BlackLivesMatter University Course proposal. Fall 2016

Lawyers of Color’s 50 Under 50 Honoree: honored as one of fifty law professors of color under the age of 50 making an impact in legal education. April 2014

Derrick A. Bell Award: national award presented by the American Association of Law Schools Minority Groups Section to a junior faculty member who, through activism, mentoring, teaching and scholarship, has made an extraordinary contribution to legal education, the legal system, or social justice. January 2014

EDUCATION

University of Wisconsin Law School, LL.M., 2008
• William H. Hastie Fellow, 2006-2008
Georgetown University Law Center, J.D., 2004
  • Graduated *cum laude*
  • Journal, *The Tax Lawyer*
  • Family Advocacy Clinic

University of Pennsylvania, B.A., 2001
  • Graduated *cum laude*

PUBLICATIONS & WORKS IN PROGRESS

ARTICLES, ESSAYS, AND BOOK CHAPTERS

*Marriage and Education in Public/Private Spheres (work in progress).*

*Diversity Tax (work in progress).*


ARTICLES, ESSAYS, AND BOOK CHAPTERS, cont.


*The Declining Significance of Presidential Races?*, 72 LAW & CONTEMP. PROBS. 89 (2009)(co-authored with Angela Onwuachi-Willig).


EDITORIALS AND MEDIA COMMENTARY


Osamudia James, Now We Can Finally Say Goodbye to the White Savior Myth of Atticus, NY TIMES, July 15, 2015.

Quoted, Charley Hannagan, Rachel Dolezal Raises Questions About Our Perceptions of Race and Identity (What They’re Saying), Syracuse.com, June 16, 2015.


EDITORIALS AND MEDIA COMMENTARY, cont.
CNN Newsroom with Brooke Baldwin, June 15, 2015.


Osamudia James, When For-Profit Colleges Close, Student Debt Should Be Forgiven, NY TIMES, May 7, 2015.

Quoted, Christina Veiga, Miami-Dade School Committee Backs Regular Attendance Boundaries for Coral Gables, THE MIAMI HERALD, February 26, 2015.


Quoted, Julianne Hing, What Happens to Students When a For-Profit College Giant Closes?, COLORLINES, July 8, 2014.

Osamudia James, Something of Race Remains: Identity in Public Education, MIAMI LAW MAGAZINE (Fall 2013).

Quoted, John Lantigua, High Court Insists on Tough Scrutiny When School Uses Affirmative Action in Admissions, PALM BEACH POST, June 24, 2013.


**SELECTED PRESENTATIONS**


Invited Panelist, *Unconscious Bias: Racism You Can’t See (But You Can Feel)*, The Village Square, Broward College, February 2016.


Invited External Speaker, *Race As Resilience*, Wake Forest University School of Law, February 2015.


**PRESENTATIONS, cont.**

Invited Panelist. *Update on Fisher v. Texas: What This Might Mean to the Pipeline*, SALT B.A. to J.D. Pipeline Project, FIU College of Law, October 2012.

Invited Panelist. *Public Finance, Competition, and For-Profits, Access, Competition and For-Profit Higher Education*, Sanford School of Public Policy, Duke University, September 2012.


Invited Panelist, *Debt Collection/Debt Relief, Consumer Protection in Underserved Communities*, University of Miami School of Law, March 2011.


**PRESENTATIONS, cont.**


Invited Panelist, *Business As Usual: The Roberts Court’s Continued Neglect of Adequacy and Equity Concerns in American Education*, The Roberts Court & Equal Protection: Gender, Race, and Class, University of South Carolina School of Law, February 2008.

**SERVICE**

University of Miami:
- Chair, ABA Learning Outcomes Working Group, June 2016-present
- President’s Standing Committee on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, 2016-present
- Promotions & Tenure Committee, School of Law, 2015-16
- Chair, School of Law Strategic Planning Committee, 2014-15
- ABA Self-Study Committee, School of Law, 2013-14
- Junior Faculty Development Steering Committee, School of Law
  - Tenured Liaison, 2014-15
  - Junior Faculty Retreat Co-coordinator, 2013-14
  - Social Events Coordinator, 2010-12
- Faculty Senate Women and Minorities Committee, Spring-Fall 2012
- Admissions Committee, School of Law, 2011-12
- Faculty Appointments Committee, School of Law, 2010-11
- Faculty and Student Community and Support Committee, School of Law, 2008-09
Other:
- Planning Committee, AALS 2017 Workshop for Pre-tenured Minority Faculty
- AAUP Litigation Committee, June 2014 – June 2017

OTHER LEGAL EXPERIENCE

Associate, King & Spalding, LLP Washington, D.C.  
2004-2006
- Summer Associate, Summer 2003

Judicial Intern, Judge George B. Daniels, SDNY  
Summer 2002

BAR ADMISSIONS

Florida; Washington, D.C.