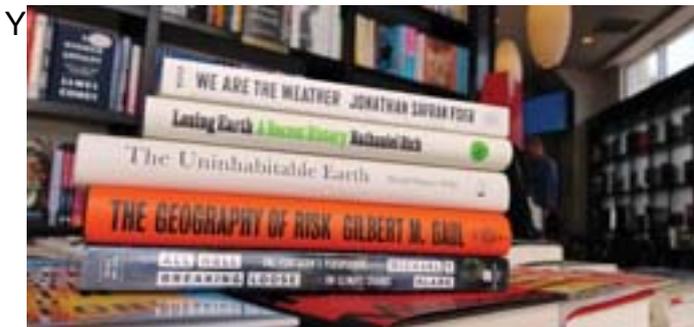


What Might Have Been

Written by Kim Ogren, BT Contributor
November 2019

Meet the Miami Book Fair's climate authors



our best opportunity to navigate tomorrow's headlines is to attend a panel of authors appearing at the 35th annual Miami Book Fair.

On Sunday, November, 24, at 1:30 p.m., the authors of four new books on climate change will be onstage in the Chapman Conference Center of Miami Dade College-Wolfson Campus (300 NE 2nd Ave., Bldg. 3) to read excerpts and answer questions.

I've read all four of these books and can promise you a thoughtful education about that point -- or dance floor or war room -- where human behavior and climate science meet. Don't wait for the issues to be spun about in the news; that's doing yourself a disservice. And it will be too messy by then.

Instead, I recommend easing into the topics at the book fair, and hearing from the authors directly. It may feel a little intellectual, but I've found that just being at the book fair elevates my consciousness, which is of practical value in today's crazy world.

Here's another reason to go: These books aren't exactly going to leap into your shopping cart. Their titles are scary. Yet each of the authors provides a fascinating, enthralling, yet methodical examination of the impacts of climate change on the human condition, our government leaders, and our development policies. As a group, and in Miami of all places, they should make for an enlightening and energizing hour.

The Uninhabitable Earth: Life After Warming is by David Wallace-Wells. Its readers have been characterized as brave. The book, called by one critic "a meticulously documented, white-knuckled tour through the cascading catastrophes that will soon engulf our warming

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planet,” removes any doubt that we are somehow separate from or, through financial wealth, shielded from disruptive change. Wallace-Wells has read the news. But he also read scientific papers and has concluded that the two sources hold divergent views about what is really possible. So he narrates a vivid and uncomfortable future and near present. Gird yourself. Be brave.

Nathaniel Rich’s *Losing Earth: A Recent History* unfolds like a thriller (I predict a movie adaptation). It was born out his work that filled an entire *New York Times Magazine* issue (August 1, 2018) on the decade from 1979, when we knew everything we know today about climate change, to 1989, during the first best chance at internationally coordinated intervention. This examination unfolds in great and engrossing detail: Who knew what and when? What information was buried? Who stood in the way, and why, during “the decade we almost stopped climate change”?

The Geography of Risk: Epic Storms, Rising Seas, and the Cost of America’s Coasts is by two-time Pulitzer Prize-winning author Gilbert M. Gaul. He lives on New Jersey’s coast and experienced Super Storm Sandy firsthand. That experience fueled him to gain a deeper understanding of the impacts of storms and climate change on coastal development. Looking at storms through 2017’s Hurricane Irma, Gaul pieces together a puzzle about billion-dollar property losses and the “confounding array of federal subsidies, tax breaks, low-interest loans, grants, and government flood insurance that shift the risk of life at the beach from private investors to public taxpayers.” Miami, we are in this moment.

Finally, there is *All Hell Breaking Loose: The Pentagon’s Perspective on Climate Change* by security expert Michael T. Klare, who offers a framework for understanding how the U.S. military leads the way in preparing for climate change and its consequences, which will include droughts, pandemics, climate refugees, rising seas, and defense along an open Arctic. Klare examines each strategic motivation, foreign and domestic, for preparation, and how the military is planning. Could this be the roadmap for the rest of us?

Miami’s own Michael Grunwald will be moderating. The Miami Beach resident is adept at writing about complexity as a senior national correspondent at *Time* and the author of two acclaimed books, one on the Everglades, the other on the Obama administration’s response to the 2008 global financial crisis.

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Jonathan Safran Foer, best known for his novels *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* and *Everything Is Illuminated* will be speaking at the same venue at 12:30 p.m. on November 24. Perhaps you know about his 2010 nonfiction book *Eating Animals*, which was developed into an award-winning documentary and opened even Alice Waters's eyes to the harmful consequences of industrial agriculture, farming, and processing that are both outrageous and normal. His latest, *We Are the Weather: Saving the Planet Begins at Breakfast* is a deeply personal rumination of what Foer has contemplated in an effort to be a healthy, thriving human contributing to a healthy, thriving planet.

I hope plenty of you will attend and contribute to the discussions these authors began. I suspect you have plenty to add. For free tickets needed to attend these two events, go to www.miamibookfair.com. I hope to see you there.

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