

Black Lives Matter Leads to Million Dollar Book Club

In these challenging times of racial reckoning in the United States, Portland author Jelani Memory is conflicted. All he wanted to do was help parents talk to their kids about race, but in the wake of George Floyd's death, his company, **A Kids Book About** (PSFIII), has sold over a million dollars worth of books, led by his own title **A Kids Book About Racism**.



Jelani Memory, A Kids Book About founder

“Never in a million years would I want to feel like I'm profiting off of tragedy,” said Memory, CEO and Co-founder of the PSF III company. “If we were selling anything else that didn't directly address and help the current situation, I'd take it down.”

“Two things happened,” Memory said. “First, footage of Ahmaud Arbery's killing became public and sales shot up. Then the video of George Floyd came out and it sparked something that was so clear, so obvious, so undeniable, that literally the day after it was released our sales went up 10-fold and the day after that they doubled again.”

Memory sold all 10,000 copies of A Kid's Book About Racism the company had on-hand, an amount he expected to last a year, and the sales continued until he had sold another 25,000 copies on backorder. The wild and sudden success has Memory feeling mixed emotions.

“There was no model of us selling that many books,” he said. “I'm feeling the same grief that the rest of the country is feeling around these deaths, but also some

delight that parents are stepping up to have this conversation with their kids, especially white parents.”

Memory, a Black father with a blended family, never planned to start a book company. He was happily employed at the first startup he co-founded, Circle Media Labs Inc., when he wrote *A Kid’s Book About Racism* for his own children.

“I made the mistake of showing it to friends. They would end up reading it right in front of me. Then they would say, ‘I want this. I think you should be making more on other hard-to-talk-about topics,’” Memory said.

After he had the same conversation at least 20 times, Memory decided to take the leap. *A Kids Book About* launched in October 2019 with 12 titles. Currently there are 19 titles and another 6 come out this month.

Memory says most customers who buy the book on racism add a few more titles to their cart, led by the titles on feminism, gratitude and failure.

“It’s exciting, parents are entertaining the idea that maybe we are waiting too long to talk to our kids about the most fundamental issues,” he said.

As for his own family, Memory said the first book was enough to get the conversation started with his children. “My wife and I are trying to keep the conversation going and be honest and share about what’s happening,” he said. “Parents are obsessed with starting conversations too early. This idea of too early, I am just not sure it exists.”

Source: Portland Seed Fund