

AUTHOR TRADES IN GLOOM FOR DELICIOUS DOSE OF JOY

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Author Isabel Allende is tired of gloom and fear. She's known too much of that and there just isn't enough time.

Instead, she wants to enjoy eating dark chocolate and sipping red wine. She wants to relish wearing lipstick, being generous, and taking pole dancing classes - in spite of cellulite. In other words, she wants an unfiltered, unadulterated dose of joy.

"To live fully is a choice," she told an audience of 800 last night in the Stranahan Theater. Her lively talk was part of the Authors! Authors! program, sponsored by *The Blade* and the Toledo-Lucas County Public Library.

Ms. Allende, 66, who grew up in Chile and now lives in California, hit the literary scene in 1985 with *The House of the Spirits* about a wealthy Latin American family whose empire starts to crumble, and she has written 16 books since then.



Isabel Allende speaking as part of the Authors! Authors! program. (THE BLADE/JETTA FRASER)

Last night, she enraptured those in attendance with humorous, uninhibited anecdotes and a strong message urging people to embrace "mamisma," a term she defined as an abundance of love and loving feminine energy, the opposite of machismo.

"For thousands of years, the fate of the world has been in the hands of high-adrenaline, testosterone men who don't identify with weakness or compassion," she said. Women, on the other hand, have embraced beauty, peace, and safety.

"I'm not advocating matriarchy because what if it turns out to be as rotten as patriarchy? ... We want parity and balance," she said.

Ms. Allende spoke of individual women who have used their nurturing energy to make a real difference and help others, including girls still sold as indentured servants abroad. She also mentioned her daughter Paula, who died in 1992 while in her late 20s and in whose memory she started a foundation to empower and protect women and girls.

While the author admitted that her daughter's death broke her heart, it also freed her from the fear of death and helped open her eyes to the joy of life.

"The natural state of the soul is joyful. In joy, everything blossoms: creativity, truth, energy, love, compassion, strength," she said.

"I don't linger in negativity anymore. I avoid gloomy stuff, like depressing black and white Hungarian movies without subtitles."

Even in times like these, surrounded by the gloomy stock market and gloomy people, she insists it is possible to be happily inspired.

"I can still be passionate about writing, about the causes I embrace, and about some men, like Johnny Depp. He's hot!" she said. "Even my granddaughters agree with me on this one."

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