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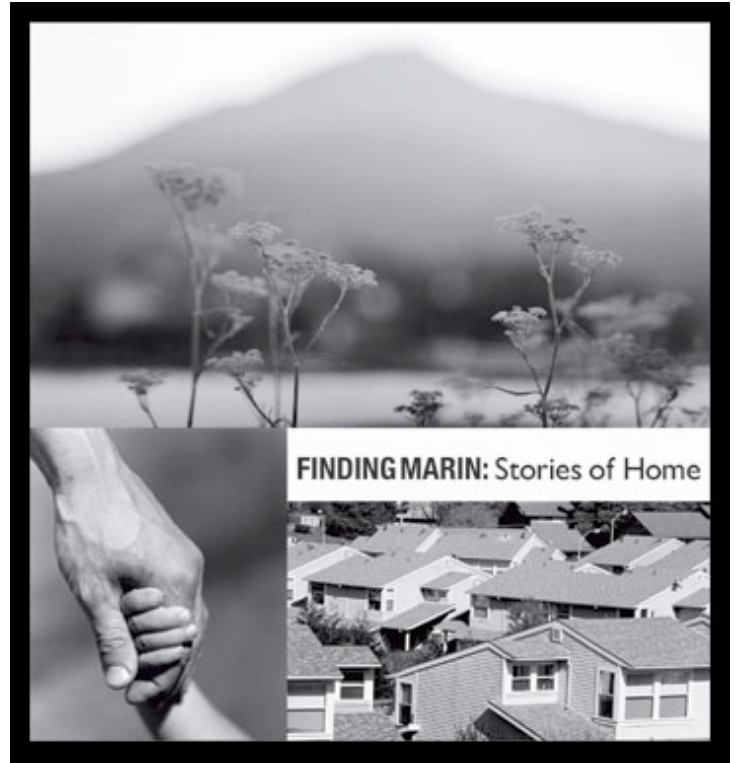
Finding Marin: Stories of Home

Marin County is often perceived as one place with one identity. But Marin is comprised of various communities, made up of individuals with diverse backgrounds and experiences. "Finding Marin: Stories of Home" is an exhibit on display through February 9 in the Foundation offices that focuses on some of these residents. Some are longtime homeowners, some are renters, some came from other states, some came from other countries, and some were born here.

The exhibit is designed to show how the arts and humanities assist a community in understanding the challenges it faces and in crafting creative responses that can make a positive difference for everyone.

Perhaps above all, the arts can help tell a community's stories, empowering individuals to see their neighbors, friends—and even themselves—in new and revealing ways. This is the premise for this exhibit and for a multi-year project of the California Council for the Humanities entitled "California Stories: Communities Speak."

CCH supported projects in eight communities across California to explore the potential for stories to address pressing contemporary issues. The Marin Arts Council, with funding from the Foundation, was selected to represent Marin as one of the eight communities participating in this project.



What's in the exhibit?

The exhibit contains selected quotes from interviews and photographs that reveal how a diverse range of people came to Marin, how they made a home here, why they stay, and what the concepts of community and home mean to them. The interviews were done within the context of the challenges Marin faces in providing affordable housing for all community members, while preserving Marin's unique culture, natural beauty, and open space.

From 2002-2004, the Marin Arts Council worked with oral historians Alicia J. Rouverol and Margie Crawford-Ryan, photographer Robert Bengtson, artists, and community leaders to create a "snapshot" of Marin with the concept of home and its relationship to the ever-present issue of affordable housing as a backdrop.

The process of collecting stories involved the help and guidance of numerous nonprofit organization partners from all parts of the County. They included community centers, housing advocates, faith-based groups, arts organizations, and advocates for the environment. These organizations and their leaders assisted in identifying potential interviewees and interviewees.

The project began with the selection of 10 people from various communities in Marin for the "interview team." In addition to conducting individual interviews, the oral historians worked with partner agencies to conduct story circles—opportunities for groups of individuals to come together to tell their stories. Over the course of two years, 55 people were interviewed.

Who was interviewed, and who took part?

Among the interviewees are teachers, a postal employee, poets, visual artists, musicians, park rangers, a hair dresser, a developer, a day laborer, a professional house sitter, carpenters, students, dairy workers, and retirees. They include residents of San Rafael, Point Reyes, Ross, Lagunitas, Novato, Mill Valley, Marin City, Sausalito, San Geronimo, and Fairfax. They all call Marin home.



In addition to this central exhibit, the Arts Council invited three artists who received grants through the Marin Arts Council's Community Arts Grants Program to present their work. They are: "Far From Home" by photographer Luz Elena Castro; "Faces of Affordable Housing" by photographer Nita Winter; and "Close Neighbors," a video by filmmaker Ami Capen.

Marin-based poets who have received grants through the Marin Arts Council's Individual Artists Grants Program were also invited to compose poems that reflected the themes of this project.

Poems and selected interviews and photographs are part of a book also entitled *Finding Marin: Stories of Home*. It includes work completed specifically for this project by Marin poets Joan Baranow, Karen Benke, Claire Blotter, Albert Flynn DeSilver, Sharon Fain, Elizabeth Hope, Robin Leslie Jacobson, William Keener, Richard Lang,

Prartho Sereno, Keith Shein, and Joseph Zaccardi.

"Finding Marin" is about making and keeping a home. It is about people from vastly different areas of the County and with vastly different histories coming together around a specific topic, identifying common values and goals and trusting one another to discuss possibilities that work for everyone.

The Marin Arts Council is deeply grateful to the residents of Marin who helped make this project possible by sharing their time, talent, experience, connections, resources, observations, and—most of all—their stories.

photos by Robert Bengtson

Home page: Terrie Harris Green, Marin City
Above left: Ayala Family, Corte Madera

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