



BOOKS

The creator of Pepe the Frog—a cartoon character hijacked as a mascot by white nationalists—has successfully forced the withdrawal of an alt-right children’s book that depicted Pepe as an Islamophobe.

Lawyers acting for Matt Furie, creator of the character, reached a settlement with Eric Hauser, author of *The Adventures of Pepe and Pede*, barring further sales of the book and compelling Hauser to donate all profits from the title to the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), an advocacy group for American Muslims, reported Motherboard.

Furie’s lawyers, from the firm Wilmer Cutler Pickering Hale and Dorr LLP, contacted Hauser after the controversial book made headlines.

In the book the Pepe character, echoing President Trump’s rhetoric, sets out to make his farm “great again,” and battles a bearded alligator villain called Alkah, regarded as a reference to Allah, the Muslim name for God.

Lawyer Louis Tompros told Motherboard that Hauser admitted copyright infringement.

“There’s no question it was copyright infringement. [We] were able to negotiate [settlement] over the course of just a few days.” He added that the book’s \$1,521.54 profits will be handed over to the CAIR.

“Furie wants one thing to be clear: Pepe the Frog does not belong to the alt-right,” read a statement by Wilmer Cutler Pickering Hale and Dorr LLP. “As this action shows, Furie will aggressively enforce his intellectual property, using legal action if necessary, to end the misappropriation of Pepe the Frog in any way that espouses racism, white supremacy, Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, Nazism, or any other form of hate.”

Hauser told the *Dallas News* that he knew that Pepe was a common conservative meme, but claimed he was ignorant of its use by white supremacists. He said that he wrote the book because there was a lack of children’s stories told from a conservative viewpoint, and he hoped to promote national unity and patriotism with the story. The book’s Ukrainian illustrator Nina Khalova also told the publication she was not aware of the racist use of the character. Reported in newsweek.com, August 29.

SCHOOLS Chandler, Arizona

In two separate incidents this school year, parents objected when schools within the Chandler Unified School District (CUSD) taught lessons using media that used the N-word.

In September, parent Amber Hutchinson, whose child attends Santan Junior High School, said the school was wrong to show junior high students *A Race to Freedom*, a movie about slavery and the Underground Railroad. She complained that the N-word used throughout the movie made her child uncomfortable and physically upset. She called on the school to “retire this outdated, culturally insensitive” film, which was released in 1994.

A representative of the school district said the film has been shown in the district for years and does not use the racial slur. Many characters in the film pronounce it “niggra.”

But Hutchinson disagreed with this defense of the film. “I don’t care how you say it. That word hurts. You’re referring to an African-American person in a very demeaning and disrespectful manner,” she told Republic Media (publisher of azcentral.com and *The Arizona Republic*).

Hutchinson raised the issue in a Facebook post, and later spoke at a

school board meeting on September 13. At that meeting, she was joined by several members of the Chandler-based Black Mothers Forum.

After the meeting, Robert Rice, president of the school district’s governing board, told *The Arizona Republic* that public reviews take place whenever new material is introduced, but that not every movie is accounted for. “We just always need to be sensitive to other cultures, races,” he said. “I have blind sides. We all do. I think that’s when we can have other groups help us understand where we’re missing those sensitivities.”

Just over a month later, another lesson involving the N-word upset at least two parents at a different CUSD school. A lesson tied to Mark Twain’s classic *Huckleberry Finn* (but not the book itself) was challenged at Hamilton High School. Twain’s book uses the N-word more than 200 times, but the parents were upset by a lesson taught before students began reading the book. To prepare the class to discuss Twain’s historically accurate dialogue, the teacher shared an article that quotes Arizona State University Professor Neil Lester, who teaches a class on the word.

Ernest Russell, who has a son at Hamilton High School, called the lesson “just totally inappropriate for a 13-14-year-old audience.” He especially took issue with what the lesson said about a new version the word that did not exist in Twain’s era. “The most shocking part of the assignment was the concept that the term ‘nigga’ means friend,” he said.

Another Hamilton parent, Khadijah Abdul-Ghane, said: “The most shocking part for me was the fact it was even brought up in the classroom without our knowledge.”

Terry Locke, a spokesperson for CUSD, told KPNX-TV (Phoenix channel 12) that the assignment is



not part of its mandatory curriculum, but it is part of a “curriculum used by high schools all over the state and country, not just Hamilton.”

CUSD statistics show that approximately 5 percent of the Chandler school district’s students are African-American. Reported in: *azcentral.com*, September 14; *12news.com*, October 17.

Scottsdale, Arizona

Middle schools in the Scottsdale Unified School District (SUSD) have pulled *18r, g8r* by Lauren Myracle from library shelves. The book, in which three girls send text messages to each other, was challenged by the mother of an 11-year-old girl who is a student at Mohave Middle School.

“The explicit sexual content in it and detail in it, it’s pornographic basically,” said the mother, who is identified in reports only as Elle. “It really is the things they talk about. I was angry. I was like, ‘you’re kidding me.’ This is what they’re exposing our kids to, and you think the library is going to be a safe place for your child to go check out a book.” The mother objected to text messages in the book that suggest ways to use social media to get more sexual partners, when to use and not use contraceptives, and other sexually explicit matters.

Elle said the school principal apologized to the parents. Erin Helm, SUSD’s public information and marketing officer, sent an e-mail to the Fox-TV channel 10 Phoenix newsroom, saying the book has been pulled from the library. If the book is found in any other SUSD middle school libraries, Helm’s e-mail said, it will be pulled from those libraries as well. Reported in: *fox10phoenix.com*, September 27.

Cross City, Florida

At Dixie County High School, first a parent complained about students reading *A Lesson Before Dying* by Ernest Gaines, because the book contains sexual references. Then the student of the parent who complained was given a substitute book, and a committee of educational leaders met to discuss whether the book should be removed from the curriculum. But classes had moved past the reference in the book, and the committee decided not to remove the book, saying doing so would give more attention to the questionable material, according to Lindsey Whittington, media specialist at the school.

Then, on September 8, Dixie District Schools Superintendent Mike Thomas issued a directive banning instructional materials that contain “profanity, cursing or inappropriate subject matter.”

In an interview, Thomas didn’t know how the ban would affect Dixie schools’ curricula. He said a committee will be formed to review instructional materials, but he didn’t know when the committee would be formed or who would be on it.

He also said he doesn’t know what will happen to the current school district policies that call for public hearings to discuss challenged books and give teachers the right to present controversial materials if they are related to the subjects being taught. Reported in: *Gainseville Sun*, October 31.

Pinellas County, Florida

Is a book about racism that includes the N-word appropriate for fifth graders? A Pinellas County mother says it’s not, but district leaders have approved the book.

Entitled *The Liberation of Gabriel King*, the book is described by its author, K.L. Going, as a fictional story about courage in 1976. One of the

characters in it is an African American girl facing her fear of the KKK, according to the author’s website.

That’s the book that 10-year-old Cerenity Whiting said her teacher read out loud to her fifth grade class on August 24. In the book there’s a line that reads, “You got beat up by an N-word girl?”

Like many who confront the legacy of white supremacy and racism in America, Whiting was unsettled by the derogatory word. And after her mother found out what happened, she called for the book to be removed from classrooms.

The National Coalition Against Censorship questioned such censorship, asking, “But can the implications of the KKK’s hateful views be accurately taught without first acknowledging that such views exist? Can derogatory words have educational value?”

Cerenity said she was shocked when she heard the word read out loud by her teacher, and was saddened by her classmates’ response. “They started laughing and then I said that wasn’t funny. And he didn’t do anything. He just kept on reading while they were laughing,” she said. “It made me feel like the word wasn’t right, and I got uncomfortable.”

She said out of all the children in her class there are only three African American children, including herself.

Her mother, Marquita Oseji, says she found out about the book when Cerenity said she didn’t want to go to school because of it.

“I’m upset. I’m upset that the school board would allow this because there’s many ways that you can teach a child about bullies and different situations without using derogatory words,” she said. “This word is a useless word and I feel like they can get their point across without using this word.”



Oseji said she asked the principal why she wasn't alerted about the content of the book.

"She told me that it was supposed to be a shared learning time. They were supposed to send home the letters that never went out and that the teacher stated that they weren't aware of it. She did tell me she was going to pull the book from the classrooms and the teachers, however, I spoke to my daughter after school and the books were still in the book cases when she left after school," Oseji said.

Despite *Gabriel King's* use of the N-word, the Pinellas County School District found educational value in the book, which *The Kirkus Review* praises as a tale in which "friends and their community come together to stand up against the evil within."

The Pinellas County School District released this statement: "*The Liberation of Gabriel King* is an approved text for fifth grade. Pinellas County Schools are reviewing whether policies related to sensitive materials were followed. The principal has spoken with the parent and the matter is being addressed." Reported in: baynews9.com, August 26; ncaac.org, September 8.

Fishers, Indiana

A same-sex gang rape scene in *The Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini has drawn the ire of a parent at Fishers High School. The parent is also a school board member at the Hamilton Southeastern School District, which includes Fishers, in suburban Indianapolis.

Board member Amanda Shera said the novel was a summer reading assignment for her daughter's AP Literature and Composition class. Shera said she was shocked by a "graphic" question her daughter asked after reading the book. Along with the rape scene, Shera said she is concerned about the

lying and distrust of adults she found in the book.

Hamilton Southeastern's director of secondary education, Phil Lederach, said the "beautifully told" story has "much to offer," including essential literary devices, for students in the college-level course. "The theme of redemption . . . fits nicely with the other works used throughout the school year," Lederach said in an email. "Instructors have found *The Kite Runner* to be very accessible to students, to deepen their understanding of the impact of historical context on literature, and has led to excellent classroom discussions."

He pointed out *The Kite Runner* received critical acclaim by both the Young Adult Library Services Association and the American Library Association.

The Kite Runner is the story of the unlikely friendship between a wealthy boy and the son of his father's servant, according to author Khaled Hosseini's website. Set in Afghanistan, a country that is in the process of being destroyed, the story is about "the power of reading, the price of betrayal and the possibility of redemption."

In a letter addressed to parents at the end of the school year, teachers said they would provide a "comparable alternative" if parents or students prefer.

But Shera is worried students wouldn't pick the alternative, in order to fit in. "The kids are ashamed that pick the alternate book," she said. "They're the ones that have the moms that are the prudes."

She also pointed out that *The Kite Runner* is not included in an overview of the course provided by College Board, the national organization that oversees AP coursework. The College Board website provides a 2014 course description that does not list Hosseini under "representative authors."

Spokeswoman Marie Alcon-Heroux said the College Board does not give schools a reading list. Authors are suggested, to show the "range and quality of reading expected," she said, but teachers choose which books to study. *The Kite Runner* was listed in 2016 as a text that could be used to respond to an open-ended essay question on the AP test, she said.

Shera wants the book removed from the reading list, but said she did not receive a response from Fishers High School's English department, which she contacted because district policy prohibits board members from contacting teachers directly.

She brought up the issue during a board meeting on August 9, as part of the discussion about the policy for selecting curriculum.

When asked if the district will make changes after Shera's comments, Lederach said the high school has not received a request to reconsider the use of the book.

"The goal of AP Literature and Composition is for students to read carefully, write thoughtfully and think deeply," Lederach said, pointing out the novel has been used on previous tests. "The literary elements of this novel fit well with many of the open-ended questions on the exam."

Teachers will review the course this year, he said, as they do every year following requirements from the College Board. Reported in: indystar.com, August 17.

Baltimore, Maryland

A memoir about a teenager who transformed his life and transcended inner-city obstacles has been removed from a Baltimore City high school, even though the author said he wrote the book years ago with the kids of Baltimore City in mind. After many parents objected to a racy chapter, *Buck* by M.K. Asante was stripped



from the lesson plans at Digital Harbor High School.

A parent posted excerpts on Facebook and hundreds responded, calling the content “extremely graphic,” and “very disturbing.” One parent said “there is no reason any child should be reading stuff like that.” The few pages are riddled with profanity. They describe things in graphic detail, like women stripping, drinking, even participating in sex games for cash.

Asante, who is a Morgan State professor, said his book shouldn’t be judged by just a few pages. He said teachers across the city have been teaching with the text for years. “I think in the context of a classroom, with these brilliant educators we have in Baltimore City who are using this material as springboards to talk about misogyny, objectification, violence in our communities,” he said. “Let’s use this as a springboard! That’s what literature does.”

Parents got a call that the book was being pulled from the classroom. Baltimore City Schools released the following statement: “*Buck* is not part of the approved curriculum, and it will be replaced with a different, approved text for subsequent lessons at Digital Harbor High School. Administrators at the school have met with the teaching staff to reinforce requirements around use of approved resources.”

Baltimore City Schools said the district provides a list of approved books for teachers to implement into their English classes.

Asante said he has held at least 75 events where he talked about the book’s content with city students, and he hopes parents concerned with the content will give it a read. Reported in: baltimore.cbslocal.com, November 30.

Biloxi, Mississippi

Biloxi school administrators pulled Harper Lee’s classic novel *To Kill a Mockingbird* from the eighth grade English curriculum after receiving complaints about the book’s language. Kenny Holloway, vice president of the Biloxi School Board said, “There were complaints about it. There is some language in the book that makes people uncomfortable, and we can teach the same lesson with other books. It’s still in our library. But they’re going to use another book in the 8th grade course.”

The school board’s decision came to light after the *Biloxi Sun Herald* investigated an email it received from a concerned reader who alleged that students would not be allowed to finish the reading of *To Kill a Mockingbird* due to the use of the N-word.

After the newspaper raised questions about whether the school board had followed its own reconsideration policy in removing the book, the Biloxi School Board held a meeting on October 17 to discuss the book’s removal. During the meeting, Yolanda Williams and her mother, Jessica Williams, told the Biloxi School Board that it wasn’t just *To Kill a Mockingbird* that was offensive about the curriculum for the eighth grade but other things, including the study of ammunition used in the Civil War. The two women said they complained to the school after Yolanda’s child was assigned to read *To Kill a Mockingbird* and students were saying the N-word and laughing in the classroom, and it was offensive.

The news report sparked a national outcry against the removal of the book, and the Biloxi School District became the focus of commentaries published by several national news outlets and anti-censorship organizations defending *To Kill a Mockingbird* and supporting use of the book in the

curriculum. The school board received letters from across the country, including one from an 11th-grade Advanced Placement language class in Tenafly, New Jersey, that urged Biloxi to continue teaching the book and one from the director of the Mark Twain House & Museum in Hartford, Connecticut.

Administrators subsequently restored *To Kill a Mockingbird* to its eighth-grade classrooms on October 23 as an optional assignment. In a letter sent home to eighth-grade parents, Principal Scott Powell said “As has been stated before, *To Kill a Mockingbird* is not a required read for 8th Grade ELA (English Language Arts) students. However, 8th Grade ELA teachers will offer the opportunity for interested students to participate in an in-depth book study of the novel during regularly scheduled classes as well as the optional after school sessions.” Students wanting to read and study the book were required to return a permission slip signed by a parent to their school and their English Language Arts teacher. Students who did not want to read *To Kill a Mockingbird* were given another assignment. Reported in: *Biloxi Sun-Herald*, October 12; October 17; and October 25.

Asheville, North Carolina

North Buncombe High School removed *The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison from the curriculum, after a parent objected to sexually explicit scenes in the best-selling book. The novel’s main character survives child abuse by her father.

“It’s astounding really that somebody thinks it’s OK for kids to be reading this in school,” Tim Cooley, a North Buncombe parent, told WLOS-TV channel 13 news. “As a Christian single dad, that’s not the values I teach my kids, and it’s



certainly not OK for them to have to read a book like that.”

In accordance with established policy at Buncombe County Schools, the entire book (not just certain passages) was referred to the school’s Media & Technology Advisory Committee. According to the school board’s online monthly “Board Briefing,” report, “The decision and subsequent recommendation from the committee was that *The Bluest Eye* will no longer be used as an instructional material for 11th grade English courses at any academic achievement level—Standard, Honors, or Advanced Placement; however, the committee provided a non-binding opinion that the book could be considered for use as an instructional resource for 12th grade Advanced Placement, as deemed appropriate by that particular teacher.”

Dr. Tony Baldwin, superintendent of the school board, said the policy for reviewing book challenges is a valuable process “to provide the student and/or parent an opportunity to either opt for a substitute resource or express an objection to the initial selection.” Reported in: wlos.com, September 21; buncombeschools.org, October 5.

Blum, Texas

Malcolm X: By Any Means Necessary by Walter Dean Myers was challenged at Blum Middle School, part of the Blum Independent School District. Because of complaints that the book is offensive to religious sensitivities, and politically, racially, or socially offensive, an alternative book was assigned. This was one of eighteen book challenges in Texas schools during the 2016-17 school year that were uncovered in an annual survey conducted by the Texas chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union. The ACLU Texas chapter said 44 percent of Texas schools responded to this year’s

request for information about banned and challenged books. Reported in: aclutx.org, September 27.

Franklin, Texas

Drama by Raina Telgemeier was banned at Franklin Middle School, part of the Franklin Independent School District. This was the only book (out of eighteen reported book challenges) to be banned in more than one school district in Texas schools during the 2016-17 school year, according to an annual survey conducted by the Texas chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union. At Franklin Middle School, *Drama* was cited as “inappropriate for all ages on this campus.” A major issue with the book was an illustration that shows two boys kissing.

Also at Franklin Middle School, *True Colors*, a series of books by Melody Carlson, was challenged for depicting “inappropriate situations for age” of the students reading the books. The series was retained, but restricted for certain age groups.

At the same school, *Maximum Ride Manga Series* by James Patterson was challenged for “inappropriate language” for the age group. The series was restricted to certain age groups. Reported in: aclutx.org, September 27.

Georgetown, Texas

The Stranger by Albert Camus was challenged but retained at Gateway College Preparatory School, part of the Orenda Charter Schools network in central Texas. The novel was challenged at the K-12 school because of its violence or horror, and for being “offensive to religious sensibilities.” This was one of eighteen book challenges in Texas schools during the 2016-17 school year that were uncovered in an annual survey conducted by the Texas chapter of the American

Civil Liberties Union. Reported in: aclutx.org, September 27.

Houston, Texas

Black Butler, vols. 5 and 6 by Yana Toboso was challenged but retained at Harmony School of Advancement, which is a public charter school for grades 9-12, affiliated with the statewide Harmony charter network. The two books in the manga series were cited as offensive to religious sensitivities and for including witchcraft, satanic, and occult themes. This was one of eighteen book challenges in Texas schools during the 2016-17 school year that were uncovered in an annual survey conducted by the Texas chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union. Reported in: aclutx.org, September 27.

Irving, Texas

Two books were challenged at Uplift North Hills Preparatory, a K-12 charter school that is part of the Uplift Charter Schools network in Texas: *Like Water for Chocolate* by Laura Esquivel, and *The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison. These were among eighteen book challenges in Texas schools during the 2016-17 school year that were uncovered in an annual survey conducted by the Texas chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union.

After the challenges, *The Bluest Eye* was retained, and excerpts from *Like Water for Chocolate* are still used in an 11th-12th grade Spanish International Baccalaureate class.

The survey respondent did not tell the ACLU what was the reason for the challenge to *The Bluest Eye*, but the title frequently appears on the American Library Association’s lists of challenged books. Most of the challenges to Toni Morrison’s coming-of-age story cite the book’s sexual content and language.



Like Water for Chocolate was challenged at Uplift North Hills on the grounds that the text was too complex for the grade level assigned. Reported in: aclutx.org, September 27.

Katy, Texas

After a controversial decision to pull *The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas off the shelves at schools in the Katy Independent School District, the critically acclaimed novel about a black teen dealing with the aftermath of witnessing a police shooting that killed her unarmed friend was returned to the district's high school libraries on February 6.

"The book is back on shelves at all of our high schools, but it includes a parental consent—that can be given by a phone call, email or in person consent by the parent," said Maria DiPetta, manager of media relations for Katy ISD.

The book's ultimate fate in the district is pending a committee review of the original challenge.

The Hate U Give, Thomas' debut novel, is the *Boston Globe-Horn Book Award* winner for fiction and a National Book Award Longlist and Morris Award Finalist title.

After a parent complained about the book to the board of education in November, members of the board and superintendent Dr. Lance Hindt read the book, according to DiPetta. Hindt then made the decision to pull the book "because of the pervasive vulgarity," DiPetta said.

Despite local district policy that requires a committee review before removing challenged material, Hindt had legal authority to make the decision and override that local policy, according to DiPetta. The ALA's Office of Intellectual Freedom and others have argued that is not true.

For their part, the Katy ISD administration said it is not true that the

book was banned, as media reports and social media posts indicated.

"It was just temporarily removed, it was not ever, ever banned," said DiPetta, noting that students were free to bring the book to school or use it for reports or homework.

The book's return might only be temporary, as well. It is back with parental consent pending the committee review to the original challenge. The committee, which can include librarians and teachers, has not yet been finalized. The process can take from a couple of days to months, according to DiPetta.

People in the book community didn't wait for the district to correct the issue, instead quickly working through social media and connections to get the book to kids in Katy as quickly as possible. Stackedbooks.org sent out the call for donations of the book and people to deliver it to Little Free Libraries in the area. Reported in: *School Library Journal*, February 6.

Kirbyville, Texas

Drama by Raina Telgemeier was banned at Kirbyville Junior High School in the Kirbyville Consolidated Independent School District. The reason given is that the book was deemed "politically, racially, or socially offensive." This was one of eighteen book challenges (and the only book that was banned in two different school districts) in Texas schools during the 2016-17 school year, according to an annual survey conducted by the Texas chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union. The book has been frequently challenged across the nation. A major issue with the book is an illustration that shows two boys kissing. Reported in: aclutx.org, September 27.

Lake Travis, Texas

George Orell's novel *1984* was challenged at Lake Travis Middle School

because some parents felt the book was not age-appropriate. The Lake Travis Independent School District (LTISD) removed the classic novel from a required reading list, and allowed students to read an alternate book instead. This was one of eighteen book challenges in Texas schools during the 2016-17 school year that were uncovered in an annual survey conducted by the Texas chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union.

In another LTISD school, *More Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark* by Alvin Schwartz was removed (at least temporarily) from the library at Lake Travis Elementary School. A final decision on the book was still pending at the time of the Texas ACLU survey. The book was challenged because of its "violence or horror." Reported in: aclutx.org, September 27.

Leander, Texas

Boxers by Tammy Gagne was challenged but retained at the Camacho Elementary School, part of the Leander School District (LSD). The complaint against the book about the boxer breed of dogs was that its depiction of bull-baiting, bull-docking, and bull-cropping was not appropriate for elementary school. This was one of eighteen book challenges in Texas schools during the 2016-17 school year that were uncovered in an annual survey conducted by the Texas chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union.

At another school within the LSD, *Beyond the Grave* by Judith Herbst was challenged at the River Place Elementary School, on the grounds that its "photographs will scare children and give them nightmares." Reported in: aclutx.org, September 27.

Montgomery, Texas

The Highwayman, an illustrated version of a famous poem by Alfred Noyes,



was challenged at Montgomery Junior High School, part of the Montgomery Independent School District, because the book was said to contain “profanity; sexual content or nudity; violence or horror.” The outcome of the challenge was not reported to the ACLU of Texas, which gathered the information in an annual survey of Texas schools for the 2016–17 school year. Reported in: aclutx.org, September 27.

New Braunfels, Texas

I Survived (The Attacks of September 11, 2001) by Lauren Tarshis was challenged but retained at Memorial Elementary School in the New Braunfels Independent School District. The book drew objections for its use of the word “terrorist.” This was one of eighteen book challenges in Texas schools during the 2016–17 school year that were uncovered in an annual survey conducted by the Texas chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union. Reported in: aclutx.org, September 27.

Poth, Texas

The Tell Tale Heart by Edgar Allan Poe was challenged and an alternate book was assigned at Poth Junior High School, in the Poth Independent School District. The challengers cited the story for “violence or horror; offensive to religious sensibilities.” This was one of eighteen book challenges in Texas schools during the 2016–17 school year that were uncovered in an annual survey conducted by the Texas chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union. Reported in: aclutx.org, September 27.

Taylor, Texas

To Kill a Mockingbird by Harper Lee was challenged but retained at Taylor Middle School, part of the Taylor Independent School District. Objections

said the book was “politically, racially, or socially offensive.” This was one of eighteen book challenges in Texas schools during the 2016–17 school year that were uncovered in an annual survey conducted by the Texas chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union. Reported in: aclutx.org, September 27.

Cody, Wyoming

Tanya Stone’s *A Bad Boy Can Be Good for a Girl* was challenged at Cody High School. A parent complained about sexual content in the book, demanding its removal from the school library. Cody District Public Schools convened an eight-person review committee to consider the book.

A Bad Boy Can Be Good for a Girl focuses on three girls and their decisions regarding a single boy who has made it his goal to seduce all of the girls in school. The book has been widely praised as a frank and relevant take on how teenagers handle sexuality. Ultimately, the girls in the book stand up to the predatory behaviors of the boy—and for themselves in the process—but those who oppose to the book focus on sexual content as a reason to censor it.

In defense of the book, the Freedom to Read Foundation, the Comic Book Legal Defense Fund, the American Booksellers Foundation for Free Expression, the National Council of Teachers of English, the Association of American Publishers, and the Society of Children’s Books Writers and Illustrators all signed on to a letter from the Kids’ Right to Read Project, addressed to assistant superintendent Tim Foley, urging the district to keep the book available and reminding the district of its responsibility to protect the First Amendment rights of students in the community, stating: “While not every book is right for every reader, the role of school libraries

is to allow students and parents to make choices according to their own interests, experiences, and family values. However, no parent, student or community member may impose their views, values and interests on others by restricting an entire community’s access to particular books. While parents are within their rights to make decisions for their own children, letting a single parent determine what is available to all children in the community raises significant First Amendment concerns.”

The letter also expressed concern about how the school district reviews book challenges: “We recommend that you revise your learning resources complaints policy to ensure that Complaints Committee decisions are based primarily on pedagogical principles and the professional expertise of education and media specialists.” Currently, district policy gives a greater number of seats on the committee to parents/patrons (5) than to educators (3) in the district. Further, the committee does not include librarians, who best know the range of materials that should be in the library’s collection to support the educational programs of the school. Reported in: cblfd.org, December 1.

INTERNATIONAL United Kingdom

One mother is calling for the classic fairy tale *Sleeping Beauty* to be removed from her six-year-old son’s school curriculum, based on fears that the story may be giving young children the wrong message about consent. Sarah Hall from Tyneside, England, says the story, in which a prince kisses the unconscious Sleeping Beauty to wake her from a curse, features an “inappropriate sexual message” and has contacted the school to request that the book be removed from younger classes.



The mother of two raised the issue after reading the story with her son, who brought an illustrated version of the book home from school. She believes that, “In today’s society, it isn’t appropriate—my son is only six, he absorbs everything he sees.”

She is not seeking a complete ban on the story, saying the tale could be a “great resource for older children” to encourage discussions on consent and “how the Princess might feel.”

The mother, who runs a PR consultancy, said she was prompted to take action by the recent sexual harassment controversy in Hollywood. In her original tweet, she used the #MeToo hashtag, which has served as the rallying cry for women and men to share their experiences of sexual harassment. Reported in: BBC, November 28.

THEATER New York, New York

The American Jewish Historical Society is facing a backlash over its decision on October 10 to cancel a reading of *Rubble Rubble*, a play by Dan Fishback, after a campaign by

right-wing activists who had criticized it as anti-Israel.

The society, which is based at the Center for Jewish History in Manhattan, had made plans months earlier for the play reading and a panel about the founding of the state of Israel, which was co-sponsored by the group Jewish Voice for Peace. The playwright is also a member of the group, which is part of the broader movement calling for boycott, divestment and sanctions against Israel, known as BDS.

His play, which was to get its first full public reading at the historical society on December 14, tells the dual stories of a modern-day settler family in the West Bank and a Jewish family caught up in revolutionary politics in early-20th-century Russia. While it explores “how Jewish families are broken over the politics of Israel-Palestine,” he said in an interview, the cancellation was not about the play’s substance.

“The people who made this decision had no access to my script,” he said. “This was about my beliefs.”

The two events, planned months ago, came under criticism from

right-wing activists, as the latest salvo in a wider campaign against the new executive director of the Center for Jewish History, David Myers, over his involvement in groups like New Israel Fund, which promotes human rights and social justice. The decision drew strong criticism from some in the arts, including the theater director Rachel Chavkin, who described it on Twitter as “right-wing censorship.” And Ofri Cnaani, an Israeli-American artist, removed an installation exploring the life of Emma Goldman that she had created in the lobby of the group’s building. Ms. Cnaani, in a telephone interview, said while she was not a supporter of BDS, the cancellation of the events demanded a response, especially given that her installation, “For Her Own Good,” explores Goldman’s defense of freedom of speech.

“When I heard about it, I was shocked,” Ms. Cnaani said. “I immediately thought that to not do anything would amount to supporting this decision.” Reported in: *New York Times*, October 11.