

## Paul Beatty



Miguel's voice stays with me most. Not his poetic or political voice, but his speaking voice, tongue-y and robust. An alveolar trill sourced not from his diaphragm but from his frontal lobe. Miguel spoke in the world's loudest whisper. A commandingly harassing New York 'psst' that compelled one to turn head, and sometimes tail. Maybe he didn't so much speak, but like your favorite outdoor athlete, rapper, callejero, and camel he spat. His words cool,

purposeful and ready for anything. In 1992, I remember because I had Biggie Smalls Unsigned Hype Source debut in my back pocket. I went to I think Hunter College to listen to Miguel, and Tracie Morris address an audience of young aspiring writers. And Miguel, like Biggie Smalls, spat like a badass. His tone expansive and open, he lectured them and me, on the importance of sharing. Of not keeping your writing stuffed in a drawer, but to give it life by sharing it with others. By printing and speaking. It was a lesson that's stayed with me. And on those rare occasions that I sit down to write, I remind myself to share. To spit. To lubricate. To fucking enunciate.

Thank you, Miguel.

Take care,  
Paul

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**Paul Beatty** is an associate professor of writing at Columbia University. In 2016, he won the National Book Critics Circle Award and the Man Booker Prize for his novel *The Sellout*. It was the first time a writer from the United States was honored with the Man Booker Prize.