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| A complicated love story set in space | Hutchinson, Shaun David | 2021 |
| A lesson in vengeance | Lee, Victoria | 2021 |
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| Perfect on paper | Gonzales, S. | 2021 |
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| Race and policing in modern America | Harris, Duchess | 2021 |
| Race and the media in modern America | Harris, Duchess | 2021 |
| Racial justice in America : topics for change | Nichols, Hedreich | 2021 |
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On October 25, 2021, Texas state representative Matt Krause sent a list of 839 books to every school district in the state asking for an audit of their curricula and library collections. This list has since been used as a reference for book challenges across the country.

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 _ The Texas Education Agency and every school district in Texas received a letter from Krause which included a 16-page list of 839 unique titles. The letter requested them to report which of those books they possess, how many copies they have, which schools they're located in, and how much was spent to purchase them.

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Free Speech vs. Social Justice

Should Hate Speech be Protected?

Author _ Jacqui Higgins-Dailey (jacqueline.higgins-dailey@gccaz.edu), Glendale (AZ) Community College

Editor's note: Publication by JIFP does not constitute an endorsement of the content or represent the official position of the Office for Intellectual Freedom (OIF) or the American Library Association (ALA). Commentaries, articles, and book reviews do not necessarily reflect the views of the editorial board of JIFP, OIF, ALA, or their affiliates.

There is a troubling trend within the library profession. As a result of blind allegiance to free speech absolutism, librarians are forgetting that we exist in a society. Libraries are social spaces and therefore spaces for social justice.

Library school teaches us that we exist to offer a space for discourse, research, and inquiry. We must present all sides and perspectives in our collection to allow individuals to form their own opinions, informing and instructing those we serve through a lens of neutrality. But to believe this, we have to ignore the nuances of society and the structural inequities within it.

Years ago, I heard a colleague say that if we don't have something in the library that offends you, then we aren't doing our job. On the surface I understand the sentiment, but upon reflection I found deep problems. First, the person saying it is white. Second, creating offense is decidedly not our job.

Why do I mention race? White supremacy is the foundation and lens through which everything is created within this country. [When 83 percent of librarians are white](#) (DPE 2021), it's an indication we do not fully understand the difference between harm and offense because that which offends white people does not typically

harm us. [However, that which offends Black, Indigenous and people of color \(BIPOC\) can and does harm them](#) (Hernandez 2021).

So while we may say that it's important to have all sides of an issue represented in the library, when do we determine that the harm some material causes to marginalized groups outweighs its value in public discourse?

Nesrine Malik, an author and journalist, wrote a compelling piece in the *Guardian* in 2019 titled "[The Myth of the Free Speech Crisis](#)," which was excerpted from the book *We Need New Stories: The Myths that Subvert Freedom*. Malik argues that the "free speech crisis," along with five



other myths, including “The Myth of Harmful Identity Politics” and “The Myth of Gender Equality,” is perpetuated by those bent on maintaining the status quo above all social progress toward equality of marginalized groups.

The First Amendment has been mythologized to invoke one’s right to say anything and everything without consequence. Free speech in the United States does not protect some categories of speech, including obscenity, fraud, and false advertising, but it does protect hate speech. The two components to this myth, Malik says, are that all speech should be free and that free speech means freedom from objection.

Malik writes, “The myth and its promoters thrive on cognitive dissonances and good intentions, feeding them with free speech absolutism, invoking a nonexistent marketplace of ideas, fabrication of free speech scandals, and slippery slope fallacies” (60).

Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes first articulated the “Marketplace of Ideas” theory that Malik mentions. Holmes said more speech is better because when all ideas are offered and available, the truth will prevail through market competition ([Annenberg Classroom](#) 2021). Does this hold true for hate speech? Malik writes, “The problem with the marketplace of ideas theory (as with all ‘invisible hand’-type theories) is that it does not account for a world in which the market is skewed, and where not all ideas receive equal representation because the market has monopolies and cartels” (71-72). She points out that the ideal of this type of “marketplace” requires significant regulation.

Librarians commonly argue that if we advocate for regulation of speech we are either “censoring” or that we enter a “slippery slope.” I don’t know if we even understand what we mean when we talk about a slippery slope. Malik sees the argument as a fallacy; a false equivalence. The slippery slope does not exist, she says. She makes the point that banning Nazi propaganda does not lead to banning other, valid perspectives and points of view. “It’s less ‘First they came for the socialists, and I did nothing, then they came for me,’ and more ‘First they came for the Holocaust deniers, and then they did not come for me or anyone else, because none of us were Holocaust deniers” (83).

Hate speech has no value in public dialogue. It detracts from discourse. When white librarians, staff, and administrators continue to value free speech over the dignity of marginalized people, we send a message that we pay lip service to equity and inclusion but are not willing to sacrifice our white comfort.

A few years ago, I learned of a library request for the graphic novel *Lost Girls* by Alan Moore. The book is an

erotic graphic novel. It has a starred [review in *Publisher’s Weekly* by Neil Gaiman](#) (2006). The author is a well-known and renowned graphic novelist. Though it met all the criteria to purchase, ultimately it was rejected. The individual making the decision said it would not be added to the collection because it was “pornography.”

Fast forward to March 2021. [Dr. Seuss Enterprises ceased publication of six titles because of racist imagery](#) (2021). Not only does the same library carry four of the six books in print in the children’s section but most are available in English and Spanish as well as e-book formats. Reflect on what message that sends. There is more offense and discomfort surrounding a book that features erotica than there is a children’s book with racist depictions of Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) and Black communities.

I am not suggesting removing these books from the library. Librarians may argue there is value in keeping them as archives and primary sources to study racist imagery in historical children’s literature. But what value are we serving by retaining them in the children’s section? Does access to such titles supersede the value of dismantling a white supremacist system that created a market for these racist materials in the first place? The American Academy of Pediatrics indicates that “[by ages 2 to 4, children can internalize racial bias](#)” (Anderson and Dougé 2019).

Those arguing the fallacy of the “slippery slope” might suggest that removing these books from the children’s section creates a precedent for “the other side” to remove lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) or anti-racist books. But this is a misapprehension. One set of books patently propagates caricatured stereotypes and dehumanizes a large swath of people. The other seeks to include, humanize, and teach about people seeking civil rights and protections of due process under the Fourteenth Amendment. How are these equivalent?

Journalism has a similar objectivity issue. Students of journalism are taught that the central tenet of the profession is neutrality and objectivity. Journalists present both sides and let the reader come to their own opinions. However, Malik shines light on her lived experience as a Black, Muslim woman in the world of journalism and politics. It is a stark example of the direct racism and even potential violence the myth of the free speech crisis engenders.

She illuminates this point about the media, “This is now the discourse; presenting bigotry and then the defense of bigotry as a ‘debate’ from which everyone can benefit. . . . As a result, mainstream media establishments began to struggle with this glut of opinion, failing to



curate the public discussion by giving into false equivalence. Now every opinion must have a counter-opinion. . . . Whenever I attempted to push back in my writing against what amounted to incitement against racial or religious minorities, my opponents fixated on the free speech argument, rather than the harmful ramifications of hate speech.”

In my personal experience with colleagues, I see similar debates. [Many librarians that hold status believe that neutrality is our ultimate goal](#) (LaRue 2018). But numerous BIPOC librarians are telling us that [neutrality directly harms them and BIPOC patrons](#) (Williams 2017). Many BIPOC librarians no longer trust the intentions of our professional organizations like the American Library Association. With her prior consent, I share April Hathcock’s perspective. Hathcock is a Black librarian and former member of the council of the American Library Association. [She wrote in 2021](#), “Having gotten a glimpse into the inner workings of the organization, I’m more convinced than ever that ALA has always been and will

always be centered on promoting the ‘neutrality’ of white supremacy and capitalism . . . there is no interest in making the organization more welcoming to those who do not represent the 87% of White librarians in the profession. ALA is what it is and it will remain what it is” (2021).

Upholding free speech absolutism, as white librarians, to grasp onto an ideal of professional integrity may seem noble, but what does it say about us as conduits of information and exploration if we are more concerned with the perception of our ethical purity than with actually serving our patrons? How we serve those who walk through our doors is the most important component of our professional integrity.

So should we continue to protect hate speech? Should we give it value in the so-called marketplace of ideas? Or should we advocate for regulating speech at the risk of facing criticism. While we may be uncomfortable with regulations, BIPOC, LGBTQ+, and other [marginalized groups are facing violent consequences](#) because of the propagation of hate speech and its protections (Hernandez 2021).

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Say It Loud! On Race, Law, History, and Culture

Author _ Randall Kennedy

Publisher _ Pantheon Books, 2021. 510p. Cloth (also available as ebook). \$30.00. ISBN: 9780593316047

Reviewer _ Sherry V. Neal, JD, School Librarian, David T. Howard Middle School

As someone who has been a lawyer for two decades and a school librarian for less than five years, I am always interested in books that bridge the fields of law and librarianship without necessarily being about legal librarianship. With its focus on legal decisions, theories, and personalities and emphasis on the critical value of intellectual freedom, Randall Kennedy's new essay collection *Say It Loud! On Race, Law, History, and Culture* sits firmly on that bridge between professions.

Kennedy himself also sits, as a thinker, in the middle ground between optimism and pessimism, espousing an approach to race in the United States that may be best considered as practical realism with a solid dash of hope. Throughout the twenty-nine essays, the theme of considering and acknowledging all facts—good and bad, positive and negative, welcome and unwelcome—pervades Kennedy's writing. While Kennedy discusses the serious racial issues that remain in this country, he couples the discussion with reminders to the reader of the immense strides toward a more egalitarian society achieved through actions like the passage of the Civil Rights Act and the (admittedly slow) desegregation of schools following the *Brown* decisions. This balance reminded me of the approach set out in Hans Rosling's *Factfulness* (Flatiron Books, 2018). While Kennedy never references Rosling, he certainly would agree with the existence of a real-world paradox that things can be both better and still bad.

Kennedy certainly comes across as far more interested in humanism, distributive justice, and dialog as a tactic for promoting change rather than in figuring out which, if any, political camp on the issue of race in America is "right." Positing himself as a realist resigned through personal experience to the pursuit of "racial decency," Kennedy is no longer the bright-eyed optimist he may have been when younger, but he does hold out hope for a more equitable society and speaks favorably of Derrick Bell's view that "struggle against racial injustice is a life-affirming activity in which one should be involved

regardless of outcome" (while also criticizing Bell's dogmatic approach).

In support of the dialog he sees as necessary to the functioning of our society, Kennedy collects a group of essays that present a range of views on the issue of race in America. In "Black Power Hagiography," Kennedy examines the various approaches to "liberation from racial oppression" from racial integrationists to racial separatists. He also examines the contributions of Black political and legal thinkers, including Derrick Bell ("Derrick Bell and Me"), Clarence Thomas ("Why Clarence Thomas Ought to Be Ostracized"), Frederick Douglass ("Frederick Douglass: Everyone's Hero"), Eric Foner ("Eric Foner and the Unfinished Mission of Reconstruction"), Charles Hamilton Houston ("Charles Hamilton Houston: The Lawyer as Social Engineer"), and Thurgood Marshall ("Remembering Thurgood Marshall"). Key to Kennedy's assessment is that each of these individuals is a fully fleshed human being with characteristics and achievements to be praised and with shortcomings and failings to be acknowledged as well. While he (and the reader) may not agree with each of these individuals politically or philosophically, Kennedy consistently asserts the value of understanding the positions and motivations of prominent individuals, giving credit where credit is due, but not unduly placing human beings on pedestals above the critical evaluation of others.

Also key to Kennedy's analysis is his belief in the critical value of intellectual freedom. This belief is most fully fleshed out in "The Princeton Ultimatum," in which he criticizes the demands of professors at Princeton seeking antiracist action. Among the demands of the professors were calls for "a faculty committee to 'oversee the investigation and discipline of racist behaviors, incidents, research, and publication on the part of faculty.'" In this demand, Kennedy sees a direct threat to the intellectual freedom that is necessary for the flourishing of academic dialog in a democratic society. In threatening intellectual freedom, Kennedy fears, calls for policing of thought and



ensorship also threaten the effort to address systemic racism by overreaching.

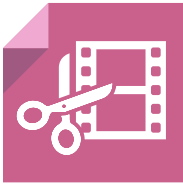
Kennedy argues throughout his essays that only a balanced approach that respects a range of opinions and thought can continue the development of change. One clear example of this call for balance appears in “Inequality and the Supreme Court,” in which Kennedy reviews Adam Cohen’s book *Supreme Inequality* (Penguin, 2020). Cohen criticizes the Supreme Court decision in *Citizens United*, which essentially equates campaign spending by corporations with free speech by individuals. Kennedy faults Cohen for not considering other views and reminds readers that the ACLU, a champion of individual liberties and no politically conservative organization, “has consistently opposed parts of the campaign finance legislation that Cohen champions” due to free speech concerns. Kennedy posits that critics of the Court’s decisions simply cannot ignore opponents. Though “one might well reject their position . . . it deserves a hearing and careful consideration.”

Kennedy’s stance is consistently that intellectual freedom is both good and also necessary because of the “prudent fear of state power,” as he notes in “Policing Racial Solidarity.” In that essay, addressing racially hateful speech, Kennedy avers, “I support, however, private parties and associations of private parties that mobilize to refute, challenge, condemn, shame, and ostracize racism in its manifold guises.” Similarly, in discussing the removal of monuments to white supremacy and the renaming of buildings that honor individuals now acknowledged to be unacceptably racist (“Race and the Politics of Memorialization”), Kennedy argues that the answer is never less speech, less intellectual freedom, but *more*: “I would prefer an outcome based on addition rather than subtraction.”

Ultimately, as Kennedy sums up in the final essay, “Racial Promised Lands?,” the only real solution is to “fore swear strict allegiance to any grand blueprint that would seek to master our unruly racial reality” and to keep engaging in an effort to seek change through dialog.

Kennedy’s own views on race and the effort to achieve a more equitable, egalitarian culture are most fully laid out in the titular essay, “Say It Loud! On Racial Shame, Pride, Kinship, and Other Problems.” In this essay, the reader sees Kennedy’s introspection and thought as he struggles with his own competing concepts about how, why, and whether race matters. The inclusion of this essay is, I believe, important for providing a baseline for understanding Kennedy’s position in most of the other essays. I found it to be powerful reading.

Setting aside the critical, theoretical aspects of *Say It Loud!*, Kennedy is a masterful storyteller and memoirist. Some of my favorite moments in the book are when Kennedy simply shares the stories of other legal and political theorists, including his own encounters and experiences with them. I walked away from the book feeling like I had a more holistic understanding of the personalities of historical figures like J. Waties Waring, Thurgood Marshall, and Derrick Bell. Kennedy is also very good at explaining legal decisions in plain terms that even non-lawyers will easily understand. I highly recommend this essay collection to others interested in the intersection of law and intellectual freedom. The book would be a valuable addition to an academic library, especially at a law school or an undergraduate school with a political science or pre-law program. It would also be a worthwhile acquisition for public libraries where there is patron interest in the circulation of titles on civil rights, political theory, and race.



Alabama

On August 12, the Alabama State Board of Education passed a resolution banning critical race theory (CRT) in public schools. The resolution passed along both party and racial lines.

The resolution employed language modeled on former President Trump's September 22, 2020 executive order (EO 13850) to ban "concepts that impute fault, blame, a tendency to oppress others, or the need to feel guilt or anguish to persons solely because of their race or sex."

It states that the board does not support any K-12 public education resources or standards used to "indoc-trinate students in social or political ideologies that promote one race or sex above another."

The resolution provides similar prohibitions to the topics of profes-sional development for teachers or employees of Alabama's public educa-tion system.

Deliberately vague provisions such as these have been used since September 2020 to prohibit educa-tion around race and racism; prevent equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) training; chill speech; and justify removal of books from curricula and libraries.

Benard Simmelton, president of the Alabama NAACP, said, "This resolu-tion was conceived out of anti-public education groups that are unfamiliar with the Alabama course of study." He contended the board should instead be concerned with issues such as the unequal punishment of Black and White students.

At a brief public hearing before the resolution was voted on, the majority of speakers opposed it, expressing fears that it would hinder teaching about race and racism and reinforce an inac-curate portrayal of US history.

Terri Michal, a Birmingham City Schools board member, spoke in

opposition to the resolution. She said, "It is not the end of the world if our White children get uncomfortable at school. We have to teach our children not to hide from these issues."

"We have to quit censoring every-thing based off our experience as a White person because the truth is, Black families don't have that luxury. They have to have real conversations with their children about not going out in public with a squirt gun or Nerf gun. They have to have conver-sations about how to handle interac-tions with police," said Michal.

Sara McDaniels, a professor at the University of Alabama's College of Education and chair of their diversity, equity, and inclusion committee, said "We now have educators who are sec-ond-guessing whether they should use a certain example in class or continue to use their curriculum . . . on a cer-tain topic."

McDaniels added that since the resolution's passage, "district leaders [are] wondering whether they can still hold trainings that talk about diver-sity, equity, inclusion, and improving disproportionate disciplinary practices for students."

The board members who voted for the resolution were Governor Kay Ivey, Stephanie Bell, Cynthia Sanders McCarty, Belinda McCrae, Wayne Reynolds, Tracie West, and Jackie Ziegler, all White Republicans. The two members who voted against it were Yvette Richardson and Tonya Chestnut, both Democrats and both Black.

Richardson said, "As it stands now, our teachers have all taught about civil rights, they taught about slavery, and it's never been a problem."

Chestnut added that she believes the resolution "will put teachers in a position where they feel uncom-fortable or even fearful to teach the truth."

The resolution from the Alabama State Board of Education is part of a national trend in legislation, regula-tions, and policies restricting educa-tion on racism, bias, and the contribu-tions made by specific racial or ethnic groups to US history.

State Senator Kirk Hatcher said CRT is a way of looking at why "patterns of inequality stubbornly exist." He characterized the anti-CRT movement as "a backlash effort that has the potential to reverse racial reckoning."

Multiple bills have been pre-filed by Alabama legislators which would prohibit the teaching of "divisive concepts."

As reported in the previous issue of the *Journal of Intellectual Freedom and Privacy*, CRT is the culture war catch-all of our times. Opaque defini-tions of CRT and "divisive concepts" are also being used nationwide to restrict education and access to mate-rials on sexism, sexuality, and gender identity.

(See: *Journal of Intellectual Free-dom & Privacy*, v.6 iss.3: *For the Record: Nationwide*)

Reported in: *Montgomery Advi-sor*, August 12, 2021; *Montgomery Independent*, August 15, 2021.

North Carolina

North Carolina Lieutenant Governor Mark Robinson proclaimed "There's no reason anybody anywhere in America should be telling any child about transgenderism, homosexuality, any of that filth. Yes, I called it 'filth.' And if you don't like that I called it 'filth,' come see me and I'll explain it to you."

His speech was delivered at the Asbury Baptist Church in June. Rob-inson also criticized critical race theory (CRT) in it. A video of the speech went viral after Right Wing Watch posted it online on October 6.



In response to Robinson's comments, faith and community leaders held a news conference outside his office on October 11 to demand that he apologize publicly and take a meeting with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA+) leaders.

"It's heartbreaking still to see such hateful words come from somebody. It's pretty hard to hear," said Kori Hennessey, director of education and programs at LGBT Center in Raleigh.

Pastor Vance Haywood said, "This isn't a political issue. It's a human rights issue. You're costing people their lives."

"We have so many things we've had to fight for for such a long time and for something as simple as not being called 'filth' and not being called names in general—it's just not something any of us will be quiet about," said Hennessey.

The Human Rights Campaign issued a statement "calling on Lieutenant Governor Mark Robinson to resign for his disgraceful, hateful statements directed at LGBTQ+ people."

When asked to comment, Robinson stood by his early statements and took things further by recommending LGBTQIA+ books be banned from schools.

"There is material out there that is pushing these issues and teaching our children about these issues," said Robinson. "There is material out there that shares intimate details about homosexuality, about sexuality in general, to our students. That has got to stop."

Robinson posted a video on his Facebook page citing the children's book *George* by Alex Gino, *Lawn Boy* by Jonathan Evison, and *Gender*

Queer by Maia Kobabe as evidence of "indoctrination." He said "These materials do not belong in public schools."

In the video he also referred to homosexuality and transgenderism as "filth" and "garbage."

Neither *Lawn Boy* nor *Gender Queer* is part of any school curriculum in North Carolina, though the titles are available in some high school libraries. John Wesley Waugh, a spokesperson for the lieutenant governor, was not able to cite any school where the books Robinson identified were used by teachers.

The Durham Public School system issued a statement that they operate "in alignment with the American Library Association's philosophy regarding the Library Bill of Rights: 'Books and other library resources should be provided for the interest, information, and enlightenment of all people of the community the library serves.'"

Their statement continued that, "A diverse collection should contain content by and about a wide array of people and cultures to authentically reflect a variety of ideas, information, stories, and experiences."

Governor Roy Cooper's office issued a statement reprimanding Robinson without naming him: "It's abhorrent to hear anyone, and especially an elected official, use hateful rhetoric that hurts people and our state's reputation."

Robinson remains unabashedly unapologetic for what state senator Jeff Jackson characterized as part of a pattern of "hateful and discriminatory" comments from the lieutenant governor.

Reported in: ABC 11, October 8, 2021, and October 12, 2021; NBC News, October 8, 2021; WRAL, October 12, 2021.

Texas

Texas state representative Matt Krause, chair of the House Committee on General Investigating, (HCGI) launched an inquiry into books available from school libraries. Soon after, Texas Governor Greg Abbott began demanding the removal of "inappropriate content" from schools.

The Texas Education Agency and every school district in Texas received a letter from Krause which included a 16-page list of 839 unique titles (see the appendix on page 15 for the full list of titles). The letter requested them to report which of those books they possess, how many copies they have, which schools they're located in, and how much was spent to purchase them.

Krause's letter also requests the districts inform Krause of all other books they have on human sexuality, sexually transmitted diseases, HIV, AIDS; all books which contain sexually explicit images; and those which "might make students feel discomfort, guilt, anguish, or any other form of psychological distress because of their race or sex."

The letter was dated October 25 and requested a written response by November 12.

In the first paragraph, Krause highlighted Carroll, Spring Branch, Lake Travis, Leander, and Katy as examples of Texas school districts which have recently removed such materials from their collections.

HCGI typically investigates legislative misconduct and wrongdoing by state officials. Its vice chair, State Representative Victoria Neave, called the letter "politically motivated."

Krause's action followed passage of Texas House Bill 3979, the critical race theory (CRT) law restricting how race-related subjects are taught in public schools. His letter includes phrases from the bill verbatim.



According to analysis done by Danika Ellis for *Book Riot*, only 8.3% of the titles pertained to race or racism. This is in keeping with the national trend to codify vague definitions of CRT into statute in order for it to serve as a catch-all for conservative culture war issues.

Most of the works listed (approximately 60%) were works of fiction. 62.4% of the books included lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA+) characters or subject matter. 13.6% of the titles were sex education books and books about teenage pregnancy. An additional 5% of the books were about abortion or *Roe v. Wade*.

According to Ellis, 163 of the books were included for no discernible reason. Most of these were false hits from search terms like “race relations” and “gender identity.”

Ovidia Molina, president of the Texas State Teachers Association, said, “This is an obvious attack on diversity and an attempt to score political points at the expense of our children’s education.”

Krause is running for Texas attorney general in the 2022 race.

On November 1, Texas Governor Abbott sent a letter to Dan Troxell, executive director of the Texas Association of School Boards (TASB), regarding “pornography or other inappropriate” materials in Texas schools.

“Collectively, your organization’s members have an obligation to determine the extent to which such materials exist or are used in our schools and to remove any such content,” wrote Abbott. “You have an obligation to Texas parents and students to ensure that no child in Texas is exposed to pornography or other inappropriate content while inside a Texas public school.”

A spokesperson from TASB expressed confusion as to why Abbott contacted them, as their association has “no regulatory authority over school districts and does not set the standards for instructional materials.”

While Abbott’s letter provided no particular guidance or examples, it is impossible to view it in isolation from Krause’s letter as it followed so closely after it.

On November 8, Abbott sent a similar letter to Mike Morath, commissioner of the Texas Education Agency; Kevin Ellis, chair of the State Board of Education; and Martha Wong, chair of the Texas State Library and Archives Commission.

In this letter, Abbott called on the agencies to “immediately develop statewide standards to prevent the presence of pornography and other obscene content in Texas public schools, including in school libraries.”

Abbott cited *In the Dream House* by Carmen Machado and *Gender Queer* by Maia Kobabe as examples of the kind of books he wants removed from school libraries. Both are LGBTQIA+ memoirs.

Reported in: *The Texas Tribune*, October 26, 2021; *Book Riot*, November 5, 2021; *The Hill*, October 27, 2021; *KXAN*, November 8, 2021; *NPR*, November 2, 2021.

Virginia

In the final days leading up to the Virginia gubernatorial election, Glenn Youngkin’s ads focused on removing “explicit” books from schools.

One ad features Laura Murphy, a mother who claims her son was traumatized by reading Toni Morrison’s *Beloved* in 2013 and suffered night terrors as a result. Her son, Blake Murphy, is currently associate general counsel for the National Republican Congressional Committee (NRCC).

In 2017, Terry McAuliffe, Youngkin’s Democratic opponent, vetoed a bill that would have allowed parents to opt their children out of “sexually explicit reading assignments.” The bill was inspired by Laura Murphy’s efforts to remove *Beloved* from 12th grade English reading lists. It was called the *Beloved* Bill.

Beloved tells the story of a formerly enslaved woman haunted by a past that includes killing one of her daughters to prevent her from being forced back into slavery.

It is widely considered one of the most significant literary works of the past 100 years. It won the Robert F. Kennedy Center for Justice and Human Rights Book Award, the Melcher Book Award, the Lyndhurst Foundation Award, the Elmer Holmes Bobst Award, the Anisfield-Wolf Book Award, and the Pulitzer Prize.

Youngkin said he would “ban critical race theory” (CRT) if elected. CRT is increasingly employed in vague and improbably encompassing ways. However, the ad in which Murphy recounts her efforts to ban a book written by a Black Nobel laureate recounting the enduring trauma of slavery provides insight into what Youngkin is talking about when he refers to CRT.

Morrison called banning books from schools the “purist and yet [most] elementary kind of censorship, designed to appease adults rather than educate children.”

Youngkin was elected to be Virginia’s next governor. It would be disingenuous to overlook the role his dog-whistled intent to suppress Black art played in this victory.

Reported in: *The New Republic*, October 26, 2021; *The Washington Post*, October 27, 2021; and *October 28, 2021*.



Jonesboro, Arkansas

Craighead County Jonesboro Public Library board member Amanda Escue resigned during the September 13th board meeting after several unsuccessful efforts to ban library materials and Pride displays.

Escue repeatedly pushed for the board to “govern children’s acquisitions” and for the board to oversee all library displays, guest speakers, authors, and performances. These issues were raised in two separate motions during her first board meeting on August 9, 2021. Escue seconded both motions. Both failed by a 2-3 vote.

Escue then attempted to call a special meeting of the board on August 16 to advance this agenda, but failed to follow protocol. As a result, her motion there was scuttled and the meeting declared unofficial.

The board’s push to control children’s materials, displays, and speakers was a response to the library’s Pride Month displays in June.

At the September 13 board meeting, Escue argued that “sensitive content” including “sexual or romantic attraction, topics of gender theory, and family planning” should require board approval in order to be “considerate of the parent’s role.”

Library Director David Eckert spoke out against Escue’s efforts at every turn. “Once the discussion moves to restrict[ing] access to any type of material, then it turns to censorship,” Eckert said.

Community member John Caldwell agreed. He said he was raised in a religious household where he was beaten because of his sexuality. He said kids like him benefit from access to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA+) materials.

“I dream of a world where this argument that we are having today will make us laugh at ourselves and dismiss it as insanity,” Caldwell said.

Lexie Brenton also spoke out against board members’ efforts to hamstringing the library staff’s ability to purchase and display materials. She said she knew she was part of the LGBTQIA+ community since she was seven.

“We do not need another generation of children growing up learning to hate themselves like most gay kids learn to do,” Brenton said. “There are kids dying due to the hate we receive because of the public’s lack of education on gay people and the lack of representation.”

Escue said her actions as a board member resulted in unforeseen consequences, prompting her resignation. “I have received a glitter bomb within the last week in the mail. I received a sack of poop in the mail today.”

The board tabled the policies Escue proposed regarding “sensitive materials” for children, tweens, and teens and oversight of guest speakers, guest authors, displays, and performances.

A subcommittee was created and tasked to make a recommendation to the board at their October 11 meeting regarding the proposals.

The subcommittee met on October 6 without providing notice to the public or any media organizations. Escue filed a complaint against the board on October 27, arguing they violated the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) by not providing at least two hours’ notice.

An agreement was reached between the library board and Escue in which the board admitted to violating FOIA and agreed to not hold any further meetings without notice,

to receive training on FOIA, and to pay court costs and attorney fees.

No recommendations to the board emerged from the subcommittee’s October 6 meeting.

(See: *Journal of Intellectual Freedom & Privacy, v.6 iss.3: Censorship Dateline: Libraries*)

Reported in: KAIT8, August 9, 2021; August 16, 2021; September 14, 2021; and October 27, 2021.

Paso Robles, California

On August 10, the Paso Robles Joint Unified School District’s board passed a resolution forbidding the teaching of topics it characterized as “elements” or “doctrines” of critical race theory (CRT) in a 4-3 vote.

Board President Chris Arend drafted and introduced the resolution.

The lessons the board banned from being taught in their schools include:

- Racism is racial prejudice plus power
- Racism is ordinary
- Those in power will move away from racist policies only if doing so serves their interests
- The “dominant society racializes different minority groups at different times in response to different needs, such as the labor market”
- People of color have “a presumed competence to speak about race and racism”
- The preservation of slavery was a material motive for independence from England

The resolution allows CRT to be taught only if “such instruction focusses [sic] on the flaws in Critical Race Theory.”

The passed resolution contradicts the district’s Controversial Issues Policy, which was approved by the board on July 14, 1998.



That policy allows controversial issues to be discussed in the classroom if “all sides of the issue are given a proper hearing” and there is allowance for “alternative points of view to be discussed and evaluated.”

During the period for comment, trustee Nathan Williams pointed out that their long-standing controversial issues policy made this resolution unnecessary.

Michael Rivera stated the board needs to “draw a line in the sand” and stand against CRT. “You’ve got to draw the line and say, ‘Not one step further.’”

Some pointed out that CRT is not taught at any K-12 school, as it’s a complex academic theory introduced at the graduate level in law schools. Others argued that Arend’s resolution entirely misinterpreted CRT.

Shannon Gonzalez lamented the board was discussing CRT instead of addressing concrete problems. “We need to be focused on transportation. You’re considering closing a school. Why are you wasting time?”

Joddy Moore, a parent in the district, felt the resolution was worth their time because banning CRT “sends a clear message.”

Trustee Jim Reed argued that “if you actually look at all Whites, we are not oppressive.” He said, “The truth is, not all Americans have been racists and oppressors. Only some have been. . . . They were Democrats.”

This prompted trustee Tim Gearhart to object that Reed’s comments were partisan and should not be allowed on a nonpartisan school board. Arend dismissed Gearhart’s objection and allowed Reed to continue.

Chris Bausch observed that the board had previously adopted a resolution proclaiming their stance against racism and questioned why banning CRT was necessary. He said he

trusted teachers to facilitate robust discussions and teach critical thinking.

“The resolution does not ban CRT,” Williams said. “It explicitly allows it to be included, but only how one side wants it to be. It goes against the very nature of education.”

Dorian Baker, Lance Gannon, and Reed voted for it. Williams, Gearhart, and Bausch dissented. Bausch requested the record show the resolution was not read aloud before voting took place.

Reported in: *San Luis Obispo Tribune*, August 11, 2021.

Sarasota County, Florida

A personal narrative relaying the story of a child attending a Black Lives Matter protest with his father was removed from the Sarasota County School District’s 5th grade curriculum. It was part of a vocabulary practice test.

District leaders sent a letter to parents in October indicating that the narrative was removed because it violated the Florida Department of Education’s ban on teaching critical race theory (CRT) in schools.

The passage was replaced with a nearly-identical narrative about the 1963 Children’s Crusade march in Birmingham.

Both narratives are told from the child’s perspective. Both refer to the heat as “soupy.” Both describe some of the protestors as wearing “their ‘Sunday best’—suits and ties, dresses and hats.” Both include an account of when the child’s father was arrested earlier that year. Both detail the everyday injustices the children are protesting. Both discuss Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

The only notable differences between the narratives are that one is set in the present and also includes the phrases “Black Lives Matter” and

“wore masks to prevent the spread of the coronavirus.”

Trevor D. Harvey, President of the Sarasota NAACP said, “the verbiage changed to flip it to something that has now happened in the past and it is moving away from present day . . . I feel that it is hindering the engagement of the learner by putting them in the past.”

Harvey and others said removing the passage was a form of censorship and amounts to a whitewashing of history.

“Banning the teaching of important milestones in our nation’s history is a detriment to our children and does them a huge disservice,” tweeted civil rights lawyer Ben Crump.

Harvey said, “If you truly and honestly understand CRT you will recognize the way it was written has nothing to do with CRT at all. . . . I get so frustrated. The minute somebody says ‘Black’ or something about slavery, they automatically relate it to CRT, and this is not CRT. It’s just not.”

The chilling effect surrounding bans of CRT extends far beyond the graduate-level academic framework to which it refers.

Reported in: *WTSP*, October 18, 2021; *Patch*, October 15, 2021.

Carmel, Indiana

A group of parents and community members in Carmel, Indiana, has been following online guidance to pressure local school boards to end social-emotional learning (SEL) and diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) work; ban books; and lift mask mandates. They use the label critical race theory (CRT) as a catch-all for what they oppose.

Unify Carmel has organized protests at meetings of the Carmel Clay school board and the Hamilton County school district north of Indianapolis. Their actions, including



showing up with bullhorns and firearms, resulted in the Carmel Clay school board temporarily suspending public comments and using metal detectors to screen attendees.

In September, the board voted to hold virtual meetings citing a group's "orchestrated" efforts to frighten, intimidate, and threaten teachers and their family members.

Unify Carmel is led by Alvin Lui, an illusionist from California, who has refused to disclose if his daughter attends a school in the district.

Lui said the group is working to "educate and empower parents to take back their school district." Their website states one of their primary goals is to "ensure parental control of academic decisions."

As part of its mission, Unify Carmel's website encourages parents to complain about books they don't approve of.

In the blog post "how to search for inappropriate books," Lui directs visitors to like and follow the Mary in the Library facebook page. Mary in the Library functions as a forum for people to post books they feel are "inappropriate" along with which school libraries own them.

One of the books targeted on Mary in the Library is *Jesus Land*, by Indiana native Julia Scheeres. Her *New York Times*-bestselling memoir details how she and her brother survived abusive fundamentalist parents who sent them to Escuela Caribe, an oppressive Christian "reform school" in the Dominican Republic.

Jesus Land won the Young Adult Library Services Association's Alex Award and the New Visions Non-fiction Book Award. Its publication helped bring attention to Escuela Caribe, leading to its closing in 2011 after other alumni came forward to expose its 40-year history of child abuse.

Referring to Scheeres' memoir, Lui said, "That kind of book is exactly what we as Unify Carmel try to point out. You want to buy it for your kids, fine, but these books have no place in schools."

"We've seen devastating results when you indoctrinate generations of students. We've seen it in the crime and everything you hear about California," said Lui. "If you want to pass on social justice, do that in your home."

Scheeres pointed out that organizations like Unify Carmel aren't interested in simply banning books. "It's not just books," she said. "It's Social Emotional Learning, diversity training—which they see as anti-White.

"And they're posting names and contact info for individual teachers and encouraging people to hound them. This broke my heart: a teacher did a tour of their classroom, which had a rainbow flag, and said it was a place where kids can write down their preferred pronoun, and a group posted this TikTok they had made, repudiating this welcoming behavior. School administrators are being cowed."

"I've got concerns about teachers and librarians," she added. "Where are the people who are going to support these teachers?"

April Hennessey, a Monroe County Community School Board member and former teacher, agreed.

"When we see these attacks launched at our teachers and librarians, I'm concerned because we cannot afford to lose them," she said. "I worry about the future of public education in Indiana. It's really disheartening."

Unify Carmel's site links to a who's who of anti-CRT organizations, including Christopher Rufo, No Left Turn, Southlake Families, Parents Defending Education, and the 1776 Commission. Purple for Parents, a group opposed to CRT, SEL,

and comprehensive sexual education, has shared videos from Lui and Unify Carmel on social media.

Lui and Unify Carmel started a Change.org petition calling for the Carmel Clay School Board to end their DEI work and fire their DEI officer. They caution those signing the petition against donating to Change.org. They instruct donations be sent to the Unify Carmel Political Action Committee, instead.

Reported in: *Star Press*, October 11, 2021, and September 30, 2021; WRTV, August 25, 2021.

Johnson County, North Carolina

On October 4, Johnston County commissioners agreed to release \$7.9 million in new school funding that they'd been withholding for months. Their stated reason for withholding funding was Johnston County Public Schools' lack of a policy banning critical race theory (CRT).

April Lee, president of the Johnston County Association of Educators referred to the commission's action as "extortion."

Tamika Walker-Kelly, president of the North Carolina Association of Educators, said "The Johnston County Board of Commissioners and the Johnston County Board of Education are attempting to stoke fears, divide parents and communities, and discredit Johnston County's hard-working teachers, yet all they are doing is hurting our children."

"The fact that an entirely White board of commissioners is using its control of funding to ensure that students don't hear about systemic racism is a powerful example of systemic racism in action," said Justin Parmenter, a Mecklenburg County school teacher.

In order to obtain their funding, the school board's Code of Ethics and



Standards of Conduct was extensively revised. It now includes a provision that “No employee or student shall be forced to have compelled speech or acceptance of ideas that are contrary to their beliefs.”

Another revision states that, “No student or staff member shall be subjected to the notion that racism is a permanent component of American life.”

The provision that “all people who contributed to American society will be recognized and presented as reformists, innovators, and heroes to our culture,” was also added.

Those provisions sit uncomfortably next to this one: “When discussing a controversial topic, which may arise out of the North Carolina Standard Course of Study, the staff member shall remain neutral and present the information without bias. These topics must include multiple and varied viewpoints, in an effort to stimulate thought, without persuasion or outside pressure.”

The policy states that teachers failing to comply will face disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

Commissioner Fred Smith indicated that the commission’s actions were an effort to locally enact the provisions of House Bill 324. HB 324 would have restricted education around race and racism statewide had it not been vetoed by Governor Roy Cooper earlier this year.

Walker-Kelly objected to the constraints the policy revisions imposed on teachers. “Our students deserve honesty in education, rooted in facts and truth. Loving America and what it stands for means learning about our history, both good and bad. If we censor our history and ignore today’s challenges, we will never live up to our ideals of liberty and justice for all.”

Alan Hall, a district parent, said these anti-CRT efforts to rewrite history were reminiscent of the actions of the United Daughters of the Confederacy, who promoted the false notion that the Civil War was a heroic cause and not centered on slavery.

Dale Lands, founder of Citizen Advocates for Accountable Government, a group that has opposed CRT and mask mandates, applauded the commission for withholding funds in order to constrain how history and current events are taught.

“Always keep that in your toolbox and understand that you can use it,” said Lands.

Reported in: *NC Policy Watch*, October 5, 2021.

Newberg, Oregon

On October 22, the Newberg school board held a special meeting over Zoom to allow public comment on their recent ban on political symbols. Vice chair Brian Shannon introduced the policy in order to prevent teachers from displaying Pride and Black Lives Matter (BLM) banners.

Two days before the meeting, Lauren Pefferle, a special education assistant at the district’s Mabel Rush Elementary School, came to work in blackface to protest mandatory vaccination. She said she “was Rosa Parks” and vaccination was “segregation.”

The previous week, a story broke about students holding a virtual “slave trade” of Black Newberg students on Snapchat.

District lawyers and an attorney for the statewide school boards association have said the directive as drafted violates the First Amendment.

Prior to the meeting, dozens of demonstrators gathered along Highway 99 in Newberg waving signs and flags bearing Pride and BLM messages.

Members of the public had up to two minutes each for comment, and nearly 50 residents and students weighed in. All staff and students who testified opposed the ban, though other residents were roughly split.

Newberg residents Peggy Kilburg and John Kitchen argued that BLM and Pride flags were “political symbols.”

Midas Jenkins, a transgender senior at Newberg Catalyst High School, said the ban on Pride and BLM flags tells lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/ questioning, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA+) that their lives are not valued.

“I am not political. I am human,” said Jenkins.

MaryJane Bachmeier, on behalf of the Newberg Education Association Executive Board, also spoke out against the ban. “Students need to know who their allies are when they feel the need to talk or a safe space just to be themselves.”

Catalyst Success Coordinator Elaine Koskela said she knew two high school students who transferred to McLoughlin High School due to the recent racist incidents and the ban. She argued that putting up Pride and BLM symbols was a way of showing support for her students.

“A board telling me what I can and cannot put on my walls is limiting the ways I connect with students,” said Koskela.

Several speakers criticized the board for not being receptive to community input earlier and only entertaining public comment after passing the policy.

Reported in *Oregon Live*, September 22, 2021; September 20, 2021; and September 15, 2021.



Appendix: Titles Targeted by Texas State Representative Matt Krause

- ¿Qué me está pasando? : las respuestas a algunas de las preguntas más embarazosas del mundo* by Peter Mayle
- "Pink is a Girl Color" ... and Other Silly Things People Say by Stacy Drageset
- #BlackLivesMatter: *Protesting Racism* by Rachael L Thomas
- 10 Things I Can See from Here* by Carrie Mac
- 100 Questions You'd Never Ask Your Parents: Straight Answers to Teens' Questions About Sex, Sexuality, and Health* by Elisabeth Henderson
- 101 Questions About Reproduction: Or How 1 + 1 = 3 or 4 or More* by Faith Hickman Brynie
- 101 Questions about Sex and Sexuality: With Answers for the Curious, Cautious, and Confused* by Faith Hickman Brynie
- 2020 Black Lives Matter Marches* by Joyce L Markovics
- 7 Days at the Hot Corner* by Terry Trueman
- A Baby Doesn't Make the Man: Alternative Sources of Power and Manhood for Young Men* by Raymond Jamiolkowski
- A Case of Need* by Michael Crichton
- A Complicated Love Story Set in Space* by Shaun David Hutchinson
- A Good Kind of Trouble* by Lisa Moore Ramee
- A Guy's Guide to Sexuality and Sexual Identity in the 21st Century* by Joe Craig
- A High Five for Glenn Burke* by Phil Bildner
- A Home for Goddesses and Dogs* by Leslie Connor
- A is for Activist* by Innosanto Nagara
- A Kids Book About Racism* by Jelani Memory
- A Lesson in Vengeance* by Victoria Lee
- A Line in the Dark* by Malinda Lo
- A Love Story Starring My Dead Best Friend: A Novel* by Emily Horner
- A New Generation of Homosexuality: Modern Trends in Gay and Lesbian Communities* by Bill Palmer
- A Question of Choice* by Sarah Ragle Weddinton
- A Tale of Two Summers* by Brian Sloan
- A Very, Very Bad Thing* by Jeffery Self
- A Woman's Right to an Abortion: Roe v. Wade* by D J Herda
- Abortion* by Tamara Thompson
- Abortion* by Noel Merino
- Abortion* by Noah Berlatsky
- Abortion* by David M Haugen
- Abortion* by Bonnie Juettner Fernandes
- Abortion* by Hal Markovitz
- Abortion* by Norah Piehl
- Abortion* by Mary E Williams
- Abortion* by Allison Lassieur
- Abortion and the Politics of Motherhood* by Kristin Luker
- Abortion Decisions of the Supreme Court: 1973 through 1989: A Comprehensive Review with Historical Commentary* by Dan Drucker
- Abortion: A Documentary and Reference Guide* by Melody Rose
- Abortion: Interpreting the Constitution* by Carol Hand
- Abortion: Opposing Viewpoints* by Tamara L. Roleff
- Abortion: Understanding the Debate* by Kathlyn Gay
- Absolute Brightness* by James Lecesne
- Absolute Convictions: My Father, a City, and the Conflict that Divided America* by Eyal Press
- Absolutely, Positively Not* by David LaRochelle
- Adam* by Ariel Schrag
- After* by Amy Efav
- Afterworlds* by Scott Westerfeld
- Alan Cole is not a Coward* by Eric Bell
- Aleecia* by Maggie Wells
- Alex* by Sylvia Aguilar Zeleny
- Alex as Well* by Alyssa Brugman
- Alison, Who Went Away* by Vivian Vandevle
- All American Boys* by Jason Reynolds, Brendan Kiely
- All Eyes On Us* by Kit Frick
- All Out: No-Longer Stories of Queer Teens Throughout the Ages* by Saundra Mitchell
- All the Bad Apples* by Moira Fowley-Doyle
- All the Things We Do in the Dark* by Saundra Mitchell
- All We Can Do Is Wait* by Richard Lawson
- Almost Perfect* by Brian Katcher
- Am I Blue?: Coming Out from the Silence* by Marion Dane Bauer
- An African American and Latinx History of the United States* by Paul Ortiz
- An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States for Young People* by Jean Mendoza
- Ana on the Edge* by A J Sass
- And She Was* by Jessica Verdi
- And Still I Rise: Black America Since MLK* by Henry Louis Gates
- And Tango Makes Three* by Justin Richardson, Peter Parnell
- Angel's Choice* by Lauren Baratz-Logsted
- Annie on My Mind* by Nancy Garden
- Another Kind of Cowboy* by Susan Juby
- Antonio's Card = La Tarjeta de Antonio* by Rigoberto Gonzalez
- Any Way the Wind Blows* by E. Lynn Harris
- Anything Could Happen* by Will Walton
- Archenemy* by Paul Hoblin
- Are You LGBTQ?* by Jeanne Nagle
- Aristoteles y Dante Descubren los Secretos del Universo* by Benjamin Alire Saenz
- Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe* by Benjamin Alire Saenz
- Articles of Faith: A Frontline History of the Abortion Wars* by Cynthia Gorney
- As Far as You'll Take Me* by Phil Stamper
- As I Descended* by Robin Talley
- Ash* by Malinda Lo
- Ask Me How I Got Here* by Christine Heppermann
- Ask the Passengers* by A S King
- Asking About Sex and Growing Up* by Joanna Cole
- At the Broken Places: A Mother and Trans Son Pick Up the Pieces* by Mary Collins, Donald Collins
- At the Edge of the Universe* by Shaun David Hutchinson
- Autoboyography* by Christina Lauren
- Avoiding Bullies? Skills to Outsmart and Stop Them* by Louise Spilsbury
- Away We Go* by Emil Ostrovski
- Baby Be-Bop* by Francesca Lia Block
- Bad Boy* by Diana Wiener
- Be Dazzled* by Ryan La Sala
- Beast* by Brie Spangler
- Beautiful Music for Ugly Children* by Kirstin Cronn-Mills
- Becoming Nicole: The Extraordinary Transformation of an Ordinary Family* by Amy Ellis Nutt
- Before I Had the Words: On Being a Transgender Young Adult* by Skylar Kergil
- Being Gay, Staying Healthy* by Jaime Seba
- Being Jazz: My Life as a (transgender teen)* by Jazz Jennings
- Being the Change: Lessons and Strategies to Teach Social Comprehension* by Sara Ahmed
- Bend, Don't Shatter: Poets on the Beginning of Desire* by T Cole Rachel



- Bermudez Triangle* by Maureen Johnson
Best Best Colors by Eric Hoffman
Between Mom and Jo by Julie Anne Peters
Between the Blade and the Heart by Amanda Hocking
Between the World and Me by Ta-Nehisi Coates
Beyond Choice: Reproductive Freedom in the 21st Century by Alexander Sanger
Beyond Clueless by Linas Alsenas
Beyond Dreams by Marilyn Reynolds
Beyond Magenta: Transgender Teens Speak Out by Susan Kuklin
Beyond the Gender Binary by Alok Vaid-Menon
Big Guy by Robin Stevenson
Bioethics: Who Lives, Who Dies, and Who Decides? by Linda Jacobs Altman
Birth Control by Roman Espejo
Birth Control by Noel Merino
Birth Control and Protection: Options for Teens by Judith Peacock
Birthday by Meredith Russo
Black Lives Matter: From Hashtag to the Streets by Artika R. Tyner
Black Rabbit Summer by Kevin Brooks
Black Swan by Farrukh Dhondy
Blood Countess by Lana Popovic
Blood Sport by Tash McAdam
Bloodline by Dana Aros
Borrowed Light by
Boy Erased by Garrard Conley
Boy Girl Boy by Ronald Koertge
Boy Minus Girl by Richard Uhlig
Boy v. Girl?: How Gender Shapes Who We Are, What We Want, and How We Get Along by George Abrahams
Boys and Sex by Wardell Pomeroy
Brave Face by Shaun David Hutchinson
Burn by Heath Gibson
Can't Take That Away by Steven Salvatore
Candace by Maggie Wells
Caste: The Origin of Our Discontents by Isabel Wilkerson
Cemetery Boys by Aiden Thomas
Chainbreaker by Tara Sim
Changing Bodies, Changing Lives: A Book for Teens on Sex and Relationships by Ruth Bell
Chasing the Day by Dana Aros
Cider House Rules by John Irving
Ciel by Sophie Labelle
Cinderella is Dead by Kalynn Bayron
Citizen: An American Lyric by Claudia Rankine
Class Act by Jerry Craft
Cold Falling White by Gabrielle Prendergast
Combat Zone by Patrick Jones
Coming Out as Transgender by Corona Brezina
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- The Latino Condition: A Critical Reader* by Richard Delgado
- The Legal Atlas of the United States* by Julius Fast
- The Less-Dead* by April Lurie
- The Letter Q: Queer Writers' Notes to Their Younger Selves* by Sarah Moon
- The Love & Lies of Rukhsana Ali* by Sabina Khan
- The Love Curse of Melody McIntyre* by Robin Talley
- The Love Interest* by Cale Dietrich
- The Magic Fish* by Trung Le Nguyen
- The Meaning of Birds* by Jaye Robin Brown
- The Midnight Lie* by Marie Rutkoski
- The Migration North* by James De Medeiros
- The Moon Within* by Aida Salazar
- The Music of What Happens* by Bill Konigsberg
- The New Civil War: The Lesbian and Gay Struggle for Civil Rights* by Diane Silver
- The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* by Michelle Alexander
- The Offenders: Saving the World While Serving Detention* by Jerry Craft
- The Order of the Poison Oak* by Brent Hartinger
- The Other Boy* by M G Hennessey
- The Pants Project* by Cat Clarke
- The Past and Other Things that Should Stay Buried* by Shaun David Hutchinson
- The Polar Bear Explorers' Club* by Alex Bell
- The Questions Within* by Teresa Schaeffer
- The Red Scrolls of Magic* by Cassandra Clare
- The Reproductive System* by Kerri O'Donnell
- The Reproductive System* by Alvin Silverstein
- The Shell House* by Linda Newbery
- The Ship We Built* by Lexie Bean
- The Sin-Eater's Confession* by Ilsa J Bick
- The Sowing* by Steven Dos Santos
- The Stars and the Blackness Between Them* by Junauda Petrus
- The Summer of Jordi Perez (and the Best Burger in Los Angeles)* by Amy Spalding
- The Sweet Revenge of Celia Door* by Karen Finneyfrock
- The Teenage Body Book: A New Edition for a New Generation* by Kathy McCoy
- The Test* by Peggy Kern
- The Traitor Game* by B R Collins
- The Truth About Keeping Secrets* by Savannah Brown
- The Truth About Sexual Behavior and Unplanned Pregnancy* by Elissa Howard-Barr, Robert N Golden
- The Truth Is* by NoNieqa Ramos
- The Ultimate Guys' Body Book: Not-So-Stupid Questions About Your Body* by Walter L Larimore
- The Underground Girls of Kabul: In Search of a Hidden Resistance in Afghanistan* by Jenny Nordberg
- The Undivided Past: Humanity Beyond Our Differences* by David Cannadine
- The Upside of Unrequited* by Becky Albertalli
- The Vast Fields of Ordinary* by Nick Burd
- The Waiting Tree* by Lindsay Moynihan
- The Way Back* by Carrie Mac
- The Whispers* by Greg Howard
- The Year They Burned the Books* by Nancy Garden
- The You I've Never Known* by Ellen Hopkins
- They Both Die at the End* by Adam Silvera
- They Called Themselves the KKK: The Birth of an American Terrorist Group* by Susan Campbell Bartoletti
- They, She, He, Easy as ABC* by Maya Christina Gonzalez
- Things that Make White People Uncomfortable: Adapted for Young Adults* by Michael Bennett
- Thinking Out Loud: On the Personal, the Political, the Public, and the Private* by Anna Quindlen
- This Book is Anti-Racist* by Tiffany Jewell
- This Book is Gay* by Juno Dawson (formerly James Dawson)
- This is Kind of an Epic Love Story* by Kacen Callender (formerly Kheryn)
- This Is Your Time* by Ruby Bridges
- This One Summer* by Mariko Tamaki, Jillian Tamaki
- Those Other People* by Alice Childress
- Thumbelina* by Andrea Koenig
- Tips On Having a Gay (Ex) Boyfriend* by Carrie Jones
- Tom* by Sylvia Aguilar Zeleny
- Tomboy BOOK* by Liz Prince
- Tommy Stands Alone* by Gloria Velasquez
- Tomorrow will be Different: Love, Loss, and the Fight for Trans Equality* by Sarah McBride
- Top 250 LGBTQ Books for Teens: Coming Out, Being Out, and the Search for Community* by Michael Cart
- Totally Joe* by James Howe
- Trans Mission: My Quest to a Beard* by Alex Bertie
- Transgender Lives: Complex Stories, Complex Voices* by Kirstin Cronn-Mills
- Transgender People* by Tamara Thompson
- Transgender Rights and Issues* by Andrea Pelleschi
- Transgender Rights and Protections* by Rebecca T Klein
- Transgender Role Models and Pioneers* by Barbara Penne
- Transphobia: Deal with it and be a Transcender* by J Wallace Skelton
- Twelve Days in August* by Liza Ketchum
- Two Boys Kissing* by David Levithan



- Two Parties, One Tux, and a Very Short Film About the Grapes of Wrath* by Steven Goldman
- Under Threat* by Robin Stevenson
- Underground Guide to Teenage Sexuality: An Essential Handbook for Today's Teens and Parents* by Michael J Basso
- Underneath it All: A History of Women's Underwear* by Amber J Keyser
- Understanding Gender* by Juno Dawson (formerly James Dawson)
- Undone* by Cat Clarke
- Unpregnant* by Jenni Henriks
- V for Vendetta* by Alan Moore
- W is for Welcome: A Celebration of America's Diversity* by Brad Herzog
- Wait, What? A Comic Book Guide to Relationships, Bodies, and Growing Up* by Heather Corinna
- Wandering Son* by Takako Shimura
- Wandering Son. Volume 2* by Takako Shimura
- Wandering Son. Volume 3* by Takako Shimura
- Wandering Son. Volume 4* by Takako Shimura
- Wandering Son. Volume 5* by Takako Shimura
- Wandering Son. Volume Eight* by Takako Shimura
- Wandering Son. Volume Seven* by Takako Shimura
- Wandering Son. Volume Six* by Takako Shimura
- Wayward Witch* by Zoraida Cordova
- We Are All Born Free: The Universal Declaration of Human Rights in Pictures* by Amnesty International
- We Are Lost and Found* by Helene Dunbar
- We Are the Ants* by Shaun David Hutchinson
- We March* by Shane W. Evans
- We Now Return to Regular Life* by Martin Wilson
- We the Students: Supreme Court Cases For and About Students* by Jamin B Raskin
- We Were Eight Years in Power: An American Tragedy* by Ta-Nehisi Coates
- What Causes Sexual Orientation?: Genetics, Biology, Psychology* by Bill Palmer
- What Happened To Lani Garver* by Carol Plum-Ucci
- What if it's Us* by Becky Albertalli
- What is the Black Lives Matter Movement?* by Hedreich Nichols
- What is White Privilege?* by Leigh Ann Erickson
- What Philosophy Can Do* by Gary Gutting
- What Riley Wore* by Elana Arnold
- What They Always Tell Us* by Martin Wilson
- What's Happening to My Body? Book for Girls* by Lynda Madaras
- What's Happening to My Body? for Boys* by Lynda Madaras
- What's Racism?* by Amy B Rogers
- What's the Big Secret?: Talking About Sex with Girls and Boys* by Laurie Krasny Brown
- Whatever* by S J Goslee
- When Aidan Became a Brother* by Kyle Lukoff
- When Can I Start Dating?: Questions about Love, Sex, and a Cure for Zits* by James Watkins
- When Heroes Die* by Penny Raife Durant
- When Religion & Politics Mix: How Matters of Faith Influence Political Policies* by Kenneth McIntosh
- When the Moon Was Ours* by Anna-Marie McLemore
- When They Call You a Terrorist: A Story of Black Lives Matter and the Power to Change the World* by Patrisse Khan-Cullors
- When We Were Magic* by Sarah Gailey
- Whistle Me Home* by Barbara Wersba
- White Rabbit* by Caleb Roehrig
- Who I Was With Her* by Nita Tyndall
- Whose Life?: A Balanced, Comprehensive View of Abortion from its Historical Context to the Current Debate* by Catherine Whitney
- Why am I So Miserable if These are the Best Years of My Life?: A Survival Guide for the Young Woman* by Andrea Boroff Eagan
- Wide Awake* by David Levithan
- Will* by Maria Boyd
- Will Grayson, Will Grayson* by David Levithan, John Green
- Willful Machines* by Tim Floreen
- With or Without You* by Brian Farrey
- Without Annette* by Jane B Mason
- Women's Rights* by Justin Karr
- Wonder Woman Unbound: The Curious History of the World's Most Famous Heroine* by Tim Hanley
- Wonders of the Invisible World* by Christopher Barzak
- Wonnie* by Sylvia Aguilar Zeleny
- Y, the Last Man, volume 1* by Brian K Vaughan
- Yo, Simon, Homo Sapiens* by Becky Albertalli
- You and Me and Him* by Kris Dinnison
- You Are the Supreme Court Justice* by Nathan Aaseng
- You Do You: Figuring Out Your Body, Dating, and Sexuality* by Sarah Mirk
- You Know Me Well* by Nina LaCour
- Your Sexuality* by Kris Hirschmann
- Youth With Gender Issues: Seeking an Identity* by Kenneth McIntosh
- Zenobia July* by Lisa Bunker
- Ziggy, Stardust & Me* by James Brandon



SCHOOLS Oklahoma

On October 19, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Oklahoma filed a lawsuit in federal court alleging an Oklahoma law banning critical race theory (CRT) is inherently unconstitutional and being used to ban books and teachings related to race in violation of the 1st and 14th Amendments.

CRT is a framework utilized in graduate-level law schools examining the ongoing impacts of slavery and racism in the US and exploring systemic ways racism has shaped foundational institutions. It is not taught in K-12 schools.

However, in Oklahoma and other parts of the US, legislation and policies targeting CRT and “divisive concepts” define them in vague terms which can encapsulate all teaching about race and racism, inequality, bias, and even gender identity issues.

Plaintiffs in the lawsuit argue the bill is being used to silence lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA+) voices in addition to those of Black authors and people of color.

Teachers say the new law, House Bill 1775, limits their ability to teach important lessons on history and current events.

ACLU of Oklahoma claims they have documents showing Edmond Public Schools banning books and certain language from being used.

They say documents sent to English teachers providing guidance on HB 1775 direct instructors to “avoid the term ‘diversity’” and “do not discuss White privilege.”

The lawsuit asserts that the law has a chilling effect on the language and lesson plans teachers use in their classes, particularly content designed to help ensure historically

marginalized students have an equitable education.

The lawsuit also claims that Edmond Public Schools have banned books like *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, and *A Raisin in the Sun* from being taught in English classes.

Megan Lambert, lead attorney for ACLU of Oklahoma, characterized these books as “texts by Black authors or about the Black experience or about issues of racism in American history.”

An Edmond English teacher who is a plaintiff in the case claims that only White male authors were allowed on the approved reading list.

In July, Oklahoma’s Board of Education passed administrative rules prescribing school district compliance with the law. Under these rules, educators’ licenses can be suspended and schools’ accreditation threatened if any prohibited concepts are taught.

Parents and private citizens can file reports against teachers they believe have acted in violation of the law.

According to the ACLU of Oklahoma, the bill’s lead authors denounced teaching about “implicit bias” and “systemic racism” when they were promoting it.

Cutting through the smokescreen, Sykes said, “A lot of these laws are written in such a confusing way as to say essentially, ‘Don’t say anything racist.’ But the subtext is: ‘Don’t talk about racism.’”

Regan Killackey, a teacher and a plaintiff in the case, was told to avoid incorporating certain race-related concepts, phrases, and books in his curriculum. According to the lawsuit, he no longer engages students in conversations about race or gender.

The Oklahoma law prohibits educators from teaching that “members of

one race or sex cannot and should not attempt to treat others without respect to race or sex” and that teachers cannot make any individual “feel discomfort, guilt, anguish, or any other form of psychological distress on account of his or her race or sex.”

Emerson Sykes, staff attorney with the ACLU Speech, Privacy, and Technology Project, pointed out that “It’s inevitable that there is some amount of discomfort in learning about difficult things.”

Sykes also said that the vagueness of the law creates a situation where “people who are subject to the law have no way of knowing what’s prohibited and what’s not.” It also “opens up the door to arbitrary and discriminatory enforcement by officials.”

Anthony Crawford, a plaintiff and English teacher at a predominantly Black high school in Oklahoma City, said he didn’t learn about African American history growing up and has sought to incorporate such lessons into his classes.

Crawford said the law’s passage took an emotional toll on him and his students. “I felt like it was a shot at teachers like me who really want to see Black and brown kids really do something with their lives. Because they need this part of history. They need to understand what happened to their people.”

After the law passed he said, “They’re like, ‘OK, now what?’ What are they going to learn now? What are they going to do in order to feel that empowerment? How are they going to figure out who they are, where they came from, what their ancestors did? How can they go on moving forward to improve their lives?”

Donovan Chaney, a Black 17-year old student in Crawford’s class said he sees the law as a “way to censor our next generation, so they don’t know



all the horrible things that went on before they were born.”

Crawford said the law contradicts many of the state’s academic standards. He and his superintendent were able to tie everything in his curriculum to those standards. “That’s where my confusion became frustration because now I just feel like . . . politicians are trying to eradicate history, to eradicate what happened to Black folks in history.”

The law applies to public colleges and universities as well as to K-12 schools.

The Black Emergency Response Team of the University of Oklahoma (BERT), one of the plaintiffs, was formed in 2019 in response to a string of racist incidents including a notorious fraternity scandal.

BERT convinced the university administration to establish a mandatory diversity training course for students.

The school dropped this requirement after the law was implemented, as it specifically bans colleges from requiring diversity training. The university also ended mandatory sexual harassment training for incoming freshmen.

In a statement, Lilly Amechi, a representative for BERT, said “We believe all students deserve to have a free and open exchange about our history—not one that erases the legacy of discrimination and lived experiences of Black and brown people, women and girls, and LGBTQ+ individuals.”

Among the defendants of the suit are Oklahoma’s governor, attorney general, and superintendent of public instruction.

Carly Atchison, a spokesperson for Governor Kevin Stitt, said “It’s par for the course that when something goes against the left’s liberal agenda, activist groups attempt to come into Oklahoma and challenge our laws and our way of life.”

Plaintiffs of the case include a student, two teachers, BERT, the University of Oklahoma chapter of the American Association of University Professors, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People of Oklahoma, and the Oklahoma chapter of the American Indian Movement.

The suit says the law prevents students and teachers from asking uncomfortable questions and from teaching and discussion of key parts of Oklahoma’s history. These include:

The 1889 Lands Run, when settlers raced to claim land from Oklahoma’s Indian Territory

The 1921 Tulsa Massacre, in which a White mob attacked and firebombed a Black neighborhood, killing hundreds of people and destroying more than 35 square blocks of Black-owned homes and businesses.

Genevieve Bonadies Torres, associate director of the Educational Opportunities Project with the Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights Under law, issued a statement calling Oklahoma’s law “an unvarnished attempt to silence the experiences and perspectives of Black, Indigenous, and LGBTQ+ people, and other groups who have long faced exclusion and marginalization.”

(See: *Journal of Intellectual Freedom & Privacy, v.6 iss.3: For the Record: Nationwide*)

Reported in: KFOR, October 20, 2021; USA Today, October 19, 2021; NBC News, October 19, 2021.

Anchorage, Alaska

Without formal announcement, the Anchorage School District (ASD) removed recommended resources on equity, race, and racism from their website in July. The action was seemingly taken in response to ongoing pressure applied by school board

member Dave Donley and the blog *Must Read Alaska*.

The removed content was previously included among the “Equity Resources” recommended by ASD’s Office of Equity and Compliance.

Over the course of numerous school board meetings, Donley raised objections to the book list, arguing that it was “Marxist,” “racist propaganda,” and in violation of Anchorage Municipal Code Section 1.15.110.

Donley’s objections continued despite district lawyers determining the recommendations complied with municipal code.

In late 2020, the district added a disclaimer to their website stating that “These books have been recommended by staff as self- and facilitated-study resources on equity and race. The authors represent prominent voices in the ongoing national discussion about equity and race. These resources are not part of the ASD student curriculum, nor are the authors endorsed by ASD.”

This is the reading list that was subsequently removed from the district’s Equity Resources page in response to community pressure:

- *Antiracist Baby* by Ibram X. Kendi
- *How to be an Antiracist* by Ibram X. Kendi
- *Stamped from the Beginning* by Ibram X. Kendi
- *The New Jim Crow* by Michele Alexander
- *An Indigenous Peoples’ History of the United States* by Roxanne Dunbar Ortiz
- *White Fragility* by Robin DiAngelo
- *So You Want to Talk About Race* by Ijeoma Oluo

A link to a parenting guide called “How to Talk to Kids About Race and Racism” was also removed from the site.



All that remains are links to a series of podcasts from *The New York Times* called “Listen to What They’re Saying” and part two of a conversation between Brené Brown and Aiko Bethea called “Creating Transformative Cultures.” A phone number is also provided for those interested in “additional resources on equity.”

Reported in: *Must Read Alaska*, July 15, 2021.

Jonesboro, Arkansas

On October 12, the Craighead County Jonesboro Public Library’s board of directors refused to remove three challenged books from the library. Less than a week later, they also announced they were moving some titles out of the children’s section to make them less accessible.

The books retained were:

- *Gender Queer* by Maia Kobabe
- *It’s Perfectly Normal: Changing Bodies, Growing Up, Sex, and Sexual Health* by Robbie H. Harris
- *L&R, g&R* by Lauren Myracle

The library has seen public outcry and numerous book challenges of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/ questioning, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA+) material after setting up a Pride Month display in the children’s section in June.

“I want to set the record straight. We don’t buy pornographic material,” said library director David Eckert. “*It’s Perfectly Normal* can be bought at Walmart or Target.”

Steven Summers read *The GayBCs* by M. L. Webb as his public comment and expressed dismay that the staff of the library was being harassed for providing inclusive material like this.

Chenoa Summers supported the library board’s decision. “Being gay is not a mental illness,” she said.

Other community members continued to raise objections after the board made the decision to retain the materials.

Janice Porter said, “I ask this board and director to end your shocking indifference and make accommodations for parents who wish to protect their children from early sexualization.”

Sharon Stallings also spoke out against the requirement to wear a face mask during board meetings. She removed her mask while speaking and was directed by the board to put it back on.

Board member Mark Nichols said one of the books retained, *Gender Queer*, should be moved to a different section.

Rebecca Robinson observed, “Jonesboro is more bigoted and hateful than I had ever imagined. I will raise my children with science and knowledge and compassion.”

Cause for celebration by those opposed to censorship was short-lived, however.

On October 18, Eckert announced that the library will move sex education books for children to the parent/teacher section.

“This section contains educational resources for caregivers to help with school work, learning disabilities, and those who homeschool their children,” said Eckert.

One of the titles moved was the recently challenged and retained book *It’s Perfectly Normal*.

The other relocated titles were:

- *You Be You: The Kid’s Guide to Gender, Sexuality, and Family* by Jonathan Branfinan
- *Why Boys & Girls Are Different* by Carol Greene
- *Talking to Your Kids About Sex: From Toddlers to Preteens* by Lauri Berkenkamp

Board member Mark Nichols said they will be announcing the relocation of additional library materials to the parent/teacher section soon.

On October 20, Kailey Holt Luster was voted in to fill an open seat on the library board. Luster is a member of Safe Library Books for Kids—Arkansas, a group which opposes including LGBTQIA+ materials in the children’s sections of public libraries.

Safe Library Books for Kids—Arkansas recently shared a post “The library has never apologized for displaying controversial SEXUAL material in June. They have given no indication they are interested in making better choices in the future. They have not responded positively in any way to concerned parents. Shame on them.”

Luster was the fourth person in a row outspokenly opposed to LGBTQIA+ library books to be nominated by County Judge Marvin Day. Three now sit on the board.

(See: *Journal of Intellectual Freedom & Privacy*, v.6 iss.3: *Censorship Dateline: Schools*)

Reported in: *Jonesboro Sun*, October 12, 2021; October 18, 2021; and October 20, 2021.

Durango, Colorado

Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe by Benjamin Alire Sáenz was removed from a Bayfield Middle School classroom library after a parent complained it contained swearing, underage drinking, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/ questioning, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA+) relationships.

The book was not part of the curriculum and none of the books in the “free-choice” library it was removed from were required reading.

Principal Brandon Thurston told teacher Dana Gerrits to remove the



book because it violated a school policy on controversial materials.

Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe is a young adult novel exploring themes of Mexican-American identity, gender and sexuality, homosexuality, artistic expression, friendship, and family relationships.

The book has received numerous accolades, including the Paul Belpré Narrative Medal for Latino Fiction, the Michael L. Printz Award for young adult fiction, and a Lambda Literary Award. *Publisher's Weekly* called it “a tender, honest exploration of identity and sexuality, and a passionate reminder that love—whether romantic or familial—should be open, free, and without shame.”

Eighth grade student Alek Burgess, who is enrolled in the class from which the book was removed, said “I really feel like, by them banning this book, it’s just spreading the message that it’s not OK to be gay, especially in school.”

Superintendent Kevin Aten said the book was removed because “there was a personnel matter that I’m not going to comment on.”

The district’s policy requires controversial materials which are not part of a district-approved curriculum to receive administrative approval before being used as instructional material.

The policy holds that “the value of any book or other material shall be judged as a whole, taking into account the purpose of the material rather than individual, isolated expressions, or incidents in the work.”

According to the policy, the superintendent will re-evaluate challenged material when a written form is completed, signed, and submitted. Aten said no written complaint about the novel was received.

Rachel Rosenthal, a high school teacher and Gay Straight Alliance

sponsor, expressed concern for the school district’s LGBTQIA+ youth. “When they see a book banned that has a character that is LGBTQ, it’s seen as a personal affront or a personal attack because it’s removing a book that represents them.”

Roxanne Henderson, a Bayfield High School English teacher, said “I’m disappointed that an extremely benign book about the process of growing up would be denied to students at the middle school—students who probably need to read literature like that.”

Reported in: *Durango Herald*, October 7, 2021.

Melbourne, Florida

On Monday, October 11th, the Melbourne High School issued a statement that they removed *Gender Queer: A Memoir* by Maia Kobabe from its library.

The statement indicated they received a complaint about it the previous week and that district staff will be retrained “in the process of purchasing book titles.”

Melbourne High School is part of the Brevard Public Schools District (BPS). A district spokesperson provided a statement that “The book was taken out of the library immediately after district leaders learned of the content of the book.”

In another statement, Superintendent Mark Mullins said, “BPS staff immediately agreed that this book violates our guidelines and that it has no place in our school district. I have directed staff to ensure there are no other similar books in our libraries.”

Mullins also urged district families to seek out items in the library and report any they feel are inappropriate. “I want to remind families that each school’s library books can be reviewed online. I encourage parents to review the content that is available to students.”

The district’s “Process for Requesting Reconsideration of Non-State-Adopted Instructional Materials (Classroom and Library)” was apparently not referred to as part of this decision-making process. The required procedures are provided in granular detail in section J of policy number 2520, which was adopted on May 1, 2002, and last revised on June 25, 2019.

The policy states that “challenged material shall remain in use and shall not be removed until the following informal and formal due process procedures have been completed.”

The process requires the parent, legal guardian, or resident objecting to classroom or library material to submit a written request for a conference with the principal (or designee) to discuss the material. That conference is to be scheduled within ten working days of the receipt of the written request.

If the individual’s issue is not resolved at the conference, the principal (or designee) will explain the reconsideration process to them and they can file a written request for reconsideration using form 2520 F2. The form must be filed within ten days of the conference.

The policy goes on to delineate the reconsideration process and timeline in detail, including the minimum constituency of the committee that will be designated to review the challenged materials.

None of this appears to have happened before *Gender Queer* was removed “immediately” after district administrators were notified it was in the high school library.

Gender Queer received an Alex Award, a Stonewall Book Award, was nominated for an Ignatz Award, and was included on the Young Adult Library Services Association’s 2020 list of Great Graphic Novels for Teens.



Kobabe, who uses Spivak pronouns, wrote and illustrated eir memoir in part to explain what it means to be nonbinary and asexual.

The book's publisher called the school's decision "short-sighted and reactionary."

"Oni Press supports Maia Kobabe for the truth and strength in sharing eir story," they said in their statement. "The fact is *Gender Queer* is an important, timely piece of work that serves as an invaluable resource for not only those that identify as nonbinary or genderqueer, but for people looking to understand what that means."

Reported in: *Florida Today*, October 11, 2021.

Waukee, Iowa

The Waukee Northwest High School library removed three books from circulation after a woman attending a school board meeting called them inappropriate. All three had lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA+) content.

Amanda McClanahan, the person who objected to the books during the October 25 board meeting, is not a parent in the school district.

McClanahan read excerpts from *All Boys Aren't Blue* by George M. Johnson, *Lawn Boy* by Jonathan Evison, and *Gender Queer* by Maia Kobabe. She also showed illustrations from Kobabe's memoir.

Amanda Vasquez, chair of the Iowa Library Association's Intellectual Freedom Committee, pointed out the dangers of judging a book by an excerpt. "It's important to look at the work as a whole . . . Any one small portion of a book might be taken out of context and seem to mean one thing when it means another."

The district indicated that the review process can take as long as 45 days and would not begin until forms

requesting the books' reconsideration were completed and submitted.

The Waukee Community School District's policy covering objection to instructional materials and reconsideration procedures (0602.9) clearly delineates all steps to the objection/reconsideration process. The district's actions in this case did not align with their policy.

The policy specifies that "instructional material shall not be removed or withdrawn from use during the pendency of the review process except upon three-fourths vote of the entire membership of the review committee and approval of the building principal, who shall state compelling reasons in writing for such action."

Removal of the books could not have happened in accord with the school policy as the committee that votes on such an action is only formed after a formal request for reconsideration is submitted in writing to the principal. No formal request was received for any of the books.

Max Mowitz, program director at One Iowa, said that books chronicling the experiences of LGBTQIA+ youth can help them feel seen and validated.

"It's so important to have things like shows, television, books, magazines that show and reflect [not only] who you are right now, but who you will be in the future," said Mowitz. "That's really, really powerful and it can save lives."

Reported in: *Axios*, October 27, 2021; *We Are Iowa*, November 1, 2021; *KCCI*, November 1, 2021.

Georgetown Township, Michigan

At the October 18 meeting of the Georgetown Finance Committee, the township superintendent Dan Carlton was instructed to review all materials at the Georgetown Township Public Library (GTPL) and "remove any

material that is deemed to be inappropriate for children and youth."

Township Supervisor Jim Wierenga said the action was not taken because of a specific complaint, but in response to a national conversation.

This would violate GTPL's established policies, which require submission of a completed "request for reconsideration of library material" form to initiate the reconsideration process.

The policy also places the library director, not the township superintendent, in charge of material review and determinations for reconsideration.

GTPL said that it has received no recent book challenges.

Deborah Caldwell-Stone, Director of the Office for Intellectual Freedom, said the library should adhere to the policy they have in place.

Caldwell-Stone said, "There's an old saying in library land that every good public library has a book in it to offend everybody in a community, because of the need to serve so many diverse information needs and interests."

"We firmly believe that a parent certainly has the right to guide their own child's reading, but we believe that they shouldn't dictate what other families have access to," said Caldwell-Stone.

Reported in: *WOOD TV*, October 26, 2021.

Brooklyn, New York

Fifth-graders from P.S. 295 spent months designing a mural spanning the wall of a cafeteria they share with M.S. 443 in Park Slope, Brooklyn. It was removed and destroyed the day after it went on display.

Elementary school principal Lisa Pagano felt certain messages included were problematic. She specifically raised objections to the phrases "Black Lives Matter," "Black Trans Lives



Matter,” and “Your Silence Will Not Protect You,” a quote from Black queer feminist writer Audre Lorde reading.

Pagano sent an email to Groundswell, the community arts organization facilitating the mural project, and requested that they substitute a message “with more inclusivity” such as “Hate has no home here,” instead.

Sarah Katz, a Groundswell official, pushed back in an email.

“We believe that naming and supporting communities most impacted by oppressive systems is essential to cultivating authentic inclusion,” wrote Katz. “‘Black Trans Lives Matter’ acknowledges a truth that certain communities have been historically undervalued and seeks to center those communities . . . closer to justice.”

The mural went up unchanged in July. It was affixed to the wall with adhesive.

The next day, a custodian was ordered to remove the mural from the wall. It was destroyed in the process. The administrator who ordered the removal remains undisclosed.

Pro-mural parents and students have demonstrated by writing the mural’s messages as well as other quotes from Lorde in chalk on the sidewalk in front of the schools. One elementary staff member left the school in protest.

The Department of Education is now investigating and principals from both schools could face disciplinary action.

Nathaniel Styer, press secretary for the department, said “Our schools must be safe and inclusive environments, and this should not have happened, and we’re very sorry this happened to our students.”

Other parents voiced opposition, asserting the mural should never have gone up in the first place. This division and the destruction of the

student-made mural are a microcosm illustrating the sort of fallout that is happening nationwide in response to an organized movement working to ban materials, curricula, and conversations they consider to be “critical race theory.”

Students involved in creating the mural were disturbed by its removal.

“I was really, really sad and angry to hear that the mural was taken down and destroyed,” said 11-year old Kai Gelber-Higgins.

Hollis Albaeck, another 11-year old muralist said, “I feel like people of color need more respect because they are just as important as White folks, but our country is not showing that, so now we need to bring back their trust in us as being kind people.”

Discord around racial and cultural insensitivity at the elementary school predates the incident with the mural. Victor Quiñonez objected to the observation of “colonial day” during which students were made to play roles on settler ships.

“By the time our second child was in that school, I said, ‘No, I’m not going to put my kid in a Pilgrim dress and take on the persona of [a] White settler colonizer,’” said Quiñonez, whose daughter was one of the muralists.

Doug Hecklinger, a fifth-grade teacher at P.S. 295 who came out as queer to his students a few years ago, said school administrators failed to create an environment that would nurture cultural understanding and indicated equity, diversity, and inclusion training for teachers was needed.

“Some teachers didn’t feel comfortable using a diversity of books without more training.” Hecklinger recalled a colleague complaining, “Why can’t we read normal children’s books?”

Carlos Menchaca, a Democratic council member, allocated Groundswell a \$20,000 grant to create the

mural, something which had been done for more than a dozen other schools previously.

During its 25-year history, Groundswell has completed more than 200 pieces of public art at 128 schools around the city. They recruited students from the elementary school to brainstorm the content and design for the Park Slope mural.

Anita Skop, superintendent of District 15, apologized for removing the artwork and hurting students’ feelings. She informed parents that “this isn’t going to be glossed over.” She also said she supported a proposal to rename P.S. 295 the Audre Lorde School.

Reported in: *The New York Times*, October 29, 2021.

Forsyth County, North Carolina

Ken Raymond, chairman of the Forsyth County Republican Party, advised the mother of a 10-year old Vienna Elementary School student to call the police regarding an unnamed book her child checked out from the school library.

According to Raymond, the mother indicated she didn’t trust the school board because of their recent vote to uphold the school’s mask requirement.

In his October 22 newsletter, he recounts instructing her to call the police or the Sheriff’s Department if “the majority of the school board doesn’t listen to her.”

In his October 15 newsletter entitled “Pornography in schools—Call the police” he repeatedly urges parents to call the police on “teachers that distribute pornography.”

Raymond claimed the school provides “copies of sexually explicit books” that “were banned by the American Library Association [ALA]” through their online library.



Contrary to Raymond's claim, ALA has never banned a book. Book banning runs contrary to the ethical underpinnings of librarianship.

ALA's Office for Intellectual Freedom works to prevent the banning of books and to raise awareness about the importance of access to library materials of all kinds, on all topics, and representing all voices—free from judgment or impediment.

Raymond identified the following books from the Vienna Elementary School as ones considered to be “sexually graphic”:

- *And Tango Makes Three* by Peter Parnell and Justin Richardson
- *Olive's Ocean* by Kevin Henkes
- *Rick* by Alex Gino
- *Julián is a Mermaid* by Jessica Love (mis-titled as “Julianne is a Mermaid”)
- *Hurricane Child* by Kacen Callender

Also included on Raymond's list were an unspecified biography of Ellen DeGeneres and something called “Mabel is a Label” that does not appear to be a book.

Raymond misleadingly wrote that making these materials “available online may qualify this as a federal crime.”

The books Raymond listed are award-winning and best-selling children's titles. With one exception, they portray lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA+) characters, including children and penguins.

Olive's Ocean is the odd title out. It is about friendship, loss, and the relationship between a child and her grandmother. The most sexually graphic thing in it is an objectively non-salacious description of a child seeing his heterosexual parents kiss each other good morning.

Raymond encouraged all parents to “get your child's login information, access his school's online library, and find out what's being made available to them in school and what they can access online.” He pledged to help them “expose” anything to which a parent objects.

Brent Campbell, a spokesman for Winston-Salem/ Forsyth County Schools, said that the district had not received any complaints from a Vienna parent about any of the books on Raymond's list. He said none of the titles listed were part of any required curriculum, though many of them were available on their ebook platform.

Campbell also said that the district has a formal process for requesting reconsideration of materials.

“We are very intentional about being inclusive of all types of students and beliefs and carefully evaluate the possible removal of some materials simply because it does not align with the personal or political beliefs of others,” said Campbell. “Censorship can be a slippery slope.”

Reported in: *Winston-Salem Journal*, October 22, 2021.

Hudson, Ohio

At the September 13th board meeting of the Hudson City School District, Mayor Craig Shubert threatened the board members with criminal charges after members of the Summit County chapter of Moms for Liberty raised concerns about a book used in a college-level writing course.

“Write a sex scene you wouldn't show your mom. Rewrite the sex scene from above into one that you let your mom read,” parent Monica Haven read from *642 Things to Write About* by Po Bronson. “Describe your favorite part of a man's body using only verbs.”

642 Things is used in “Writing in the Liberal Arts II,” a college-level course offered to seniors in association with Hiram College. Parents are required to sign a consent form for their children to participate, acknowledging that the course material contains “adult themes.”

The book was used in the class for five years. It was withdrawn before the board meeting was held.

“On Friday, September 10, the Hudson City School District was made aware of inappropriate and offensive writing prompts included in a supplemental resource . . . used in our High School Senior College Credit Plus Writing sections,” proclaimed a statement issued by Hudson City Schools Superintendent Phil Herman.

“The district immediately determined this writing resource should not be in the hands of our students, and on Monday, collected the books from the students enrolled in the course. It is important to note that at no time were any of these inappropriate writing prompts assigned as part of the class,” continued the statement.

During the meeting, Mayor Shubert told the board, “It has come to my attention that your educators are distributing essentially what is child pornography in the classroom. I've spoken to a judge this evening. She's already confirmed that. So I'm going to give you a simple choice. You either choose to resign from this Board of Education or you will be charged.”

On September 17, the Hudson Police Department and the Summit County Prosecutor's Office released a joint statement, clearing the board of criminal misconduct in this case.

“These allegations have resulted in threats being made against board members, faculty, and administrators in Hudson. Those threats must stop.”



Under Ohio law, a prompt about fictional writing is not child pornography,” said Prosecutor Sherri Bevan Walsh.

At the September 20 board meeting, dozens of community members attended in support of the district board of education.

“The prompts which some find distasteful were never used in class, and frankly I am disappointed to see that so many people are wasting their time arguing over something that is such a small issue,” said Matthew Constable, a 2018 graduate who took the writing class as a senior.

“I believe it is okay to examine the book to determine if it’s appropriate for use in school. But calling for the entire board of education to resign under a baseless threat of criminal prosecution is completely childish, irresponsible, unnecessary, and honestly, it’s disturbing,” continued Constable. Some in attendance booed the recent graduate while he was speaking. One audience member walked out in protest.

The chilling effect from the threats, book ban, and false allegations of criminal misconduct was already evident.

“I’ve always been proud of my lessons, but now I’m second-guessing things on a daily basis,” said social studies teacher Marty Bach. He described “a stifling fear that is permeating our schools.”

“Should I detail how horrific the lynching system was against African Americans?” asked Bach. “Should I dial back the mass graves at Wounded Knee?”

“Should I cut the relationships unit completely and let these young adults navigate the world of Tinder . . . without any thoughtful discussion?” asked Bach, referring to a class covering dating, issues of consent, sexual assault, and toxic relationships.

Jennifer Scheeser said, “I had one friend tell me she’ll be retiring as quickly as possible and another friend—and recent Hudson graduate—tell me, ‘I’m changing my major. I don’t want to be a teacher anymore. I just want to help kids, but people will be out to destroy me.’”

The September 27 board meeting had to be moved to the auditorium to accommodate more than 400 attendees, most of whom gave the board a standing ovation for their dedication and perseverance. Former mayors Bill Currin and David Bail presented a joint statement to the board.

“Let us all support our teachers, our school administration, staff, and board members as together we pursue the hard work of ensuring the continued recognized excellence of our public schools,” said Basil, in a rebuff of mayor Shubert’s recent actions.

During the public comment section, nearly 40 people spoke in support of the board. Andrea Bucey Tikkanen said, “Hear us tonight. We are the vast majority. We are proud of this town, proud of you.”

Regarding *642 Things*, Karen Gondek said, “The book is not the issue. The book is a tool that was weaponized for political gain.”

“I trust the educators we have in Hudson to do what’s best for our kids. We should be respecting them and listening to them,” said parent Danielle Sarver Coombs. “I want my kids exposed to different ideas.”

Moms for Liberty members were also in attendance. They spoke out in support of the mayor’s actions and voiced strange new threats. “Teachers are going to have parents sitting in the classroom watching you,” said Karen Matier. “That’s what needs to happen because you have lost all of our trust.”

Reverend Peter Wiley, senior pastor at First Congregational Church of

Hudson observed that there are passages in Shakespeare and *The Bible* that are “far more violent and salacious” than the writing prompts in *642 Things*.

“The idea that the board could keep track of millions of pages read by kids is absurd,” said Wiley. He then praised the board for their professionalism and civility in the face of threats and yelled condemnation.

Despite these admonitions, the outrage engine of Moms for Liberty churned on and the administration continued bending to their will.

On September 29, Herman announced that the district had removed three books from school libraries pending further review: *Lawn Boy* by Jonathan Evison, *Gender Queer* by Maia Kobabe, and *A Girl on the Shore* by Inio Asano.

The books were removed in response to concerns raised by members of the Summit County Moms for Liberty during the September 27 board meeting. No time frame was given for when the reconsideration process would be completed.

Herman also announced he initiated a review of how books are selected for school library collections.

On October 1, *Me, Earl, and the Dying Girl* by Jesse Andrews was also removed from school libraries for reconsideration.

Mayor Schubert’s involvement in the push to censor school materials appears to have been politically motivated.

A November 15 report from the Summit County Prosecutor’s Office determined no school board policies were violated in the selection and approval of *642 Things*.

Walsh’s six page report lambasted Shubert for leveling false allegations of child pornography against the board and detailed scores of threats that were leveled at them as a result.



The report revealed Hudson's involvement with the issue began at a political fundraiser he attended just hours prior to the September 13th board meeting.

"My office's report into this matter may seem harsh," said Walsh in a statement, but "the reckless conduct by Hudson's Mayor resulted in threats, fear, and hate-filled words from around the country."

The report characterized Shubert's repeated claims of child pornography as "extremely troubling" since they continued weeks after the prosecutor's office determined them to be false, including in an October 18 Facebook video with US Senate candidate Josh Mandel.

Shubert responded on November 18 by again calling for Hudson school board members to be held accountable for allowing "pornographic content" in the curriculum. He said the prosecutor's office "has ignored the real crime of who is responsible for 'pandering sexually oriented matter involving a minor.'"

Walsh responded to Shubert's statement by saying the Mayor does not understand Ohio law and "wants to create a public battle over censorship."

Reported in: News 5 Cleveland, September 14, 2021; Yahoo! News, September 15, 2021; Cleveland.com, September 28, 2021; WOIO, September 17, 2021; Akron Beacon Journal, September 28, 2021; October 2, 2021; October 10, 2021; and November 16, 2021.

Lansdale, Pennsylvania

At the October 21 board meeting of the North Penn School District (NPSD), parents affiliated with a local chapter of Moms for Liberty voiced complaints about three books and disparaged the school board members.

Carrie Rocks raised objections to *Gender Queer* by Maia Kobabe. Rocks

read from Kobabe's award-winning memoir about growing up nonbinary and asexual before lashing out at the board.

"Is it your intent to groom our children? Who made it your job to steal their innocence?" Rock demanded. "You are Satan's pawns to me right now. You are all disgusting."

Vicki Flannery read excerpts from *All Boys Aren't Blue*, George M. Johnson's memoir about growing up Black and queer. Flannery also took aim at the school board, stating "If you see this as acceptable, you belong on a national registry and not a school board."

Ken Ferry performed a similar bit of theater around Jonathan Evison's *Lawn Boy*.

Jason Lanier, who did not identify as a parent, also raised objections to library material. "There's a whole lot of books in our libraries which really have no business being there. A bunch of them talk about Critical Race Theory and talking [*sic*] about how good it is. A bunch of them talk about very sexually explicit content."

Through 90 minutes of public comment and additional shouted objections, board members did not respond directly other than to ask commenters to remain civil and to provide notifications when a speaker's time had expired.

Ultimately, the behavior of some Moms for Liberty members grew so disruptive, district security had to escort them from the meeting.

They realized their aims nonetheless.

In a statement, school district spokesperson Christine Liberaski said "Last week it came to our attention that books were ordered for some of our schools' libraries that contain material not appropriate for children and have upset some of our families."

Liberaski said *All Boys Aren't Blue* was removed from circulation at the Oak Park elementary school library for "not being developmentally appropriate for that age group."

Gender Queer had been ordered for the North Penn High School library, but was withdrawn before it was put into circulation.

Lawn Boy was removed from circulation at the Penndale Middle School.

Reported in: The Reporter, October 26, 2021.

North Kingstown, Rhode Island

It was reported on October 20 that Nicole Solas filed a police report against the North Kingstown High School for having *Gender Queer* in its library, claiming that the book was pornography.

Gender Queer received an Alex Award, a Stonewall Book Award, was nominated for an Ignatz Award, and was included on the Young Adult Library Services Association's 2020 list of Great Graphic Novels for Teens.

Kobabe's memoir is a nonbinary coming of age graphic novel. Kobabe wrote and illustrated it in part to explain what it means to be nonbinary and asexual.

In an email, Superintendent Phil Auger wrote that the book is "a valuable resource for someone who is working through issues of sexual identity and/or identifying as transgender."

There have been numerous efforts to ban *Gender Queer* from libraries this year as part of an organized effort to suppress lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/ questioning, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA+) voices and representation. Virtually all have utilized the same excerpts and poster-size blow-ups from the book.

In an editorial for *The Washington Post*, Kobabe wrote, "Removing



or restricting queer books in libraries and schools is like cutting a lifeline for queer youth, who might not yet even know what terms to ask Google to find out more about their own identities, bodies, and health.”

Another mother requested that Maia Kobabe’s memoir *Gender Queer* be removed from the school library or for the school to restrict access to it. When Chairman Greg Blasbalg asked if she’d read the book, she responded, “Well, no, I’m not going to read this book.”

At the October 26 meeting of the North Kingstown High School board, people demanding the book’s ban came out in force. Protesters held up signs with images from the book.

Ramona Bessinger, a teacher in the Providence School Department, said “Our job as educators is to teach children how to read and write. Our job is not to teach children how to give blowjobs.”

“You’re talking about children—you’re going to expose them to pornographic material? You might as well put *Playboy* and *Hustler* in there,” said another speaker.

Tiffany Macleod held a sign proclaiming “North Kingstown School Department is lying to parents.”

Auger again defended Kobabe’s memoir and spoke out against book bans generally.

“Any discussion of banning a book should not be taken lightly,” said Auger. “The book in question deals with mature questions of sexual identity and there are students in our high school that are asking these questions. As part of a public school population, LGBTQ youth have as much of a need and a right to have access to library resources to support their overall health and wellbeing.”

Board member Jen Lima added that “A library is there to provide us information on all topics, not just those that make us feel comfortable.”

Reported in: ABC6, October 20, 2021; *The Washington Post*, October 29, 2021; *The Independent*, October 28, 2021.

Hamilton County, Tennessee

Censorship efforts led by school board member Rhonda Thurman were on the agenda at the October 21 meeting of the Hamilton County Department of Education.

In an October 13th interview with WRCB TV and an October 15 opinion article she wrote for the *Chattanooga Times Free Press*, Thurman requested clarification on how school library books are selected and asked that four books be removed from school libraries.

Thurman objected to four books:

- *More Than Words Can Tell* by Brigid Kemmerer
- *On the Come Up* by Angie Thomas
- *Far From the Tree* by Robin Benway
- *The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas

Thurman said parents complained to her about these books in August. She said the use of profanity and references to sex and violence made them inappropriate for inclusion in school libraries.

More than Words Can Tell received a Booklist starred review and was nominated for the CILIP Carnegie Medal.

On the Come Up was included in the American Library Association’s “2020 Top Ten Books for Young Adults,” and was nominated for a Carnegie Medal, Kirkus Prize, and Boston Globe-Horn Book Award.

The Hate U Give won the Michael L. Printz Award, the William C. Morris Award for best debut book for teens, and was a Coretta Scott King Book Award Honor Book.

Far From the Tree won the National Book Award for Young People’s Literature and the PEN America Award for Young Adult Literature.

“I am still in disbelief this insanity is allowed in our school libraries and classrooms,” Thurman said.

A joint statement from the Tennessee Association of School Librarians, Tennessee Library Association, and Friends of the Tennessee Libraries said that, “We oppose censorship within school libraries on the grounds that it is unconstitutional and contrary to the professional ethics of librarianship.”

The statement noted that challenge and removal processes were already in place at the local school district level.

“Every book is not for every reader, but every child should have access to books they may want to read. School librarians strive to know learners and assist them in finding books that fit their needs and interests,” said the statement.

The school district’s reconsideration policy was discussed at the board meeting per Thurman’s request.

During the meeting, representatives from Chattanooga’s Moms for Social Justice spoke out in defense of the books. “What we are seeing in our country is a small faction of predominantly conservative parents targeting books that are mostly written by authors of color,” said Taylor Lyons.

“They are calling these books into question because they depict life experiences that are a reality for millions of students across our country and that makes them uncomfortable and we understand because it makes us uncomfortable too. Important books such as these make us feel uncomfortable because they teach us important things about ourselves and society,” said Lyons.

Edna Varner, a retired Hamilton County educator, spoke at the



meeting on behalf of the Chattanooga-Hamilton County chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

Varner argued this debate was needless as district policies already allow parents to opt their children out of books or lessons they find objectionable. She encouraged board and community members to put their time to better use.

“There are plenty of ways we can come together without month after month of complaining,” Varner said. “You have important work to do.”

No action was taken at the meeting regarding the books’ disposition, but discussion is expected to continue at the November board meeting.

Reported in: WRCB, October 13, 2021; Nashville Tennessean, October 21, 2021; News Channel 9 ABC, October 22, 2021.

Williamson County, Tennessee

The Williamson County branch of Moms for Liberty sent the Tennessee Department of Education (DOE) a spreadsheet itemizing objections to 29 books, 1 video, and 1 article contained in the K-8 Wit & Wisdom curriculum.

Among the complaints is that *Seahorse: The Shyest Fish in the Sea* is not age appropriate for first graders because it includes “mating seahorses with pictures of positions and discussion of the male carrying the eggs.”

While it’s easy to focus on the absurdity of railing against the sexiness of seahorses, an organization like Moms for Liberty sending a list of censorship demands to a state department of education poses very real threats to educational opportunities.

As of this writing, Moms for Liberty is a group with 142 chapters in 35 states and well over 55,000 members. It receives funding from the

Conservatives for Good Government PAC and Megyn Kelly hosted fundraisers. It has been promoted on *FOX News*.

Moms for Liberty was started in Florida as a “parents’ rights group” opposed to school mask mandates. Their focus quickly shifted to limiting curricula and banning books from school libraries. They actively oppose sex education, anything they consider to be “critical race theory,” and books with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/ questioning, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA+) characters or authors.

The co-director of Moms for Liberty is the wife of Christian Ziegler, vice chairman of the Florida Republican Party. Ziegler has championed Moms for Liberty and expects them to aid Governor Ron DeSantis’s 2022 reelection campaign.

Nationwide, Moms for Liberty have become known for their “I don’t co-parent with the government” t-shirts and viral protest videos.

Major news outlets have portrayed them as both a grassroots organization and as a well-funded and organized astroturf campaign. Both stances are accurate, making grounds for their dismissal on either count irrelevant.

They are well-funded by prominent Republican party members and organizations. They are equipped with resources for confronting school board members, administrators, and teachers in Youtube-worthy ways.

The astroturf campaign is channeling very real fear and rage felt by White conservative parents nationwide, as well as a genuine desire to protect their children in the ways they feel are best.

The confluence of these two streams has resulted in a movement which Attorney General Merrick Garland condemned for creating

a “disturbing spike in harassment, intimidation, and threats of violence against school administrators, board members, and staff.”

While the letter and spreadsheet sent to the Tennessee DOE lacked the bluster and violence Moms for Liberty have become known for, it still grabbed headlines because of the sexy seahorses.

Many of the titles that Moms for Liberty requested the Tennessee DOE remove from statewide curricula dealt with racism, race, and the histories of Black and indigenous peoples in the US instead of seahorses. These include the following titles and rationales for exclusion:

Cendrillon: A Caribbean Cinderella by Robert D. San Souci was characterized as inappropriate because it contains “many French Creole words.”

First Nations of North America: Plains Indians by Andrew Santella was characterized as inappropriate because it “paints White people in a negative light.”

The Buffalo are Back by Jean Craighead George was characterized as inappropriate because it is “divisive and dark.” The spreadsheet notes that it’s “not historically accurate” since “the true history is that the railroad was being built and therefore a lot of the buffalo were pushed out and died.”

The Story of Johnny Appleseed by Aliko was characterized as inappropriate because “for no reason and no context, there are two pages of divisiveness where it talks about Native Americans hating White men.”

Ruby Bridges Goes to School by Ruby Bridges was characterized as inappropriate for the first grade because it contains “racist remarks,” “shows division along racial lines,” “shows the oppression of people of color,” and “causes shame for young impressionable White children.”



Moms for Liberty recommended *The Story of Ruby Bridges* by Robert Coles be used in the 6th–8th grade instead of the prescribed 2nd, because it has “themes of segregation and racism,” “is highly inflammatory and divisive,” and “instills shame in White children.”

Frances E. Ruffin’s *Martin Luther King, Jr., and the March to Washington* was characterized as inappropriate due to “photographs of political violence.”

A cautionary note regarding *The Keeping Quilt* by Patricia Polacco warns that “the earlier versions of this book are fine. However, according to reviews, the newer 25th anniversary edition ends with a gay marriage so it’s important to know which version the schools are using.”

Coming to America by Betsy Maestro is listed as being inappropriate because it presents information “about difficult subjects such as slavery and Indian conflicts . . . without noting any of the challenges associated with illegal immigration in our country.”

Walk Two Moons by Sharon Creech is inappropriate due to “an unnecessary slap at historical monuments . . . totally missing the point that it is to honor those who have been presidents, she says ‘I’ve got nothing against the presidents, but you’d think the Sioux would be mighty sad to have those White faces carved into their sacred hill. I bet my mother was upset. I wondered why whoever carved them couldn’t have put a couple Indians up there too.’”

Putting Up the Sky: Seven Native American Plays for Children by Joseph Bruchac is listed as being inappropriate for containing “Native American parables.”

Thunder Rolling in the Mountains by Scott O’Dell and Elizabeth Hall “painted White people as ‘bad’ or ‘evil’ or ‘couldn’t be trusted.’”

The River Between Us by Richard Peck “painted White people as ‘bad’ or ‘evil’ or ‘couldn’t be trusted.’”

We Are the Ship: The Story of the Negro League Baseball by Kadir Nelson is questioned because it “talks about being hanged, referencing the ‘N’ word.”

The complete list of titles requested for removal from public school curricula in Tennessee:

- *Amos and Boris* by William Steig
- *Brave Irene* by William Steig
- *The Buffalo Are Back* by Jean Craighead George
- *Coming to America: The Story of Immigration* by Betsy Maestro
- *Feelings* by Aliki
- *George vs. George: The American Revolution as Seen from Both Sides* by Rosalyn Schanzer
- *Gifts from the Gods: Ancient Words & Wisdom from Greek & Roman Mythology* by Lisa Lunge-Larsen
- *Hatchet* by Gary Paulsen
- *Hurricane* by Jessica Rudolph
- *Johnny Appleseed* by Steven Kellogg
- *The Keeping Quilt* by Patricia Polacco
- *Love That Dog* by Sharon Creech
- *Martin Luther King, Jr. and the March on Washington* by Frances E. Ruffin
- *Plains Indians* by Andrew Santella
- *Pushing Up the Sky: Seven Native American Plays for Children* by Joseph Bruchac
- *The River Between Us* by Richard Peck
- *The Rough-Face Girl* by Rafe Martin
- *Ruby Bridges Goes to School* by Ruby Bridges
- *Seahorse: The Shyest Fish in the Sea* by Chris Butterworth (book and video)
- *Separate is Never Equal* by Duncan Tonatiuh
- *Shark Attack!* by Cathy East

Dubowski

- *The Story of Johnny Appleseed* by Aliki
- *The Story of Ruby Bridges* by Robert Coles
- *Thunder Rolling in the Mountains* by Scott O’Dell
- *Understanding Greek Myths* by Natalie Hyde
- *Walk Two Moons* by Sharon Creech
- *What Do You Do With a Tail Like This?* by Steve Jenkins
- “When Peace Met Power” by Laura Helweg (article)
- *Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People’s Ears* by Verna Aardema
- *Woods Runner* by Gary Paulsen

Reported in: *LGBTQ Nation*, September 24, 2021; *The Guardian*, June 30 and September 25, 2021; *Media Matters for America*, November 12, 2021; *The Washington Post*, October 15, 2021.

Austin, Texas

On September 16, Lake Travis Independent School District (ISD) announced they were removing *Out of Darkness* by Ashley Hope Pérez from the Hudson Bend and Bee Cave middle school libraries for review.

The announcement came the day after former school board candidate Kara Bell raised objections to the book during a school board meeting.

Out of Darkness is set in East Texas in 1937 and details the ill-fated love between a Mexican American girl and an African American boy. It was a 2016 Michael L. Printz award honor book. The Michael L. Printz is a prestigious award recognizing each year’s “best book written for teens, based entirely on its literary merit.” Up to four Honor Books are also designated annually.

Bell read a passage from the book then proclaimed “I do not want my children to learn about anal sex in



middle school. I've never had anal sex. I don't want to have anal sex. I don't want my kids having anal sex. I want you to start focusing on education and not public health." A video of her comments went viral.

Pérez responded on social media by providing context for the passage Bell excerpted. "What she's reading from is from a part of the book where the whole point is to capture the utterly relentless sexual objectification and racialization the Mexican American main character endures."

Jonathan Friedman, Director of Free Expression and Education at PEN America, said "I think to pretend books that deal explicitly with sex or sexual assault are in some way a threat to young people are doing them a disservice. This is about having access for young people to a wide variety of literature that people from different backgrounds are reflected in."

"Craven political leaders are fueling a panic about supposedly 'divisive concepts' being taught in schools, and that in turn has sparked a wave of righteous but misguided parental calls for out and out censorship," said Friedman.

Earlier this year, Bell was charged with a Class C misdemeanor for assaulting a Nordstrom Rack employee after refusing to put on a mask. In the body cam video of the attack, Bell can be heard proclaiming "I am a woman of God!"

"For anyone who believes in liberty and choice, calling to ban books from a classroom should be anathema," said Jonathan Friedman, Director of Free Expression and Education at PEN America. "The solution to creating a better classroom for our kids isn't trying to cover their eyes from difficult or challenging books—even ones we disagree with."

Pérez said she hopes students are "kind of hungry for stories from

people at the margins of history." She said that, in *Out of Darkness*, "I knew a lot of the historical details, but I was also trying to tell stories that reflect the marginal experiences by the characters."

According to a spokesperson for the school district, their policy holds that "A district shall not remove materials from a library for the purpose of denying students access to ideas with which the district disagrees. A district may remove materials, because they are pervasively vulgar or based solely upon the educational suitability of the books in question."

No indication was provided regarding how long the review process may take.

Reported in: KXAN, September 16, 2021; Book Riot September 21, 2021.

Leander, Texas

In early August, Leander Independent School District (ISD) announced an additional seven titles it was banning from school libraries, continuing an ongoing censorship saga that began in February.

These titles are part of the 140 optional book club titles that were suspended from circulation pending review on April 21. Virtually all of the books suspended or banned were by Black or lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/ questioning, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA+) authors.

The latest titles banned from the school district were:

- *None of the Above* by I.W. Gregorio
- *Out of Darkness* by Ashley Hope Perez
- *Red at the Bone* by Jacqueline Woodson
- *Brave Face: A Memoir* by Shaun David Hutchinson
- *In the Dream House: A Memoir* by Carmen Maria Machado

- *Ordinary Hazards: A Memoir* by Nikki Grimes
- *Shout* by Laurie Halse Anderson

Speak by Laurie Halse Anderson, *The Nowhere Girls* by Amy Reed, *My Friend Dahmer* by Derf Backderf, *Dear Evan Hansen* by Val Emmich, *American Street* by Ibi Zoboi, and *The Book of Unknown Americans* by Christina Henríquez remain under review.

Following this announcement, Jonathan Friedman, director of free expression and education at PEN America said, "This is a sad day for literature and for students' freedom to learn."

Friedman said, "It is disheartening to see a school district closing off avenues for learning and engagement across lines of difference. Not only is the removal of these books harmful to the literary community as a whole, it also contributes to the further minimization of the issues that people of color and LGBTQ+ individuals face."

Making the books' removal more egregious is that 80% of the district's reviewers said Machado's book met the curriculum standards and 88% said *Red at the Bone* met the standards. The district removed them anyway.

Even while the review of suspended book club titles was ongoing, additional calls for censorship emerged.

During the public comments section of the September 9 school board meeting, complaints about *Lawn Boy* by Jonathan Evison were raised by Brandi Burkman, a parent who described the book as the depraved work of a pedophile.

Burkman and another parent filed reports with the police regarding obscenities contained in the book.

Lawn Boy was not one of the book club titles and according to the district, no requests for reconsideration were submitted for *Lawn Boy*.



Subsequently, it is not currently under review.

Following the meeting, board member Jim MacKay emailed his resignation to the superintendent and to the school board president, lamenting that the board was not sufficiently limiting students' access to LGBTQIA+ reading material.

"I cannot, and quite frankly will not support a superintendent or board that turns a blind eye to the incredible harm we are potentially doing [to] our innocent children," wrote MacKay. "I will keep for myself the shame and guilt of our 'literature program' for the rest of my life."

(See: Journal of Intellectual Freedom & Privacy, v.6 iss.2: *Censorship Dateline: Schools*)

Reported in: *Book & Film Globe*, August 9, 2021; *Book Riot*, August 11, 2021; *Austin American-Statesman*, September 16, 2021; *CBS Austin*, September 14, 2021; *PEN America*, August 5, 2021.

Houston, Texas

Spring Branch Independent School District (ISD) banned the graphic novel *The Breakaways* by Cathy G. Johnson from all of its elementary schools following one parent's complaint.

According to the publisher, *The Breakaways* is intended for readers aged 8–11. Johnson's critically-acclaimed graphic novel tells the tale of a diverse group of kids on a pretty bad soccer team who form bonds of friendship and learn to make room for themselves in the world. It won the 2019 Dorry Award for Children's/YA Book of the Year.

One of the characters is transgender. Some of the characters kiss. The decision to ban it occurred while the Texas state legislature was considering a bill to bar transgender student

athletes from competing on teams aligned with their gender identity.

Spring Branch ISD's policy states that library books should be selected to "help students gain an awareness of our pluralistic society" and to "present various sides of controversial issues."

After the parent's complaint was received, the book was reviewed for reconsideration by a committee of two librarians, two teachers, and an administrator. They decided that "the book was not age appropriate nor was it appropriate for its intended educational use." The committee "recommended that *The Breakaways* not be available in elementary libraries."

Johnson said "The book includes kids of all sorts of identities to reflect the world around us. There is a transgender student who comes out in the book. He is just one of many characters who make up my book, as well as one of the identities that make up the world."

She said this was the first time she was aware of her book being banned from a school library. "As a teacher and as someone who identifies as queer myself, it isn't surprising and it's sad. It's something we need to fight against," Johnson said.

Austin Ruiz, communications and marketing manager for the Montrose Center, a Houston-based nonprofit that supports the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/ questioning, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA+) community, indicated that positive representations of LGBTQIA+ youth in media can be lifelines for kids who face a greater risk of bullying and violence in schools, as well as higher rates of suicide.

"It's important for youth . . . to see literature that they can read and say, 'That's something that I identify with and it's OK and normal and not a bad thing,'" said Ruiz. "It could be the difference between them continuing

or unfortunately trying to harm themselves."

Johnson noted how valuable it was for her to find books that reflected her experience growing up. "I value being able to continue that as an author and educator by creating work representative of all identities." She added that, "Research does show that representation helps students do better in school and achieve more."

Johnson said, "I hope going forward that transgender students in Texas are offered the same opportunities, dignities, and respect that cisgender students have."

Spring Branch ISD officials said the fact that a character in the book comes out as transgender did not figure into its decision to remove the book from its elementary schools.

Mandy Giles, a parent of two non-binary children, said that kids are already aware of issues of gender identity and sexual orientation. She said kids need positive portrayals of children from all ethnic, gender, and identity backgrounds.

Giles said banning the book "makes us feel attacked, especially my children feeling attacked. That their existence, their humanity is being erased."

Johnson shared a message of acceptance and compassion for the children who may be hurt by the district's decision: "There are people out there who love you and you'll find them."

Reported in: *Houston Chronicle*, October 7, 2021; *ABC 13*, October 7, 2021.

Southlake, Texas

On October 4 the Carroll Independent School District (ISD) school board voted 3-2 to formally reprimand Rickie Farah, a fourth grade teacher at Johnson Elementary School, for having *This Book is Anti-Racist* in her classroom library.



Rickie Farah was named Carroll ISD Teacher of the Year last year. The reprimand has joined the award in her personnel file.

Kirkus Reviews called Tiffany Jewell's *This Book is Anti-Racist* "a guidebook for taking action against racism" and named it one of their Best Books of 2020. It's an Indie-bound and *New York Times* bestseller. Muns said the book violated her family's "morals and faith."

Sarah Muns and her husband complained to the board that their child had checked the book out during the previous school year. The ISD's administration investigated the matter and determined that nothing Farah did warranted disciplinary action.

Hannah Smith and Cam Bryan, two of the board members who voted for the reprimand, received campaign donations from the Muns family while they were running for school board.

Smith made the motion to reprimand Farah. Bryan seconded. Trustee Eric Lannen joined them in voting for the motion.

In dissent, Board President Michelle Moore said, "I think the administration did a great job investigating this and trying to work with the family to address the concerns related to this matter and I am in agreement with the administration's decision."

Smith and Bryan have also opposed the district adopting a cultural competency plan and hiring a director of equity and inclusion.

They were endorsed by the Southlake Families PAC, which has raised more than \$200,000 since 2020. In addition to Smith and Bryan, they campaigned for the winner of the mayoral race.

"The PAC has gotten control of our town. This teacher is one of our best and brightest," said Jennifer Hough, parent of a student in the ISD.

"This has just killed teacher morale around here and who's ultimately going to be hurt are the kids."

Sheri Mills, the other board member who opposed the reprimand, issued a warning to teachers in the district.

"If you are worried about teaching in this school district, you should watch this vote. I want you to know that you are right to be worried by whoever votes yes," Mills said.

Less than a week after the reprimand was issued to Farah, district administrators told teachers they'd be receiving mandatory training on new district-wide rules governing which books are allowed to be in classrooms.

In an email sent October 7, administrators directed all classroom libraries to be closed "until they can be vetted."

Administrators distributed a rubric for determining which books need to be removed from Carroll ISD classroom libraries. Language used in the rubric echoed that of HB 3979, Texas's law banning the teaching of critical race theory in schools.

Five Carroll teachers anonymously reported concerns that the guidelines are too vague and that they are afraid of punishment from the board if a parent issues a complaint. Four said they were considering leaving the school district.

One English teacher wrapped their classroom library shelves with caution tape. Another draped black sheets over them along with a sign proclaiming, "You can't read any of the books on my shelves."

One teacher said she was getting rid of *Separate is Never Equal* by Duncan Tonatiuh, because it details a family's fight to end segregation.

Another said she had to pull *A Good Kind of Trouble* by Lisa Moore Ramée, because the story involves the Black Lives Matter movement.

A high school English teacher said it would take her months to review every book in her classroom and that she would likely need to get rid of many of them, based on the guidelines. She said she no longer feels safe keeping a copy of *The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas or any books by Toni Morrison.

"One of the questions we're supposed to ask is 'Does the writer have a neutral stance on the topic? Well, if you're Toni Morrison, how can you have a neutral stance toward racism?'" asked the teacher. "All of this is creating a chilling effect that's going to hurt our students."

"It is frightening to think that we are back in the days of book banning," said Kim Anderson, director of the National Education Association. "Why don't school board members who are taking these actions or legislators who are taking these actions believe that America's students deserve an honest and truthful reflection of our history?"

It might be because school board members can benefit by exploiting racial division and anxiety. Andrew Yeager, a third board member endorsed by Southlake Families PAC, was elected to the Carroll ISD school board on November 2. He's filling the seat David Almand vacated in July.

During the October 8 training on the book purging rubric, Carroll ISD's executive director of curriculum and instruction Gina Peddy advised teachers to "remember the concepts of [HB] 3979" and make sure they present multiple perspectives on "widely debated and currently controversial" issues.

"And make sure that if you have a book on the Holocaust, that you have one that has an opposing, that has other perspectives," continued Peddy.

Clay Robison, a spokesman for the Texas State Teachers Association, characterized Carroll ISD's guidelines



as a misguided overreaction to the passage of HB 3979. “We find it reprehensible for an educator to require a Holocaust denier to get equal treatment with the facts of history. That’s absurd. That’s worse than absurd. And this law does not require it.”

On a recording of the meeting, teachers can be heard discussing Peddy’s comments. “I am offended as hell by somebody who says I should have an opposing view to the Holocaust in my library,” said one. To which another replied, “They don’t understand what they have done. And they are going to lose incredible teachers, myself potentially being with them.”

“Teachers are literally afraid that we’re going to be punished for having books in our classes,” said an elementary school teacher. “There are no children’s books that show the ‘opposing perspective’ of the Holocaust or the ‘opposing perspective’ of slavery. Are we supposed to get rid of all of the books on those subjects?”

After news coverage lambasting the ISD broke, Superintendent Lane Ledbetter made a Facebook post stating Peddy’s advice was “in no way to convey that the Holocaust was anything less than a terrible event in history.”

“As we continue to work through implementation of HB 3979, we also understand this bill does not require an opposing viewpoint on historical facts,” continued Ledbetter.

Reported in: *Dallas Morning News*, October 6, 2021; *The Texan*, October 6, 2021; *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, October 7, 2021; *NBC News*, October 8, 2021, and October 14, 2021.

New Kent, Virginia

Poet X by Elizabeth Acevedo was removed from the New Kent Middle School (NKMS) Library after Emily White complained about it on social media. She thanked the principal for

removing it during their October 11 board meeting and expressed concerns regarding other “inappropriate” books that were still available.

Poet X was promoted at NKMS for National Hispanic American Heritage Month. Acevedo’s novel is about a Dominican 15-year-old in Harlem working through family conflict by writing poetry. It won the Carnegie Medal for best children’s book published in the UK in 2018, multiple Youth Media Awards, and received starred reviews from *Kirkus* and *School Library Journal*.

The school’s policy covering reconsideration of learning materials was not followed when *Poet X* was removed.

The policy requires submission of a completed reconsideration form to the school principal, so the principal can conduct a review of the materials “for their educational suitability.” The policy specifies that materials will not be “removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval” and allows for two rounds of appeals.

Superintendent of schools Brian Nichols said the process was not followed in order to quickly address White’s concerns. “This was a good learning step for us because it shows us that our process isn’t perfect.”

District 1 school board representative Wayne Meade said he was pleased the superintendent addressed the issue quickly and hopes to put in place an easier process for banning books from the school.

“We definitely need to make it easier for parents to get access to this [reconsideration] form,” said Meade. “I hope that even though we were able to get on top of this issue, that parents become more involved.”

At the board meeting, Tom Miller amplified White’s complaints about *Poet X* and felt that removing it wasn’t going far enough. “I want to know who is involved in choosing these

books. How are they going to be held accountable?” asked Miller.

Miller also said the school’s Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion program was a “rebranding of critical race theory” and expressed concerns that cultural competency training was required for teacher licensure.

Ross Miller, Director of Innovation and Development, said the district is considering shifting to an opt-in model for parents to restrict their children’s access to young adult materials and is looking into a process of notifying parents whenever a child checks out certain library books.

Reported in: *New Kent Charles City Chronicle*, October 12, 2021; and October 25, 2021.

Virginia Beach, Virginia

On October 5, Virginia Beach City Public Schools board members Victoria Manning and Laura Hughes sent an email to Superintendent Aaron Spence requesting that four books be banned from the district’s schools.

The challenged books were:

- *Lawn Boy* by Jonathan Evison
- *Gender Queer* by Maia Kobabe
- *A Lesson Before Dying* by Ernest Gaines
- *The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison

Spence added two books to Manning and Hughes’ list before requesting that all six titles be pulled and reviewed for reconsideration. Hughes’ additions were *Beyond Magenta: Transgender Teens* by Susan Kuklin and *Good Trouble: Lessons from the Civil Rights Playbook* by Christopher Noxon.

Gaines and Morrison’s books are taught in 11th and 12th grade classes.

The books targeted for removal in Virginia Beach reflect the national trend to remove books discussing race or including lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning,



intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA+) characters and to silence Black and LGBTQIA+ voices.

Nora Pelizzari, communication director of the National Coalition Against Censorship, said that it's important for schools to make such literature available to students. She said banning books "suggests to students that there are some ideas that are too dangerous to even discuss and that there are some stories that don't deserve to be told."

The debate over the books went public during the October 12th school board meeting, when parents showed up with printouts from *Gender Queer* and read passages from the challenged books during the public comments period.

Amy Solares said "I'm not saying, 'burn [the books]. I'm saying, 'Get them out of our public school libraries.'"

Manning requested that all books in the district be reviewed and immediately removed if they contain "any pornographic material."

Superintendent Spence belatedly attempted to pump the brakes on the ban bus, offering the cautionary admonition that "what one person finds offensive, others may not," and noting that all physical and digital materials had been vetted by staff with the Department of Teaching and Learning.

During the October 26 meeting of the school board, it was announced that Kobabe's book was banned from the district. The others remain under review.

Reported in: *Virginian-Pilot*, October 7, 2021, and October 17, 2021; 13 News Now, October 26, 2021.

LIBRARIES Harrisonville, Missouri

Protesters showed up at the September 21 board meeting of the Cass

County Public Library to demonstrate their objections to *It's Perfectly Normal: Changing Bodies, Growing Up, Sex, and Sexuality* by Robbie Harris.

Harris's book was written to inform pre-adolescent children about puberty so young individuals would understand aspects of sexual health. It received numerous accolades, including being *The New York Times* Best Book of the Year in 1995, a *School Library Journal* best book, and an American Literature Association Notable Children's Book.

Booklist recommends Harris's book for grades four through seven and called it a "caring, conscientious, and well-crafted book [that] will be a fine library resource as well as a marvelous adjunct to the middle-school sex-education curriculum."

Protesters objected to illustrations in the book they considered "pornographic" and asserted sex education materials do not belong in the children's section. It has been in the children's section of the library since 1994.

The public comments section of the meeting was spirited.

Josh Wollberg, a Baptist pastor, said "Everything about this book is horrifying. This is an absolutely disgusting book. This is written by sick individuals who are looking to groom young kids into sex."

One resident defended Harris's book, calling it "very important for parents who maybe feel like they don't have the words to talk to their children about it."

Sarah Maclean said, "Let me parent my kids, let you parent yours. We're all good."

One protester took her sign into the meeting, which read "For goodness sake just MOVE the book! Simple solution."

Christie Mangan observed that any effort to restrict access was an act of

censorship. "Where do you go from there?," she asked. "This is 2021. Kids have far more access to things on the internet than they do in a book."

The library has not made a formal decision regarding whether to move, remove, or retain the book where it is.

Reported in: KMBC 9 News, September 22, 2021; FOX4, September 21, 2021.

Campbell County, Wyoming

Between August 9 and November 20, the Campbell County Public Library (CCPL) received 55 book reconsideration requests concerning 29 titles.

County prosecutors were also asked to pursue criminal charges against library staff for making certain books available. The local chapter of MassResistance has led the book banning effort. Members of MassResistance filed the criminal complaint.

MassResistance, formerly the Parents' Rights Coalition and the Article 8 Alliance, was founded in Massachusetts. It opposes same-sex marriage and actively organizes protests against drag queen story hours, critical race theory (CRT), sex education, and sex change operations for minors.

MassResistance became active in Gillette this summer after the CCPL made a Facebook post promoting lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/ questioning, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA+) materials in their teen section for Pride Month.

Local MassResistance member Hugh Bennett called the Facebook post "a slap in the face to people who don't want their children exposed to this nonsense of gender identity."

Arthur Schaper, organization director of MassResistance, said Campbell County residents reached out in the second week of July and "we helped them organize and grow." The local chapter now has over 150 members.



Once established, MassResistance began organizing protests against the library for “promoting the LGBTQ lifestyle to young people.”

In September, MassResistance paid for ads on a dozen billboards in Gillette warning of “inappropriate youth books” and “LGBT indoctrination” at the library.

MassResistance members have attended all library board and county commission meetings since the chapter formed in July.

At the September 8 commission meeting, Susan Sisti lamented that a determination had been made to retain two of the challenged books. She added that books on witchcraft, satanic rituals, drinking blood, and eating toads are also inappropriate for young readers.

“A group of citizens has come to you and you don’t care about this most horrible, vile, erotic porn that belongs in an adult bookstore,” said Sisti.

Ed Sisti, relationship unknown, said “There’s an 800-pound gorilla in the room and it’s called socialism. It’s everywhere and it’s in our library.”

During a September 27 meeting between the Campbell County Commissioners and the CCPL, Commissioner Del Shelstad complained the library was progressing through the reconsideration requests they’d received too slowly.

Shelstad also said he had personally filed a reconsideration request for *This Book is Gay* and that it was denied. He said he read *This Book is Gay* and the problem with it “has nothing to do with the fact that it’s about gay,” but rather that it was “garbage.”

Shelstad said, “My suggestion is that we don’t fund the library. If that means closing it, then we close it.”

CCPL Executive Director Terri Lesley said the sheer volume of

requests for reconsideration they’ve received was startlingly high and that it was “actually very unusual for a public library to receive this many challenges in a small time frame.”

Lesley explained that the reconsideration process takes time and that, “This time is needed to review the challenged material, gather reviews, and write a little information to the patron about the decision.”

Lesley said that by policy, the maximum amount of time to process and respond to a request for reconsideration and move through a board appeal process is 120 days. Since they received their first formal challenge on August 9, all responses have been issued in about 30 days.

“We have a lot of challenges to respond to,” stated Lesley. “It takes a lot of work to go through a challenge, it doesn’t happen instantly. The merits and faults [of a book] are both weighed in our decision. It is absolutely our top priority.”

Lesley said in seven weeks, the library received 35 reconsideration requests by 14 people for 18 titles and sent out 16 responses. All 16 stated the challenged books would remain in the library in their respective sections.

Susan Sisti said she was filing 13 more challenges this week.

Shelstad said the library needed to work faster. “This is creating division in our community, we need to take action on this.”

Lesley said “We are trying to be the force of reason, trying to work through these things using the policy we have in place—review these books and do our due diligence.”

Commission Chairman Bob Maul followed with, “If we are going to provide what the citizens of this community desire, then we need to think a little bit more like a redneck.”

Lesley said the library’s operant philosophy is “that we have a balanced

collection and that we can’t take sides. We want to have the book there and for the patrons to make their own decisions. That’s where we stand.”

Shelstad then argued that books should be at least as difficult to acquire as guns.

“I own a gun store. A 10- or 12-year-old comes into my store and wants to buy a gun, they can’t. Why? Because it’s not appropriate for that age. Why do we have to look at our library and say it’s open to anything no matter what it is? I fundamentally think that is wrong,” said Shelstad.

Library board members explained to Shelstad how library cards work and that children require a parent-approved card in order to check out items.

At the September 28 Campbell County Commission meeting, Bennett accused library leadership of “committing sexual intrusion on minors.”

“There are a lot of laws in existence that make what’s being done in this library felony behavior,” said Bennett. He suggested the commissioners look up the definition of “intrusion.”

“I think that you guys should be on notice that you’re fighting a losing battle and the longer you resist, the worse it’s gonna be,” menaced Bennett.

On September 29, Hugh and Susan Bennett filed a criminal complaint with the Campbell County Sheriff’s Office asking that charges be brought against library employees for disseminating and promoting obscene material.

The allegedly obscene material listed in the complaint are: *This Book is Gay* by Juno Dawson, *How Do You Make a Baby* by Anna Fiske, *Doing it! Let’s Talk About Sex* by Hannah Winton, *Sex is a Funny Word* by Cory Silverberg, and *Dating and Sex: A*



Guide for the 21st Century Teen Boy by Andrew P. Smiler.

Wyoming statute defines obscene material as “that which the average person would find encourages an excessive interest in sexual matters, depicts or describes sexual conduct in a patently offensive way, and lacks serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value.”

Dating and Sex was written by a therapist, distributed by the American Psychological Association, and has won multiple awards.

Sex Is a Funny Word is a critically acclaimed and award-winning children’s book discussing sex, gender identity, privacy, safety, respect, and protecting yourself against unwanted sexual touch and abuse.

Doing It is the critically acclaimed first book by the award-winning vlogger Hannah Witton. *Booklist* said, “This highly accessible title offers much for young adults. Empowering, modern, and judgment-free.” *School Library Connection* called it “a must-have for libraries serving young adults.”

How Do You Make a Baby was recommended by *School Library Journal* for kids K-4. They describe it as “an informational and fun treatment of what can be a difficult subject. Readers will appreciate the humor and straightforward presentation. Recommended for general purchase.” The couples and babies depicted are racially diverse, and same-sex couples are represented.

This Book is Gay received numerous awards, a starred review in *Booklist*, and is currently on three separate Amazon bestseller lists. A review in *The Guardian* said “*This Book is Gay* makes you feel confident and comfortable with yourself, regardless of sexuality.”

On October 5, the Weston County Attorney Michael Stulken was

appointed as a special prosecutor after Deputy Campbell County Attorney Sean Brown informed the commissioners’ that his office could not ethically investigate a criminal report filed against the library as they are a subsidiary of the county and a client of the Campbell County Attorney’s Office.

On October 18, the Campbell County Board of Commissioners stopped allowing public comments about CCPL during their meetings. This decision met with criticism, including by state representative Scott Clem, who characterized the speech prohibition as a First Amendment violation.

On October 25, the library board upheld library staff’s appealed decision to retain *This Book is Gay* in the teen section.

Stulken On October 27, Stulken wrote to Campbell County Sheriff Scott Matheny that under Wyoming Law, the disputed books were not obscene and having them in the library’s children and teen sections did not constitute engaging in “sexual intrusion.”

“I cannot ethically bring criminal charges if the facts surrounding a certain matter are not supported by probable cause,” Stulken wrote.

Lesley expressed relief and hoped it meant the library could start to move on. However, she recognized that the turmoil she’s been engulfed in since July “is bigger than our library. This is a political movement and we just happen to be caught in here.”

The titles of some challenged books at CCPL have not been publicly released, but they’re known to include:

- *Doing it! Let’s Talk About Sex* by Hannah Witton
 - *Heartstopper* by Alice Oseman
 - *Jane Against the World: Roe v. Wade and the Fight for Reproductive Rights* by Karen Blumenthal
 - *Music from Another World* by Robin Talley
 - *Sex Plus: Learning, Loving, Enjoying Your Body* by Laci Green
 - *My Body My Choice: The Fight for Abortion Rights* by Robin Stevenson
 - *How Do You Make a Baby?* by Anna Fiske
 - *Jack (Not Jackie)* by Erica Silverman
 - *Rainbow: A First Book of Pride* by Michael Genhart
 - *A Quick Easy Guide to Queer & Trans Identities* by Mady G. and Jules Zuckerberg
 - *This Book is Gay* by Juno Dawson
 - *Trans Mission: My Quest to a Beard* by Alex Bertie
 - *The V-Word: True Stories About First-Time Sex* by Amber J. Keyser
 - *Mary Wears What She Wants* by Keith Negley
 - *Meena* by Sine van Mol
 - *Sex is a Funny Word* by Cory Silverberg
- (See: Journal of Intellectual Freedom and Privacy, v.6 iss.2: *Censorship Dateline: Libraries*)
- Reported in: *Powell Tribune*, August 26, 2021; *U.S. News and World Report*, November 20, 2021; *Cowboy State Daily*, October 18, 2021; *County 17 News*, September 9, 2021; September 28, 2021; October 4, 2021; October 6, 2021; and October 7, 2021; *Gillette News Record*, September 28, 2021; *ABC News*, October 1, 2021; *Associated Press*, October 28, 2021; *Reason*, October 5, 2021.**
- *The Babysitters Coven* by Kate Williams
 - *The Black Flamingo* by Dean Atta
 - *Dating and Sex: A Guide for the 21st Century Teen Boy* by Andrew P. Smiler



MUSEUMS

Kansas City, Missouri

On September 1, an exhibit examining Kansas City's contributions to the gay rights movement was removed from the State Capitol building's Missouri State Museum in Jefferson City. It was scheduled to remain up for four months, but was removed after less than two days.

The exhibit, "Making History: Kansas City and the Rise of Gay Rights," was created by historians at the University of Missouri-Kansas City.

Before the exhibit was taken down, Republican state representatives Brian Seitz and Ann Kelley said they opposed its display in the Capitol. A state employee also complained that the exhibit went against "family values."

Kelli Jones, a spokeswoman for Governor Mike Parson, said in a statement that the exhibit organizers had violated a state law requiring them to coordinate with the state's Board of Public Buildings (BPB). The Board consists of the governor, the lieutenant governor, and the attorney general.

John Cunning, former director of the museum, said he was "befuddled" by the state's rationale. He oversaw the museum for 24 years.

"Never in that time did I have to get permission from the Board of

Public Buildings to put up an exhibit," said Cunning. He stated he "never had any dealings with the board."

Openly gay State Senator Greg Razer called the decision to remove the display "unacceptable." and said the governor's statement "seemed like a convenient excuse."

Razer expressed concern about the message state authorities would send to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/ questioning, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA+) youth. "I want them to know that this is a beautiful, vibrant, accepting community that wants you here. Stunts like this don't help," said Razer.

The Missouri Department of Natural Resources (DNR), which runs the Missouri State Museum, said it would relocate the exhibit to the Jefferson Landing State Historic Site and reopen it on September 4.

The Missouri State Capitol Commission is coordinating the exhibit's new location instead of the Board of Public Buildings.

"We apologize for the way this unfolded," said DNR director Dru Buntin. "We agree the history of all Missourians is an important story that needs to be told."

The National Coalition Against Censorship (NCAC) sent a statement to Gov. Parson regarding the exhibit's removal. "It is apparent that the

removal was motivated by hostility to the viewpoints expressed in the exhibit. This act of censorship flies in the face of the state's First Amendment obligations."

The statement continues that, "For at least the last two decades, no exhibit has been approved by the Board [of Public Buildings], nor removed because the Board had not given its approval. That suggests that the absence of Board approval was not the real reason but a pretext for an act of viewpoint discrimination."

NCAC urged the governor to return the exhibit to the State Museum. "As a public space open to exhibiting artwork, state-owned spaces are ruled by the free speech clause in the First Amendment. This means that government officials cannot arbitrarily or systematically impose their prejudices on a curated exhibition simply by labeling works 'inappropriate' or 'contrary to family values.'"

Razer said if some legislators are uncomfortable with discussions about LGBTQIA+ rights, "that is their problem to overcome." He added, "We can't brush over the parts of history that we don't want to see."

Reported in: *The New York Times*, September 4, 2021; National Coalition Against Censorship, September 16, 2021.



SCHOOLS Volusia County, Florida

On August 31, Volusia County School District removed the book *Rosa Parks* by Eloise Greenfield from elementary school classrooms after a teacher complained about it. The book was part of the state-approved curriculum. Concerns over it were raised after Florida's Board of Education voted unanimously to ban the teaching of Critical Race Theory (CRT).

Volusia United Educators President Elizabeth Albert explained that the teacher was concerned about how parents would react to a book that points out the harms the Ku Klux Klan and Jim Crow Laws did to Black people.

Once Albert was made aware of the teacher's concerns, she reached out to district staff members to ask what protections are in place for teachers "if a student makes an inaccurate statement at home about a teacher talking about the Ku Klux Klan." Albert also asked if a different book could be used in the curriculum.

Rene Clayton, assistant superintendent for elementary schools, then emailed all the principals asking them to remove the book from classrooms "until given further direction." All references to the book were also removed from teachers' curriculum resources.

The move surprised Mike Buchanan who was in the middle of teaching the book in his third grade class. "The kids loved it," Buchanan said. "There were no complaints from parents."

In response to the district's request for guidance, State Vice Chancellor for Literary Achievement Cari Miller responded that the book is one of 27 optional texts about civics for third-grade English language arts. Miller said there was no question that the book was age appropriate.

On September 9, principals were notified that *Rosa Parks* was being returned to classroom libraries and would remain an optional text for third grade teachers.

Albert said the question regarding protections for teachers remained unanswered and this was relevant given the state's ban on CRT.

Buchanan was unconcerned. "It's actual historical facts. It just tells the history of what happened." He characterized the book's temporary removal as an attempt to "whitewash history."

Reported in: *Daytona Beach News-Journal*, September 29, 2021.

Chelsea, Michigan

The Chelsea School District Board of Education voted 6-1 to retain Toni Morrison's novel *The Bluest Eye* in its high school library, pending further review. Tammy Lehman was the one vote favoring removal of the book until it could be reviewed.

Lehman said she found it "disgusting" that there were four copies of the book available at Chelsea High School.

The book came under scrutiny after parents and community members spoke out against it and read excerpts from it at the August 9 board meeting.

Their objections stemmed from the novel's depiction of incestuous sexual violence perpetrated against the character Pecola Breedlove. The title refers to Pecola's belief that she would be free from abuse and racism if she had blue eyes.

Morrison won the 1993 Nobel Prize for Literature, and *The Bluest Eye* was part of the reason she received this accolade. Morrison also won a Pulitzer Prize for her novel *Beloved*.

The Bluest Eye was one of 13 books donated to the district by Chelsea's One World One Family Task Force. The books were selected from

a list vetted by the district's Equity and Social Justice (ESJ) Committee. Their work is evaluated by the Board of Education's Diversity, Belonging, Equity, and Inclusion (DBEI) committee.

In response to the book challenge, the district removed the ESJ resource list from their website.

Board member Shawn Quilter said removing the book would send the wrong message to students. "I think the main point is getting rid of the book is getting rid of the opportunity to access it. I get worried when you start doing that."

Chelsea School District Superintendent Julie Helber said that the book is not used in classes and is not part of the high school curriculum. She said that the book has been available from the library for 20 years.

Helber noted that an excerpt from *The Bluest Eye* is on the College Board's Advanced Placement test.

Quilter said that *The Bluest Eye* has "been controversial since it was published, but there's so much of that book that does deal with understanding racism, oppression and inferiority, and all of those other things."

Theresa Plank, a parent, spoke in support of the book and the work of the DBEI.

"I'm well aware that the people making these difficult decisions have the safety and wellbeing of our kids at the forefront of their minds every single day," Plank said. "Not to mention that I believe trained educators are able to navigate through these obstacles much better than I am as a parent alone."

Reported in: *Michigan Live*, August 24, 2021.

York, Pennsylvania

On November 9, 2020, the all-White board of Central York Schools suspended use of approximately 300



books, articles, and videos included on their Diversity Committee's Summer Meeting Resource List (see the appendix on page 47 for the full list of titles).

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/ questioning, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA+) materials, books about indigenous peoples, and books about autism and disabilities were included on the list of newly-prohibited resources.

Most of the books banned were by Black or Latinx authors. They primarily dealt with racism and Black history.

The banned items included a picture book about Rosa Parks, *The Story of Ruby Bridges* by Robert Coles, PBS documentaries, an episode of *Sesame Street*, and a litany of award-winning children's books.

"This seems pretty egregious," said Natalia Mehlman Petrzela, associate professor of history at the New School. "The kind of texts that are being banned here make me feel that there is now just sort of an allergy to anything that mentions race or racism."

The list of forbidden resources was distributed to faculty at the middle and high school in early September of 2021.

School librarians were required to pull the books from their shelves. Teachers' lesson plans were undermined and needed to be recreated.

When news of the ban broke, push-back and protests ensued.

Students and parents alike raised complaints that the school board was not addressing the needs of a multicultural student body.

"I don't think that a board that lacks diversity is the appropriate authority to determine what qualifies as appropriate material to address race in this community," said parent Brandi Miller.

Senior Edha Gupta said, "This is a board that after hearing their students' concerns about diversity in the district, hearing my struggle with race . . .

and consistently feeling like I didn't belong, after hearing those conversations for weeks on end, they still pursued the book ban."

In addition to speaking out against the board's actions, Gupta wrote an op-ed for the *York Dispatch* and started a Change.org petition urging the board to reverse the ban. His petition was endorsed by more than 5,000 signatories.

At the September 13 school board meeting, Ellis, a Black senior, said "Why is a *Sesame Street* episode threatening the education of children? If anything, this school board is threatening education."

Central York High School teacher Ben Hodge spoke to the chilling effect created by the resource ban. He said he has to "think twice about whether or not I should or could use a James Baldwin quote as an opening for my class."

Patricia Jackson, who has taught in the district for more than 20 years, said "There are teachers looking over their shoulders wondering if someone's going to be . . . darkening their door, saying you said something, or you mentioned something, or used something that you were not supposed to."

Some parents in attendance supported the board's action, however, wielding their misappropriation of the term "critical race theory" (CRT) as a weapon.

"The community is 100% against an [*sic*] critical race theory indoctrination agenda," said one mother. Since August of 2020, CRT has been used nationwide as a catch-all term encompassing all conservative culture war issues.

The Panther Anti-Racist Union, a student organization, organized a protest in front of the school before the board meeting. Around 100 people participated.

Olivia Pituch, one of the student protesters said, "I want to learn genuine history. I don't want to learn a whitewashed version. I want to hear all of it."

In a written statement in response to the protests, Jane Johnson, the school board president, said officials would form a curriculum committee to review the banned materials.

Johnson said they would wait to form the committee until a new superintendent replaced Michael Snell, who retired in October. The ban will remain in effect until this review occurs.

JJ Sheffer and Hannah Shipley wanted to make sure that York students and community members retained access to the banned materials. To that end, they organized a book drive of titles from the diversity resource list for distribution to little free libraries. They were soon overwhelmed as nearly 7,000 books were delivered to their homes.

Recognizing the capacity limits of little free libraries, Sheffer and Shipley announced a read-aloud event and book giveaway at nearby Cousler Park. They distributed more than 5,000 of the banned titles in less than half an hour.

The controversy soon received national media attention, prompting the school board to change course. They announced they would hold a vote on reinstating the banned materials at an emergency meeting on September 20.

The board unanimously voted to lift the ban.

Johnson said, "We are committed to making this long delay right." She declined to be interviewed.

Recognizing that the board only lifted their nearly year-long book ban after sustained student protests and national condemnation, Pituch observed, "We know that they did not



temporarily reverse out of the goodness of their hearts.”

“It took five high schoolers organizing a peaceful walk-in protest for each day . . . to help make sure that our district heard that they and many others did not feel represented,” said Hodge. “They are heroes and should be celebrated as bastions of American freedom and democracy. I want to be clear: these kids did this.”

Reported in: FOX 43, September 7, 2021; CNN, September 16, 2021; York Dispatch, September 10, 2021; September 20, 2021; September 24, 2021; and October 1, 2021; Yahoo! Life, September 21, 2021; The New York Times, October 2, 2021.

Katy, Texas

At the beginning of the school year, the Katy Independent School District (ISD) promoted an October 4 virtual visit with award-winning children’s author Jerry Craft for all third through fifth graders.

Bonnie Anderson, a former candidate for the Katy ISD school board and a party in a lawsuit seeking to overturn the district’s mask mandate, started a Change.org petition calling on the district to cancel the event and ban all of Craft’s books.

The petition was taken down for violating Change.org’s community guidelines, but Anderson claims it got around 400 signatures before that happened.

Despite its illegitimacy, Anderson’s petition had the intended effect.

On October 1, parents were given the choice to opt their children out of attending the event. The district serves nearly 89,000 students. The parents of 30 children opted out.

On the day of the event, the district announced they were postponing it and removing two of Craft’s books from school libraries. They cited the

illegitimate petition and HB 3979, Texas’s law banning the teaching of critical race theory (CRT) in schools, as the motivations for their action.

Habikia Eney, a 12th grader at Katy ISD’s Cinco Ranch High School, said “If you’re going to say things like ‘we’re inclusive’ and then not let someone who’s trying to add racial awareness into schools speak, it looks very contradictory.”

The books removed from school libraries for review were *New Kid* and its sequel, *Class Act*.

The semi-autobiographical graphic novels tell the story of a Black 12-year-old’s experiences after enrolling in a private school. They explore cross-racial friendships, the effects of microaggressions, and how well-meaning adults can make a school uncomfortable for minorities.

New Kid was the first graphic novel to be awarded the Newbery Medal and it also won the 2020 Kirkus Prize and Coretta Scott King Award. Craft is one of only five African American writers to receive the Newbery.

In a statement on the Office for Intellectual Freedom’s website, Craft said the goals for his books are “helping kids become the kind of readers that I never was; letting kids see themselves on my pages; and showing kids of color as just regular kids.”

“I almost never saw kids like me in any of the books assigned to me in school. Books aimed at kids like me seemed to deal only with history or misery,” wrote Craft. “I hope that readers of all ages will see the kindness and understanding that my characters exhibit and emulate those feelings in their day-to-day lives.”

Brandon Mack, lead organizer for Black Lives Matter Houston, said Craft’s books do not include CRT. “Critical race theory is not inherently automatically taught when trying to

discuss racism or the Black Experience,” said Mack.

“Katy ISD is not giving our students the ability to see themselves in literature and to know inherently that their lives matter. This sends the message that learning about the Black experience is somehow dangerous,” said Mack.

The district’s policy governing removal of library materials states that, “Students’ First Amendment rights are implicated by the removal of books from the shelves of a school library. A district shall not remove materials from a library for the purpose of denying students access to ideas with which the district disagrees.”

Their policy governing reconsideration states that if a “complainant wishes to make a formal challenge, the principal or designee shall provide the complainant a copy of this policy and a form to request a formal reconsideration of the resource.”

While the policy does cover an informal challenge process, as well, access to materials can only be restricted if a formal challenge has been received. Since that did not happen in this case, the board’s actions were not consistent with their policy.

“People need to understand that this is not a small issue,” said Mack. “It sends a message to Black students that their lives don’t matter and it sends a message to White students that it’s OK to devalue people who are not like them.”

Jeynelle Branch, mother of a sixth-grade student in Katy ISD, said “Kids should be able to pick up a book and learn about another person’s perspective and they’ve taken that off the shelves.” She called it “a stain on the district,” and said, “It’s sending a message that there are people in the community that don’t matter.”

Omerly Sanchez, mother of two biracial students, said her kids were



fans of the books and were looking forward to a virtual author visit with someone who “looks like them.”

Sanchez expressed disappointment and frustration with the district’s handling of the situation. “They want to live in this bubble. They’re uncomfortable with touching the subject. They’re uncomfortable knowing that they’re part of the problem.”

After reviewing the books, the district returned them to school libraries and held Craft’s virtual visit on October 11.

Reported in: *Click2Houston*, October 4, 2021, and October 15, 2021; *Houston Chronicle*, October 4, 2021; October 5, 2021; and October 6, 2021; *Reuters*, October 6, 2021.

Fairfax, Virginia

Gender Queer by Maia Kobabe and *Lawn Boy* by Jonathan Evison were returned to the shelves of 18 libraries in the Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) following a two-month review by the district, which was initiated by a formal challenge.

Committees composed of school administrators, librarians, parents, and students were convened to review the books and recommend a course of action. The decision to retain the books was unanimous.

The district issued a statement that, “The decision reaffirms FCPS’ ongoing commitment to provide diverse reading materials that reflect our student population, allowing every child an opportunity to see themselves reflected in literary characters. Both reviews concluded that the books were valuable in their potential to reach marginalized youth who may struggle to find relatable literary characters that reflect their personal journeys.”

Assistant Superintendent for Instructional Services Noel Klimenko

said, “I am satisfied that the books were selected according to FCPS regulations and are appropriate to include in libraries that serve high school students.”

The books were initially removed from the library for review after parents disrupted a board meeting to denounce the books as “pedophilia,” “pornography,” and “homoerotic.” They also chanted the Prayer to St. Michael the Archangel.

The books’ removal spurred protests by a coalition of students called the Pride Liberation Project (PLP). They released a letter to the school board with over 400 student signatures asking the board to reject attacks against books that uplift the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA+) community.

“LGBTQIA+ representation in literature is critical to fostering validation, acceptance, and self-affirmation for queer students,” read the PLP’s statement. “Removing two award-winning books that dismantle LGBTQIA+ stereotypes from FCPS libraries only contributes to the dearth of positive representations of queer people, perpetuating an unwelcoming school environment for LGBTQIA+ students.”

“As students, we are tired of being scrutinized and targeted for who we are. We simply want to be treated equally in our schools, including in our libraries. Please reject attacks against LGBTQIA+ literature, and allow *Gender Queer* and *Lawn Boy* to remain in our schools.”

After two months of organized resistance, the PLP’s request was honored.

Reported in: *The Washington Post*, September 28, 2021; *Patch*, October 7, 2021; *WUSA9*, November 23, 2021.

LIBRARIES

Byron Township, Michigan

At the September 27 meeting of the Byron Township Board, trustee Tom Hooker called for the graphic novel *Check, Please* by Ngozi Ukazu to be withdrawn from the 11 Kent District Library branches that own it.

“Tax dollars are providing trash,” said Hooker.

Check, Please is a coming of age story about Eric Bittle, a former junior figure skater turned college hockey player. Bittle comes out during his freshman year on the team. It received starred reviews from *Booklist* and *Kirkus* and was a finalist for the 2019 Morris Award, which is bestowed by the Young Adult Library Services Association.

Don Tillema, Byron Township supervisor said, “Our issue is more, you know, why is this kind of crap even in the building?”

Lance Werner, Executive Director of Kent District Libraries, was informed that a 10-year-old boy at the Caledonia branch selected the book from the teen summer reading prize cart instead of from the children’s summer reading prize cart. While the boy put it back and selected a different title, his mom reviewed the book and complained to the board.

Werner said that the library would not include any “salty” books as future summer reading prize options, but *Check, Please* will remain available for checkout. He said books would be removed from the library if they met the legal definition of obscenity, child pornography, or hate speech, and that Ukazu’s book was none of those.

“You guys are asking us to violate the Constitution and impinge on people’s freedom,” said Werner. “That goes against everything we stand for in this country.”

“And the other thing we can’t do is we can’t step in the shoes of the



parent,” Werner added. “Nor should anybody want the government to raise their kids.”

Tillema responded, “I guess where we’re sitting, I’m not sure how long we want to give you guys \$1.6 million a year and provide you a building for all this legal stuff. ‘Cause I think it’s despicable. Maybe we’ll turn [the library] into a shoe store.”

At the meeting, seven citizens spoke out regarding the book. Two, a husband and wife, wanted the book removed. The other five defended it.

“As a parent or a grandparent of a child, I feel it’s your responsibility to be watching what they’re looking at or what they’re reading,” said Suzanne Snider. “I would hate to see any of those works taken out of that library, because there’s something there for everybody and everybody relates to things in different ways.”

“This country is made up of all different kinds of people from different walks of life and we need to continue to represent that and allow those freedoms to be there,” concluded Snider.

Werner said the library system has received four book challenges so far this year.

“I think we’ve had kind of an increase, an uptick, lately in challenges to materials, and I think it’s largely due to the fact that everybody in society is super-duper stressed right now,” said Werner. “Between COVID-19, between the caustic political environment and all the things that are going on, I think everybody is under duress.”

Reported in: WOOD TV, October 22, 2021.

Appendix: Titles Challenged at Central York Schools

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| 25 <i>Women Who Dared to Go</i> by Allison Lassieur | <i>Always My Dad</i> by Sharon Dennis Wyeth | <i>Chasing Space: Young Readers' Edition</i> by Leland Melvin |
| 25 <i>Women Who Fought Back</i> by Jill Sherman | <i>Amal Unbound</i> by Aisha Saeed | <i>Chocolate Milk, Por Favor!</i> by Maria Dismondy |
| 25 <i>Women Who Ruled</i> by Rebecca Stanborough | <i>Amazing Grace</i> by Mary Hoffman | <i>Cilla Lee-Jenkins: Future Author Extraordinaire</i> by Susan Tan |
| 25 <i>Women Who Thought of it First</i> by Jill Sherman | <i>Amelia to Zora: Twenty-Six Women Who Changed the World</i> by Cynthia Chin-Lee | <i>Cilla Lee-Jenkins: The Epic Story</i> by Susan Tan |
| 47,000 <i>Beads</i> by Kojia Adeyoha | <i>American as Paneer Pie</i> by Supriya Kelkar | <i>Cilla Lee-Jenkins: This Book is a Classic</i> by Susan Tan |
| <i>A Big Mooncake for Little Star</i> by Grace Lin | <i>An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States for Young People</i> by Jean Mendoza | <i>Clap When You Land</i> by Elizabeth Acevedo |
| <i>A Bike Like Sergio's</i> by Maribeth Boelts | <i>Anna Hibiscus</i> by Atinuke | <i>Come with Me</i> by Holly McGhee |
| <i>A Boy Called Bat</i> by Elana K. Arnold | <i>Another</i> by Christian Robinson | <i>Condoleezza Rice: Being the Best</i> by Mary Dodson Wade |
| <i>A Good Kind of Trouble</i> by Lisa Moore Ramée | <i>Around Our Way on Neighbors' Day</i> by Tameka Fryer Brown | <i>Counting on Katherine: How Katherine Johnson Put Astronauts on the Moon</i> by Helaine Becker |
| <i>A is for Activist</i> by Innosanto Nagara | <i>As Brave As You</i> by Jason Reynolds | <i>Crown: An Ode to the Fresh Cut</i> by Derrick Barnes |
| <i>A is for Audra: Broadway's Leading Ladies from A to Z</i> by John Robert Allman | <i>Bat and the End of Everything</i> by Elana K. Arnold | <i>Daddy, There's a Noise Outside</i> by Kenneth braswell |
| <i>A Splash of Red: The Life and Art of Horace Pippin</i> by Jen Bryant | <i>Bat and the Waiting Game</i> by Elana K. Arnold | <i>Desmond Cole Ghost Patrol</i> by Andres Miedoso |
| <i>Accidental Trouble Magnet [Planet Omar]</i> by Zaniab Mian | <i>Bayou Magic</i> by Jewell Parker Rhodes | <i>Don't Touch My Hair!</i> by Sharee Miller |
| <i>Ada</i> byron Lovelace and the Thinking Machine by Laurie Wallmark | <i>Because</i> by Mo Willems | <i>Drawn Together</i> by Minh Lê |
| <i>African American Cowboys: True Heroes of the Old West</i> by Jeffrey B Fuerst | <i>Before the Ever After</i> by Jacqueline Woodson | <i>Dream Drum Girl</i> by Margarita Engle |
| <i>All American Boys</i> by Jason Reynolds, Brendan Kiely | <i>Being the Change: Lessons and Strategies to Teach Social Comprehension</i> by Sara Ahmed | <i>Dreamers</i> by Yuyi Morales |
| <i>All Are Welcome</i> by Alexandra Penfold | <i>Big Hair, Don't Care</i> by Crystal Swain-Bates | <i>Duke Ellington: The Piano Prince and his Orchestra</i> by Andrea Davis Pinkney |
| <i>All Boys Aren't Blue: A Memoir-Manifesto</i> by George M. Johnson | <i>Bilal Cooks Daal</i> by Aisha Saeed | <i>Each Kindness</i> by Jacqueline Woodson |
| <i>All the Colors We Are: The True Story of How We Get Our Skin Color</i> by Katie Kissinger | <i>Brown Girl Dreaming</i> by Jacqueline Woodson | <i>Early Sunday Morning</i> by Denene Millner |
| <i>All the World</i> by Elizabeth Garton Scanlon | <i>Can I Touch Your Hair? Poems of Race, Mistakes, and Friendship</i> by Irene Latham, Charles Waters | <i>El Eia en que Descubres Quien Es</i> by Jacqueline Woodson |
| <i>Alma and How She Got Her Name</i> by Juana Martinez-Neal | <i>Can We Talk About Race?: And Other Conversations in an Era of School Resegregation</i> by Beverly Daniel Tatum | <i>Elizabeth Blackwell: The First Woman Doctor</i> by Liza Burby |
| | <i>Carmela Full of Wishes</i> by Matt de la Peña | <i>Encounter</i> by Jane Yolen |
| | <i>CeceLovesScienceKD</i> by Kimberly Derting | |
| | <i>Changing the Equation: 50+ US Black Women in Stem</i> by Tonya Bolden | |



- Enough!: 20 Protesters who Changed America* by Emily Easton
- Escuchando con Mi Corazon: Un Cuento de Bondad y Autocompasion* by Gabi Garcia
- Exquisite: The Poetry and Life of Gwendolyn Brooks* by Suzanne Slade
- Faith Ringgold* by Mike Venezia
- Fishing Day* by Andrea Davis Pinkney
- For Black Girls Like Me* by Mariama Lockington
- Freedom in Congo Square* by Carole Boston Weatherford
- From the Stars in the Sky to the Fish in the Sea* by Kai Cheng Thom
- Front Desk* by Kelly Yang
- Fry Bread: A Native American Family Story* by Kevin Maillard
- Full, Full, Full of Love* by Trish Cooke
- Get Up, Stand Up* by Cedella Marley
- Ghost* by Jason Reynolds
- Ghost Boys* by Jewell Parker Rhodes
- Girls Who Code 2: Team BFF: Race to the Finish!* by Stacia Deutsch
- Girls Who Code: The Friendship Code* by Stacia Deutsch
- Grace Hopper: Queen of Computer Code* by Laurie Wallmark
- Grandpa Cacao: A Tale of Chocolate, from Farm to Family* by Elizabeth Zunon
- Hair Love* by Matthew Cherry
- Hands Up!* by Breanna J McDaniel
- Hank's Big Day: The Story of a Bug* by Evan Kuhlman
- Harvesting Hope: The Story of Cesar Chavez* by Kathleen Krull, Yuyi Morales
- Henry's Freedom Box* by Ellen Levine
- Hey Black Child* by Useni Eugene Perkins
- Hey, Charleston!: The True Story of the Jenkins Orphanage Band* by Anne F Rockwell
- Hidden Figures: The True Story of Four Black Women and the Space Race* by Margot Lee Shetterly
- Home of the Brave: An American History Book for Kids: 15 Immigrants Who Shaped U.S. History* by Brooke Khan
- Hot Day on Abbott Avenue* by Karen English
- How Many Stars in the Sky?* by Lenny Hort
- I Am Enough* by Grace byers
- I Am Every Good Thing* by Derrick Barnes
- I Am Human: A Book of Empathy* by Susan Verde, Peter H. Reynolds
- I Am Not Your Negro* by Raoul Peck
- I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter* by Erika Sanchez
- I am Rosa Parks* by Brad Meltzer
- I Promise* by LeBron James
- I'm a Pretty Little Black Girl* by Betty K bynum
- Imani's Moon* by JaNay Brown-Wood
- Incredible Rescue Mission [Planet Omar]* by Zanib Mian
- Indian No More* by Charlene Willing McManis
- Intersection Allies: We Make Room for All* by Chelsea Johnson
- Islandborn* by Junot Diaz
- Jabari Jumps* by Gaia Cornwall
- Jack (Not Jackie)* by Erica Silverman
- Jaden Toussaint, the Greatest. Episode 1: The Quest for Screen Time* by Marti Dumas
- Jaden Toussaint, the Greatest. Episode 2: The Ladek Invasion* by Marti Dumas
- Jaden Toussaint, the Greatest. Episode 3: Muffin Wars* by Marti Dumas
- Jaden Toussaint, the Greatest. Episode 4: Attack of the Swamp Thing* by Marti Dumas
- Jasmine Toguchi, Drummer Girl* by Debbi Michiko Florence
- Jasmine Toguchi, Flamingo Keeper* by Debbi Michiko Florence
- Jasmine Toguchi, Mochi Queen* by Debbi Michiko Florence
- Jasmine Toguchi, Super Sleuth* by Debbi Michiko Florence
- Julian is a Mermaid* by Jessica Love
- Keena Ford and the Second-Grade Mix-Up* by Melissa Thomson
- King & Kayla [series]* by Dori Hillestad Butler
- Knock Knock: My Dad's Dream for Me* by Daniel Beaty
- Last Stop on Market Street* by Matt de la Peña
- Leila in Saffron* by Rukhsanna Guidroz
- Let the Children March* by Monica Clark-Robinson
- Like the Moon Loves the Sky* by Hena Khan
- Lily and Dunkin* by Donna Gephart
- Little Leaders: Bold Women in Black History* by Vashti Harrison
- Little Legends: Exceptional Men in Black History* by Vashti Harrison
- Little Melba and her Big Trombone* by Kathryn Russell-Brown
- Locked Up for Freedom: Civil Rights Protesters at the Leesburg Stockade* by Heather Schwartz
- Lola Levine [series]* by Monica Brown
- Lola Reads [series]* by Anna McQuinn
- Look Both Ways: A Tale Told in Ten Blocks* by Jason Reynolds
- Lubna and Pebble* by Wendy Meddour
- Lucky Broken Girl* by Ruth Behar
- Luis Munoz Marin: Father of Modern Puerto Rico [Community Builder series]* by Linda George
- Lulu and the Duck in the Park* by Hilary McKay
- Mae Among the Stars* by Roda Ahmed
- Malala Yousafzai* by Robin S Doak
- Malala: My Story of Standing Up for Girls Rights* by Malala Yousafzai
- Malala's Magic Pencil* by Malala Yousafzai
- Mango, Abuela, and Me* by Meg Medina
- Marisol McDonald Doesn't Match* by Monica Brown
- Marvelous Cornelius: Hurricane Katrina and the Spirit of New Orleans* by Phil Bildner
- Max and the Tag-Along Moon* by Floyd Cooper
- Me and White Supremacy* by Layla F. Saad
- Melissa (previously published as George.)* by Alex Gino
- Milo's Museum* by Zetta Elliott
- Mindy Kim and the Birthday Puppy* by Lyla Lee
- Mindy Kim and the Lunar New Year Parade* by Lyla Lee
- Mindy Kim, Class President* by Lyla Lee
- Mixed Me!* by Taye Diggs
- Mommy Sayang* by Rosana Sullivan
- Monster Trouble* by Lane Fredrickson
- Morris Micklewhite and the Tangerine Dress* by Christine Baldacchino
- Mrs. Katz and Tush* by Patricia Polacco
- My Family Plays Music* by Judy Cox
- My Friend Maya Loves to Dance* by Cheryl Willis Hudson
- My Hair is a Garden* by Cozbi Cabrera
- My Papi Has a Motorcycle* by Isabel Quintero
- Nelson Beats the Odds* by Ronnie Sidney
- New Kid* by Jerry Craft
- Nikki & Deja* by Karen English
- Nino Wrestles the World* by Yuyi Morales
- Ninth Ward* by Jewell Parker Rhodes
- Noah Chases the Wind* by Michelle Worthington
- Not Norman: A Goldfish Story* by Kelly Bennett
- Not Quite Snow White* by Ashley Franklin
- Nothing Stopped Sophie: The Story of Unshakable Mathematician Sophie Germain* by Cheryl Bardoe
- On Our Street: Our First Talk About Poverty* by Jillian Roberts
- On The Come Up* by Angie Thomas
- One Green Apple* by Eve Bunting



- Ouch!: That Stereotype Hurts: Communicat- ing Respectfully in a Diverse World* by Joel Leskowitz
- Our Class is a Family* by Shannon Olsen
- Parachutes* by Kelly Yang
- Patina* by Jason Reynolds
- Peanut Goes for the Gold* by Jonathan Van Ness
- Peeny Butter Fudge* by Toni Morrison
- Pele, King of Soccer = Pele, el Rey del Futbol* by Monica Brown
- Pink is for Boys* by Robb Pearlman
- Pride: The Story of Harvey Milk and the Rain- bow Flag* by Rob Sanders
- Prince and Knight* by Daniel Haack
- Rainbow Revolutionaries: 50 LGBTQ+ People Who Made History* by Sarah Prager
- Ramadan Around the World* by Ndaa Hassan
- Rap a Tap Tap: Here's Bojangles: Think of That* by Leo Dillon
- Read the World: Rethinking Literacy for Empa- thy and Action in a Digital Age* by Kristin Ziemke
- Red Kite, Blue Kite* by Ji-li Jiang
- Refugee* by Alan Gratz
- Reparations Yes!: The Legal and Political Rea- sons Why New Afrikans, Black People in the United States, Should be Paid Now for the Enslavement of Our Ancestors and for War Against Us After Slavery: Articles by Chokwe Lumumba*
- Ruby and the Booker Boys [series]* by Derrick Barnes
- Same But Different* by Tessa Dahl
- Saturday* by Oge Mora
- Saving Ruby King* by Catherine Adel West
- Say Something* by Peter H. Reynolds
- Shades of People* by Shelley Rotner
- Shining Legacy: A Treasury of "Storypoems and Tales for the Young so Black Heroes Forever Will be Sung"* by Nkechi Taifa
- Sing a Song: How "Lift Every Voice and Sing" Inspired Generations* by Kelly Starling Lyons
- Skin Like Mine* by LaTashia M Perry
- Smoky Night* by Eve Bunting
- Sofia Martinez: Hector's Hiccups* by Jacqueline Jules
- Sofia Valdez, Future Prez* by Andrea Beaty
- Solo Pregunta: Se Diferente, Se Valiente, Se Tu* by Sonia Sotomayor
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- The Undeclared* by Kwame Alexander
- The Year of the Book* by Andrea Cheng
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- Those Shoes* by Maribeth Boelts
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- WeirDo [series]* by Anh Do
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- What Was Stonewall?* by Nico Medina
- What Was the March on Washington?* by Kath- leen Krull
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- Your Name is A Song* by Jamilah Thompkins-Bigelow



Social Media

On December 1, a federal judge blocked a Texas law banning “censorship” on social media platforms, ruling that it violated social networks’ First Amendment right to moderate content published on their sites.

House Bill 20 was set to go into effect the following day.

Section 143A.002 states that a “social media platform or interactive computer service may not censor a user, a user’s expression, or a user’s ability to receive the expression of another person based on the viewpoint of the user or another person, or the viewpoint represented in the user’s expression or another person’s expression.”

The Texas law would have required platforms with over 50 million users to disclose all information regarding how they promote and moderate users and how they use algorithms. It also would have granted users the right to sue companies for injunctive relief and attorney fees if they felt they were wrongfully targeted.

HB 20 also would have required publication of transparency reports disclosing the number of times

content was removed and the number of users who were removed for violating content policies or terms of service.

US District Court Judge Robert Pitman issued the 30-page ruling that prevented the law from going into effect. In it, he characterized the Texas law as “replete with constitutional defects.”

Pitman asserted that “social media platforms are not common carriers.” He said that social media networks are not required to provide access to everyone and they are not neutral in transmitting users’ speech.

He also stated that social media networks “curate both users and content to convey a message about the type of community the platform seeks to foster and, as such, exercise editorial discretion over their platform’s content.”

Pitman wrote that “Social media platforms have a First Amendment right to moderate content disseminated on their platforms” and HB 20 “compels social media platforms to disseminate objectionable content and impermissibly restricts their editorial discretion.”

“HB 20 seems to place social media platforms in the untenable position of choosing, for example, to promote Nazism against its wishes or ban Nazism as a content category.” Pitman argued that “HB 20’s prohibitions on ‘censorship’ and constraints on how social media platforms disseminate content violate the First Amendment.”

Pitman also found that the provision to sue social media companies interfered with their moderation policies and chilled platforms’ First Amendment rights.

Pitman noted that the conservative networks Parler and Gab were the only social media platforms excluded from the law as they were the only ones with fewer than 50 million users.

Conservative Texas lawmakers prevented a state senator’s proposal to include them by lowering that threshold to 25 million monthly users.

Earlier this year, a comparable law was blocked in Florida on similar grounds. That case has been appealed to the 11th Circuit District Court.

Reported in: *Jurist*, September 12, 2021; *Courthouse News Service*, December 2, 2021; *ArsTechnica*, December 2, 2021.



LIBRARIES

Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin

On June 17, Derrick Van Orden, Republican congressional candidate, loudly complained about a Pride display in the children's department and threatened a seventeen-year-old library worker at the Prairie du Chien Memorial Library.

Van Orden insisted that taxpayers shouldn't have to see lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA+) books.

Van Orden was apparently particularly enraged about *A Day in the Life of Marlon Bundo*, a picture book about same-sex rabbit marriage. Van Orden submitted a written complaint about the book in which he stated it was "skewing young people to think Republicans are not inclusive."

Kerrigan Trautsch said Van Orden's "voice was loud, he was aggressive, he had his finger jabbing into [*Marlon Bundo*] constantly." She said he demanded to know who set up the display so he could "teach them a lesson." Trautsch was too frightened to admit she set it up.

She tried to suggest adult LGBTQIA+ books and Van Orden told her "Hush, you don't have a voice. You don't have a voice."

"He was full-on shouting and he kept aggressively shoving the books around," Trautsch said. Van Orden called the displayed books "disgusting" then checked out all of them aside from one that another patron was reading.

When she got home, Trautsch told her parents she no longer felt safe coming to work.

After returning the books, Van Orden issued a statement in which he said, "It is 2021 and this should not have to be stated but there are people who continue to divide us as Americans for political purposes."

Van Orden unsuccessfully ran for a seat in Wisconsin's 3rd Congressional District in 2020, despite President Trump's endorsement. He was present at the January 6 insurrection, but insists he did not participate in the violence. He has announced he intends to run again in 2022.

Trautsch, who is now 18, said Van Orden "cannot handle the new generation of voters coming in by telling them to shush, that we don't have a voice. I want him to know: I can vote now."

Reported in: *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, August 24, 2021; *La Crosse Tribune*, August 22, 2021.

UNIVERSITIES Florida

The constitutionality of Florida's law, which requires a survey of the beliefs and perspectives of college and university professors and students, is being challenged by a lawsuit brought by United Faculty of Florida (UFF), the non-profit March for Our Lives Action Fund, four students, four professors, and a lecturer.

The UFF issued a statement calling HB 233 a "political stunt" undermining free speech, assembly, and privacy.

HB 233 requires state universities and colleges to conduct an annual assessment of "intellectual freedom and diversity of perspectives."

When Governor Ron DeSantis announced the bill, he threatened to defund universities found to be "indoctrinating" students with "state ideology," raising concerns that it was designed to control discourse on college campuses.

The lawsuit notes that "the survey provisions neither explain or put any limitations on how the governor, Florida legislature, or boards might use the results of the survey."

Attorneys for the plaintiffs assert the law was ideologically driven.

The lawsuit argues that, "While it may purport to protect and advance intellectual freedom and viewpoint diversity on Florida's public college and university campuses, [the law's] reality—and its intention—is the exact opposite."

HB 233 allows students to record lectures without their professors' consent, to be used as evidence in complaints to the Board of Education or in civil proceedings.

"It was passed with the intent to suppress liberal and progressive views and associations . . . by creating a hostile environment for those views on virtually every level, up to and including sanctioning vindictive litigation and targeting them for harassment and budget cuts," states the lawsuit.

The lawsuit asserts HB 233 unlawfully targets and discriminates based on viewpoint "with the goal of chilling some and compelling other speech, as well as chilling the freedom to associate with groups that share the viewpoints that HB 233 is designed to suppress."

"Without regard for the First Amendment, the law permits the state to collect the private political beliefs of students and compels faculty both to espouse and promote views they do not share and carefully consider whether and how to discuss views that they do," states the lawsuit.

The Republican-controlled legislature passed the bill earlier this year. It went into effect on July 1.

(See: *Journal of Intellectual Freedom & Privacy, v.6 iss.3: Is it Legal?: Universities*)

Reported in: *Florida News Times*, August 6, 2021; *WTSP*, August 4, 2021; *WLRN*, August 5, 2021.



NEWS IN BRIEF

Some cases of censorship are only reported briefly via social media or board meeting minutes. When substantive media reporting regarding a challenge is lacking, the case will be reported here.

Olathe, Kansas

In a Facebook post, Olathe School District board candidate Joshua Paulson called *All Boys Aren't Blue* by George M. Johnson a “pornographic/homosexual” book and stated any teachers who have it in their classroom library “need to be fired.” He called on the district “to publicly address this and apologize to the parents.”

Paulson’s post was made as a comment on a post from the official Olathe Public Schools account announcing a parent seminar called “Navigating the World of School.”

Source: Facebook, September 28, 2021.

York, Maine

Inspired by the book *A Large Expanse of Sea*, a York High School senior painted a depiction of Martin Luther King, Jr., with the words “Still Dreaming” above him. The painting also included a quote from Ruby Bridges, “Racism is a grown-up disease and we should stop using our kids to spread it.”

The student donated her artwork to the school library in April 2021. On September 26, a series of comments were made on Facebook about the artwork culminating in demands for its removal.

The school principal demanded that school librarian Nicole Master-son remove the artwork and told her it was “anti-American” and she “did not have permission” to display it. Master-son was informed the artwork had to be removed until a schoolwide policy governing the display of artwork was

in place. **Source: Seacoast Online, October 2, 2021; Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.**

Novi, Michigan

After seeing a news story about a school board meeting in Fairfax, Virginia, the parent of two Novi High School students called the principal and requested the removal of Jonathan Evison’s *Lawn Boy* from the school library.

Source: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Adair, Missouri

On September 29, 2021, a patron called the Adair County Public Library to complain about the book *Gender Queer* and request that it be removed. He requested to come in and discuss the book with the children’s librarian.

Source: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Independence, Missouri

A banned books display at the North Independence branch of the Mid-Continent Public Library (MCPL) was attacked by three library board members on Facebook, including Vice President Michael Lazio.

Bright red lettering surrounding the display read “Caution: These books are dangerous!” Lazio commented that the display was “appalling.” Trustee Yummy Pandolfi posted, “I’m saddened by this lack of judgment from library employees.” Trustee Michelle Wycoff commented “You are crossing a line that’s not yours to cross.”

Former MCPL employee Austin Gragg characterized the comments as consistent with the board’s anti-intellectual views and stance opposing lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/ questioning, intersex,

and asexual (LGBTQIA+) content. He said the board’s views and actions have led to some LGBTQIA+ former employees leaving their jobs with the library.

Source: KCUR, October 1, 2021.

Bedford, New Hampshire

During the public comments section of the September 27, 2021, Bedford High School board meeting, a parent stood up and read a passage from Jonathan Evison’s *Lawn Boy*. In an email to the board, the parent demanded “I would like to know who is responsible for allowing this smut in the library and what is going to be done about this.”

Source: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Salem, New Hampshire

At the September 28, 2021, school board meeting of Salem High School, a parent objected that the school library had the book *Lawn Boy* by Jonathan Evison. He called the book “pornographic material.” No formal reconsideration request was made.

Source: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Massapequa, New York

Sara Cimino complained on Twitter and at the September 21 Plainedge Union Free School District board meeting that the book *Front Desk* by Kelly Yang was being read aloud in fifthgrade classrooms. She tweeted that the book was “CRT” and “even connects to the BLM movement,” referring to critical race theory and Black Lives Matter.

She also said that “after researching and seeing how much Scholastic is behind the BLM movement, we do not want our kids reading or being read any Scholastic books—or any other that teaches subjects of race,



gender, religion, or any other controversial topics.”

Source: Plainedge Union Free School District board minutes, September 21, 2021; @NewWombat on Twitter, September 22, 2021.

Riverhead, New York

During the public comment section of the June 9, 2021, board meeting of the Riverhead Public Library, two community members voiced objections to Pride Month programming with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/ questioning, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA+) content.

David Schmidt claimed the programs Drag Queen Story Hour and LGBT101 “will affect the community at large in a very dangerous way.” He said he “opposed an agenda that promotes homosexuality.”

Source: Minutes of the Board of Trustees of the Riverhead Free Library, June 9, 2021.

Canby, Oregon

Canby Public Library canceled its subscription to *BookPage*, a circular containing book reviews that is distributed to more than 4,000 libraries and hundreds of thousands of readers each month.

While providing curbside service during the pandemic, instead of making it available free to library visitors, they included copies in the bags containing patron-requested materials.

Complaints were received regarding a recommendation in the March 2021 issue for the title *Lick Like a Lesbian*.

The book was not available from the library, but a community member bought a copy and read passages at a Canby School Board meeting. Staff resignations were demanded as were safeguards to prevent future

distribution of book reviews. City Administrator Scott Archer canceled the library’s subscription.

Source: Canby First, March 4, 2021.

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

The Free Library of Philadelphia took down two storytime videos from social media after complaints from the Greater Philadelphia chapter of the Zionist Organization of America. The videos featured a children’s librarian reading books about Palestinian people.

A blog post about the incident states they “strengthened our content guidelines, and met with local Jewish organizations and shared remedial measures to mitigate future occurrence.”

Source: Freerlibrary.org, September 3, 2021.

Radnor, Pennsylvania

Bob Whitehead, a candidate for the board of Radnor High School, made a Facebook post on October 7, 2021, asserting that Jonathan Evison’s *Lawn Boy* “is pedophilia and grooming behavior, and has no place in our District Library’s [sic]. If I’m elected I will do whatever needs done [sic] for that to be removed. I am disgusted that it ended up there in the first place.”

No formal request for reconsideration was made.

Whitehead was not elected.

Source: Friends of Bob Whitehead—Community Organization and Action Facebook page, October 7, 2021; Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Horry County, South Carolina

Administrators of Horry County Schools instructed teachers to stop

using CNN 10 for daily classroom use, seemingly in response to parent concerns about “political indoctrination” from “fake news CNN.”

According to CNN, CNN 10 is a daily 10-minute news show designed for students which seeks to “identify stories of international significance and clearly describe why they’re making news, who is affected, and how the events fit into a complex, international society.”

The district denied this took place, but Freedom of Information Act requests surfaced emails from principals advising social studies teachers that CNN 10 was not approved for daily use and could only be used when it directly supported curriculum content.

Source: Myrtle Beach Sun News, August 20, 2021.

Knoxville, Tennessee

A parent at Sterchi Elementary School complained after a teacher shared the audiobook version of *Something Happened in Our Town* with her fourth grade class. The book details family discussions about racial injustice in policing following the shooting of an unarmed Black man. The parent felt it was anti-police.

Co-author Marianne Celano said, “We wanted to write a book that would help parents and kids talk to one another about these issues and promote values of anti-racism.” The school district said the book was not part of the approved curriculum, though education association president Tanya Coats said teachers often use supplemental learning materials.

Source: WBIR, May 1, 2021.

Pflugerville, Texas

A patron sent an email to the Pflugerville Public Library on September 24, 2021, objecting to the DVD *Killing*



ED: Charter Schools, Corruption, and the Gulen Movement in America for its “bias” and “politically motivated baseless claims.” The documentary asserts that a Texas-based charter school movement is operated by a global Islamic organization known as the Gulen movement.

Source: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Plano, Texas

Two speakers at the October 5 meeting of the Plano Independent School District (ISD) board meeting requested that books be removed from school libraries.

One book objected to was *Lawn Boy* by Jonathan Evison. The other was not identified by the speaker.

Source: Dallas Morning News, October 6, 2021.

Davis, Utah

The Davis School District banned display of Pride flags and Black Lives Matter flags in any of their buildings.

North Layton Junior High interpreted the ban as including other decorations such as rainbow stickers or pins.

Source: The Salt Lake Tribune, September 21, 2021.

Smithfield, Virginia

School Board Chair Jackie Carr objected to Smithfield High School’s “Read Woke” reading list at the September 9, 2021 school board meeting. The list includes 70 titles that are part of an optional reading challenge.

Librarian Cicely Lewis said the books on the list “challenge a social norm, give voice to the voiceless, provide information about a group that has been disenfranchised, seek to change the status quo, or have a protagonist from an underrepresented or oppressed group.”

Carr suggested implementing an email notification system to alert parents every time their child checked out a book with “this kind of content.”

Community member Volpe Boykin took things further and suggested banning the books from the school library. Boykin said, “If you don’t look back into these books and pull those out, you’re as disgusting as the people who wrote them.”

Source: The Smithfield Times, September 21, 2021.

Madison, Virginia

Community members complained on Facebook about Pride flags displayed in the Madison County High School library. In response, the superintendent and principal took down both flags. Policy was not followed regarding the removal of the displayed artwork. The principal had previously approved the flag declaring “Science is real, Black lives matter, no human is illegal, love is love, women’s rights are human rights, kindness is everything.”

Source: MaddRapp, August 24, 2021; August 26, 2021; and August 29, 2021.

Stafford, Virginia

On September 21, 2021, the Stafford County Board of Supervisors unanimously passed a resolution denouncing teaching of the *1619 Project* and critical race theory (CRT) in county schools. They also unanimously passed a resolution condemning requiring students to state their preferred pronouns.

The passed motions allow the Board to withhold any money the county’s public school system spends on teaching CRT or requiring students to state their preferred pronouns.

Source: ABC13 News, September 21, 2021.

Bellingham, Washington

Bellingham school officials and a local business were targeted with antisemitic and other hate speech and harassment over *I am Jazz*, a children’s book about a transgender girl that was read to first graders. Superintendent Greg Baker said the book is part of the district’s recent commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion and meets state guidelines for age-appropriate education. School spokeswoman Dana Smith said the district has received malicious emails and phone calls.

Source: The Bellingham Herald, May 7, 2021.

New Berlin, Wisconsin

During an August 5 meeting of the New Berlin Library Board, 17 of the fewer than 40 attendees made public comments regarding the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA+) books *This Book is Gay* by Juno Dawson and *Queer: The Ultimate LGBTQ Guide for Teens* by Kathy Belge and Marke Bieschke.

Many argued the titles should be moved from the Young Adult section to the Adult section of the library. People who spoke in defense of the books were booed by other attendees. No decision was made regarding whether or not to move the books.

Source: Patch, August 5, 2021.

Whitefish Bay, Wisconsin

Whitefish Bay School District residents approved a tax levy by an overwhelming majority despite some parents’ efforts to withhold funding until books about White privilege and police shootings were removed from the school library.

The push to withhold funding was part of a nationwide movement to ban books that fall under a vague and



inaccurate definition of “critical race theory.”

The five books targeted were:

- *Not My Idea: A Book About Whiteness* by Anastasia Higginbotham

- *Ghost Boys* by Jewell Parker Rhodes
- *Something Happened in Our Town: A Child’s Story about Racial Injustice* by Marianne Celano
- *The Jacket* by Andrew Clements

- *Julián is a Mermaid* by Jessica Love

Source: Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, September 1, 2021.

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Library Bill of Rights



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