



Book to Action 2021 Case Study

Library: Burlingame 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.

The Burlingame Public Library is a mid-sized library that is part of the Peninsula Library System consortium in San Mateo County, with one main branch downtown and a smaller branch in a residential neighborhood. It is a more affluent area, with a historically white population and an increasing Asian population (per recent demographics), while bordered to the north and south by more dense and diverse populations who also utilize the libraries' services. The community is politically split.

Given the prescient writing of Octavia Butler's *Parable of the Sower*, launching to a New York Times bestseller during the pandemic, we chose to feature the book with themes of environmental justice, equity, and community care, with the supplement of *Emergent Strategy* by adrienne maree brown. We aimed to look at the intersection of climate change and racism, along with this concern of how we care for each other, against the backdrop of the dual pandemic of COVID-19 and racial hate. Our immediate community already had strong interests in environmentalism and climate justice, and we wanted to bring in further discussions around the broad picture of how such concerns impact populations differently and to varying levels, and how we as a community can move forward collectively. It was unfortunate that given the state of all going on, it became harder to establish more partnerships as so many people and organizations were stretched thin – taking on the engagement was harder for many. However, we were also fortunate to connect with partners we worked with previously, many who also connected us to others who would share knowledge and broaden our connections. We ultimately worked with Citizens Environmental Council (based in Burlingame), Sustainable San Mateo County, the San Mateo County Poet Laureate Aileen Cassinetta, Farming Hope Co-Founder Kevin Madrigal, and Nethra Samarawickrema & Yuri Zaitsev of the Listening Lab. We also connected with the San Mateo County Office of Sustainability, Thrive Alliance, and San Mateo County Office of Behavioral Health Services for discussion and connection to share out the series.

The giveaway copies were in high demand given the popularity of the book during this time and were distributed via signup form with curbside pickup. We hosted a range of virtual events, all of which allowed us to go in depth on various discussions and in various ways – our Poetry Kickoff event provided inspiration and warmth, while participants noted the book discussions allowed for a communal feeling and enlightening concerns to explore further. Lighter events encouraged some interaction and consideration around our themes for those who might not have taken part in more serious discussions, and at the same time I was delighted to be able to host Octavia Butler scholars in this virtual setting, with whom we otherwise would not have been able to engage in discussion in-person. The workshops we hosted with the Listening Lab were also transformative for participants, providing practices for internal reflection as well as communication and care tools to apply out in the world. Especially with these workshops did we work to model care and create a safe space for these more vulnerable discussions. We also had to think about how to successfully offer such interactive sessions for those who might work through the recordings later. It was this partnership that was

especially enlightening and inspiring for how we can establish such a practice of care and community in the future.

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.

Survey response, Burlingame Reads Poetry Kickoff 4/7/21:

“It was so necessary and powerful to hear poets talk about issues of race and current events. We need poetry to give us hope and guide us. The library is doing such necessary and inspiring work for our community.”

Survey response, Listening Lab Workshop: Self Care for Community Care 5/25/21:

“It was SO great! My mind is literally blown away and I need some time to just soak in all the great insights and thoughts that came up during this event/conversation. Highly recommend this free flowing workshop to anyone and just feeling seen and healed by this open dialogue.”

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?

The initiative drove us to research more about civic engagement in the community, and what organizations and grassroots efforts exist locally. It also expanded how we could think of engagement, partnerships, and who could take part in such conversations – especially with what we ultimately chose to discuss, and with the intersectional aspects of the themes of equity, sustainability, and health that were chosen for Book to Action 2021. The initiative drove us to consider how to engage with people in different ways, especially from a distance/virtually, and offered a great deal of skill-building and practice with planning a large series, along with discussion-moderation with a group of people who might not know each other, and the unknown possibilities of where the discussions could go.

To improve community engagement with adults and intergenerational groups, it is important to look at common topics of interest – built in to Book to Action given we are all affected by the civic issues in our community – and think about what events could reach various ages and interests. If common presenters or events only reach a more homogeneous set of people, or present a dominant perspective or voice, it is also great to examine what opportunities exist to uplift or highlight other voices. The use of art is such an important and dynamic way for people of all ages to engage as well, and the interplay of fun, thoughtful, and more serious engagement offerings can help expand and invite people to see the library as a place for them.

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 possible, work with grassroots groups in the area and see how you might help them in partnering, and hopefully work with a group that is also very excited about the engagement series. Look to speakers, groups, and materials that are engaging and interesting to those who may otherwise not know as much about the topic if possible, and consider that even small discussions can have a huge impact!

Total # Programs: 10

Total Attendance at Programs: 247

Book to Action URL(s): <https://www.burlingame.org/library/explore/burlingamereads.php>

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: Facebook event image Burlingame Reads 2021.jpg

Image 1 Caption: One of our social media files used to announce Burlingame Reads 2021

Image 2 File Name: Burlingame Reads List of May Events.jpg

Image 2 Caption: We created a one-page flier for our May events, which were included in our curbside pickup bags.

Book to Action Program Coordinator Name & Title: Elaine Tai, Adult Services Librarian

Contact: tai@plsinfo.org

May others contact you with questions? Yes No



Image 1 Caption: One of our social media files used to announce Burlingame Reads 2021



Image 2 Caption: We created a one-page flier for our May events, which were included in our curbside pickup bags.

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