



## Book to Action 2021 Case Study

**Library: San Rafael Public Library**

### **Book to Action 2021 Summary & Impact Reflection**

*Please summarize your Book to Action 2021 public programming series. Write for an audience that has never heard of your library, your community, or the Book to Action concept. Start by introducing your library and community. Be sure to show how the Book to Action topic and titles met a specific community need or aspiration. Be sure to highlight your community partners, explain significant, innovative, or new models for public programs, and show how this program impacted your community. Limit 2-3 paragraphs.*

San Rafael Public Library is a small city library with 3 locations, serving a population of about 55,000. Much of our community is white and affluent, and a significant number (36%) are Latinx. Like communities across the country, race and equity have become central to the public discourse in Marin/San Rafael since the murder of George Floyd. According to Race Counts, Marin County ranks #1 in racial disparity in California. There is a huge need for education and activism around race and equity here. Fortunately, more people in Marin with white privilege are engaged in the work than ever before. More people are open to the learning and introspection that is needed.

Our City and County leadership, and many citizens, aspire to live in a more equitable community, and collaborate with BIPOC leaders to do the work. We chose *The Vanishing Half* as our book because it is a bestseller, and thus likely to draw in many participants. It allowed us to educate on a specific type of discrimination (colorism) that is less understood by folks who aren't BIPOC, while also opening space for a broader discussion of race/equity in general. We partnered with the Marin chapter of Showing Up for Racial Justice to create a deliver programs, promote to their engaged community of activists, and for help connecting with BIPOC leaders and organizations, especially youth, in Marin. We prioritized the centering of BIPOC presenters in all planning meetings, with white library staff and partners providing support and holding space for their emotional labor. Our other partner was SPAHR Center, the primary LGBTQ+ support organization in Marin. They were critical in connecting us with queer BIPOC folks on the planning team and to provide programmatic content.

Our most innovative and significant program of the series was a film screening and panel co-hosted with SURJ Marin. We screened a documentary film about colorism from Kanopy, then created a safe space for a panel of folks impacted by colorism to have an open and vulnerable conversation about it, and their overall experiences with racism in Marin. Panelists represented a wide variety of identities, leading to a rich, intersectional learning experience. 95%-100% of survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they learned something and will apply what they learned, making it clear that our BTA series supports continued anti-racist learning and action in Marin, necessary for meaningful systemic change in our deeply divided county.

### **Community Member Quotes**

*Please enter 1-2 community member quotes from surveys or public comments that may be anonymized and used in future grant applications and program model sharing.*

"It was really moving to hear people's stories of the ways that both systemic and individual racism in Marin County have impacted their lives. I feel thankful for their gift of sharing."

"Understanding more about the feeling of not belonging and particularly was shook up but not surprised that the panelists do not feel safe in Marin"

"Increased awareness of the difficulties of racial and gender identity."

### **Impact on Professional Development**

*Please summarize how participating in the Book to Action 2021 initiative impacted you and your team's professional development. As a result of participating in this program, what skills did you or your team learn? What professional takeaways would you share with others looking to improve community engagement with adults & intergenerational groups?*

BTA strengthened our partnership skills. In particular, we did a great job of identifying specific asks from our potential partners, as well as outlining the benefits to the partners. We also learned a lot about hosting a panel discussion about sensitive topics. We decided early on to leave all content and facilitation decisions to the panelists, who were all folks impacted by colorism. We learned about following their lead to hold safe space and set boundaries for the audience, so the panelists could feel safe to be vulnerable.

We also gained experience responding to some fairly angry complaints from a handful of community members who took issue with the program series.

### **Final Words of Advice**

*What brief bit of advice (1-2 sentences) would you give to library staff members interested in coordinating a Book to Action or similar community engagement series for adults and intergenerational groups in their community?*

If you are focusing on a "controversial" topic, be prepared for some backlash from the community, even if you live in a "liberal" place. Be prepared to set boundaries, weigh which patron comments need responses and which are not worth your time, and energy and stand strong in the core values of the work.

**Total # Programs: 6**

**Total Attendance at Programs: 689**

**Book to Action URL(s): Book to Action Images: Please attach 1-2 images (.jpg or .png files only) that best represent your Book to Action 2021 series**

**Sample File Name: BTA 2021 San Leandro Library Image 1.jpg**

**Image 1 File Name: BTA 2021 San Rafael Public Library Image 1**

**Image 1 Caption: Screenshot of Little White Lies panel discussion participants.**

**Image 2 File Name:**

**Image 2 Caption:**

**Book to Action Program Coordinator Name & Title: Jill Harris, Supervising Librarian**

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**May others contact you with questions?  Yes  No**

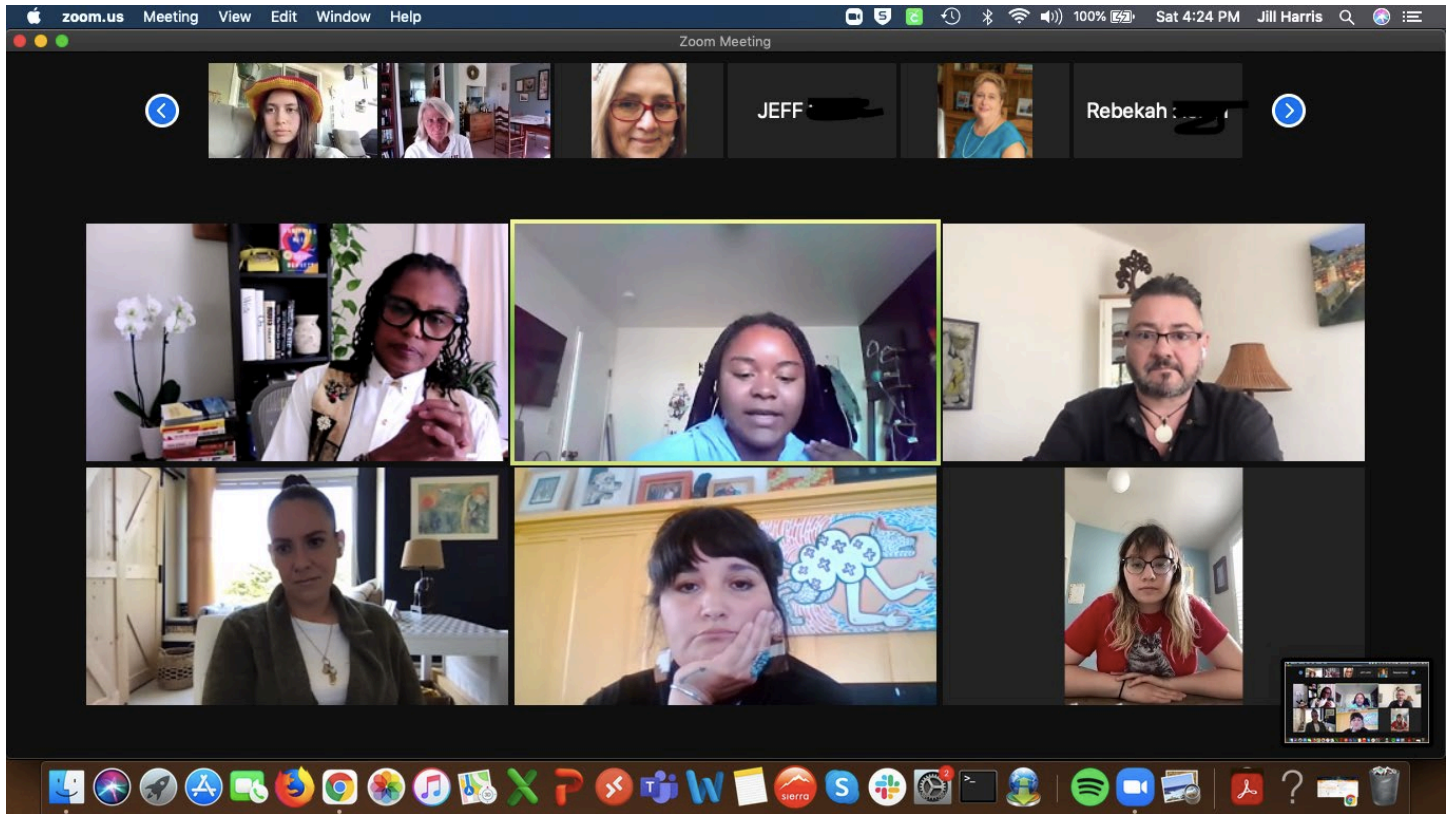


Image 1 Caption: Screenshot of Little White Lies panel discussion participants.